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MARKETING, THE LITERARY & THE LOGOS OF COOL

A poststructuralist enquiry into the appropriation and impact of literary theory on marketing discourse and its implications for the re-presentation of consumer dispositions characterised by *cool*.

Glyn Fry

A submission presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the University of Glamorgan/Prifysgol Morgannwg for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Words are never enough but a special thanks is offered to Professor John Beynon. Special thanks also to the Taj Mahal for providing John with patience when it was most needed.

Certificate of Research

This is to certify that, except where specific reference is made, the work described in this thesis is the result of the candidate's research. Neither this thesis, nor any part of it, has been presented, or is currently submitted, in candidature for any degree at any other University.

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ABSTRACT

This Dissertation offers a poststructuralist critique of *cool* across the discourses of marketing and consumer culture.

The starting point for this study was an exploration of the ways in which postmodern marketing's engagement with the literary helps consolidate interpretive approaches that claim to offer a deeper understanding of the more nuanced needs of the sovereign consumer. I challenge this Whiggish version of a 'progressive' marketing by problematising its deployment of the literary, with its focus on the use of irony as a mode of subjective *knowingness*, but which occludes its disruptive 'other':

I draw on Foucault and Belsey to highlight the discursive practices and techniques entailed in the articulation of subjectivity and *knowingness*. I also highlight the implications of Derrida's challenge to Western culture's dependence on the logo-centric in its inscriptions of the knowing subject that ultimately effaces the play of textuality and the materiality of the signifier. Consequently, it is proposed that recognising subjectivity as a function of signifying and discursive practice, and not simply as the manifestation of a logocentric rationality or some deeply embedded psychological need or impulse, has profound implications for consumer sovereignty and choice.

This study maintains that the shared logocentric assumptions between articulations of ironic *knowingness* in relation to literary and postmodern theory 'conspire' to valorise the subjective configurations of the sovereign consumer, most notably promoted as *cool*.

While a poststructuralist mode of research is not without its methodological difficulties it proved particularly apposite in offering a reading of how marketing achieves its effects. A key feature of poststructuralist enquiry, as with the uses of irony configured as a challenge to, rather than a manifestation of, *knowingness*, is to draw attention to the unsettling, disruptive, decentring, tendencies implicit in the linguistic process. But while this makes for a degree of discomfort and frustration, such critiques also constitute a source of creativity and innovation for configuring the world differently.

In this regard, a deconstructive cultural history shows marketing to be divided against itself. Marketing both seeks to specify and satisfy clearly determined needs, desires and aspirations, but at the same time constantly effects to unsettle and reconfigure desire. Those deemed to have a *cool*, percipient sensibility effectively operate as a conduit for this unsettling of desire. The consequence is that almost before consumer satisfaction can be [re]articulated it is running up against a new unsettling of desire. What the study of the discourses of *cool*

indicate is that this unsettling effectively constitutes a 'creative' strategy by which *cool* maintains its exclusivity over early and late majority consumers, and in driving forward new 'consumer' priorities. This Dissertation argues that it cannot be inconsequential that the material signifying practices entailed in promoting this unsettling also have the effect of achieving a particular resonance with the priorities of late consumer capitalism – the creation of an ever increasing cycle of demand for products and services.

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CHAPTER ONE: UNSETTLING QUESTIONS

Promptings

On reflection, part of the impetus, one of the starting points, for this dissertation originated from an encounter with Stephen Brown's texts on postmodern marketing and his engagement with, and particular articulation of, the literary. From a simple prosaic perspective, this interest was based on previous engagements with literary theory from within the academy of English Literature. While not apparent to begin with, a consequence of this trajectory, and the intersection of the disciplines of Literature and Marketing resulted in the recognition of readings that glossed the tensions in poststructuralist approaches to the literary. Troubled by a tendency that viewed marketing's engagement with the literary and the postmodern as pointing the way to a teleological unfolding, a progressive liberation of the marketing and consuming subject, a space for the realization of individual desire, raised questions about the articulation of this liberation.

This uneasiness with the institution of a progressive postmodern marketing found further

Illustration 1

Undiluted by focus groups

CHRYSLER PT CRUISER FROM £14,995

Be honest, what would rather be driving? Something carefully designed not to offend 74.9% of your socio-economic group. Or something that makes you grin like an idiot. Gloriously stylish, the PT Cruiser may be. But not at the expense of sheer practicality. So there's a 2 litre engine, air conditioning and CD stereo as standard, 120 cu ft of interior space with all the seating and load configurations imaginable. And all from £14,995. (We don't need research to tell us that everyone wants to drive a bargain.) Call 0800 61 61 59 or visit www.chrysler.co.uk

CHRYSLER

Be honest. What would you rather be driving? Something carefully designed not to offend 74.9% of your socio-economic group. Or something that makes you grin like an idiot. Gloriously stylish, the PT Cruiser may be. But not at the expense of sheer practicality. So there's a 2 litre engine, air conditioning, and CD stereo as standard, 120 cu ft of interior space with all the seating and load configurations imaginable. And all from £14,995. (We don't need research to tell us that everyone wants to drive a bargain.) Call 0800 61 61 59 or visit www.chrysler.co.uk.

focus in what might be regarded as another originary point - an advertisement for the Chrysler PT Cruiser (Illustration 1). This advertisement, by means of the literary device of irony, hailed the virtues and capabilities of a particular class of consumers - invariably designated as *cool* - deemed to be untouched by marketing stratagems.

Given the challenges to positivist marketing models encountered in a range of postmodern marketing texts, what was intriguing about this advertisement were the implications of the strapline: 'Undiluted by Focus Groups'. While the irony of an advertisement calling into question the stratagems of marketing is nothing new - indeed it is deemed a signifier of postmodern marketing - it served as a further focus for questions concerning the play of signifying practice, of rhetoric, in marketing's appropriation of the literary subject. While this ironic mode of marketing acknowledges that the consumer is on to the stratagems of marketers and their signifying practices, what is nevertheless maintained is the notion of the consumer as a unified, coherent, knowing subject.

The more I reflected on this advertisement, the more significance it took on. Was the advertisement, with its taken-as-read challenge to the positivist paradigm on which traditional marketing is predicated, a configuration of advertising that was bearing testimony to certain aspects of postmodernity? In addition, it was a neat turn on the postmodern play of self-reflexivity, predicated on the idea that the individuals and creatives who put together the advertisement epitomise the individuality, independence and ironic creativity of the audience to which it appeals. Also the condition of postmodernity as characterised by increasing fragmentation and resistance to all-encompassing metanarratives reinforces the possibility and desirability - in theory at least - to communicate with an audience at an individual, one-to-one level.

However, it also occurred to me that I might simply be interpreting this advertisement from a postmodern perspective. After all, the advertisement was 'pitching' a message based on a perceived desire for the expression of individuality among its target audience; and there is nothing particularly new about that as a communication strategy in lifestyle advertising.

This said, there remained something both unsettling and enlightening about this advertisement. In the Derridean sense, it plays on the text's undecidability. It seemed to offer a comment about the emergence of particular new tensions in marketing. But at the same time there was a sense that such tensions have long been present. In raising the issue of focus groups as a rhetorical device to make the case for the individual appeal of the PT Cruiser, the advertisement brings into play that which is normally repressed in marketing, particularly that of the lifestyle variety - the need to appeal to an homogenous mass of people. While the appeal of lifestyle advertising is to the individual, its designs are

predicated on achieving sufficient uniformity of desire to give the product the critical mass to make it commercially viable.

Deconstructing the advertisement brings into play a tension, an opposition in its mode of signification. In stating quite overtly that expressions of individuality comprise going against the grain, transgressions of the bounds of what is considered normative behaviour as articulated by focus groups, the advertisement avers to the Saussurean linguistic axiom that meaning is predicated on the play of difference. In this particular case individuality acquires its meaning as a result of its differentiation from a mass of people characterised by conformity to social norms. In this sense the two are entirely interdependent, and neither is it a case of choosing one over the other. Indeed, while making its 'pitch' to the individual, marketing could not function without the opposing turn toward social conformity.

It seemed to me that while marketing might disavow the sanction of focus groups and other forms of market research to give 'authority' to its activities, it cannot do without them, but not for the empirical data they generate. Such data, arguably, is as much of a rhetorical ruse as is the use of focus groups in this PT Cruiser advertisement. It is possible this advertisement briefly lifts the 'blinds' on the stratagems of marketing? And perhaps the reason for all this market research is not to discover what the individual wants, but to elaborate and differentiate positions as to how individuality might be determined, both in the sense of being discovered and being imposed!

In the final analysis, this advertisement had the effect of bringing about a questioning or problematising of the 'subject', whether referring to the discipline of marketing or those subjects, individuals, who are addressed by the discourses of marketing, and indeed the relation between the two. It also brought about a questioning of the idea of *knowingness*, a disposition towards claiming to know but without any concomitant obligation to articulate or explain what is known. Arguably, it is an age-old strategy of veiling knowledge, of vesting it with a mystery, of claiming exclusive insights, that makes it all the more desirable, and hence the source of a degree of power. To this end, rhetoric, and irony in particular, is often deployed to maintain a degree of undecidability about one's claims to knowledge and exclusivity, with *cool* constituting a more recent secular manifestation of such claims. On further reflection, it seems that the appeal of this advertisement was that it circumscribed what were critical issues for this study of the uses of the literary in postmodern marketing and its relation to irony and *cool*.

In sum, this Dissertation is for a sceptical academy who would take issue with the way in which the Literary has been taken for granted in postmodern Marketing's turn to the Literary. It is argued there is often a failure to recognise the ways in which the power of the

literary, particularly in its canonisation of particular texts, helps fashion particular sets of cultural and social priorities, inscribing what it is we come to value and take as being of value; what in the particular context of this Dissertation come to be determined as *cool*. I argue that otherwise perspectives on the turn to the literary enable us to read texts more sceptically, questioning the effects of what is valued in their specificity and the interests served.

Having broached the problematisations that prompted this thesis, it would seem useful to sketch a broader context for the study. The next section briefly outlines the concept of marketing and the changing ways in which the discipline has been approached, locating my questioning within tensions surrounding the emergence of postmodern marketing.

Marketing: beginnings

Marketing in its simplest sense is seen as a process for facilitating exchange. And while something of a truism, the phenomena of markets and consumption are as old as society itself. As Brassington & Pettitt (2003) observe:

The basic ideas of marketing as an exchange process has its roots in very ancient history, when people began to produce crops or goods surplus to their own requirements and then to barter them for other things they wanted. Elements of marketing, particularly selling and advertising, have been around as long as trade itself, but it took the industrial revolution, the development of mass production techniques and the separation of buyers and sellers to sow the seeds of what we recognise as marketing today. (p. 10)

As the modes and processes of marketing have become more complex, so too have the ways in which marketing is defined. Taking a business process approach, the Chartered Institute of Marketing defines marketing as, 'the management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably' (Brassington & Pettitt 2003, p. 4). Taking a wider social and philosophical view, Kotler et al (2008, p. 7) view marketing as 'a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others'.

These contrasting definitions of marketing are offered here as exemplary of the tensions that have characterised marketing – as a functionalist business process subject to positivist modes of enquiry or as a field of enquiry that has to take into account its wider social and cultural impact. The difference in these definitions also hints at the articulation of a progressive unfolding of the marketing mission and philosophy, as what are determined as the more nuanced needs of the consumer are subject to alternative modes of representation. Arguably, this *progressive* articulation of marketing's mission is further reinforced through the classification and *promotion* of marketing as having evolved through a

number of stages or eras (Keith, 1960; Brown et al 1994, Brown 1995a; Belk, 1995; Davies & Elliott 2006; Grant, 1999; Enright, 2002; Blythe, 2005, 2006; Shaw & Jones, 2005). But as Hackley (2003) observes:

In most popular marketing management books the text is organized persuasively to give marketing a sense of narrative. There is a familiar story of the evolution of marketing as a discipline that is referred to in many of these texts. Marketing management theory is given origins (normally placed in the late 1950s in the USA), there is a time of struggle (the 'production' and 'sales' eras of business orientation) and it achieves great popular success in the modern era. (p. 183)

Hackley (2003) further argues that:

Much marketing writing, such as that in popular marketing management textbooks, has been described as 'modernist' or 'progressivist' in that it assumes that marketing is part of the relentless upward progress of humanity. There is no space in modernist narratives for critical appraisal of basic values and assumptions. The assumption that marketing, as described in the text, is moving towards a utopia of perpetual organisational success and customer satisfaction is given in the narrative form. (p. 184)

While Hackley himself might be deemed guilty of making certain assumptions concerning the circumscription of narrative, he does raise the question of a need for greater criticality, particularly with regard to what might be described as Whiggish¹ notions of marketing history and how perhaps particular narrative forms with an emphasis on closure might compromise the quest for achieving greater criticality.

Hart (2003) echoes this growing concern with the articulation of marketing's mission and acknowledgement of a trend towards greater criticality:

In recent years, research in marketing has broadened in scope, from being concerned with describing, analyzing and predicting 'rational' buying behaviour in both mass and business markets to embracing trends and issues from cognate social sciences and the humanities. (p. 3)

Arguably this trend has become more insistent as marketing has come to be seen as increasingly all-pervasive and defining of contemporary society and culture.

Morgan (2003), citing Brownlie et al (1999), argues that the extensive use of marketing technologies outside the private sector in relation to non-profit organisations, politics and the state sector as well as to the broader ideological and political context, has led to market capitalism becoming the single dominant mode of economic organisation after the collapse of the Soviet system.

Intriguingly, in the context of this dissertation, Morgan (2003) notes that modern marketing had quite radical origins before becoming established as an orthodoxy in business schools

¹ This refers to Herbert Butterfield's (1973) arguments with regard to the ways in which the progress of history is configured according to the values and priorities of an established regime.

and firms during the 1960s, and before achieving an even wider social remit and prominence during the 1990s. Elaborating on this more nuanced perspective, Morgan (2003) postulates that the marketing story began in late nineteenth century USA when,

the robber barons of the gilded age (Rockefeller, Morgan, Carnegie, etc) were establishing monopolistic positions in the key industries of railways, steel and oil through the use of ruthless pricing tactics against smaller competitors. (p.112)

As a consequence of the pressure brought to bear anti-trust laws were passed that led to the breaking up of a number of monopolies. One result, Morgan argues, is that large US companies were no longer able to dominate particular industries by simply buying-out or destroying all their competitors. They, therefore, turned inwards, considering both how to improve the efficiency of their operations and how to market their products more effectively. As a result marketing began to find a place within large corporations, this time as a guide to management practice as opposed to forming the basis of a critique of some dubious commercial practice. The aim now was for managers to find ways of influencing consumers to buy their products. As Morgan (2003) observes:

Thus marketing as an academic discourse shifted from being a critical perspective that showed how companies were exploiting consumers through their control of the market to being imbued with a managerialist perspective, concerned to solve managers' problems. (p.113)

Arguably, it is an early example of how a particular critical marketing discourse became incorporated to a more compliant, managerialist, corporatist perspective. As a consequence of this incorporation marketing took on what Morgan describes as more of a productionist mentality. However, as it ran its course the productionist perspective on marketing came to be seen as flawed as it ignored what customers wanted in favour of simply maximising the efficiency of the production process. A new mode of thinking emerged in which in order to win greater market share customers and firms needed to become more customer oriented (Drucker, 1993 [1955]). Accordingly, in this era of marketing, firms could become more successful by listening to customers. Morgan (2003) notes that:

Developing a marketing orientation was legitimated by reference to serving customers. In political debates about 'big business', marketing appeared on the side of the 'angels'; it might be inside the firm but its goal was to listen to and serve those outside the firm. . . In this respect marketing as a function within the firm and as a business school discipline legitimated big business and the market process itself. (p. 114)

However, this new articulation of marketing itself became subject to questioning. During the 1960s and 1970s, writers such as Nader, Galbraith, Packard and Marcuse began to argue this legitimacy turn in marketing discourse effaced the ways in which marketers worked in the interests of producers rather than consumers.

In turn, as Morgan (2003), and Desmond (1998) point out, Kotler came to extend the role of the marketing concept in ways that legitimised its social role in response to such criticism. This allowed him to develop the generic concept of marketing in which the marketer becomes a specialist in understanding human wants and value, and knowing what it takes for someone to act. As Morgan (2003, p 115) observes: 'Kotler therefore paved the way for an extension of the concept of marketing into non-business areas such as the public services, politics and voluntary organisations.' Marketing with its discourse of consumerism and serving the needs of the consumer became part of a wider critique of how organisations had ignored their consumers and markets. Morgan notes that in the public sector for example, the critique of bureaucracy was framed in very similar terms to earlier critiques of the productionist imperative. It is argued that marketing played a crucial role in legitimating a change in public discourse towards concepts such as customers and customer service. As Morgan (2003) points out:

The discourse is seductive being closely tied to a language of choice and freedom which comes from market provision instead of provision which is administered by the state or professionals. (p 115)

But while marketing might be changing and becoming more focused on the customer it still carries with it particular sets of technocratic assumptions about how marketing should be carried out. As Morgan observes this model is based on a positivist view of the world, which is deemed predictable and uniform, capable of distinguishing true from false needs, and somewhat conflicts not only with the marketing concept, which has as its focus the unique individual with their diverse, idiosyncratic needs and desires, but with a perception of needs and markets as socially constructed. Morgan adopts a Foucauldian perspective to argue that one way of overcoming these tensions is to guard against adopting an overarching critique and to focus on more specific, researchable questions. Morgan (2003) cites as examples of the types of question that might be asked:

How is marketing discourse constructed? What is its impact on the subjectivity and identity of consumers? How can the historical preconditions and conditions of possibility of certain forms of marketing discourse be surfaced and used for purposes of critique? (p. 123)

Arguably, the pressing concern for marketers operating in a period characterised by rapid social and technological change, and which is perceived as being constitutive of and constituted by a postmodern consumer culture, is to find a means for meeting the critical challenge these changes pose to marketing's *raison d'être* and long standing epistemologies, particularly its relationship to positivist approaches and scientific method. This is not to argue against the merits of positivist approaches in particular instances. Rather, it is to argue that positivism is not the measure of all things and to pay due regard to the assumptions underpinning its deployment.

In sum, marketing's critical turn has called into question the limitations of what was seen as marketing's singular adherence to reductive methods of scientific and positivist enquiry for dealing with the social and cultural complexities of the contemporary marketplace. Neither has a marketing characterised by scientific instrumentality found itself able to adequately address marketing's increasingly constitutive role in the construction of social and cultural values and the consequent ethical implications. As Firat et al (1995, p. 53) point out: 'Marketing can no longer pretend to be an instrumental discipline that *affects* consumers and society but has to become reflexive and has to be studied as the sociocultural process that *defines* postmodern society.' In short, Firat and Venkatesh, argue for the constitutive role marketing plays in shaping the narratives of postmodern society. Indeed, for Firat and Venkatesh (1993, p. 227), marketing is the 'ultimate social practice of postmodern consumer culture.'

Accordingly, accepting Firat and Venkatesh's position has important implications for how marketing processes and phenomena are researched and studied. The narrative and discursive processes entailed in adopting a reflexive, imaginative, speculative approach are not linear, causal, instrumental and unidisciplinary. They do not lend themselves to empirical, positivist, and detached modes of analyses in which the 'realities' of cause and effect are taken for granted. Similarly to Morgan, they argue that this has engaged the marketing academy in a reconsideration of its priorities, epistemologies and configuration of its disciplinary boundaries.

For marketers steeped in the positivist traditions, the radical, technologically driven economic, social and cultural changes taken to characterise the condition of postmodernity, are deemed not so much a crisis of representation in how the subject is articulated, but as being simply a further development of the Enlightenment and modernist projects. However, for those uncomfortable with positivist approaches, notably in the context of this dissertation, *the marketing literati* (Ahuvia, 1998; Brown, 1995, 1995a, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2000a, 2002, 2004b, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Brown et al 1999; Hirschman 1998; Hirschman and Holbrook 1992, 1993; Holbrook 1997, 2002; Scott 1994a; Stern 1988, 1989, 1989a, 1990, 1991, 1995, 1996, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1998; Stern & Schroeder 1993), the response has been to concede the postmodern is intricately entwined with a crisis in the configuration and representation of marketing. Many in the marketing and consumer studies academies have sought to engage with the issues raised by the postmodern paradigm, by bringing to bear interpretive frameworks derived from the field of aesthetics, notably literature and literary theory. But this turn to aesthetics as a means for addressing the issue of marketing's growing complexity is not unproblematical.

For example, in *Postmodern Marketing Two*, Brown (1998) recommends resorting to the aesthetic as a means for addressing the crisis in marketing:

If there is a single message contained in this book... it is that marketing academics should seek to adopt more expressive modes of expression. By reflecting on our own marketing-related behaviours and trying to capture them in poetic, aesthetic, creative prose we can succeed in saying the unsaid, grasping the ungraspable, and by bringing into consciousness the hitherto hidden, the inchoate, the unformed, generate meaningful, original and important insights into marketplace phenomena. (p. 241)

Brown appears to be arguing that the complexities of marketing, which scientific approaches with their reductive methodologies pass over, can be best represented by the figurative, creative processes of literary writing and narrative, which configure its various elements - language, rhythm, form - into an aesthetic structure that leads to the revelation of what are ostensibly more profound, metaphysical truths. It would seem that for Brown these truths lie beyond what can be said; and that they can only be recognised and acknowledged intuitively, through acts of epiphany. But this leaves us with the singular problem of what are to count as 'original and important insights'.

Quite simply, if, as Firat and Venkatesh (1993) maintain, marketing and by extension consumer culture have become part of an over-arching, all-encompassing meta-narrative, and if, as Coblely (2001) cedes, there is an 'unavoidable kernel of truth' to Sunday Times journalist Brian Appleyard's claims that, 'the human impulse is to make sense of each moment by referring it to a larger narrative', then the ubiquitous insights, priorities and values of marketing and consumer culture narratives have the potential to achieve an hegemony that is as overwhelming as it is insidious.

This dissertation argues there are issues concerning the appropriation of aesthetic and literary theory by marketing, which have been overlooked, circumnavigated or marginalised, and which are not unrelated to the particular cultural and historical moment in which this engagement emerged. Specifically, it is argued that postmodern marketing bears the particular imprint of the American academy's engagement with literary theory and that the relativity of this position needs to be addressed. It is somewhat ironic, given marketing's crisis of representation was partly based on the perception that the discipline was too homogeneous in outlook, that it should take a somewhat homogeneous view as to what constitutes the literary. At the same time it is necessary to acknowledge this representation of marketing's turn to the literary itself runs the risk of ascribing a degree of homogeneity to the project. To this extent the turn to the literary critiqued in this dissertation is not to deny the heterogeneity and challenges of critical marketing as a field in the throes of redefining itself (Badot and Cova 2008, Brownlie et al 1999, Saren et al, 2007).

But what is crucial to this dissertation is that, rather than simply taking for granted marketing's use and deployment of the 'literary' and literary theory, it will be subject to a critical analysis and deconstruction to reveal contradictions, blind spots and crises of representation in its own project.

Questioning the subject

Accordingly, a key issue for this research is to investigate the reconfiguration entailed in postmodern marketing's appropriation of the literary, its problematic deployment of *subjective* modes of knowing and the way in which this relates to the emergence of discursive formations that have the effect of mapping a privileged space for *cool*. The argument is made that *cool* modes of subjectivity, particularly with regard to the elevation of sovereign consumer knowingness, achieve a particular resonance with the priorities of late consumer capitalism. It is further argued this is achieved in large part through the mapping of an historical space predicated on the unfolding of increasingly enlightened sovereign consumers, but in which claims to knowingness are leavened with a degree of irony. This research is concerned to challenge this Whiggish version of marketing history by means of a series of readings that draw on literary theory's engagement with cultural history and deconstruction.

The poststructuralist work of Belsey (1989, 1994, 1999, 1999a, 2002, 2003, 2005), influenced by Derrida (1976, 1978, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1996), Foucault (1977, 1977a, 1979, 1981, 1986, 1997) and Lacan (2001), offers a framework for interpreting the Literary which has significant potential for addressing some of the reservations concerning uncritical configurations of the 'subject' in the postmodern marketing project. I propose and illustrate the use of her approach to cultural history and criticism as part of a discursive formation that marks out and problematises the construction of subjectivity, individuality and *knowingness* across a range of literary and cultural texts. Belsey as both a commentator on first-wave poststructuralists such as Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and Lacan, and as a literary theorist in her own right has played a significant role in reconfiguring the boundaries of the literary to incorporate the implications of poststructuralism.

Fundamental to this research is that the (pro)positions offered in any text are never impartial; that they are always implicated in wider discursive formations and practices. Further, as an integral part of this analysis, Derrida and Foucault are deployed to make the case for recognising that the forces at play in the writing, reading, interpreting of any text operate well beyond liberal-humanist notions of the sovereign subject.

It is argued, following Belsey's approach to literary theory, that by analysing the specific signifying strategies and modes of address of texts in their cultural and historical specificity, it

will be possible - not to elicit meaning clearly and unproblematically - but to establish how meaning is put into play and contested across a range of subject positions, and from which texts are offered as having a certain intelligibility. What is distinctive and intriguing about Belsey's approach is that it offers a challenge to the more conventional empiricist critique in its refusal to treat texts or documents as transparent, as providing access to an unproblematical, objective reality beyond the texts in themselves.

What is to be understood by subjectivity is a key issue for this Dissertation. One of the consequences of Saussure's linguistic paradigm shift that language constitutes a system of differences with no positive terms, rather than simply a re-presentation of the real, an expression of ideas about the real, was to bring about a questioning of the individual subject as the source and author of her or his own thoughts and modes of expression. As Belsey (2002, p. 8) notes: '[Saussure's] observation initiated a train of thought that would be taken up by a succession of figures in a range of disciplines during the course of the following century.' As a consequence of this decentering of the subject, who we are, how we come to be who we are, what we might understand as questions of identity came to acquire new theoretical perspectives.

Following Saussure's paradigm shift numerous writers, philosophers, theoreticians - Benveniste, Levi-Strauss, Althusser, Barthes, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida - began to explore the implications of this 'decentering' of the subject as the source of her/his own knowingness. Early Structuralism, given a wider remit in the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss and the semiotic studies of the early Barthes, held out the hope of providing a scientific account of the deep mental structures that constitute subjectivity and the semiotic codes that accommodate these to various cultural forms, but which lay beyond the control of individual subjects and consciousness.

However, the challenge to structuralism posed by poststructuralism further complicated matters with regard to the issue of subjectivity, questioning whether structuralism simply reinstated one form of centred logos with another. For Lodge (1988) Derrida's, 'Structure, Sign and Play' marks the moment at which poststructuralism as a movement began to emerge, opposing itself to structuralism as well as to traditional humanism and empiricism. The thrust of Derrida's argument is that each in their different ways attempt to identify the essence of what underlies the infinite manifestations of any form of cultural production. But, as Lodge observes, for Derrida, all such analyses imply that they are based on some secure ground, a 'centre' or 'transcendental signified', that is outside the system under investigation, offering a guarantee as to its intelligibility. For Derrida there is no such secure ground - it is a philosophical fiction. Crucially, I would argue, Derrida marks the difference between particular configurations of postmodern and poststructuralist approaches

to the question of subjectivity. In the wake of Derrida's rigorous deconstruction there is the rather disconcerting need to follow through the implications of there being no founding, logocentric subject, no guarantee of meaning that is 'beyond the text'. Postmodern approaches to subjectivity, on the other hand, all too often become synonymous with a fragmented and anti-foundational neo-liberal individualism that refuses to question the sources of its own *knowingness*.

As structuralist and poststructuralist discourse has proliferated, it has resulted in the production of, and been accompanied by, further reflection, commentary, explication, debate, 'readers' and 'primers', seeking to elaborate, gloss and promote more accessible readings, and which in turn has led to many of those self-same writers contributing further to the development of theoretical perspectives on the question of subjectivity.

In a primer on literary theory, Culler (1997) notes that a significant area of Literature's theoretical speculation concerns the identity and function of the subject or self. The reason for his interest in subjectivity is revealed as a function of its relationship to what he articulates as a key issue for literature: the question of identity and its exploration. To this end he argues literary theory constitutes attempts to explore further the uncomfortable questions and paradoxes that often inform the treatment of identity in literature.

Culler notes that while literary works characteristically represent individuals, in theoretical writings, such representations are explored with regard to their wider implications for the configuration of social identity - what it is to be a woman, to be black. To Culler's list might be added issues concerning this configuration of individual identity in relation to what it is to be a consumer, to be a celebrity, to be *cool*.

While the literary encompasses more than the expressive realist mode that Culler implies here, it is a mode of representation that appears to have acquired a degree of hegemony. For Culler, it is the tension between literary explorations and critical or theoretical challenges that help account for the widening impact of the literary. The power of literary representations, he argues, depends on a special combination of singularity and exemplarity, but which begs the question: exemplary of what and by what means is such status achieved? As Culler observes, Literature has not only made identity a theme, it has played a significant role in the construction of the identities of readers. The same argument might be made for marketing and advertising narratives, which increasingly play on this combination of singularity and exemplarity to articulate, promote and inscribe the configuration of a sovereign, free-thinking individual subject.

Pondering the issue of subjectivity, Donald Hall (2004) writes:

"Who am I?" is a question that has been pondered, no doubt, by all of us at some point, perhaps at many and various points, in our lives. Indeed, we live in an era in which we are commonly asked to rethink, express, and explain our identities by a wide variety of authority figures and institutions: parents, school guidance counsellors, best-selling self-help gurus, talk show hosts, and even advertisers, who encourage us to test out a different form of 'self' expression by purchasing an expensive car, entering a weight-loss programme, or trying a new hair colour. We are widely led to believe that we have the freedom and ability to create and re-create our 'selves' at will, if we have the will . . . (p. 1)

Hall moves on to differentiate between subjectivity and identity by way of making greater sense of the binary issues raised in coming to an understanding of the self: whether we have complete freedom to choose who we are or are constrained; whether we are the subjects of self-construction or social construction. He goes on to argue that while the terms identity and subjectivity are often used interchangeably, there are subtle differences. He notes that the term identity is generally thought of as being comprised by a particular set of traits, beliefs and allegiances that provide one with a consistent personality and mode of social being. In effect, these traits, beliefs, allegiances constitute pre-inscribed psychological and social 'categorical imperatives' that are to a greater or lesser degree fixed and beyond the control of the individual subject. Subjectivity, however, is viewed as implying a degree of thought and self-consciousness that makes for a more problematic sense of self.

While Hall's exploration of subjectivity and identity entails a degree of contingency and reflexive questioning with regard to how we come to a sense of self, there remains a tendency to presuppose and give priority to an evolving, knowing self-consciousness which is part of what is being called into question to begin. This reservation aside, Hall makes a crucial observation when he notes that in occupying the intersection between two lines of philosophical inquiry - epistemology and ontology - subjectivity raises questions as to the extent to which our understanding of knowledge relates to and is a constraining factor in coming to an understanding of our own existence. He takes this a step further by raising questions as to whether our social and individual existence is determined by the ways that knowledge is collectively organised, and presumably, which varies according to different cultures.

Hall raises what is a central issue for theories of subjectivity: the question of 'agency' and the extent to which as individuals we are able to determine our understanding of the world and the implications of this for effecting change. Hall notes that Lacan epitomises a shift from attempts to uncover and exert control over what constitutes the essence of subjectivity to using the concept for a more wide-ranging analysis. Crucially, Lacan posed searching questions with regard to Freudian psychoanalysis being deployed as an agent for the

adaptation of the individual to society.

Lacan is a key figure in the articulation of a theory of the subject that accommodates and develops Saussure's reconfiguration of linguistics to articulate and challenge prevailing models of psychoanalysis that conform to a Liberal Humanist paradigm. Lacan's oft cited 'the unconscious is structured like a language' marks a further stage in challenging fixed, centred notions of the individual subject and agency, albeit riven by conflicting drives. As Belsey (1980), Hall (2004) and Marshall (1992) point out, in his 'return to Freud' Lacan rejects a concept of humanity based on a quasi-biological theory of instincts, arguing that the subject is constructed on its entry into the symbolic order, language. To this purpose, he draws specific comparisons with what he regards as the psychoanalytic institutions' doctrinal rendering of Freud to that of religious practices. Lacan is much less interested with discovering the truth of what makes us tick than with broadly articulating the structuring principles of cultural and social identity. Consequently, Lacan's critique focused on challenging the development of a Freudian psychoanalytic theory and practice that had the effect of upholding existing institutions. As Hall (2004,) notes:

Lacan both lauded Freud's insights and departed from them, shifting the psychoanalytic discussion away from pathologization and normalization to the use value of psychoanalytic concepts in iconoclastic cultural interpretation. . .

Lacan continued to emphasize that to understand human behaviour one must grapple with the rules and processes of human communication. He thereby replaces the social scientific emphasis on normalization in the psychoanalytic community with a cultural critical emphasis on the discovery of the underlying processes whereby the norm is established and maintained. (pp. 78-80)

Foucault was similarly concerned with the issue of subjectivity and its relation to institutional practices. Reflecting on his work on subjectivity in the essay 'The Subject and Power', Foucault (2002 (1982)) asserts that his objective over the previous twenty years had not been to offer an analysis of power but: 'to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects' (p. 326). Elaborating further, Foucault notes that his work had dealt with three modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects. The first he describes as the modes of enquiry that aspire to the status of sciences: linguistic, economic, natural history. The defining characteristic of the second phase of his work he describes as the objectivising of the subject by means of 'dividing practices', as in the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the 'good boys'. By making it clear the the main objective of his study is with the subject, Foucault does not so much deny the operation of power as open a space for an exploration of the subject with regard to the complexity of power relations that extend beyond legal and institutional conceptions.

The third mode of transformation Foucault describes as being concerned with the way a human being turns him - or herself into a subject. In this third mode, Foucault's concern is more with the everyday operation of power, the day-to-day discursive configurations that help define and contest priorities with regard to how we come to be constituted as subjects. As Foucault (2002) declares:

'The form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word 'subject': subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.' (p. 331)

For Foucault, this power in relation to the configuration of the subject operates through discourse. However, as Hall (1997) notes, Foucault's 'subject' seems to be produced through discourse in two different ways. First, the discourse itself produces 'subjects', figures who personify and define the particular forms of knowledge configured by a particular discourse - the madman, the criminal, the homosexual; and to which might be added in the context of a postmodern consumer society, the shopaholic, the celebrity, the fashion icon, the X-factor contestant. Second, Hall also notes that discourse produces a place for the subject (i.e. the reader or viewer, who is also 'subjected to' discourse) from which its particular knowledge and meaning most makes sense.

Throughout this Dissertation the aim will be to register and further explore the complex implications of the ways in which theories of subjectivity impact on the discourses and assumptions that help determine the subject(s) of marketing and configurations of the *cool*, sovereign consumer.

Taking into consideration the various modes and conditions of the texts being studied, a range of marketing texts are deconstructed to map ways in which, through the deployment of postmodern and ironic perspectives, positions of *knowingness* and inclusivity are configured, which at the same time hold out the promise of an exclusivity. From a marketing standpoint, it will be argued this double movement invariably represents for readers/consumers those indefinable – because ostensibly contradictory and undecidable - qualities that attract such epithets as *cool*, *hot*, *in*, *hip*, used to ascribe distinctive, exclusive qualities to products, services, brands and experiences. It is also noted how this resistance to being pinned down, to being classified, is articulated as offering consumers the opportunity to manifest a degree of resistance to the predations of marketers, but which deconstructive readings will call into question.

The argument is made that membership of these exclusive communities, requiring subscriptions to *cool*, symbolic modes of consumption, nevertheless remain predicated on the revelation and acceptance of an unmediated and unproblematised subjectivity. What is ultimately ignored are the signifying stratagems and practices by which consumers are addressed.

Having configured a poststructuralist ethos for this dissertation, in chapters five, six, seven and eight, I go on to deconstruct more specifically a range of texts – ranging from the output of literary discourse to that of the marketing academy through to the positioning of corporate and product brands – and in which irony plays no little part. From here it will be argued that in an increasingly fragmented, differentiated and discerning market place, recognising subjectivity as positioned and contested across a range of discourses, not only has implications for consumer sovereignty and choice but has strategic and ethical implications with regard to the signifying practices deployed in the positioning of products, services and brands.

Noises Off [An Aside on Methodology, Data, Structure]

Given the discursive trajectory adopted by this research, the approach to the question of methodology is inevitably qualitative, interpretive, rather than quantitative. Indeed, the very resort to reductive, quantitative approaches is precisely what marketing's 'mid-life crisis' calls into question. The more specific lines of enquiry deployed in this research take a poststructuralist perspective and draw on Foucauldian discourse theory, Derridean deconstruction, Lacan and the close textual readings of cultural history as proposed by Catherine Belsey to locate marketing texts as a constitutive part of the wider social, cultural and historic milieu. To this end the remit of discourse theory for the purposes of this dissertation will be that which focuses on the play and interpretation of socially produced meanings, rather than the search for objective causal explanations and origins.

While this work maintains a degree of academic conventionality in its structure and ethos, at the same time, it is supplemented by a deconstruction that operates to challenge, unsettle, fragment, de-construct and keep open to question the imposition of conventional modes of rationality and the assertion of any singular truths. Ultimately, it is not about offering more rational prescriptions, neither adding to, nor replacing, but with exploring and mapping the terrain, while at the same time offering an unsettling questioning of the modes of reasoning into which we are drawn. It is to argue there is always more that might be written, and that rather than offering conclusions, to question the implications and conventions of the exclusions, the ex-centric and the marginal.

Consequently, this Dissertation does not offer analysis of *data* in the conventional sense. While it is inevitable that I will offer commentary on certain quotations, my overall aim is not to add yet more layers of commentary, to somehow reveal the hidden truth that the text in question has not been able to articulate quite clearly enough. Rather, the concern is to accept quotations as 'speaking' for themselves, to refuse the mitigation of contradictions, evasions, discrepancies and the possible implications that arise from attempts to halt and stabilise the play of meaning. In addition, this resort to citationality maintains a focus on the continuing need to question our authorial claims to *knowingness* and originality.

As such, the *data* that this research focuses on are the signifying practices and modes of address of a range of marketing and consumer texts. These texts comprise: academic texts which manifest a critical and postmodern stance; hybrid texts such as Naomi Klein's *No Logo* which not only blur the boundary between marketing and the literary, but confront marketing with decidedly social, economic, cultural and ethical issues; and *real-world* marketing communications media – print, TV, internet, products, organisations, brands, events, etc. - which strike a decidedly postmodern note.

A key issue for this dissertation, in pursuing a Derridean trajectory is that it is not possible to lay claim to an objective, founding position outside its own rhetoricity and intertextuality. Some of the implications of this are addressed through the inclusion of a 'Literary review' in chapter three, through consideration of the issue of intertextuality and by the adoption of an oblique stylistic approach. A consequence of this approach is to blur the divisions between the conventional structural categories of a thesis in the social sciences and is a mark of the 'invasion' of literary paradigms. Furthermore, aspects of the methodological/critical approach infuse the whole of the dissertation, since all knowledge claims are susceptible to deconstruction. While these approaches might be deemed unusual, they are a key and original feature of this critique of marketing's turn to the literary. These issues will be briefly addressed in turn below.

The Literary review

A key self-reflexive issue for this dissertation is the postmodern questioning of metanarratives, particularly as it relates to the inclusion and function of methodology and structural academic conventions such as the 'literature review'. For example, in purporting to offer an overview, a balanced, objective, perspective on its chosen subject, the conventional literature review compromises and contradicts the poststructuralist questions posed by this dissertation in its attempt to trace and determine the impact of the literary turn.

Deploying something of a Derridean stratagem (Derrida, 1976), in mitigating this compromise, the literature review of the postmodern, that attempts to draw out particular relations to and within marketing, is supplemented by a *Literary review*, partly as acknowledgement that in offering to make the literature review complete, it at one and the same time attests to its deficiency, its incompleteness, to the impossibility of achieving even a consensual, objective position. At the same time the Literary review explores a range of texts from a poststructuralist perspective to map the implications of the linguistic turn and the decentring of the subject.

Intertextuality

is argued this deconstructive perspective deployed with regard to reading marketing texts opens up alternative, intertextual trajectories for the configuration of meaning, identity and subjectivity that counters the idealist perspective of liberal humanism, in which thought, reason, the property of a transcendent mind that constitutes the essence of each individual, is taken as prior to and mediating our encounters with experience and reality. In so doing, this dissertation offers innovative and original perspectives on the debate concerning marketing's significance for and relation to particular configurations of the postmodern that are not predicated on the teleological unfolding of an increasingly enlightened and knowing consumer (Campbell, 1989).

The emergence of intertextuality marks a shift in focus to a study of meaning as a function of relations between texts, rather than on viewing the meaning of texts as products of the author's mind. On the face of it the question of how we read and interpret texts does not seem too problematical. The meaning of texts is normally regarded as a function of particular authors' thoughts and perceptions of, and interactions with, the world. It would seem a matter of commonsense, that, while we might have difficulties divining the author's exact intentions, the meaning of their text can be ultimately determined. However, following on the literary and cultural theory that emerged in the wake of Saussure's 'linguistic turn', it will be argued that the apparent obviousness of how we come to understand texts has been radically challenged.

According to Allen (2000) the term 'intertextuality' helps account for texts and works of literature as constituted by:

systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature. The systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meanings of a work of literature. Texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call intertextual. . . Meaning becomes

something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations.
(p. 1)

Given this changing perspective on the creation and interpretation of texts conventionally classified as literary, as being not within the sole remit of the author, then the intertextual imperative would seem to be all the more relevant to the texts of marketing. Quite simply, the prime focus of marketing texts tends to be with eliciting the codes of particular cultures to achieve particular ends. Questions concerning the author are rarely a concern; indeed who exactly constitutes the author of a marketing text is likely to constitute a team comprising the commissioning organization, copywriter, art director and designer.

Consequently, while it is conventional to talk in terms of a dissertation being based on the analysis of 'data', this Dissertation comprises in its entirety a varied and eclectic mix of texts, with no privilege granted to any particular category, canon or genre of text, calling into question modes of representation and disciplinary boundaries, bringing to the fore a degree of interdisciplinarity and intertextuality. And it was precisely this suspending of disciplinary boundaries, categories and rationales that helped pave the way for an exploration and rendering of discursive cross-currents and issues, rather than being constrained by what is taken to constitute the essence, homogeneity and rational structure of particular disciplines.

Stylistic approach

Further, taking Derrida's articulation, 'there is nothing outside the text', the ethos of this dissertation means that it is necessary to take into account the implications of there being no external referent or signified through which the truth of the text might be guaranteed, and that ultimately what must be faced is the issue of undecidability – with which, it will be argued, marketing is ultimately enmeshed and in which it has something of a vested interest.

A key critical and methodological issue for this dissertation in questioning representation, will be a resistance to taking texts as transparent, as providing – or holding out the possibility of providing - clear, unequivocal insights into the world, as securing a match between intentions and meaning, representation and reality, as marking a transition to a more enlightened status. To this end, this text, this dissertation constantly calls into questions the modes of representation manifest in the texts being studied. And by way of maintaining consistency, the same applies to the modes of representation and conventions of doctoral theses, including this one.

This makes for a degree of difficulty in the writing and reading. To this extent, this Dissertation adopts an approach that should not be misconstrued as being wilfully obtuse

or opaque, a refusal to write in clear, succinct prose, but with registering a commitment to not taking for granted language and texts as problem-free representations. It is a case of being 'mindful' of the undecidability and the interwoven thread of allusions – both conscious and unconscious - that is the mark of our entry into language and culture.

The Structure Trajectory of the Thesis

In this opening chapter a number of issues and encounters have been outlined by way of charting the openings for this critique of postmodern marketing's engagement with literary theory and their relation to the logos of *cool*. It is argued marketing's particular turn to the literary raises as many questions as possible [re]solutions to the configuration of marketing. To this purpose, questions are raised with regard to how the postmodern is configured in relation to marketing history, representation and the real, the decentering of the subject, assumptions concerning the homogeneity of the literary and literary theory, the issues of irony, knowingness and undecidability, and theoretical issues entailed in pursuing a poststructuralist line of research that calls into questions modes of representation, including its own.

Following convention, Chapter Two of this dissertation continues with a 'Literature Review'. This traces some of the key debates surrounding the postmodern in general, before considering the postmodern and the field of marketing. In particular it focuses on the implications of marketing's attempt to move away from the scientific paradigm and come to terms with the issues of representation and the subject by turning to the literary. In so doing, it is noted that a variety of postmodern approaches to marketing tend towards a somewhat homogenous and monolithic reading of the literary and a commitment to a neo-liberal subjective introspection which, it might be argued, constitutes a type of powerful metanarrative that the postmodern seeks to call into question. By way of further reviewing the issues of representation and subjectivity, alternative poststructuralist readings of the literary will be deployed in later chapters to question the play of power that takes certain forms of individuality as read.

The 'Literary Review' presented in Chapter Three offers a supplement – with all its Derridean connotations - to the partial reading of the postmodern and the literary outlined in Chapter Two. To this end, Brown's (1995, 1995a, 1998, 1998a, 1998b 1999, 2000, 2000a, 2000b 2002, 2004b, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) argument for utilising the literary to develop marketing theory is examined more closely as is his elevation of marketing literati such as Stern, Hirschman and Holbrook who are viewed as figures worthy of a new marketing canon, based on a set of approaches and values established by literary discourse. But rather

than take the literary for granted, the 'Literary Review' explores what might be understood by literature and the trajectory of English literature, to suggest that particular poststructuralist articulations of literary theory have emerged to challenge an elitist literary canon, with its humanist conception of the *knowing* subject as the origin of meaning, as the source of the logos, the 'cosmic reason that gives order and form to the world'.² It is argued that the textual strategies of sceptical European postmodernists or poststructuralists demonstrate a sustained potency in maintaining the radical challenge that calls into question our sources of *knowingness*, particularly with its resistance to the conflation of ontology with epistemology.

What is of interest for this dissertation is to deconstruct postmodern marketing's turn to the literary as bearing witness to the expression and unfolding of a more progressive, enlightened consumer, who is characterised as *cool*. By way of resisting this Enlightenment metanarrative as to how the consumer is configured, articulations of the *cool* consumer are examined in their specificity, as part of discourses with somewhat varied, mundane and discontinuous priorities.

Chapter Four, 'Deconstructing Method', explores the implications of pursuing sceptical postmodern, poststructural readings in more detail. In particular, it outlines Foucauldian discourse theory, Derridean deconstruction and cultural history to offer a strategy for challenging the *metaphysics of presence* that grounds the authority of meaning in an idealised human subjectivity. In following through the implications of the literary turn, I explain that Derrida's work is vital for arguing that there is no position outside the text, no escaping the instability of the text, a certain determination in our linguistic constitution as subjects. Indeed, how texts are rendered bears the imprint of distinctive priorities with regard to how we are positioned, both historically and philosophically. This research focuses on the signifying practices and modes of address of the texts being interpreted. It is argued that the choice and use of diction, metaphor, rhythm, syntax, ambiguity, convention and breaches of convention, genres and generic surprises, do not simply represent the author's facility for creative expression in revealing hidden truths. Rather, it is argued they constitute part of a rhetorical process in which readers are engaged by the prospect of certain subject positions

² This definition of 'logos' is taken from The New Penguin English Dictionary, (2001), the fuller version of which is: **Logos** noun **1** in philosophy, cosmic reason that gives order and form to the world. **2 (the logos)** the divine wisdom manifest in the creation and redemption of the world, identified in Christian thought with the second person of the Trinity. [Greek *logos* speech, word, reason]. Clearly, the logo as it relates to marketing and branding shares this *vision* of a central or defining idea that is taken to symbolize the essence or truth of the order and form that constitutes particular corporate brands, organizations and identities.

that hold out the promise of rendering texts intelligible from familiar, common-sense, hegemonic perspectives.

The texts comprising this study in its entirety, comprise a varied and eclectic mix, calling into question modes of representation, generic conventions and disciplinary boundaries (including those of academic writing), bringing to the fore an interdisciplinarity and intertextuality, while at the same time mapping a variety of philosophical and ontological positions. To this end, and by way of maintaining the distinctive challenge of this work, the various chapters of this dissertation adapt aspects of new historicism, cultural criticism and cultural history to deconstruct a range of texts from literary, marketing and consumer culture discourse, as a means of further exploring the issues of representation, subjectivity, consumer sovereignty, ironic knowingness and undecidability.

Chapter Five focuses on charting the play of irony particularly with regard to questions of the knowing humanist subject. Given irony's pivotal position in the articulation of postmodern marketing and in the circumscription of the *cool* consumer, and by way of maintaining a degree of consistency in not taking irony as read, this chapter maps a genealogy of irony and its relationship to both literary theory and marketing. The aim is not to reveal the essence of irony or why it is deemed apposite to a postmodern condition, but to seek out discontinuities, to consider irony's varied and excluded modes of address. The focus was on exploring the implications of contingent, alternative, overlooked modes of irony and to assess their impact for the marketing project.

The chapter begins with Frank's (1997) reading of Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB'S) VW campaign in the late 1950s and early sixties. In this campaign irony is deployed as a structural literary device to inscribe and acknowledge the primacy and knowingness of the self-present consumer. -It is argued that this campaign represents the beginning of a reversal of sovereignty from the duplicitous producer to the knowing consumer. This change is invariably represented as evidence of an increasingly progressive and enlightened outlook on the part of marketers and consumers, marked by an ironic detachment and worldly skepticism. However, it is argued that a deconstruction of marketing's deployment of irony raises the possibility of a masking of its own inadvertent questioning of consumer sovereignty as discursively constructed.

In charting this construction of the consumer, comparisons are drawn with the elevation of the reader in Barthes (1977) *Death of the Author*. It is argued that the liberation of the signifier from within the purview of the author/producer simply paved the way for its inscription in the authority of individual readers/consumers. In the process, the case is made for irony having moved from being a mode of challenging the truth-claims of authors and

marketers, along with their prescriptions on the human condition and needs, to being expressive of 'a routine everyday attitude', an assertion of the primacy and authority of the reader/consumer as a sovereign law unto themselves. The result has been an increasing sublimation of irony as an interrogative mode of calling meaning into question for irony as an expressive mode of signification that refuses questioning.

The chapter continued by charting a history of irony via Shakespeare, Castiglione, Swift and Dickens. In so doing attention is drawn to how, through an examination of varying signifying practices and modes of address, irony's priorities shift, constituting an element of resistance to, and denial of, undecidability. There is a movement from irony constituting a challenge to the hubris of knowingness, to that of irony as the representation of an unwritten guarantee of knowingness, paving the way (ironically) for modern day dispositions towards *cool*.

The chapters that follow (Six, Seven & Eight) further adapt aspects of cultural history to deconstruct a range of texts as a means for exploring the issues of representation, subjectivity, logocentrism, signifying and discursive practice, and meaning in literary, marketing and consumer culture discourse. In particular, they focus on the effects of postmodern marketing's turn to the literary as contributing to the articulation of the cool, *knowing* consumer. Part of an intertextual stratagem followed by this research is to pursue Brown's (1999) advocacy of Lentricchia's 'striking together' of texts to consider the issues that are generated in the play of their differences, and to consider meaning as a consequence of the play of difference. In calling into question current modes of representation and disciplinary boundaries, by bringing to the fore a focus on interdisciplinarity and intertextuality, the texts explore cross currents and otherwise perspectives, be that the trajectory of particular writings of such figures as Harold Bloom, Northrop Frye, Terry Eagleton, Jacques Derrida, Naomi Klein, Thomas Frank; or literary and theoretical tropes and theories such as irony, intertextuality, reader-response theory; or philosophical and ontological positions with regard to the construction of subjectivity and the 'real'. This charting and exploring of a range of texts to question boundaries, modes of address and claims to canonical status is designed to raise issues with regard to the configuration of the subject, the scope for change and the ethical forces at play.

Chapter Six focuses on deconstructing a range of texts from a number of the marketing literati. The term 'marketing literati' was used by Stephen Brown (1998, p.151) to describe a number of predominantly US consumer researchers and marketers who had turned to the literary as a means for achieving insights into the thinking of consumers and the stratagems of marketing. A selection of texts Brown identifies as marking marketing's literary turn – along with those of Brown himself - will constitute the 'data' and deconstructive focus of this chapter. The interest with the texts of the marketing literati is the scope they offer for

exploring and deconstructing the circumscription of a subjectivity that alludes to and privileges an independent, counter-cultural individualism that carries with it the assumption of a counter-authority, underwritten by claims to a tolerance and resistance to the manipulative forces of an overbearing capitalist ethos.

Arguably, the epitome of the independent, sovereign individuals who are represented as refusing to conform to the strictures of the capitalist rationale are those designated as *cool*. Consequently, Chapters Seven and Eight focus on a range of discourses in which *cool* has become a significant focus of attention with the aim of mapping possible implications for the configuration of the sovereign consumer. Chapter Seven charts the mapping of *cool* in contemporary academic discourse and more general journalistic commentary, while paying attention to the articulation of literary, cultural and historical antecedents. Chapter Eight then deconstructs a selection of *cool* brands designated as such by the Superbrands Council to map further the interplay of marketing, the literary and culture in privileging particular forms of subjectivity that arguably provide a glimpse into the priorities of a postmodern, globalised economy. It will be argued that the template of a *cool* nonchalant, rebellious, disconnected, sovereign consumer helps configure the subjects of an homogenised globalised culture only too ready to kit out these ersatz rebels and revolutionaries.

The final chapter provides brief summaries of the dissertation's various chapters, before drawing out a number of key issues for marketing, the contributions of this study to the marketing academy and their possible implications, before identifying a number of areas for further elaboration and future research.

It will be argued that the poststructuralist perspective and deconstructive readings offered in this dissertation are put forward with a view to identifying alternative processes and strategies by which marketing might assess more critically an environment increasingly characterised as fragmented, and in which marketing-literate and 'knowing' consumers are held to offer a more nuanced and more enlightened understanding of what has come to be described as a postmodern consumer culture.

These deconstructive readings will be deployed to highlight the implications of Derrida's challenge to Western culture's dependence on the logo-centric in its inscriptions of the knowing subject that ultimately effaces the play of textuality and the materiality of the signifier. It will be argued that recognising subjectivity as positioned and contested across a range of discourses, and not simply as the manifestation of a logocentric rationality or some deeply embedded psychological need or impulse, not only has implications for consumer sovereignty and choice but has wider reaching strategic and ethical implications.

In pursuing this argument, a key feature of this study will be to follow through the implications of recognising that the shared logocentric assumptions between articulations of ironic knowingness in relation to literary and postmodern theory 'conspire' to valorise the subjective configurations of the sovereign consumer, most notably promoted as *cool*.

Further, it will be argued that *cool* modes of subjectivity achieve a particular resonance with the priorities of late consumer capitalism in mapping an historical space predicated on the unfolding of increasingly enlightened sovereign consumers who know what they want, but who offset ephemeral, epicurean claims to knowingness by resort to irony.

While a poststructuralist mode of research is not without its methodological difficulties with regard to grounding knowledge, it is particularly apposite with regard to coming to an understanding of how marketing achieves its effects. A key feature of poststructuralist enquiry, as with the uses of irony configured as a challenge to, rather than a manifestation of, knowingness, is to draw attention to the unsettling, disruptive, decentring, tendencies implicit in the linguistic process. But while this makes for a degree of discomfort and frustration, such critiques also constitute a source of creativity and innovation for configuring the world differently.

Drawing on poststructuralist theory, I will argue that ultimately marketing is divided against itself. It both seeks to specify and satisfy clearly determined needs, desires and aspirations, but at the same time constantly effects to unsettle and reconfigure consumer desire. I will argue those deemed to have a cool, percipient sensibility effectively operate as a conduit for this unsettling of desire. The consequence is that almost before consumer satisfaction can be [re]articulated it is running up against a new unsettling of desire. What the study of the discourses of cool will indicate is that this unsettling effectively constitutes a 'creative' strategy by which cool maintains an exclusive position over early and late majority consumers, and in driving forward new consumer priorities. Finally, it will be argued that it cannot be inconsequential that the material signifying practices entailed in promoting this unsettling also have the effect of achieving a particular resonance with the priorities of late consumer capitalism – the creation of an ever increasing cycle of demand for products and services.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: READERLY TEXTS

Engaging the Postmodern

The purpose of this chapter is to trace some of the key debates surrounding the postmodern in general, before considering the postmodern in relation to marketing. A literature review of postmodernism, poststructuralism, literary theory in relation to postmodern marketing immediately presents a distinctive set of interrelated problems. First, there is considerable debate as to what is circumscribed by these fields. There are no unified theories, but rather a grouping of what can often be a diverse range of theories and conflicting positions. Second, a crucial aspect of the activities, which for convenience are subsumed under these headings, is precisely to question the limits and delimitations of fields of enquiry. Third, particular texts at one and the same time might be inscribed in postmodern, post-structuralist and literary theory discourses. Fourth, postmodernism, post-structuralism and literary theory in various ways all question what is constituted by common-sense usage of such terms as language, writing, author, text, meaning. Fifth, questions about modes of re-presentation is at issue in all three, and a self-reflexive issue for each.

I begin by mapping what I call the prehistory of the postmodern, which will help chart the ground for an exploration of its relationship with poststructuralism and for the tensions and differences in postmodern positions that subsequently emerge and which are notably encapsulated in Norris' (1992) polemic against Baudrillard. In the following chapter, I will move on to trace the trajectory of English Literature from its beginnings as a modern academic discipline in the late nineteenth century to what Belsey (1999, p. 125) describes as that moment when: 'English studies found itself entering the Postmodern Condition'. This will pave the way for questioning and problematising the ways in which the Literary as a domain of knowledge is taken to be having a significant impact on the discipline of marketing.

Postmodern Prehistory

By way of charting the postmodern, Best and Kellner's (1991) work serves a useful function in providing what they describe as an 'Archaeology of the Postmodern'. As they explain:

Our archaeology of postmodern discourse explores the history of the term in its uneven development within diverse theoretical fields. We begin by searching for sediments and layers of postmodern discourses as they have accumulated historically. . . In undertaking such an inquiry, one discerns that there are anticipations of and precursors to ideas and terminology which gain currency at a later date. (p 5)

The lines of Best and Kellner's (1991, pp 5 - 9) inquiry span the following: an observation by Higgins (1978) that an English painter, John Watkins Chapman, spoke of postmodern painting around 1870 to designate painting that was deemed more modern than French Impressionism; the notion of a postmodern break with the modern age following the Second World War, in a one-volume summation by D.C. Somervell of Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1947); and in an example of intertextuality, Toynbee adopted the notion of a postmodern age for Volumes VIII and IX of his *A Study of History* (1954); an optimistic study by Peter Drucker (1957) entitled *The Landmarks of Tomorrow* and sub-titled 'A Report on the New Post-Modern World'; a more negative work of a new postmodern age in C. Wright Mills' *The Sociological Imagination* (1959); a systematic and detailed explication of what constitutes the postmodern age in the work of historian Geoffrey Barraclough's *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (1964).

Having outlined a pre-history of postmodernism, Best and Kellner develop its trajectory by observing that while the term postmodern was occasionally used in the 1940s and 1950s to describe new forms of architecture or poetry, it was not widely used in the field of cultural theory to describe artefacts that opposed and/or came after modernism until the 1960s and 1970s. It was during this period, they argue, that many cultural and social theorists began discussing radical breaks with the culture of postmodernism and the emergence of new postmodern artistic forms.

Best and Kellner go on to discuss briefly and situate works from a range of commentators who engaged in the postmodern debate including, Irving Howe, Harry Levin, Susan Sontag, Leslie Fiedler, Ihab Hassan, Charles Jencks, George Steiner, Amitai Etzioni, Frederick Ferre and Daniel Bell.

In drawing together the threads of the different ways in which the postmodern term has been used, Best and Kellner (1991, p. 14) state:

Our archaeological inquiries have disclosed that there are two conflicting matrices of postmodern discourse in the period before it proliferated in the 1980s. One position - Drucker, Etzioni, Sontag, Hassan, Fiedler, Ferre, and others - gave the term a predominantly positive valence, while others produced negative discourses (e.g. Toynbee, Mills, Bell, Baudrillard). The positive perspective was itself divided into social and cultural wings. The affirmative social discourse (Drucker, Etzioni, Ferre, and theorists of the post-industrial society) reproduced 1950s optimism and the sense that technology and modernisation were making possible the break with an obsolete past. These theories replicated the ideologies of the 'affluent society' (Galbraith), 'the end of ideology', and the 'Great American celebration' (Mills) that affirmed contemporary capitalist modernity in the 1950s and 1960s, believing that capitalism had overcome its crisis tendencies and was on the way to producing a 'great society'. The positive culturalist wing (Sontag, Fiedler, Hassan) complemented this celebration by affirming the liberating features of new postmodern cultural forms, pop culture, avant-gardism, and the new postmodern sensibility.

Following these dividing lines, Best and Kellner go on to argue that in general the cultural discourse had a much greater impact on later postmodern theory than the socio-historical discourses. The reason for this they propose is that cultural discourses shared certain epistemological perspectives with later postmodern theoretical discourse which emphasised difference, otherness, pleasure, novelty, and attacked reason and hermeneutics.

But in what helps to explain its paradoxical positioning, the affirmative social discourse of the postmodern continued to be viewed as an extension of modern modes of thought - reason, totalizations, unification, and so on - which later postmodern theory would assault. To add to the confusion, negative discourses continued to posit a pessimistic view of the postmodern as further evidence of a crisis in and decline of Western civilisation. However, these perspectives on the postmodern also beg questions as to whether the cultural discourses celebrating individuality, openness and diversity in turn provided for this liberation to be overwhelmed by a more rampant, hedonistic consumer capitalism, which simply fashions and promotes a transitory aesthetic over the ethical.

What might be concluded here is that in their different ways both the negative and positive theorists of postmodernism were engaging with changing, capitalist patterns of economic activity which was going through an expansionist phase and producing an increasingly diverse range of commodities and more affluent lifestyles. As Best and Kellner (p. 15) observe, this changing economic order was characterised by: '...Advertising, credit plans, media, and commodity spectacles [that] were encouraging gratification, hedonism, and the adoption of new habits, cultural forms, and lifestyles which would later be termed postmodern.' Such characterisations of a changing indulgent economic order were charted in 1970 by the *bête noire* of postmodernism, Baudrillard (1998).

However, by the 1980s, developments in French postmodern theory, enfolded with structuralist and poststructuralist discourse, giving debates a distinctive new direction. Together they constituted an attack on the legacy of Cartesian rationalism and dualism and subsequent Enlightenment theories. This has resulted, I argue, with empiricism and expressive humanism becoming the scientific and *cultured* twin pillars of the modernist project, the legacy of which continues to re-present itself in the postmodern, and against which the postmodern returns its challenge. And this challenge to the rationale, ethics and priorities of a simplistic postmodern consumer culture has found added urgency following the global credit-crunch and recession that brought economies across the world to the point of collapse in late 2008.

The purpose of charting this prehistory of the postmodern was to problematise the postmodern as far from being the homogeneous concept many postmodern marketers take

it to be. More problematic perspectives of the postmodern are considered in the next section.

Epochs and Culture

Best and Kellner, as do Belsey (1999), Hutcheon (1989), Brown(1994) and Anderson (1996) distinguish between postmodernity, as an epochal term for describing the period which allegedly follows modernity, and postmodernism – along with its corollary modernism – to describe movements, texts and practices in the cultural field.

Brown (1994), however, goes on to argue that the dramatic economic and social changes of recent time represent the single most important influence on the condition of postmodernity. For many, Brown asserts, it has culminated in the fragmentation of contemporary life and a widespread belief that anything goes. But how far this *reality* is representative of the situation for all – however postmodern – is open to question. There are times when Brown suspends the contingency that elsewhere he contends is a feature of the postmodern turn, in order to secure a line of argument that represents what he contends are the essential characteristics of postmodernism. These characteristics, which constitutes Brown's (1994, p. 38) typology of postmodernism, are summarised under five broad headings: fragmentation, de-differentiation, hyper-reality, pastiche and anti-foundationalism. What is revealing is that Brown represents each in terms of an unproblematic, existential relationship with reality, which it might be argued contravenes the postmodern project. What Brown writes is that: 'Fragmentation *refers to*'; 'De-differentiation *comprises*'; 'Hyper-reality, *as exemplified*'; 'Pastiche *consists of*'; and 'Anti-foundationalism *is*' [emphasis added].

However, poststructuralist studies of these characteristics would suggest unsettling, exploratory inscriptions of differentiated constructions of reality, a movement towards an interrogative mode of address that takes nothing for granted, not even representation. Such stratagems, at one and the same time, would help inscribe, unsettle and challenge the prescribed categorizations and positivist forms of knowledge that emerged during the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment Project

Best and Kellner begin their explication of the postmodern by first outlining what might be described as the modernist project. They argue that the theoretical discourses of modernity from Descartes through the Enlightenment and its progeny championed reason as the

source of progress in knowledge and society, as well as the privileged locus of truth and the foundation of systematic knowledge that would lead to a just and egalitarian social order. The dynamics by which modernity produced a new industrial and colonial world, they describe as modernisation – denoting those processes of individualisation, secularisation, industrialisation, cultural differentiation, commodification, urbanisation, bureaucratisation, and rationalization, which together constitute the modern world. However, as Best and Kellner go on to argue, the modernisation process had its losers, its marginalised, its oppressed. And as they point out, modernity also produced a set of disciplinary, delimiting range of institutions, practices, and discourses which legitimate its modes of domination and control. In describing this process they use the term coined by Horkheimer and Adorno (1972), the 'dialectic of Enlightenment' whereby reason is regarded as mutating into its opposite and modernity's promises of liberation is deemed to mask forms of oppression and domination.

Set against this somewhat bleak picture, Best and Kellner point out that certain theorists of postmodernity claim that technologies such as computers and media, new forms of knowledge, and changes in the socio-economic system are producing a postmodern social formation, which while marked by a greater degree of capital penetration and homogenisation across the globe, is also characterised by cultural fragmentation, changes in the experience of space and time, and new modes of experience, subjectivity, and culture. These conditions, they argue, provide the socio-economic and cultural basis for postmodern theory.

In the introduction to *The Fontana Postmodernism Reader*, Anderson (1996) similarly asserts that we are in the middle of a great, confusing, stressful and enormously promising historical transition, and it has to do with a change not so much in *what* we believe as in *how* we believe. He observes that the term 'postmodern' conjures up the imminent demise of the modern era, which has been associated with what is new and progressive. What comes across strongly in Anderson's writing here is the sense of uncertainty, contingency and denial that is a feature of living in and through a period of revolutionary change and radical shifts in patterns of belief, the implications of which are not certain. The word postmodern, Anderson subsequently concludes, is a makeshift word that is being used to describe a sense of breaking with the modern era, but with its own defining characteristics not yet having clearly emerged.

Harvey (1989, cited Anderson 1996) defines postmodernity as:

The situation in which the world finds itself after the breakdown of the 'Enlightenment project', which lasted from the latter part of the eighteenth century until well into the twentieth. That was the project aimed at getting all the world's diverse peoples to

see things the same way - the rational way. The thinkers of the Enlightenment, Harvey said, 'took it as axiomatic that there was only one possible answer to any question. From this it followed that the world could be controlled and rationally ordered if we could only picture and represent it rightly. But this presumed that there existed a single correct mode of representation which, if we could uncover it (and this was what scientific and mathematical endeavours were all about), would provide the means to Enlightenment ends.' The Enlightenment - and the twentieth-century scientific rationalism that grew out of it - was not only a philosophical effort, then, but an ideology of progress: a belief in 'linear progress, absolute truths, and rational planning of ideal social orders.' (pp. 3/4)

The postmodern then can be seen as a dissatisfaction resulting from the modernist breakdown of the Enlightenment project, the recognition of a dark side to its all-embracing, implicitly patriarchal and colonialist metanarrative. In light of more recent concerns with global warming and global economic crises, perhaps the question that failed to make a big enough impact was, 'What price progress?'

Lyotard (1984) articulates this sense of dissatisfaction, manifesting itself in postmodernism as an incredulity towards metanarratives or grand discourses – Christianity, Enlightenment, Marxism, Modernism - that purport to trace the main trajectories of history.

The Centre Cannot Hold

In charting responses to this questioning of Enlightenment rationality, it is useful to turn to the opening of Racevskis (1993, p.1) text *Postmodernism and the Search for Enlightenment*, that begins with the statement: 'The paradigm of Western thought known as modernity is unravelling.' And the cause for this failure, he argues, is that the traditional model of reason that Western man has used since the eighteenth century, both to found and legitimate an understanding of reality, is increasingly incapable of accounting for the complexity it uncovers and the operations of power it disguises.

In developing his argument, Racevskis draws on the work of French structuralist and poststructuralist writers, whose critique of reason becomes part of a more general attack against the philosophy of humanism as a form of rationality whose elaboration is seen to accompany the development of certain strategies of political power. Best and Kellner (1991) elaborate on a range of commentaries as to how these strategies were deployed:

Roland Barthes critically dissected the ways that mass culture naturalised and idealised the new social configuration through 'mythologies' which provided propaganda for the new consumer society; Guy Debord attacked the new culture of image, spectacle, and commodities for their stultifying and pacifying effects, claiming that the 'society of the spectacle' masked the continuing reality of alienation and oppression; Baudrillard analysed the structures, codes, and practices of the consumer society; and Henri Lefebvre argued that the transformations of everyday life were providing new modes of domination by bureaucracies and consumer capitalism. (p. 17)

For Racevski, the impact of Structuralism cannot be understated. It described social phenomena in terms of linguistic and social structures, rules, codes, and systems, while at the same time decentring the primacy of the humanist subject that had previously shaped the social and human sciences. The questioning of the centrality of the 'subject' that had dominated philosophy from Descartes through Sartre had become a key issue for the structuralist project.

As Best and Kellner (1991) observe, with the advent of structuralism:

The subject was dismissed, or radically decentred, as merely an effect of language, culture, or the unconscious, and denied causal or creative efficacy. Structuralism stressed the derivativeness of subjectivity and meaning in contrast to the primacy of symbolic systems, the unconscious, and social relations. On this model, meaning was not the creation of the transparent intentions of an autonomous subject; the subject itself was constituted by its relations within language, so that subjectivity was seen as a social and linguistic construct. (p. 19)

It was the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure that provided an important catalyst for the decentring of the subject, operating as a seminal text in the emergence of structuralism and poststructuralism. In Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1974 (1915)), a fundamental distinction is made between the system of language (*langue*), which pre-exists and provides the scope for discrete articulations of language (*parole*). The proper object of linguistic study, claimed Saussure, was not specific articulations, but the workings of the system of differential rules that constitute signifying practice. Consequently, Saussure rejected the idea that the primary function of words is to refer to things in the world. Indeed, he saw the link between the written or acoustic image (*signifier*) and the object or concept (*signified*) as purely arbitrary. The emphasis instead is shifted to the process of signification, to the sign signifying as a function of and in relation to its place within the linguistic system. In this, language constitutes a system of differences with no positive terms.

The perspective adopted by this theory is that letters, phonemes, words, signifiers achieve meaning as a consequence of their differential positioning within an endlessly proliferating linguistic or semiotic network, rather than as representations of discrete phenomena out there in the world. In many respects it is this process of differentiation that constructs and categorises *objects* out there in the world. A consideration of metaphor demonstrates this relational and differentiating process at work in language, with *objects* being described in relation to others, but in so doing establishing their difference.

Hence the meaning of a word, to take 'cat' as an example, does not simply derive from it referring to a particular feline object out there in the world - and of course the reference could be to a 'cat-o-nine-tails' or a catamaran or a catalytic converter - but from its position within the system of linguistic signifying practice. Thus 'cat' derives its meaning from its

relative, differential position within the linguistic system, i.e. it is cat and not rat; it is cat and not car.

Taking the example of traffic signals might shed further light on the proposition. While the red light has come as a matter of convention to signify stop, there is no necessary link; the light could equally be blue. The colour chosen is simply a matter of social convention. (Indeed, with regard to the colour red, in other situations it could signify politics, passion.) What is also significant is that the red light signifies because of its relative position within a differentiated sequence of signals: it is red and not green, nor amber, nor red and amber together.

Laclau (1993 cited Howarth, 2000) offers another perspective on language as a process of differentiation: 'To understand the meaning of the word "mother", one must understand related terms like "father", "daughter", "son" and so on.' In effect each of these signifiers is inhabited/crossed by the trace of its defining but necessarily absent or excluded others. Meaning is determined as much by what is excluded as what is included.

The legacy of Saussure has profound implications for the model of language based on discrete representations and encapsulations of reality, and for hypodermic theories of communications (Schramm, 1960; cited Picton & Broderick, 2001), which still provides the basis of marketing communications for most standard marketing textbooks. According to this model of language the objective appears to be the transmission of meaning clear of unwanted traces of extraneous 'noise'. But according to the Saussurean model this is the very condition of language. Language is constituted by the play of difference between the traces of included and excluded signifiers.

Saussure's work has been a key influence in locating meaning beyond the purview of the subject, in decentering the subject as source and locus of meaning. Arguably, the trajectory of Saussure's work opened up a terrain for the mapping of a poststructuralist discourse that furthered the displacement of meaning as a product of the rational, cognitive interactions of centred individuals, and (dis)located meaning across an endlessly proliferating and shifting relay of cultural and intertextual signifiers; perhaps most notably inscribed in Derrida's (1976) articulation: 'There is nothing outside the text'.

From the structural insights derived from Saussure and the recognition that language is one among many sign systems, the study of semiotics evolved. Barthes (1973), in his seminal work *Mythologies*, explored the ways in which texts – incorporating the wider sense of semiotic sign systems – can be read to reveal the operation of semiotic codes across a wide range of signifying practices. In effect, semiotics examines the culturally situated correspondence between signs and symbols and their role in the assignment and propagation of meaning. *Mythologies* takes various aspects of popular cultural products -

car adverts, soap powders, pasta packaging, wrestling matches - and through a process of semiotic differentiation, the readings offered manifest a range of subtle, layered meanings. What these readings foreground are the ways in which the messages wrapped up in these cultural products resonate with a more extensive set of discourses and identities.

Racevskis (1993) goes on to argue that one of the main achievements of the structuralist project is the attention it focused on what is seen as the myth of the autonomous subject, which has helped submerge in nebulosity linguistic and cultural formations and constraints. This questioning and problematizing of the autonomous, Cartesian subject as the self-assured and self-sufficient source of thought has been a crucial legacy of the structuralist movement.

As Racevskis observes:

Ever since Descartes accomplished the conjunction of the epistemological with the ontological, Western 'man' has been able to found the truth of his knowledge in the essence of his being. The validity of 'man's' thought has been guaranteed by his fundamental nature – he is a rational being. (p. 10)

This dissertation argues that what has also taken place in this conjunction of the epistemological and the ontological, is a subsuming of the *processes* of reasoning, of differentiation, of writing, by the proclamation of a prior rational subject, deemed to have a pre-linguistic, unmediated relationship with reality. The questions of subjectivity and mediation will constitute a key element in a critique of the literary in the texts of postmodern marketing that will be undertaken in this dissertation.

Beyond Reason

While structuralism began the project of decentering the humanist subject as source and guarantee of truth and meaning, concerns emerged that the classical structuralist model ran the risk of simply replacing the humanism of existing approaches with a new form of essentialism based on the primacy of a static and complete structure. This led to what has become configured as poststructuralism.

Derrida (1976), for example argued that in spite of Saussure's inscription of language's structural basis, he nevertheless maintains a metaphysics of presence – a lingering assumption that there are pre-existent, fixed origins and ideal, transcendent essences - in privileging speech over writing. Derrida also points out that Saussure assumes a unitary and stable relationship between the signifier and the signified. By contrast, poststructuralist critiques increasingly emphasised the arbitrary, differential and non-referential character of the sign. In so doing meaning is no longer within the controlling remit of the centred,

logocentric subject, but a function of the differential processes of writing and open to a degree of reworking and plurality. Whether consciously or not, the marketing and advertising industry has long engaged with this play of the signifier as a means of extending and proliferating the appeal of their messages.

Both structuralists and poststructuralists decentre the subject, but with poststructuralism the major theoretical concern shifts to one of analysing how individuals are constituted as subjects and offered particular identities or subject positions. This process of how individuals are offered particular subject positions to consume, and with which to identify, is clearly a major issue for marketing.

And it is in relation to their positioning with regard to the linguistic turn that the difference between structuralism and poststructuralism emerges most strongly. As Best and Kellner (1991) state:

Unlike the structuralists who confined the play of language within closed structures of oppositions, the poststructuralists gave primacy to the signifier over the signified, and thereby signalled the dynamic productivity of language, the instability of meaning, and a break with conventional representational schemes of meaning. In traditional theories of meaning, signifiers come to rest in the signified of a conscious mind. For poststructuralists, by contrast, the signified is only a moment in a never-ending process of signification where meaning is produced not in a stable, referential relation between subject and object, but only within the infinite, intertextual play of signifiers. (pp. 20/21)

And for the poststructuralist there is also no settling, no clear, stable position from which the world might be objectively, scientifically ordered.

Not surprisingly, the poststructuralists also attacked the scientific pretensions of structuralism, which attempted to create a scientific basis for the study of culture – as opposed to recognising the cultural and historical relativity of the position from which they spoke - and which strove for the standard modernist goals of foundation, truth, objectivity, certainty and system. Poststructuralist favoured approaches that engaged historical perspectives, viewing different forms of consciousness, identities, signification as a function of different histories and, therefore, subject to influence, variance and change at all levels of society and culture.

As Best and Kellner (1991) observe:

While poststructuralists continued to reject the concept of the spontaneous, rational, autonomous subject developed by Enlightenment thinkers, there was intense debate over how the subject was formed and lived in everyday life, as well as the ubiquity and multiplicity of forms of power in society and in everyday life. In particular, attention was focused on the production of the subject through language and systems of meaning and power. (p. 24)

From a marketing perspective this has significant implications. If subjects/consumers are constituted through the positions they are offered within signifying systems then it begs a number of questions about how we attempt to understand the needs, wants, desires of the consumer. There is perhaps a case to be made for shifting attention to a fuller understanding of the ways in which consumers are offered subject positions within already prescribed discursive marketing formations rather than attempt to *determine* the behavioural responses of consumers based on simplistic conditioning models of psychology; communication models based on simplistic stimulus/response patterns; and all predicated on being able to achieve viable, statistical correlations.

As Best and Kellner (1991) conclude:

Poststructuralism forms part of the matrix of postmodern theory, and while the theoretical breaks described as postmodern are directly related to poststructuralist critiques, we shall interpret poststructuralism as a subset of a broader range of theoretical, cultural, and social tendencies which constitute postmodern discourses. Thus, in our view, postmodern theory is a more inclusive phenomenon than poststructuralism which we interpret as a critique of modern theory and a production of new models of thought, writing, and subjectivity. . . (p. 25)

What emerges from these various discussions of the postmodern, particularly in its relation to other theoretical perspectives such as those of poststructuralism, is that it circumscribes a variety of perspectives; consequently, what and how it signifies needs to be treated with a modicum of vigilance and circumspection.

Postmodernism, Parody, Politics

Hutcheon (1989) contends that postmodernism is a phenomenon whose mode is resolutely contradictory as well as unavoidably political. In general terms, she argues, postmodernism takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement, the effect of which is to highlight and subvert at one and the same time. Its mode of address then might be said to be a knowing and ironic one. Postmodernism's distinctive character lies in maintaining this double movement, in being able to face both ways at one and the same time, the effect of which is to de-naturalise, to challenge dominant features of our ways of thinking. On this basis, argues Hutcheon, the self-reflexive, parodic art of the postmodern inevitably carries a political dimension.

Hutcheon adapts Barthes general notion of the doxa – public opinion or the 'Voice of Nature' and consensus – to argue that postmodernism works to de-doxify our cultural representations and their hidden political import. By way of reinforcing her point Hutcheon (p. 3) cites Rosso (1983), citing Eco, who states that the postmodern is: 'The orientation of anyone who has learned the lesson of Foucault, i.e. that power is not something that exists

outside us.' Hutcheon further observes that it is difficult to separate the de-doxifying impulse of postmodern art and culture from the deconstructing impulse of what has been labelled poststructuralist theory. Similarly, Norris (1982, 1992) challenges the proposition that postmodernism is apolitical and as bearing no relation to the real world. In this respect he firmly countermands Derrida's deconstruction project against the irrationalist or nihilist disposition towards postmodernism as characterised by Baudrillard.

He dissociates Derrida's project from the kind of outlook, which takes it for granted - in Baudrillard's manner - that truth and reason are obsolete values, overtaken by the advent of postmodern hyperreality. He argues firmly that those who treat deconstruction as one more offshoot of the current postmodernist or counter-enlightenment trend, is simply to misread the Derridean project.

Drawing on Derridean deconstruction - a project itself often accused of being divorced from the real - Norris argues that its focus is to challenge the metaphysics of presence that grounds meaning and authority in an idealised human subjectivity. The site of this struggle is writing, the process of inscription and displacement of meaning across a proliferating network of signifiers, which both governs language and places it for ever beyond the reach of a stable, self-authenticating knowledge with no ultimate or determining sanction or authority.

This does not mean, however, that Derridean deconstruction bears no relation to the real world. As Norris observes, Derrida's work is replete with arguments to the effect that deconstruction is not a discourse with no further use for criteria of reference, validity, or truth. In short, Derridean deconstruction squarely repudiates the 'anything goes' school of postmodern hermeneutic thought; and that to deconstruct naive or commonsense ideas of how language hooks up with reality is not to suggest that it should, henceforth, be seen as a realm of open-ended textual freeplay or floating signifiers devoid of referential content.

Norris (1992) further argues that it is a gross misunderstanding to suppose that deconstruction ignores or suspends the question of interpretive responsibility, the requirement that texts should be read, 'with a due respect for those other-regarding maxims (of good faith, fidelity, attentiveness to detail etc) which prevent it from becoming just a super-subtle game, a licence for all kinds of readerly extravagance.' (pp. 17/18) He further points out that this attitude of recognition and respect is described by Derrida (1976) in *Of Grammatology* as an: 'indispensable guardrail', to mitigate against any interpretation that might 'risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything'. Consequently, argues Norris, there is clearly no question of Derrida's

falling into that strain of postmodernist rhetoric that cheerfully pronounces an end to the regime of reality, truth, and enlightenment critique.

Marketing's Turn from Positivism to the Postmodern

Having mapped the terrain, what emerges is that postmodern debates have had a significant impact on cultural and intellectual fields of enquiry. What is also clear is that the intractability of these debates raised issues that have resisted easy dismissal or facile incorporation into already established positivist paradigms.

Brown (1994) takes precisely this line of argument with regard to the impact of postmodernism on marketing:

Although an indifferent, sceptical or dismissive reaction to the dramatic entrance of 'postmodern marketing' is understandable, such a response would be both hasty and ill-advised. Not only has the concept conspicuously failed to fade from the screens of other academic disciplines, such as sociology and politics, but also their experience suggests that serious research programmes cannot resume until the questions posed and problems raised by postmodernism are addressed and redressed. Postmodernism, as its advocates frequently emphasise, has much to contribute to marketing discourse. It helps conceptualise some of the dramatic changes that are taking place in the marketing arena and provides an insight into the current crisis of confidence in the discipline. Conversely, and contrary to what many of its adepts in marketing proclaim, the adoption of postmodernism is not without penalty. The construct has serious implications for long-established marketing principles and the discipline's epistemological underpinnings. Postmodernism is not a cure for marketing's manifold ills - it brings costs as well as benefits. (p. 28)

What can be deduced from Brown's comments here is that postmodern approaches are not focused on providing solutions commensurate with positivist paradigms, but with reconfiguring the issues. Ultimately, the trajectory of the postmodern and poststructuralist has tended towards maintaining a critical, questioning perspective, of not simply taking the world as read, including those of its own signifying perspectives.

Having reviewed the postmodern in general terms, I want now to examine it in more detail in relation to marketing. By way of making clear the strength and extent of the relationship deemed to exist between the postmodern and marketing, I will cite Firat et al (1995), who state that:

Marketing can no longer pretend to be an instrumental discipline that *affects* consumers and society, but has to become reflexive and has to be studied as the sociocultural process that *defines* postmodern society. (p. 53)

Firat et al, it seems, are arguing not only that marketing needs to adopt a reflexive approach with regard to its own discourse, but in so doing it needs to recognise the constitutive role

it plays in shaping postmodern society. For Firat & Venkatesh (1993), marketing is the 'ultimate social practice of postmodern consumer culture.'

Following in this trajectory Brown (1995) elaborates on his 1994 postmodern typology of marketing's relation to society by the addition of an all-encompassing chronology and pluralism. In 1997 Firat and Venkatesh elaborate further on their 1993 conditions of postmodern culture by drawing on the work of Van Raaij (1993) and Brown (1994) to come up with a postmodern typology that includes: openness/tolerance, hyperreality, perpetual present, paradoxical juxtapositions, fragmentation, loss of commitment, decentring of the subject, reversal of consumption and production, emphasis on form/style, acceptance of disorder/chaos.

With such a bold rewriting of the marketing script it is somewhat inevitable that there would be calls for changes to the ways in which marketing processes and phenomena are researched and studied. The processes entailed in adopting an open, reflexive, decentred approach are not linear, causal, instrumental, and unidisciplinary; they cannot be captured solely by empirical, positivist modes of analyses. Significantly, argues Firat, some of these may not be researchable in the sense we understand social science research, but only 'experienceable' and subject to critique the way the arts and the humanities are.

While having reservations about how what Firat classifies as 'experienceable' comes to be known, there is a degree of validity in the contention that in postmodernity, some of the nearest and dearest notions and axioms of marketing may have to be re-examined, recast, or even abandoned.

Brown's writing on marketing puts the point more strongly. He argues that the discipline is in crisis and that this crisis is inextricably linked to the condition of postmodernity. This crisis, he argues, is the result of a slavish devotion to scientific methodologies on the part of marketing's authoritative figures.

While Paul Anderson (1983) is variously attributed with ripping up the rule book with regard to the philosophical pretensions underpinning marketing's aspirations to scientific status, it might be argued that the work of Keith (1960) and Levitt (1960) cleared the ground for this challenge. While Anderson unpicked the positivist, logical empiricist assumptions of marketing's scientific pretension - namely that an objective social reality could be empirically measured, and as a consequence enable the identification and articulation of law-like generalisations - by shifting the focus to consumers and markets, Keith and Levitt began redefining marketing's purview from one based on economics and logistics to one more closely allied with social psychology as evidenced by the growing provenance of consumer research. And by 1993 Brady and Davis were referring to marketing's 'mid-life crisis' and

the need for a deeper understanding of the consumer and with Brown (1995a) adding further to the debate.

Ultimately, Anderson's argument that marketing would be better served by adopting a more relativist approach, paved the way for approaches to marketing that eventually created a space for the postmodern critique. Basically, Anderson put forward the view that it is impossible to access an external world independent of human perceptions and interpretation. As a consequence it is never possible to access an objective reality, but only a reality that is socially constructed and which is invariably relative to the issues and concerns of the time. As Brown (1995) points out, this eschewal of the orthodox idea of marketing science as objectively proven knowledge and its replacement with the notion of science as societal consensus provoked a ferocious reaction, most notably on the part of Shelby Hunt who was particularly scathing about what he perceived as an heretical relativism. However, following some ten years of debate, the result, Brown (2001, p.97) concludes, is that, 'the revolutionaries of relativism have triumphed, in so far as marketing scholarship is much less epistemologically and methodologically monolithic than before.'

And the broader significance of this Brown (2001) argues is that while postmodernists recognise that Western science has provided enormous material benefits, they contend that its promise of perpetual plenty has been achieved at a very heavy social, environmental and political price. The mass of society may be better off than before but the division of wealth is as unequal as ever, arguably more unequal. As Brown (2001, p. 98) observes, the postmodern critique concerning the progress of scientific thought is that: 'The rise of the West has been at the expense of the subjugation, exploitation, usurpation and coca-colonisation of the "rest".' As such, the postmodern approach clearly calls into question marketing's scientific pretensions to be a means for objectively meeting and managing economic needs.

Such has been the strength of postmodern arguments, contends Brown (2000a), that:

Many of marketing's most illustrious intellectual luminaries - Kotler, Webster, Sheth, Baker, McDonald, etc. - accept that the traditional concepts no longer reflect the marketing world as it really is and no longer help managers cope with decentred, delayed, downsized, reengineered, ever accelerating, global-local marketing milieux. (p. 286),

In short, this debate concerning marketing's mid-life crisis has paved the way for further postmodern critiques of marketing's relationship to society. These range across a variety of positions, many of which appear to use the term 'postmodern' in ways that marginalize some of its basic challenges to modernist and humanist epistemologies. There is the evangelical tone of Firat and Venkatesh (1995) and Firat et al (1995), which views the postmodern as symptomatic of marketing's relevance and ascendancy. There is the resigned, negative

morality of Belk (1996), Belk et al (1989). There are the fundamentally humanist and structuralist, albeit interpretive approaches of Stern (1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1996a, 1998, 2001), Hirschmann Scott & Wells (1998), Hirschmann & Thompson (1995, 1997), McGuire, (2000), McQuarrie, & Glen (1999), Glen and Claus (1992) who tend to equate the complex representations of postmodernism and deconstruction with those of New Criticism, and who continue to deploy modernist methodologies. Similarly, there is the basically humanist focus in the reader-response/subjective introspective approach of Brown (1995, 1998, 1999a, 2000b, 2001a), Brown et al (1998, 1999) and Reid & Brown (1996), Holbrook (1997, 2000), Scott (1994, 1994a), Elliott (1997) who, while offering 'insights' on various subjects, efface their own positioning as subjects in and of particular discursive formations.

From the perspective of this dissertation it would seem that key issues for the postmodern entail engaging with the implications of fragmentation; the reversal of consumption and production; the decentring of the subject; the questioning of authority; the call for greater tolerance; questions of the real and hyper-real, questions of history; and the aesthetic turn in which tropes such as the use of irony and parody entail a greater focus on questions of form and style. And while all these might be considered part of a crisis of representation, a manifestation of changes taking place in society, it might also be argued that discursively they map a space for the articulation of the *cool* consumer.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the implications of marketing's attempt to move away from the scientific paradigm and come to terms with the issues of representation and the subject by turning to the postmodern. But in so doing, I argue their approaches to the postmodern tend towards a somewhat homogenous and monolithic reading of that concept. This can be argued as tending towards a type of powerful metanarrative that alternative configurations of the postmodern seek to call into question. Further, the undecidability implicit in these conflicting notions of the postmodern is what poststructuralism maintains as an open question, recognizing the historical and cultural forces at play in mapping discursive spaces for particular forms of subjectivity.

In Chapter Three entitled 'Literary Review', I will examine from a somewhat different perspective the scope and significance of marketing and consumer culture's engagement with the postmodern and the 'Literary' as a means of further mapping this crisis of representation and its implications for the subject of *cool*.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERARY REVIEW: WRITERLY TEXTS

Up in the Gallery

If some frail, consumptive equestrienne in the circus were to be urged round and round on an undulating horse for months on end without respite by a ruthless, whip-flourishing ring-master, before an insatiable public, whizzing along on her horse, throwing kisses, swaying from the waist, and if this performance were likely to continue in the infinite perspective of a drab future to the unceasing roar of the orchestra and hum of the ventilators, accompanied by ebbing and renewed swelling bursts of applause which are really steam-hammers - then, perhaps, a young visitor to the gallery might race down the long stairs through all the circles, rush into the ring, and yell: 'Stop!' against the fanfares of the orchestra still playing the appropriate music.

But since that is not so; a lovely lady, pink and white, floats in between the curtains, which proud lackeys open before her; the ring-master, deferentially catching her eye, comes towards her breathing animal devotion; tenderly lifts her up on the dapple-grey, as if she were his own most precious grand-daughter about to start on a dangerous journey; cannot make up his mind to give the signal with his whip, finally masters himself enough to crack the whip loudly; runs along beside the horse, open-mouthed; follows with a sharp eye the leaps taken by its rider; finds her artistic skill almost beyond belief; calls to her with English shouts of warning; angrily exhorts the grooms who hold the hoops to be most closely attentive; before the great somersault lifts up his arms and implores the orchestra to be silent; finally lifts the little one down from her trembling horse, kisses her on both cheeks and finds that all the ovation she gets from the audience is barely sufficient; while she herself, supported by him, right up on the tips of her toes, in a cloud of dust, with outstretched arms and small head thrown back, invites the whole circus to share her triumph - since that is so, the visitor to the gallery lays his face on the rail before him and, sinking into the closing march as in a heavy dream, weeps without knowing it.

Kafka, Franz, 1978. Wedding Preparations in the Country and Other Stories.

Literature and Marketing

Chapter one provides an overview of the origins of marketing and the advent of a more recent critical turn as part of a wider response challenging the myth of an all-encompassing, authoritative rationale that lays claim to being capable of reflecting and representing reality unproblematically. This section begins the mapping of the various contributions to this critical turn from within marketing.

A review of this crisis of representation in marketing reveals it to be the site of intense scrutiny as to its modalities, its relevance, its integrity, its ethics (Brown, 1994, 1995, 1995a, 1998, 2003, 2003a; Burton, 2001, 2005; Edwards, 2000; Firat, 1995, 1999; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995, 1998; Firat et al 1995; Hackely, 1998, 1999b, 2000, 2002, 2003; Hodgson, 2002; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002; O'Malley & Patterson 1998; Tonks, 2002). But while marketing has long been subject to criticism, what is perhaps new is the scope and intensity of the theoretical scrutiny to which it is being subjected. Belsey (1999) makes a similar point with regard to English Studies:

The voices silenced for so long by the grand narrative of a humane and humanising literary tradition are now insisting on being heard, offering new readings of the canonical texts, and drawing attention to works the canon marginalised. Suddenly we can't get enough of incitements to acknowledge injustices, past and present. As we repudiate the illusion of impartiality, the goal of objective interpretation and the quest for the final, identifiable meaning of the text, English studies has found itself entering the postmodern condition. (p 125)

Similarly, the growing scrutiny of marketing is perhaps also attributable to the gathering encroachment of the postmodern condition. The acknowledgement of the complexity, fragmentation and heterogeneity of what constitutes reality and how it is represented is bringing about a shift in the terms of the debate that takes us beyond simplistic moralising about the relationship between marketing and the truth or the appeal to consumer sovereignty as signified through reductive empirical measures. Increasingly, the focus is shifting to a consideration of the discursive construction of reality.

Many of those rallying to an anti-positivist marketing banner, particularly in the US, began addressing this 'crisis of representation' by turning to the field of aesthetics, notably literature and literary theory, and more recently art history and history (Brown, 1995, 1998, 1998a, 1999; Brown et al, 1999, 2001; Elliott & Ritson, 1997; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1992, McFall, 2002; Scott, 1994, 1994a; Stern, 1989, 1990, 1996, 1996a; Stern & Schroeder 1993.) But this turn to aesthetics as a means for addressing the issue of marketing's growing complexity is not without its own problems.

Stephen Brown along with a number of American 'marketing literati' (Stern, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1996, 1996a; Stern & Schroeder, 1993; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1992; Holbrook &

Hirschman, 1993; Scott, 1994a; Belk, 1995) have been key figures in advocating the use of aesthetic and literary theory as a means of meeting the postmodern challenge to marketing's crisis. But while Brown's pioneering and iconoclastic approach has made significant inroads in addressing this crisis, a key factor mitigating against this engagement is a persistent adherence to a metaphysical, unified subjectivity as the locus of truth, meaning, insight. It is precisely this notion of a unified subjectivity that structuralism, poststructuralism, literary, critical and postmodern theory in their various ways have called into question.

In *Postmodern Marketing Two*, Brown (1998) recommends resorting to the aesthetic as a means for addressing the crisis in marketing:

If there is a single message contained in this book... it is that marketing academics should seek to adopt more expressive modes of expression. By reflecting on our own marketing-related behaviours and trying to capture them in poetic, aesthetic, creative prose we can succeed in saying the unsaid, grasping the ungraspable, and by bringing into consciousness the hitherto hidden, the inchoate, the unformed, generate meaningful, original and important insights into marketplace phenomena. (p 241)

Brown appears to be arguing that the complexities of marketing - which scientific approaches with their reductive methodologies pass over - can be best represented by the figurative, creative processes of literary prose, which configure its various elements - language, rhythm, form - into an aesthetic structure that leads to the revelation of what are ostensibly more profound, metaphysical truths. And for Brown this can be achieved via a process of individual, subjective introspection. (Brown, 1998, 1998a, 1999; Brown et al 1999, Holbrook & Hirschmann, 1993.) It would seem that for Brown these truths lie beyond what can be said; they can only be recognised and acknowledged intuitively, in what might be described as progressive epiphanies. But this leaves us with the singular problem of what are to count as 'original and important insights' and how they are made to count.

While many of the marketing literati have turned to the literary as a means of foregrounding the validity of a more heterogeneous approach to the marketing project, there has been little recognition that the literary and literary theory are also characterized and 'divided' by a degree of heterogeneity. Crucially, rather than simply taking for granted postmodern marketing's deployment of the 'literary' and literary theory, it needs to be subject to a critical examination to sound contradictions, evasions and crises of representation in its own project. In order to effect such questioning of marketing's version of the literary, the next section traces briefly the trajectory of Literature as a discipline, to open up the ground for a consideration of what might be viewed as its 'repressed' project.

Literature by the Book

In tracing and differentiating the ways in which literature might be understood I resort to The New Penguin English Dictionary (2001), which offers three perspectives on literature:

1] printed matter, e.g. leaflets or circulars. 2] the body of writings on a particular subject: *scientific literature*. 3] writings in prose or verse; *esp.* writings having artistic value or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest.

This is not an untypical dictionary definition, in which a particular word serves to signify a somewhat disparate range of matter. Indeed, literature as common, unambiguous, instructive, informative material with a particular focus would seem to be the antithesis of literature as creative, aesthetic work of art, expressing universal values.

At first reading definitions one and two would seem to offer few problems, describing literature in ostensibly prosaic, matter-of-fact terms as printed matter - offering information, instruction, guidance - and writing in general as a means of articulating and charting domains of knowledge, not dissimilar to that circumscribed by the term discourse, but without its more dynamic, interrogative and circumspect modes of address.

However, leaflets and circulars as a genre are not without designs on their audience; nor are they without their own traces of persuasive and rhetorical register, and none more so than marketing leaflets and circulars. Neither is delimiting what constitutes a particular domain or body of knowledge as unproblematical as this dictionary definition implies. On closer examination, what constitutes the boundaries of 'Literature' and indeed any particular subject - what is to be included and excluded - is soon revealed to be a site of contested meaning.

Even the most cursory review of marketing literature would indicate it is similarly difficult to define the boundaries of marketing as a body of literature - as a body of knowledge, as a subject - however circumscribed and however narrowly or broadly focused. There are significant issues as to the empiricist legacy of economics, from which marketing ostensibly emerged, ongoing debates as to the demarcation of boundaries between marketing and HRM, Strategy and Organisational Behaviour; and more recently, the relationship between marketing and the emerging field of consumer studies is coming under ever closer scrutiny, opening up new trajectories into the fields of cultural studies, semiotics and literary theory (Baker, 2000; Brown, 1998, 2001; Brown et al, 2001; Brownlie & Saren, 1992; Enright, 2002; Hart, 2003; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1992; Morgan, 1992, 2003; Pachauri, 2002; Saren 1995). In charting marketing literature as the circumscription of a particular domain of knowledge - as with any domain - there are inevitably encounters with contentious issues of what to include, what to exclude and what constitutes an appropriate methodology for the articulation of such work.

The question I now want to address is how and in what ways the domain of marketing literature is finding a new point of differentiation with that of the aesthetic domain of Literature? This carries the proviso of course that neither within these domains is the question of differentiation without its problems. In raising the question of differentiation a key issue will be to explore/deconstruct the desire for and play of inclusivity/exclusivity in the positioning of the subject. In this, the dictionary definition of 'Literature' as writings in prose or verse perhaps proves significant in unexpected ways.

The third dictionary definition of 'literature' raises some problematical issues as to what is to count as having artistic value and how this is to be decided; and given the impact of postmodern and poststructuralist discourse – where established hierarchies have been called to account - what ideas are to count as having permanent or universal interest? The problematical register that is struck by the term 'literature' here, is attested by an editorial note to the New Penguin English Dictionary (2001) definition:

Literature comprises works where style or form offers pleasure in excess of the content, which is often, but not necessarily, fictional. The term thus represents a classification that depends on a value judgement. The category, not widely identified before the 19th century, is now in question, as it has become increasingly evident that it represents the taste of a particular race, class or gender at a specific historical moment.

And as this editorial note indicates, the category or discipline of literature is not only a recent invention but is being called into question on account of being partial, exclusive.

As a *product*, literature in the traditional, cultural sense – sagas, drama, sermons, poetry, prose, novels – has been around for some time. But as an academic discipline, it is perhaps not much older than marketing itself. With regard to the provenance of English as an academic discipline, the first chair of English Literature was created at University College, London in 1828; and it was not until 1904 that Oxford appointed its first chair.

Brian Doyle (1982, 1989) argues that English as a modern discipline, with a methodological posture of its own, did not begin to emerge until the 1860s. Prior to this point English had been positioned primarily as an element in the propagation of a sense of national culture and character. Consequently, even though in keeping with a developing rational ethos and disciplinary autonomy of its own, literature nevertheless maintained the traces of its propagandising prehistory in sustaining a range of appropriate moral values. Arguably, it was not until after the traumatic events of the First World War, with the publication of the Newbolt Report, 'The Teaching of English in England' (1921), that a more overt desire for the establishment of a notably English culture was articulated and the study of literature acquired a more professional and rigorous status (Jefferson & Robey, 1982, Newton 1992, Pope, 2002).

Subsequently, the post-War years saw the emergence and formation of a particular critical vocabulary, with categories such as irony, ambiguity, point of view, imagery and balanced organic structure being pressed into service to facilitate the construction of a canon of appropriate texts. But of course, what constitutes 'appropriate' can always be relied on to guarantee academic debate.

The Newbolt Report has been represented (Doyle, 1982, 1989; Eagleton, 1983; Hawkes, 1986) as an 'inclusive' propagandizing project which sought to defray the increasing disaffection of the working class by encouraging them to subscribe to a distinctive set of English cultural values, as evidenced through the construction of an exclusive literary canon with its own accompaniment of cultural gatekeepers and intermediaries. And in addition to the more obvious cultural intermediaries for the literary canon, such as academics and literary reviewers, arguably the advertising industry has since the early nineteenth century been part of the complex mediating process in the construction of literary taste and the literary canon (Brown and Patterson, 2002; Holt, 2004; McFall, 2002).

But with assent always comes the possibility of dissent. And, as the editorial note in the New Penguin English Dictionary goes on to observe, the literary canon has been called into question, as it has become increasingly evident that it represents the taste of a particular race, class or gender at a specific historical moment. While the Cartesian subject claims to be the source/originator of knowingness by recourse to nothing other than the claims and configurations of his or her own reasoning powers and sensibilities, that self-same subject, is also, in part at least, predetermined by what culture circumscribes as objects/subjects worthy of being known; by a process of canonisation.

Peter Widdowson (1982), reflecting on the crisis in English studies during the early eighties, observes that it was based on a growing debate amongst radical critics about the value - and values - of Literature, particularly the criteria by which literary productions are judged and the validity of the category Literature itself. As a result of the development of interdisciplinary courses being developed in Higher Education, Widdowson observes that Literature and Criticism were being exposed to a questioning of their methodologies. Issues about Literature were being framed in ways that cut across its unquestioned assumption. As he observes, historians and sociologists were asking why major texts were considered to be so much more valuable for an understanding of society than minor texts? This also begged questions as to who decided which were major texts and on what grounds.

The result of these critiques, Widdowson argues, was an intense scrutinising of the premises on which Literary Criticism operated and a questioning of how far it had itself created Literature by means of its pre-selections, evaluations and tacit assumptions as to what constitutes literary value. At the same time, the development of new, contiguous areas of

study such as communication and cultural studies - which incorporated 'popular' fiction, film, television, journalism, advertising - were challenging the hierarchical and elitist conceptions of Literature and Criticism, both in the scope of material considered worthy of study and the theoretical and methodological models brought to bear on its study. In many respects these strategies and critiques are similar to those being deployed by many now operating at the boundaries of the Marketing discipline.

In addition to calling into question the category of Literature/literature, this New Penguin English Dictionary editorial note introduces the long-standing, more conventional idea of Literary writing as characterised by the use of the imagination, of fiction, of stylish language. But crucially, while the Literary is not necessarily fictional, what this aspect of the dictionary definition points to it is the play of style and form in relation to and in excess of the content and conventions of writing. This has the potential for the imagining and fictionalising of otherwise possibilities – what might be regarded as new and exclusive sources of pleasure/desire; and an area of obvious and considerable interest to marketing.

It is with regard to the imagining and fictionalising of otherwise possibilities that I would like to propose a close study of the effects of this interweaving of Marketing and Literature. I undertake this study in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. A crucial stratagem for this Dissertation is to explore the positioning of the consumer as the subject of the inclusive/exclusive signifying strategies of the fictive texts of these respective disciplines and to explore the relation of these texts to constructions of reality.

Having briefly problematised 'Literature' as a discipline, I now use this to provide an otherwise perspective for examining more closely Brown's argument for using the Literary to develop marketing theory.

Marketing and the 'Literary'

In *Postmodern Marketing Two*, Brown (1998) sets out specifically how the Literary might be deployed to help overcome the crisis in marketing:

In an attempt to demonstrate that there is an alternative - a meaningful alternative - to marketing science, this book has sought to highlight the potential of marketing aesthetics in general and the world of literature in particular. It has argued that important marketing insights can be derived from works of literature, that the tools and techniques of literary criticism can be applied to all manner of marketing artifacts and, not least, that marketers should seek to adopt more literary modes of academic expression. (p. 231)

Moreover, he seeks to develop the case for extending the use of Literature-in-marketing beyond the simple application of the procedures of literary criticism to the now well-

established critiques of advertising and promotion and to the Literary representation of marketing texts themselves. Brown (1998) goes on to argue that if there is a single message contained in *Postmodern Marketing Two*, it is that:

. . . marketing academics should seek to adopt more expressive modes of expression. . . To this end the introspective process of critical self-examination, what Kundera (1988, p. 31) terms 'meditative interrogation' is of paramount importance. By reflecting on our own marketing-related behaviours and trying to capture them in poetic, aesthetic, creative prose we can succeed in saying the unsaid, grasping the ungraspable, and by bringing into consciousness the hitherto hidden, the inchoate, the unformed, generate meaningful, original and important insights into marketplace phenomena. (p. 241)

Brown appears to be arguing that the complexities of marketing, which scientific approaches with their reductive methodologies pass over, can be best represented by the figurative, creative processes of literary prose, which configure its various elements - language, rhythm, form - into an aesthetic structure that leads to the revelation of more profound truths. What is also implicit is that the profound truths of these aesthetic structures would lose their meaning if analysed into their separate constituent elements.

For example, he begins a discussion of the relationship between marketing and literature by means of an anecdotal reference to an encounter at an academic conference that he had with the marketing manager of a major multinational clothing manufacturer. This encounter followed the delivery of what Brown states was his standard 'sex and shopping' presentation. To his surprise this marketing manager affirmed Brown's prognosis by announcing that her decisions often relied upon books, television and glossy magazines for insights into the workings of the market place as opposed to the cranked out machinations of the marketing research department. Now Brown admits, if somewhat obliquely, that even allowing this was a fortunate encounter, it nevertheless provides a useful counterpoint to the disdain of the adherents of marketing science, if only on the grounds that potentially researchable hypotheses are obtainable from works of literature. Brown goes further and states that a study of marketing-in-literature is not just about hypothesis generation.

In what is a key assertion in Brown's (1998, p.131) work, he states that: 'Works of literature can offer insights into marketing- and consumption-related phenomena that are otherwise unobtainable.' He uses an extract from *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* describing a shopping experience, setting it alongside similarly typical experiences described in the 'sex and shopping' novels of Judith Krantz, to claim that what is distinctive about the literary mode – as opposed to scientific modes of discourse - is that it is the compelling use of language that best evokes the actual, singular experience of consumer activities.

Crucially, what Brown is leading us towards is that while it is not possible to have access to reality unmediated by language, it is possible to gain insights into the experiences of others, precisely through the mediation of language, but of a distinctively Literary/artistic form.

Brown (1998, p 132), in persuasive mode, approvingly cites Belk 'rightly' observing: 'Only art is able to convey [the] specific, personal, and experiential knowledge . . . in a way that approaches the intensity and intimacy of the actual experience.' He goes on to cite Belk further: 'One can learn more about the complexity of motives and mutual perception from a reasonably good novel than from a "solid" piece of social-science research.'

Brown's review of literature-in-marketing ranges across works produced by the 'marketing literati' and marketing methodologies which bear the imprints of literary narratives and which include projective techniques, critical incident techniques, Semiotics, Hermeneutics, Discourse Analysis, subjective personal introspection, and case studies. But for Brown, the problem with the majority of contributions to the literary school of marketing scholarship – with some exceptions – is that they have taken a functionalist approach. This is revealed not least in the metaphors he uses to describe their activities. He begins this review of the marketing literati by referring to the 'apparatus' of literary criticism that they apply in their interpretations of Literature. Brown (1998, p. 133) also describes Barbara Stern, one of the marketing literati's pioneering figures, as the 'primum mobile' of this methodological transfiguration. Brown further describes the approaches of the marketing literati as deploying 'devices', 'tools' and 'techniques'.

In sum, Brown argues that in the main the marketing literati take the content of the narratives they study at face value, as having an unproblematic, unmediated relationship with reality. As Brown (1998) claims:

Nevertheless, it is no exaggeration to state that a largely uncritical – essentially realist – assumption of unproblematic linguistic transparency is all too prevalent. In classic, New Criticism fashion, the marketing literati seem to believe that texts mean what they say, and say what they mean. (p. 151)

What Brown appears to be suggesting is that this particular wave of marketing literati – with some exceptions – have not really moved beyond the positivist problematic, that is perceived as having brought about the crisis in the representation of marketing.

However, Brown goes on to acknowledge that Barbara Stern and others of the marketing literati have progressively moved away from their initial assertions that the main benefit of taking a literary approach was in opening up new empirical lines of endeavour. He also commends them for having pressed the many and varied schools of literary theory into service. But on this point he raises another criticism, namely that while the practitioners of literary theory represents a diverse and heterogeneous range of approaches the marketing

literati have tended to treat marketing communications in a somewhat monolithic fashion. Brown appears to be arguing that the project of literary theory was to map out and provide a more complex picture of what constituted the Literary and the diverse experience and insights which literary expression *illuminated*. By extension Brown argues that what the marketing literati have failed is to foreground the stylistic fads, fashions, trends, movements, cults and schools of thought that characterise the trajectory of twentieth century advertising.

Turning the Tables: a critique of Brown's 'Literary turn'

With regard to Brown's argument so far, there are two issues to raise. First, I would contend that the thrust of the diverse approaches to literary theory was to question and problematise the assumptions underpinning the literary canon and associated practices of literary criticism, and not simply provide a more complex picture of what constituted a taken-for-granted concept of literature. In this respect Brown might be viewed as treating literature in a somewhat homogeneous, monolithic fashion. Second, despite qualifications about the problems of defining postmodernism, what also comes through is that Brown is adhering to a discretely delineated view of postmodernism that conforms to the taxonomy he has previously laid down.

I now want to contest Brown's subsequent critique of the marketing literati's engagement with extra-advertising marketing phenomena, primarily consumer behaviour studies in the form of: consumer interviews, consumption experiences, motivation, consumer relationships to brands, the use of projective techniques, critical incident techniques and further narratological analyses of various hues.

With some notable exception, the problem for this particular body of literary-influenced marketers, claims Brown, is that the literary theory they apply is old-fashioned, predicated on structuralist schools of critical thought, which seek to identify the deep, inviolate, universal structures or functions that underpin the marketing texts in question. But this essentially modernist idea of deep universal structure of meaning, Brown goes on to argue, has been abandoned as an impossible dream by latter-day postmodern, poststructuralist literary theorists.

However, Brown's contention that these modernist and structuralist approaches have been abandoned begs serious questions. Privileging the latter-day, up-to-date, contemporary postmodern, poststructuralist literary theories over those of the abandoned, old-fashioned structuralist literary theories is to establish a binary opposition that simply reinscribes the logocentric structural mode of reasoning Brown claims is being abandoned. A

deconstruction of poststructuralism, and postmodernism particularly, attests to an 'excess' of meaning in these terms. To describe a movement, a theory, an event as later, more modern than the modern is to expose a paradox, a logical contradiction, an aporia and more than a trace of a characteristically postmodern ironic relationship. But what such terms as postmodernism and poststructuralism inscribe is that while there might be a desire to move beyond the modernist/structuralist problematic, it is impossible to escape fully the constraints/inscriptions of the linguistic structures which are a condition of our entry into the realm of writing, without being consigned to silence. As Umberto Eco (1996) playfully iterates:

The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently. I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her, "I love you madly," because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, "As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly." At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly that it is no longer possible to speak innocently, he will nevertheless have said what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her, but he loves her in an age of lost innocence. (p. 31)

To put it more succinctly perhaps, Brown is in danger of simply instituting, privileging his particular postmodern, post-structural marketing brand of literary theory, without fully acknowledging that it is *fashioned* out of what has already been pre-scribed. Brown, it could be argued, is in danger of simply re-inscribing an endless substitution of cultural gatekeepers. Clearly Brown wants to move beyond the positivist problematic and while he is prepared – unlike the first wave of marketing literati – to follow through the implications of such a move, only it would seem, to a point.

On first reading it would seem that Brown and many of his American antecedents adopt and adapt what are fundamentally liberal humanist constructions of literature and aesthetics. While these might appear to have radical, alternative potential in challenging marketing's scientific predilections, there is a strong argument that such approaches run counter to the project of literary theory. At this point it is important to acknowledge that marketing, literature, literary theory are not the uniform, homogeneous bodies of knowledge implied in my approach. This move is merely by way of opening up a line of argument.

The critical theory, structuralist and poststructuralist discourses on which literary theory substantively draw are largely predicated on challenging humanist constructions of the literary and the aesthetic; on displacing and decentering the humanist subject as the source and origin of meaning. What the writing of Stephen Brown appears to represent is not so much a decentering of the humanist subject, but a re-centering of the humanist subject on an aesthetic paradigm, as opposed to an empiricist, scientific one.

It could also be argued that from certain theoretical perspectives the production of aesthetic works can, in one rhetorical movement, both conceal and reveal what are construed as profound truths, insights, new ways forward and positions from which the reader can make sense of the work in question.

Also implicit in Brown's pronouncements is that literary expression has an honesty, an integrity, that acknowledges the complexities of life and lived experience. The trajectory of his argument is that the process of 'balancing' this complexity leads to flashes of creative insight, epiphanies, in contradistinction to the bland, self-deceiving, reductive nostrums and prognostications of science.

While not taking issue with Brown's challenge to the truth claims of the scientific/positivist approaches, there is a concern that the alternative he adopts similarly effaces the blind spots to be found in the literary project, as represented in his work. What is at issue is whether the scepticism being applied to scientific and positivist epistemologies should also be applied to aesthetic epistemologies.

On this point Brown (1998) appears to be somewhat evasive and contradictory. He states:

. . . despite the undeniable attractions of the 'sceptical' strand of postmodern thought, my suspicion is that this nihilistic, essentially continental European perspective - although wonderfully refreshing to imbibe on occasion - is incapable of sustaining a programme of empirical research. By its own anti-representational criteria, it cannot do so because empiricism is ruled out of postmodern court. (p. 248)

Nailing his colours firmly to the mast of subjective criticism, Brown (1998) articulates and justifies the position he takes. He argues that because the essentially continental European perspective on postmodern thought is:

. . . susceptible to the rejoinder: 'OK, you have told us that our existing models, theories, concepts and suchlike are wrongheaded, mistaken, unsustainable, old-fashioned and so on, but unless you have something better to put in their place we'll stick with the imperfect devils we know'. Postmodernism of the Baudrillardian or Derridean variety is impotent against this kind of critique, and it follows that the 'affirmative', the storytelling, the anecdotal, the autobiographical, the conversational, the confessional, the narrative-based, the less extreme school of Anglo-American postmodernism possesses greater revolutionary potential, paradoxical though it at first appears. (p. 249)

However, Brown makes a number of assumptions and engages in a further degree of evasion here. First, he conflates the Baudrillardian and Derridean approaches to postmodernism, a position no doubt uncomfortable for both. Second, by attributing a degree of homogeneity to the European strand of postmodernism Brown contravenes a crucial tenet of his often cited descriptions of postmodernism as characterized by heterogeneity and fragmentation. Third, simply asserting that postmodernism of the Baudrillardian or Derridean variety is impotent, does not constitute an argument from which it follows that Anglo-American

postmodernism has greater potential. Fourth, in ruling out sceptical, European postmodernists, Brown not only marginalizes Baudrillard and Derrida, but also other postmodernists, most notably Foucault, whose work it is later argued provides a useful theoretical model for exploring the relationship between knowledge and the construction of subjectivity (particularly apposite for situating marketing as a discipline, given its predilection for surveying/surveillance, monitoring and re-presentation). Fifth, in ruling out a whole body of work that would provide a rich seam for challenging the positivist project, Brown also forestalls a potential challenge to his own aesthetic project. From a Derridean perspective in asserting the 'potency' of Anglo-American postmodernism over the 'impotence' of the European, Brown institutes a classic structuralist binary opposition, in which the privileged, affirmative term is clearly signified on the basis of its logocentric or phonocentric appeal – its origins based in the relating of direct human experience manifested in storytelling, anecdote, autobiography, conversation and confession. On this basis, the potency/impotency binary might be reversed, with European postmodernists viewed as providing the radical challenge with regard to following through the implications of the crisis of representation.

What is also puzzling is the concern for the capability to sustain a programme of empirical research (not that this necessarily follows for all European postmodernists). Only two pages earlier, Brown (1998) writes:

Every time you express yourself in what Agger (1989) terms the 'midwestern empiricist' mode of enunciation, you are reinforcing its 'rightness' and literally sentencing marketing to the lowest levels of the intellectual hierarchy. Every time you crank out a paper according to the 'normal' 'usual' or 'standard' formula, you are perpetuating the hegemonic (in a Gramscian sense) character of academic marketing discourse; you are - with apologies to Althusser - sustaining extant ISAs (Ideological State Apparatuses) and RSAs (Repressive Scholarly Apparatuses).

(p. 247)

Despite the conscious/unconscious 'slip of the pen' - Repressive Scholarly Apparatuses as opposed to Repressive State Apparatuses – what is puzzling here is that while it might well be possible to carry out an empirical programme of research which enables the 'findings' to be enunciated in an oblique, discursive, expressive, non-empirical, Literary mode, there is no clear reason for privileging the knowingness, construction and positioning of the subject of the Literary, expressive enunciation over that of the subject of empirical research. The simple assertion by Brown (1998) - as cited earlier - that marketers, in reflecting on their own marketing-related behaviours and experience, and through the adoption of expressive, poetic, aesthetic, creative prose will be able to reveal the hidden truths of marketplace phenomena, is no guarantee.

While appearing to be all-embracing, the trajectory adopted in the postmodern marketing texts of Stephen Brown nevertheless appear to marginalize, occlude, ignore and dismiss

certain arguments which contribute to the project that is literary theory and which calls into question the functioning of the literary canon.

Challenging the Canon

But with assent always comes the possibility of dissent. And, as the editorial note in the New Penguin English Dictionary, cited earlier, observes, the literary canon has been called into question, as it has become increasingly evident that it 'represents the taste of a particular race, class or gender at a specific historical moment'. While the Cartesian subject claims to be the source/originator of knowings by recourse to nothing other than the claims and configurations of his or her own reasoning powers and sensibilities that self-same subject is also, in part at least, predetermined by what culture circumscribes as objects/subjects worthy of being known; by the process of canonisation.

And while almost by definition it is likely that few postmodern marketers with an interest in the Literary would limit themselves to the canon of *great works*, nevertheless, the literary canon along with the critical vocabulary and categories through which it is constructed have the effect of circumscribing and limiting the values and meanings available. If interpretation - both in a general sense and with regard to the marketing project - is ultimately grounded in a psychological propensity for insight, epiphany, for a simple *knowings* based on a subjective introspection without any concomitant explanation, then the 'anything goes' charge levied at postmodernism and postmodern marketing in particular, would stand.

This dissertation argues that from a postmodern marketing perspective, Roland Barthes pronouncement on the 'Death of the Author' has become more a displacement, with meaning now a function of the subjective introspection of the consumer/reader as author of his or her own meanings. In marketing terms, it is perhaps the equivalent of the shift from the sales era to the marketing era in which the consumer/reader rather than the producer/author is now the sovereign authority. But what is excluded in both cases is the linguistic, cultural and historical mediation of the subject.

Consequently, texts, whether literary, marketing or other classification, continue to be addressed and interpreted as extensions of the unified, *knowing*, introspective subject, rather than as an effect of particular signifying practices crossing and dividing the subject - albeit now as reader/consumer.

Postmodern marketing's continued insinuation of the transcendental subject as ultimately the *exclusive* locus of truth, meaning and insight, effectively excludes the relative determination of the linguistic, historical and cultural structures which collude in the positioning of the subject. As Belsey (1999) argues, it is our entry into language, our

linguistic constitution as subjects that make us susceptible to the meanings and values in circulation in our own culture. Furthermore, the subject positions on offer through particular discourses are varied and often at variance. So, for instance, our understanding of genre will in part determine how we read particular texts. As Belsey (1999a) points out:

A domestic conduct book sets out to overcome the anxieties about marriage that motivate its publication; a play, by contrast, foregrounds anxieties to sustain the plot for five acts, and a happy ending does not necessarily dispel them entirely. (p.15)

Captivating Subjects

Close attention to signifying practices and modes of address raises the question of how the inscription of particular perspectives operate to 'capture' and delimit the subject, based on a movement of inclusivity/exclusivity. It is argued that in effacing the impact of discursive practice the Cartesian or humanist 'subject' - whether as author or as reader - is contradictorily positioned as both object and subject of knowledge; not just a reader of 'texts' but the ultimate authority on the 'text'; not just recipient of knowledge but, also, final authority on what is to count as knowledge, and what knowledge is to count. In effect, what can be known is predetermined by what has already been included and excluded as worthy of being known, and simply requires assent to see the good sense of what is being expressed.

Invoking some literary conventions and modes of address by way of illustration, we know even before we reach the end of the fable the moral that has been inscribed. In drama, the ironic aside is a stock convention for eliciting, interpellating and affirming arguably more complex configurations of values, by means of an invitation to the reading/viewing subject to share in an exclusive knowingness. In the classic realist novel, the convention of the omniscient narrator is regularly deployed to help in the structuring of an inclusive/exclusive complex of values invariably positioned as offering knowing reflections on reality, the human condition and timeless human truths to which the reader is invited to subscribe.

By means of a sleight of hand or rhetoric, the humanist subject is attuned and inducted into an 'exclusive' knowingness that not only purports to offer access to reality, but, at the same time, lays down subtle guidelines as to what is worthy of being known; and it is made all the more captivating for being rendered visible only from a particular perspective, for being positioned beyond articulation, beyond the disruptive, destabilising play of the text.

This chapter opened with an extract from a story by Kafka entitled 'Up in the Gallery'. What is interesting about the Kafka text is that it offers unresolved positions for the subject within the same aesthetic frame, inviting us – to cite Belsey (1999, p. 134) commenting on Holbein's *The Ambassadors* – 'suddenly to read from another position and thus [drawing]

attention to the subject as precisely positioned, making sense from a specific and limited place.' So, *The Ambassadors*, while averring to conspicuous consumption as a visible manifestation of success, at one and the same time, with its representation of an anamorphic skull – which can only be viewed as such by taking up a viewing position to the right of the picture frame - offers a contested, dissenting reading that registers the 'memento mori' and 'vanitas' genres of art, and which intrude and only make sense from an exclusive and excluded position on the margins of the work.

Playing to the Gallery . . .

My interest and intrigue in the Kafka short story is that part of its rhetorical, persuasive, poetical power – the pleasure it offers in excess of the content - derives from the denial of a clear, authoritative position for the subject of the story. The scene being viewed from the gallery – both for the young visitor and the reader - does not have a clear focus, is indistinct, uncertain. Indeed, what constitutes the subject of this story is not just the plight of the equestrienne or the young visitor's confusion, but how the viewing/reading subject is denied a stable position from which to achieve a singular, meaningful perspective on the events visible from and in the gallery. While more conventional literary critical position might interpret the uncertainty, restlessness, undecidability of 'Up in the Gallery' as symptomatic of an existential angst I would suggest the text also offers a perspective that throws into relief the material effects of the contradictory modes of address and signifying strategies that constitute this text.

'Up in the Gallery' comprises a counterposing of two sentences, two paragraphs, two perspectives represented through the binary opposition of realism and fantasy. But with neither genre privileged, the effect is a focusing of attention on the modes of address and signifying practices deployed by these preinscribed narrative forms, opening up a space that acknowledges the discursive constitution of the subject, which all too often is rendered invisible by the operation of certain literary conventions.

From a position in the gallery the subject of the narrative views a scene – the performance by a circus equestrienne - in which the use of language, imagery and rhythm not only reinforces the prescriptions of each narrative form but, in not resolving between them, draws attention to the material effects of their accompanying modes of address and signifying practices. While the terse syntactical structure, the detached, impersonal tone, the punctuated, staccato rhythms and the relentless, insistent movement of the first half of the Kafka story are counterposed to the more hesitant, thoughtful, breathless, captivating rhythms and language of the second part of the story, no clear position is offered the subject

from which to make the scene clearly and unambiguously intelligible. Indeed, neither narrative form offers an escape for the subject from the linguistic and cultural space that constitutes reality/fantasy. Unusually perhaps, rather than providing a position of *knowingness* from which to make sense of the scene visible to the subject of the narrative, what remains is a position of undecidability, of openness.

What is intriguing about the Kafka story is that in its counterposing of realist and fantasy/romantic genres it refuses to resolve contradictory discourses, simply to position the subject as divided against itself. Or to put the argument from a slightly different perspective, it is an acknowledgement of the subject as a function of the particular discourse in which it is positioned

I would argue that it is this counterplay, this play of difference, this confounding of patterns of expectation that gives writing its creative power to reconfigure perspectives. But what further adds to the creative power of this particular piece of writing is that by simultaneously maintaining alternative perspectives - this movement of inclusion and exclusion, inside and outside - it resists closure and in so doing defers the fixing of the subject to already pre-scribed perspectives. What remains perhaps is the desire for captivation, for 'the pleasure that is in excess of the content', but at the same time not blind to captivation as its own particular form of power play.

The argument I wish to propose is that readings which focus on the materiality of the signifier are able to render interpretations in which the stratagems of inclusion/exclusion cannot but be contested and that *knowingness* is neither objective, matter-of-fact, nor a function of subjective introspection, but is circumscribed by a destabilising movement of signifying practices and intersecting discourses. The result is not so much a subject divided against itself, characterized by uncertainty and dissatisfaction, which arguably has the all-important effect – particularly from a marketing standpoint - of both frustrating and sustaining desire, but of a subject that deconstructs and negotiates the inclusive/exclusive power plays of the discourses in which they are inscribed.

Crucially, I want to suggest that this text by Kafka foregrounds an approach to textual production and consumption that has a particular relevance for how we might approach postmodern marketing discourse.

Problematising the question of the subject has the potential to map out new territories for interpreting the marketing project. Approaching texts so as not to provide a singular, unified subject position from which a meaning can be determined, perhaps offers a different model for reading and hence deconstructing marketing texts. While marketing is replete with models that view it as a discipline emerging through various stages or phases that track

its teleological progress in implicit accordance with the liberal humanist realization of individual (and consumer) sovereignty (Belk, 1995; Brown, 1995, 1995a; Firat & Venkatesh, 1993, 1995; Holt, 2002; Patterson, M, 1998; Shankar & Patterson, 2001; Shankar et al 2001, 2006), deconstructive readings which pay close attention to the specificity of their discursive practices have the potential to render other, excluded perspectives.

In similar fashion to Morgan, (2003) the aim here is to explore the productive effects of marketing's techniques in constituting particular forms of subjectivity. A focus on the productive effects of marketing's rhetoric will highlight the constitution of subjectivity as a space to be contested – rather than simply taken-for-granted.

Arguably, the power of and desire for exclusivity that is a characteristic feature of marketing is made possible by means of a movement that depends upon an endless play of inclusion and exclusion. It is perhaps the play of a desire predicated on becoming 'other', on making good the division of the 'Subject' against itself that accompanies what Lacan (2001) describes as the child's misrecognition of its 'completeness' during the mirror-stage of its development. It is arguably this division of the subject against itself, this 'lack' that constitutes the sense of exclusion and the consequent desire for exclusiveness, but which at the self same time seeks to reverse the trajectory of this desire.

This questioning of the subject is now used as a point of departure for deconstructing a particular trend in marketing texts to argue for *knowingness* as a consequence of subject positions discursively constituted and not as a consequence of individual Cartesian rationality, however logical or mercurial.

... Whoever you are

The Mercedes advertisement (Illustration 2), with the strapline 'For whoever you are', provides a point of engagement for both a deconstruction of the values it inscribes and its positioning of the subject as problematical, contradictory and divided against itself. The advertisement pitches itself overtly at the idea of ever more discerning individuals – symptomatic it might be argued of an increasingly fragmented, post-modern market - capable of shaping their own reality, in which undecidability, inconsistency, indeterminacy is not an issue but a virtue. In fact, the advertisement makes a virtue of such contradiction, on the play of inclusivity/exclusivity, as a mark of individuality; thus Penny - the subject of this advertisement - can at one and the same time be represented as highly focused (a programme manager) and unconventional; tolerant and intolerant; part of the media circus and critical of its effects; obsessed with the CL-class Mercedes; and represented as conscious that such a preoccupation/desire transgresses reasonable behaviour. But for this

Penny: Programme Manager (terrestrial TV)
Likes: 01 unconventionality 02 freshly-baked bread 03 her CL-Class (and its built-in TV, naturally)
Dislikes: 01 people who say 'whatever...' 02 people who go on TV to discuss personal problems
03 her preoccupation with the CL-Class

We've built a Mercedes for her
www.mercedes-benz.co.uk or call 0800 181 361

Mercedes-Benz is a trademark of DaimlerChrysler

FOR WHOEVER YOU ARE Mercedes-Benz

advertisement, it would seem that part of being an individual is that reason is transgressed: consistency of thought and action is not a requirement. Desire is nothing if not mercurial! It is perhaps not without significance that the subject of this advertisement, from whose vantage point we view this particular scene, is represented as a TV programme manager, thus directing the focus of the advertisement further away from the idea of a reality separate from an individual's perceptions, to that of hyper-real creations. Indeed, there is scope for arguing that we are not meant to subscribe to the literal truth of the final line of the advertising copy, 'We've built a Mercedes for her' (Penny). Arguably this is better represented as the Mercedes being a construction which depends on a shared linguistic and cultural space in which subjects - Penny and readers of this advertisement standing slightly behind and to one side of Penny - are conscripted; and so included in the exclusive range of ideals, values and fantasies on offer. And that perhaps is the more potent significance of the advertisement. The significance of consumer products lies not in the reality of their being, but as signifiers through which subjects position - and have positions created for - themselves, through the intersection of a range of discourses.

While Penny, the main subject of the Mercedes advertisement, may be interpreted as an unfolding of a particular model of individual aspiration and achievement, at one and the same time both rational, and mercurial and whimsical, the advertisement's modes of address attest to Penny occupying a discursive position openly divided against itself. Significantly, Penny manifests a fractured, fragmented subjectivity without any unsettling signs of cognitive dissonance.

Perhaps what the representation of a fractured, fragmented, mercurial subjectivity determines for marketing is a space to explore the (con)figuration of the subject. Rather than tracing the humanist realization of individual (and consumer) sovereignty, perhaps the focus should be on the material effects of such a shift in marketing discourse. By addressing individuals' shifting sense of self, marketing, in one 'stroke' and splitting of the subject, expands exponentially a potential schizophrenic or multiphrenic consumer constituency. And arguably, it brings new meaning to the term 'segmentation'.

The marketing project with its ceaseless, unsettling play on desire and exclusivity ultimately has little choice but to move beyond the idealization and realization of individual sovereignty. With the focus on the individual and customer-centricity now firmly inscribed, an expansive marketing project is the subject of a shift in focus to the determination of fragmented, mercurial subjects. But in so doing they open up further the territory for subjectivity as *being* inscribed in discursive practice rather than as simply the product or expression of the Cartesian human subject, however rational or mercurial.

The argument proposed here has been that by analysing the specific signifying strategies and modes of address of texts in their cultural and historical specificity, it is possible - not to elicit meaning clearly and unproblematically - but to establish how meaning is put into play and contested across a range of subject positions from which texts are made intelligible. Arguably, it offers marketing a more rigorous, theoretical focus on the design and deployment of signifying strategies as opposed to viewing marketing as the product of rigorous, objective statistical correlation, or as the product of inspired creativity or genius; and will ultimately lead to more careful consideration of the strategic and ethical implications of the marketing project.

The readings of Kafka and the Mercedes advertisement offer potential new directions - albeit not exclusive – for an otherwise mapping of marketing and consumer studies.

Whither Marketing: Deconstruction

By way of summarizing, much of literary theory – notably feminist, post-colonial and queer theory - has been at pains to explore the stratagems by which the literary is implicated in the constitution of particular forms of subjectivity, through the construction of exclusive canons that tend towards the privileging of certain values. It is argued that this is also an issue of major significance for marketing which similarly is implicated in the constructions of subjectivity through fictionalising, narrative, imaging and poetic devices. Indeed, what both literature and marketing propagate and disseminate is an imag(in)ed sense of how 'to be' in the world.

With regard to this issue Brown reveals a somewhat uncritical acceptance of the literary canon and all this entails for the shaping of values and construction of subjectivity. Indeed, he argues positively for the importance of literary critics as defenders of the literary faith, guardians of tradition, of the canon – defending them against accusations of being little more than parasites and leeches feeding off the creativity of original writers.

Brown (1998) observes that:

Far from being subordinate to, or leeches upon, the working author, critics actually *create* (Brown's emphasis) and maintain the canon through their commentaries on the merits of individual works, artists, genres, interpretations and schools of thought. (p. 133)

He further adds that,

Literary criticism may be chronologically posterior to the texts which it addresses and assesses, but it also serves to identify, classify and, not least, disqualify the works that are deemed worthy of critical attention in the first place. (p. 133)

But the glaring question that Brown fails to ask is: what is the basis on which these critics qualify and disqualify literary works?

What Brown describes here has clear parallels with the activities of what marketing and consumer culture discourse identify as the role of 'Cultural Intermediaries' or 'Cultural Gatekeepers' (Edwards, 2000; Featherstone, 2000; Frosh, 2001; Holt 2004; McFall, 2002; Nancarrow et al 2001; Negus, 2002, Nixon & du Gay; Paterson 2006; Soar 2002; Solomon et al 1999).

Many judges or 'tastemakers' influence the products that are eventually offered to consumers. These judges, or cultural gatekeepers, are responsible for filtering the overflow of information and materials intended for consumers. Gatekeepers include film, restaurant and car reviewers, interior designers, disc jockeys, retail buyers and magazine editors. (Solomon et al 1999, p. 442)

Quite evidently, literary critics form part of this cultural milieu, which mediates the production/consumption process.

The thrust of Solomon et al's (1999) argument is that tastes and product preferences are not formed in a vacuum:

The selection of certain alternatives over others - whether cars, dresses, computers, recording artists, political candidates, religions or even scientific methodologies - is the culmination of a process of cultural selection. (p. 439)

These choices, they contend, are driven by the images presented to us in mass media; our observations of those around us; and even by our desires to live in the fantasy worlds created by marketers. And one might add, by the narrative/fictive worlds created by Literature. To be clear, the literature being described here would incorporate what are conventionally termed fiction and non-fiction, as both engage in narrative/fictive processes of constructing and selecting series of events that are deemed noteworthy. And what is deemed noteworthy, it might be argued, is that knowledge, *knowingness* which carries with it a certain power – be it a power of attraction, of dictat, of veracity, of truth-claims, of insight, of inclusion, of identification. Cultural gatekeepers, as the term implies, have a certain power to accede or contest what might be entered as worthy of being known.

Certainly, the marketing literati have provided new and challenging ways of generating readings and insights into marketing. But, as interesting and outwardly heterogeneous as they might be, the discomfiting question persists that they remain further extensions of an unannounced, unacknowledged liberal humanist project that, while promoting the virtues of tolerance, balance, equality, discernment, freedom-of-choice, individual sovereignty, does so within a discursive framework that privileges the centrality of the *knowing*, transcendental humanist subject as the source and guarantor of meaning. All too often, what is not addressed is how that *knowingness* is constituted. But once we begin to challenge

knowingness as ultimately grounded in and validated by individual consciousness, it is possible to open up the terrain for exploring the construction of knowledge and the question of *knowingness* as discursively or textually situated.

And this is precisely where the textual strategies of sceptical postmodernists or poststructuralists are far from impotent as claimed by Brown (1998) above. Part of what poststructural and deconstructive readings strive for is to tease out what is at issue in particular texts, foregrounding and calling into question the logocentric sources of our *knowingness*. However, at the same time, there is the recognition that their own readings are not immune from the process of deconstruction, which in turn keeps in process the validating procedures underpinning their interpretation.

It would appear that Brown and other advocates of literature-in-marketing have simply adopted a shopping basket approach to literary theory, only selecting and sampling various methodologies that consciously and unconsciously accord with their subjective positioning, without following through the epistemological, cultural and historical implications of their engagement with literary theory. Are they simply buying the Nike trainers and effacing the possibility of sweatshop conditions of production? What is problematical about Brown's appropriation of literary theory is that it is a *partial* reading. While he references literary theory as an all-embracing term, what he in practice focuses upon is literary criticism in the new critical/Romantic tradition which accords with his commitment to subjective personal introspection. There is a certain irony here. Brown enlists a particular mode of literary interrogation to support the challenge he lays down to the marketing positivists, but it was in challenging this particular form of subjective literary interrogation that much of the literary theory of the past thirty to forty years has been predicated.

Brown's approach, along with other Literary marketers, is open to the charge, which he readily admits, of being relativist, nihilistic, anarchic. But as Belsey points out, abandoning truth is not necessarily to embrace its opposite, the free-for-all of radical subjectivism that Brown implies. It is worthwhile quoting Belsey (1989) at length to elaborate an important aspect of the poststructuralist perspective she is proposing:

The proposition is that we cannot *know* that any existing language maps the world adequately, that there can be no certainty of a fit between the symbolic and the real. This is not the same as encouraging people to subscribe to whatever conviction happens to come into their heads, or inciting them to make things up. Nor is it to settle for believing them when they do. It is perfectly possible to recognize lies without entailing the possibility of telling the truth, least of all the whole truth. It would be very naive indeed to claim that people do not from time to time set out to deceive each other, or that institutions and states do not practise cover-ups on a deplorable scale. But what they conceal is what they know, and since there can be no guarantee that any system of differences maps the world accurately, knowledge is necessarily culturally and discursively relative. This does not exonerate the liars.

They are culpable. But neither does it support the belief that in order to be able to denounce lies, we have to cling to a metaphysics of truth. Language is a system of differences, not of binary oppositions. (p. 86)

It is the misunderstanding of language as a system of differences, rather than of binary oppositions, that often results in a failure to mitigate an either/or rationality that insists on dealing in absolutes and certainties. In many ways, the approach Brown advocates can be seen to accord with the creative aspects of marketing, where product ideas and communications campaigns are being worked upon. However, the relativist, nihilist, anarchic approach seems ill at ease with Brown's professed desire to assist practising marketers. If Brown is serious, then it could be argued an approach that enabled an exploration of the subject positions being offered readers would have greater validity.

The cultural and historical space we now occupy is unprecedented for the multiplex of images, narratives, fictions, brand-scapes, signifying systems that compete to captivate and capture our attention, our commitment, our loyalties; to offer audiences/readers particular positions, perspectives and prescriptions through which texts achieve particular modes of visibility and intelligibility; to inscribe and re-inscribe our realities through accelerating metaphorical shifts of meaning that lead to an endless proliferation of desire. But ironically, at the same time, this increase in visibility, this facility for achieving an evermore extensive, public visible presence in which it is possible theoretically for all and sundry to have their say, overwhelms the likelihood of achieving any significant visibility, unless matched by resources for capturing public attention. The effect, however, is to give the impression of a progressive participation in the processes of democratisation, of having one's voice heard by means of one's consumer choices.

Further, while the increasing heterogeneity of positions from which meaning can be ascribed makes the unified Cartesian subject as the source of a unified knowledge increasingly untenable, it doesn't obviate the play of power in securing what might count as knowledge. As this increasingly overwhelming array of signifying systems extends and intensifies its modes of 'visibility', the result is a degree of 'blindness', a degree of de-selection, a rendering invisible of less powerful discourses, and an insinuation of how we are more recognisably subject to the discourses that have the resources to captivate and engage our participation.

Such is the intensity of the communication to which we are now subject that the question of who and what to believe no longer revolves around the simple question of determining the ultimate truth or reality of the matter, but of registering what is at stake. With the gathering encroachment of the postmodern it has become a substantive issue of contention that truth and reality are not simply manifestations of 'unmediated' representations of the world, but that they are the consequences of particular or discrete – and discreet, by way of

maintaining a 'prudent' silence - discursive practices. In short, a feature of the postmodern cultural and historical space we currently inhabit is that truth is revealed to be a chimera and that the 'reality' we inhabit lacks a singular, all-encompassing and authoritative rationale. (Belsey, 1989, 2001, 2002; Best & Kellner, 1991; Brown, 1995, 1998; Hutcheon, 1994; Lyotard, 1984; Munslow, 1997.)

Conclusion

This chapter raised questions about marketing's interest in and engagement with the literary and literary theory as a means for reconfiguring the subject of marketing. I began by briefly revisiting the reasons for marketing's turn to the literary and particular aspects of its response. I subsequently explored some difficulties surrounding what might be understood by 'Literature' and the trajectory of English Literature, reflecting upon the problematic boundaries of the discipline, challenges to the taken-for-granted literary canon and the otherwise possibilities opened up by taking a critical, deconstructive approach to the ways in which the literary is configured.

These various perspectives were used to examine more closely the deployment of arguments by Brown and others to develop a marketing theory that incorporates a turn to the literary. As a consequence, it was argued that all too often, marketing, while advocating increased heterogeneity in its own discourse, simply takes the literary for granted. In particular, I argue that the boundaries of the marketing discipline are more difficult to define than convention would suggest, that in elevating marketing literati such as Stern, Hirschman and Holbrook, who are viewed as figures worthy of a new marketing canon, Brown is maintaining a set of exclusive approaches and values associated with a particular humanist literary aesthetic. I also argued that while seen as an alternative to the empiricist/scientific paradigm, the literary is invariably viewed as a touchstone for unique, privileged insights into the human condition on the part of perceptive authors, critics and readers - the gifted, knowing subjects, individuals of an orthodox liberal-humanist discourse.

As an alternative to this partial reading of the literary, I explored the potential offered by poststructuralist articulations of literary theory that are concerned with decentring the subject as locus of knowledge and the construction of subjectivity and meaning as a consequence of intertextuality, 'relayed' across a variety of discourses.

In providing a perspective on the positioning of the subject, I turned to the Franz Kafka short story, 'Up in the Gallery' to address the ways in which texts render 'reality' visible by means of a range of literary devices and signifying practices. It is argued that by destabilizing

the positioning of the subject, it is the issue of undecidability, rather than the securing of a knowing perspective on reality that is made manifest in the Kafka story.

An argument will be made for maintaining the problematisation of the essential, knowing Cartesian subject, where knowledge is viewed as a product of the rational individual's representations of the world, as a pre-text for a deconstruction of the ways in which meaning and the subject in and of particular texts are rendered visible and intelligible from an ever shifting array of perspectives and discourses. The effect is a destabilization of both the subject and meaning, not dissimilar to that of the young visitor in the Kafka story, 'Up in the Gallery'.

This questioning of the subject is subsequently used as a point of departure for deconstructing a range of marketing texts to argue for knowingness as a consequence of subject positions discursively constituted and not as a consequence of individual Cartesian rationality, however logical or mercurial.

In determining future directions for marketing, this study argues for a focus on the specificity of the effects of the subject positions offered in marketing texts, rather than insinuating them within a larger prescribed, teleological frame that views marketing interaction with the consumer as evolving through a series of stages – production, sales, marketing – corresponding to a 'realisation' of the ultimate primacy of the individual, sovereign consumer, whether objectively rational or irredeemably mercurial. The question is raised as to more specific implications of this individualism or subjectivity, particularly with regard to the configuration of consumer needs and desire.

The next chapter outlines the issues and processes entailed in pursuing a particular 'deconstructive' approach to the interpretation of texts and for the questioning of the 'subject', in both literary and marketing discourse, based on the work of Belsey (1988, 1989, 1999, 1999a, 2001, 2002, 2005), which takes its trajectory from Saussure, Foucault, Lacan and Derrida.

CHAPTER FOUR: QUESTIONING METHODOLOGY: LITERATURE DECONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Introduction

This Chapter explores the methodological implications for our understanding of meaning, the 'real' and subjectivity as a consequence of sceptical postmodern, poststructuralist readings. The theoretical frameworks on which this PhD is based have emerged from engagements with, and readings of, a post-Saussurean discourse that encompasses structuralism and poststructuralism, along with sceptical configurations of the postmodern and literary theory that sustain the problematisation of subjectivity. What is outlined in this chapter are proposals for a deconstructive critical methodology/approach that addresses the implications of the discursive configuration of reality. This will facilitate alternative perspectives in reading the texts of marketing and consumer culture that do not depend on, or assume, a logocentric sovereign consumer.

I begin by briefly registering the heterogeneous aspects of literary theory as a means for opening up more sceptical reading of the postmodern, particularly in relation to configurations of the sovereign consumer. In pursuing further critical readings with regard to questions of subjectivity and the configuration of the real attention is turned to Derrida and deconstruction. Subsequently, I consider the question of history and historicism, by way of paving the way for Foucault and discourse theory. I move on to the work of Belsey and configurations of cultural history/criticism as a means for juxtaposing, deconstructing and reading the texts of marketing and culture. The critical approach proposed by Catherine Belsey is adopted as the basis for challenging logocentric readings that ground the authority of meaning in an idealised human subjectivity, most notably manifest in marketing in the concept of the sovereign consumer.

In sum, the specific 'methodologies' or critical approaches that have been deployed in this research draw on Derridean deconstruction, Foucauldian discourse theory, Belsey and cultural history/criticism. These will be used to locate and deconstruct the texts of marketing and consumer culture as a constitutive part of a wider social, cultural and historic milieu. To this end, these texts – some of which conventionally might be deemed more appropriate to a literature review – constitute part of the primary data for this study. In engaging with this 'data', this research will focus on the signifying practices and modes of address of the texts being interpreted.

The reading of these texts will not be done in isolation, but by attending to the implications of their modes of representation and the conditions that give rise to these texts: where they

come from, who controls them, what they stand to gain? Deconstructive readings of these texts will not only render meaning, but also explore how, at the same time, they constitute the source of their own resistance. In pursuit of these aims, further techniques for rendering deconstructive readings include juxtaposing seemingly unrelated types of text, exploring somewhat mundane events, activities or texts that seem inconsequential in the greater scheme of things, attending to and unravelling seemingly inconspicuous details, and seeking out the conflicts, tensions and debates evident in any historical moment.

Addressing the question of methodology in a thesis that traverses both Arts and Social Science disciplines, entails navigating and balancing various and, at times, conflicting ontological and epistemological perspectives and priorities. These problems become particularly acute with regard to the deployment of deconstruction and its problematisation of a founding logos that is taken to guarantee meaning, whether or not that logos is configured as positivist or constructivist, deductive or interpretivist.

Overall, given the literary and discursive trajectory adopted by this research, the question of methodology or critical approach tend to focus on the qualitative, interpretive and speculative rather than the quantitative, deductive and definitive. The chapter concludes by considering further the problematisation of the ontological and the epistemological that arise from the critical approaches and interpretive practices that accompany this turn to the literary, and ultimately what is entailed in deploying cultural history/criticism as a mode of deconstructive reading.

Reconfiguring the *Literary*

This research will draw on diverse configurations of literary theory to interrogate and deconstruct further a range of marketing, anti-marketing, consumer and literary texts as a means of identifying gaps, opening up alternative trajectories and of contributing to the debate on the ways in which marketing can relate to a continuously changing postmodern world. The aim is neither simply to undermine such work nor privilege the arguments of this research. Rather, it is to situate this work in relation to these openings and trajectories as a means of rearticulating the social and communications impact of marketing within a postmodern environment increasingly represented as being characterised by fragmented, marketing-literate and *knowing* consumers. To this end, this Dissertation will argue for an ongoing openness and skepticism in locating and positioning the commercial or value imperatives that drive the marketing process, its methodological, ontological and epistemological assumptions, particularly with regard to the sovereign consumer.

In many respects, this openness is a consequence of the impact of literary theory and its problematisation of how we attend to and understand Literature, particularly with regard to the configuration of the author, reader and meaning. Further, literary, fictional discourse effectively collapses ontology and epistemology one into the other. Fictional writing by definition is not 'real', yet as signifying practice it offers a source of 'real' experience and 'instructive' commentary, both as a means of pleasure and in speculating what it is, and how, to be in the world. And as the publishing and advertising industry testify, the possibilities are open to endless reworking for authors, readers and consumers.

Fundamental to this research is that the (pro)positions offered in any text are never impartial: that they are always implicated in wider discursive formations and practices. Consequently, a case will be made for recognising and exploring the forces at play in the writing, reading, interpreting of texts that operate well beyond liberal-humanist notions of the sovereign author/reader. Key to this engagement with the ontological/epistemological problematic posed by this poststructuralist challenge to the sovereign subject will be the work of Derrida and deconstruction.

Derrida and Deconstruction

While the social and management sciences may now be engaging the linguistic turn and literary theory in an encounter with the postmodern, this does not make us master – or indeed servant - of the languages and texts in which we are circumscribed.

What followed as a result of Saussure's seminal *Course in General Linguistics* was that it problematised language's relation to reality that was to have far-reaching effects. Language could no longer simply be taken as read, as providing the means for achieving a linguistic one-to-one match with reality. From a post-Saussurean and poststructuralist perspective what we take as reality came to be compromised, as always already bearing the traces of the linguistic, cultural and historical structuring processes that precede our entry into language. One effect of this linguistic and poststructuralist turn is that the epistemological becomes collapsed into the ontological. From a methodological perspective, while what we understand as the 'real' undoubtedly exists the possibility of accessing a pure, pristine reality - objective or subjective - becomes highly problematic.

Recognising the complicity of language, Derrida is significant for his enduring challenge to logocentrism, 'the belief that the first and last things are the *Logos*, the Word, the Divine Mind, the infinite understanding of God, an infinitely creative subjectivity, and, closer to our time, the self-presence of full self-consciousness.' (Derrida, 1976, p. lxviii) Keeping to the radical thrust of Saussure's linguistics - that language is a system of differences without

positive terms - Derrida's writing constantly challenges the credibility of logocentrism, pointing out how ideas are constituted as an effect of the signifier, of the play of difference, rather than ideas constituting the origin of the signifiers through which the world, the real, is articulated.

And as Belsey (2002a) observes in a discussion of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*:

If ideas are effects, and not origins, those foundational, transcendental ideas, God, nature and reason, lose their capacity to guarantee meaning and truth. We long, but in vain, for a free-standing, self-guaranteeing signified, an idea, that would hold all other meanings in place, but no such transcendental signified exists. Thought is not finally anchored in anything outside the differences, without positive terms, which constitute the language that enables us to think in the first place. (p. 116)

It is this 'complicity' of language that Derrida refuses to let go. Constantly aware how language's articulations privilege the logocentrism deeply embedded in Western thinking, Derrida deploys a style of writing that seeks to resist any resort to a founding logos. To this end Derrida's writing destabilises, circumvents, refuses, resists, the obvious and the immediate; unpicking and deconstructing the snags and details to further articulate and set our guard against the permeating force of logocentric thinking, centred on the logos of Western reasoning, the *knowing* humanist subject.

Consistent to his oft cited articulation that there is no position outside the text (*Il n'y a pas d'hors texte*), Derrida's (p 158, 1976) writing is invariably located in relation to other writing – Saussure, Rousseau, Searle, Freud, Kafka, 'postcards'. In so doing this stratagem effectively resists the inscription of a purely Derridean position, pure Derridean thought, a place outside the text from which to interpret the world.

Because of the theoretical, interpretivist approach adopted by this work, there is no methodology in the strict positivist sense of the word. Indeed, to offer such a methodology would run entirely counter to the interpretivist paradigm of much of postmodern marketing and the deconstructive thrust of this work. Derrida (1991) himself has argued that:

Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one. Especially if the technical and procedural significations of the words are stressed. It is true that in certain circles (university or cultural, especially in the United States) the technical and methodological 'metaphor' that seems necessarily attached to the very word 'deconstruction' has been able to seduce or lead astray. (p 275)

For Derrida, methodology implies a position outside discourse, a mode of analysis which suggests a, 'regression toward a simple element, toward an indissoluble origin' (Derrida, 1991, p 273) a progression toward a position of privilege and neutrality from which the truth, the fact of the matter, the real state of affairs can be revealed. But what Derrida's writing attests – particularly in being situated *contra* other writings - is the impossibility of

ever achieving such an objective, of achieving a detached, impartial position or perspective, outside the texts of our culture.

As Rice et al (1992) observe:

Deconstruction is a twofold strategy of, on the one hand, uncovering and undoing logocentric rationality and on the other, drawing attention to the language of the text, to its figurative and rhetorical gestures and pointing up the text's existence in a web of textuality, in a network of signifiers where no final and transcendental signified can be fixed. If it is to sustain such a strategy then it must constantly refuse to set itself up as a systematic analysis independent of the text, a system that explains and masters, since to do so would be to fix the meaning of the text. Deconstruction appears, therefore, not as a rigid method or explanatory metalanguage, but more as a process and a performance closely tied to the texts it deconstructs. (p. 148)

And as Beardsworth (1996) notes:

A thinker with a method has already decided how to proceed, is unable to give himself or herself up to the matter of thought at hand, is a functionary of the criteria which structure his or her conceptual gesture. For Derrida...this is irresponsibility itself. (p. 4)

But this is not to argue that deconstruction serves no useful purpose. What deconstruction can promote in its unsettling is an otherwise thinking, a more careful consideration of language's relation to institutional structures and conventions and a space for inscribing otherwise possibilities. As Chia (1996) observes:

Deconstruction is never concerned only with signified content but especially with the conditions of possibility of discourse, with frameworks of inquiry and the institutional structures governing our practices. (p. 186/87)

Equally, Spivak in the translator's preface to *Of Grammatology* describes Derrida's process of deconstructive reading as one that produces rather than protects, albeit appearing as a somewhat random response to, or transaction with, particular textual moments that catch his attention:

If in the process of deciphering a text in the traditional way we come across a word that seems to harbour an unresolved contradiction, and by virtue of being a new word is made sometimes to work in one way and sometimes in another and thus is made to point away from the absence of a unified meaning, we shall catch at that word. If a metaphor seems to suppress its implications, we shall catch at that metaphor. We shall follow its adventures, through the text coming undone as a structure of concealment, revealing its self-transgression, its undecidability. It must be emphasised that I am not speaking simply of locating a moment of ambiguity or irony ultimately incorporated into the text's system of unified meaning but rather a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse that system. (Derrida 1976, p. lxxv)

While taking account of the difficulties Derrida finds with the term - implying a set of rules or techniques - deconstruction can be thought of as an attempt to 'catch at' the rhetorical strategies used in a text that seek to halt the structural play of language and construct the

temporary stability that we mistake for the truth of the matter, whether objective or subjective.

Consequently, as Norris (1982) argues, texts and interpretive strategies compete for domination in a field staked out by no single order of validating method. He cites Edward Said's, book *Orientalism*, as offering a very practical example of how deconstruction can engage a specific cultural history on its own textual ground to contest its interpretations. As Said (1985) cogently argues, the image of the Orient constructed by generations of scholars, poets and historians is shown to be governed by an ethnocentric discourse secure in the power of its superior wisdom. Occidental reason is refuted point for point in its mythography of Oriental laziness, guile and exotic irrationalism. Commenting on Said's approach, Norris (1982), observes that:

to combat this discourse by exposing its ruses of metaphor is not to set up as a 'science' unmasking the confusions of ideology. It is an act of challenge which situates itself on rhetorical ground the better to meet and turn back the claims of a spurious objectivity. (pp 87/8)

What Said achieves in his writing is to show how the truth claims of the West's images of the Orient are far from being reflections of how things are. Rather, they are culturally, historically and linguistically charged. So, far from being impotent, deconstruction not only foregrounds the signifying forces at play in the processes of writing but, also, the textual/rhetorical strategies that endow them with a particular form of significance, a particular form of power.

In further making the case for the potency of deconstruction as opposed to the anything goes school of postmodern hermeneutic thought, Norris (1992) states that it is possible to cite many passages from Derrida's work where he asserts that deconstruction is not a discourse with no further use for criteria of reference, validity or truth. To reinforce this point Norris states:

To deconstruct naive or commonsense ideas of how language hooks up with reality is not to suggest that it should henceforth be seen as a realm of open-ended textual 'freeplay' or floating signifiers devoid of referential content. In ethical terms likewise, it is a gross misunderstanding to suppose that deconstruction ignores or suspends the question of interpretive responsibility . . . For it is among the greatest virtues of Derrida's work that it raises issues of ethical accountability (along with epistemological questions) which are rendered invisible by the straightforward appeal to reference, intentions, textual authority, right reading, authorial warrant and so forth. What hostile commentators regularly fail to grasp is the fact that Derrida conserves these standards - maintains them, in his own carefully chosen words, as an 'indispensable guardrail' - even while showing that they cannot (or should not) set absolute limits on the exercise of critical thought. (pp 17/18)

It is important to register this aspect and reading of Derrida's work as a counter to tendencies that seek to use deconstruction to sanction not just the freeplay of the signifier,

but, by extension, the freeplay of interpretation, and how we interpret desire, as simply a manifestation of individual, consumer choice. What this Dissertation is concerned to provide, in part at least, is a discursive account of the wider historical and cultural forces at play, but which maintains a scepticism towards simply taking such accounts at their word. As such, the deconstructive thrust of this work is to register how the various texts that constitute the discursive focus of this Dissertation are caught up in attempts to halt the play of language in ways that are ethically and teleologically pre-scripted. Deconstructive readings might be thought of as attempts to render and counter the rhetorical strategies used in a text, which seek to halt the play of language and ground its authority in a founding logos that is taken to operate beyond the text.

While the founding logos of Western reasoning might be viewed as part of what determines the form of marketing's address and the ontological assumptions that underpin its methodological approach, deconstructive readings render this founding logos as that which marketing also seeks to unsettle. While predicated on meeting the 'real' needs and desires of the sovereign consumer, marketing is at the same time subject to a double movement, unsettling and articulating a sense of dissatisfaction with what constitutes the self's 'real' or 'authentic' needs, constantly determining a further sense of lack and in so doing propagating an endless cycle of consumption and accompanying discourse that configure this 'phenomenon' as constitutive of the postmodern. The deconstructive readings offered in this Dissertation will focus on this 'unsettling' and follow through on its implications.

Foucault and Discourse Theory

According to Best and Kellner (1991, p. 26), discourse theory views social phenomena as structured semiotically by codes and rules and is, therefore, amenable to analysis, utilising a linguistic model of signifying practice. Using this model, discourse theorists argue that meaning is not simply given, but is socially constructed across the documents of a number of institutional sites and practices. As May (1997, p. 157) observes:

Documents, as the sedimentations of social practices, have the potential to inform and structure the decisions which people make on a daily and longer-term basis; they also constitute particular readings of social events.

While, as May points out, documentary approaches have sometimes been dismissed as 'impressionistic', particular developments in discourse theory characterized by Michel Foucault's forensic, genealogical approach to historical documents, combined with developments in literary theory, make discourse analysis a particularly productive *methodology* for the study of postmodern marketing texts.

In assessing the impact of literary theory on postmodern marketing, this study will draw significantly on developments in discourse theory. Indeed, as Howarth (2000) points out, the social sciences have seen a proliferation of discourse about discourse, ranging from a close detailed analysis of language in use and the rules governing sets of sentences in speech or writing, to discourse as literally synonymous with the entire social system.

Originating in disciplines such as Linguistics and Semiotics, and a significant factor in the development of literary theory, discourse theory has also come to play an increasingly significant role in contemporary social science. Its growing prominence is not only evident in the increasing number of studies which use the concepts and methods of discourse analysis but, also, visible in the widening scope of its deployment.

This increasing deployment can be attributed to the growing dissatisfaction with the ubiquity of positivist modes of inquiry. In recent decades, the positivist hegemony has been challenged, with numerous research programmes drawing upon a range of interpretive and critical traditions of analysis, such as ethnography, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, structuralism, poststructuralism, Western Marxism and post-analytical philosophy (Bryman 2001, May 1997).

Making the case for an interpretive approach has been no easy task given the success of the positivist model of the natural sciences in explaining and predicting the physical world. But, while not denying the achievements of positivism, it has exerted a force on sociological studies beyond its capacity to offer always a meaningful explanation. In taking issue with the positivist proposition that it is possible to view objective reality as a disengaged spectator, adherents to the interpretive approach acknowledge their position within a world of constructed meanings and practices, and seek to chart its intelligibility on a basis that admits the play of contingency.

Howarth (2000) has attributed the emergence of a distinctive field of discourse analysis both to the growth of interest in interpretive modes of analysis and to the impact of the so-called linguistic turn within the discipline of Linguistics during the 1970s, and its subsequent take-up by practitioners in disciplines such as Cultural Studies and Literary Theory. However, it is important to argue that discourse theory should not be seen as synonymous with hermeneutical modes of inquiry, which are normally associated with retrieving and reconstructing the meanings of social actors - an hermeneutics of recovery - in which the principal object of research is to make intelligible meanings that are initially unclear or incomplete. Post-structuralists such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault go beyond the hermeneutical emphasis on the determination of social meaning, regarding social structures as inherently ambiguous, incomplete and contingent systems of meaning. In this regard,

Derrida argues for a model of writing or texts in which human and social experience is structured according to the logic of *différance*, where meaning is a function of difference from and a deferral to the trace of other possibilities across an endlessly proliferating signifying network with no (ar)resting point. Neither is Foucauldian discourse analysis concerned with determining or revealing the truth; as Howarth (2000) points out, its concern is with exploring the connection between discursive practices and their institutional, historical and political construction and functioning.

This ambiguity, this contingency, is a function of the linguistic turn in the social sciences. As Derrida (1978, p. 280) further argues, 'When language invaded the universal problematic...when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse.' And this discourse, he argues is:

A system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. (p. 280)

The remit of discourse theory for the purposes of this dissertation will be that which focuses on the play and interpretation of socially produced meanings, rather than the search for objective causal explanations and origins.

For Foucault, an important concern of discourse theory is to analyse the institutional bases of discourse, the viewpoints and positions from which people speak, and the power relations these allow and presuppose. The production of discourse then, both linguistically and institutionally, becomes a site and object of struggle where different groups strive for hegemony and contest the production of meaning. Consequently, in this study, there is a concern with the construction of the discourses of marketing and Literature.

As May (1997) points out, the work of Michel Foucault evolved in reaction to both the naïve empiricism imported from the natural sciences and the subjectivism of certain social science perspectives. Foucault's work has been characterised by Dreyfus & Rabinow (1982) as moving beyond structuralism and hermeneutics towards an 'interpretive analytics'.

The trajectory of Foucault's work led to the deployment of a genealogical approach to the study of discourse; what he was to term a 'history of the present' (Foucault, 1977, p. 31). As Howarth (2000, p. 72) observes, Foucault's genealogical approach entailed the study of discourses in their historical specificity, beginning with the problematization of an issue confronting the historian in present day society, followed by an examination of its contingent historical and political emergence. As Lechte (1994) notes, Foucault's genealogical approach is not without its problems in that if the present determines the historian's themes of interest, then there is the danger of the past becoming a more or less inevitable lead up to the present. However, as Lechte further observes, Foucault's response is that this is a

danger exacerbated by idealism, where the notion of cause is allowed to predominate and where continuity is given precedence over discontinuity. Lechte argues that Foucault recognized that if history is always genealogy and an intervention, then frameworks of knowledge and modes of understanding are subject to change. Consequently, the issue becomes one of determining the forces at play in those discourses offering an explanation of, and commentary, on such change.

As an example, Howarth (2000, p. 72) cites Foucault's argument that *Discipline & Punish* (1977) is a study in the genealogy of the present scientifico-legal complex from which the power to punish derives its bases, justifications and rules. Foucault's (1977) concern was not simply to write a history of punishment and the prison, rather, it was:

That punishment in general and the prison in particular belong to a political technology of the body is a lesson that I have learnt not so much from history as from the present. (p. 30)

The present events to which Foucault refers were a series of prison revolts across the world, including model prisons, tranquilizers, isolation, the medical and educational services. Foucault concludes that these revolts were not focused simply and necessarily on harsh conditions, but also on the control of the body through what he calls the 'technology of the soul'. As Foucault (1977) states:

What was at issue was not whether the prison environment was too harsh or too aseptic, too primitive or too efficient, but its very materiality as an instrument and vector of power; it is this whole technology of power over the body that the technology of the 'soul' – that of the educationalists, psychologists and psychiatrists – fail either to conceal or to compensate, for the simple reason that it is one of its tools. I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present. (p. 30-31)

By this I take Foucault to mean the tracing of the history of an event problematised in, and of, the present. What is of interest for this Dissertation is to problematise postmodern marketing's turn to the literary as the expression of an unfolding of a more progressive, enlightened approach to the needs of the consumer by examining in their specificity articulations of the *cool* consumer.

As a further example of how Foucauldian notions of power and the technology of the 'soul' relate to discourses of the body, but in ways more directly relevant to marketing, I want next to discuss the 'repressive hypothesis' as articulated by Michel Foucault (1979) in *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault puts forward the proposition that up to the beginning of the seventeenth century there was still a degree of frankness about sexual matters, but that this, according to received wisdom, was followed by a period characterised as the Victorian repression of sexuality. 'On the subject of sex, silence became the rule,' iterates Foucault

(1979, p. 3); exceptions being the brothel and the mental hospital. Only in those places could sex be talked about, and then only according to 'clandestine, circumscribed and coded types of discourse'. The consequences of such repression, so it is written, are only now being countered by modern attitudes towards sexuality.

However, Foucault (1979,) raises doubts about the ways in which this repression, this power operates:

But there may be another reason that makes it so gratifying for us to define the relationship between sex and power in terms of repression: something that one might call the, speaker's benefit. If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. (p.6)

Foucault (1979,) develops his line of argument:

What sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation, and manifold pleasures; to pronounce a discourse that combines the fervor of knowledge, the determination to change the laws, and the longing for the garden of earthly delights. This is perhaps what also explains the market value attributed not only to what is said about sexual repression, but also to the mere fact of lending an ear to those who would eliminate the effects of repression. Ours is, after all, the only civilization in which officials are paid to listen to all and sundry impart the secrets of their sex...But it appears to me that the essential thing is not this economic factor, but rather the existence in our era of a discourse in which sex... serves as a support for the ancient form - so familiar and important in the West - of preaching. A great sexual sermon - which has had its subtle theologians and its popular voices - has swept through our societies over the last decades; it has chastised the old order, denounced, hypocrisy, and praised the rights of the immediate and the real... (p.7)

Given the 'Oprah Winfreyisation' of television, with its proliferation of confessional talk shows and the consequent sermonising of its host and acolytes, this statement by Foucault would appear somewhat prescient. Further, this sexual sermon preaching freedom and liberation that Foucault articulates can be seen to inhabit the very narratives and fabric of everyday consumer culture and its marketing messages. And these sexual sermons invariably entail not so much proscription, but prescription; disseminating the ways and means in which manifesting sexual freedom and allure become synonymous with representations of freedom more generally.

Foucault does not take for granted received wisdom about the repressive hypothesis, but subjects to detailed textual scrutiny a variety of discourses in which it is circumscribed. As Foucault argues, the notion of repressed sex is not just a theoretical matter. The affirmation of a sexuality that has never been more rigorously subjugated is coupled with the grandiloquence of a discourse purporting to reveal the truth about sex. Crucially, argues Foucault, the statement of oppression and the form of the sermon refer back to one

another: they are mutually reinforcing. Consequently, he argues, that to contend the relationship between sex and power is not characterized by repression, is to risk falling into a sterile paradox. Foucault's concern is not with whether the repressive hypothesis is mistaken: rather it is to do with positioning it within a general economy of discourses on sex in modern society.

Commenting on this issue, Howarth states that what is of key importance to an understanding of the repressive hypothesis is that it is rooted in what Foucault calls the juridico-discursive conception of power. Consequently, Howarth (2000) states:

In this legalistic conception, power is seen to constrain freedom by repression and prohibitions, such that the production of truth and knowledge can be seen to challenge power in the name of greater freedom or sexual licence. This model is attractive because it benefits those intellectuals and protesters who speak out against power and domination in the name of a universal truth or reason, and it bolsters the prevailing understandings of power in liberal democratic regimes. (p. 74)

Howarth goes on to argue that for Foucault, what the focus on the 'juridico-discursive' forms also achieves is to conceal and make tolerable the more insidious forms of power by which social relations are organized, ordered and regulated. This juridico-discursive model thus fails to examine what Foucault calls the normalizing functions and disciplinary technologies of power, a bio-power, which is directed at the production of docile bodies (Foucault 1977: 138).

The central issue with regard to sexuality, Foucault (1979) argues is:

To account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue, briefly, is the over-all 'discursive fact,' the way in which sex is 'put into discourse.'

Hence, too, my main concern will be to locate the forms of power, the channels it takes, and the discourses it permeates in order to reach the most tenuous and individual modes of behavior, the paths that give it access to the rare or scarcely perceivable forms of desire, how it penetrates and controls everyday pleasure - all this entailing effects that may be those of refusal, blockage, and invalidation, but also incitement and intensification - in short, the 'polymorphous techniques of power.' (p. 11)

I would argue that postmodern consumer culture, with its marketing stratagems that relentlessly play on and reach into the most secret desires and everyday pleasures, is not just permeated by these forms of bio-power, but saturated.

By way of clarifying the issue, Foucault argues he is not claiming that the repressive hypothesis or the prohibition of sex is in itself a ruse, but is however a ruse to make prohibition into the basic and constitutive element from which it is possible to write the history of what has been said about sex in the modern era. What Foucault appears to be

arguing is that the repressive hypothesis and the idea of prohibition produce and delimit the conditions by which it is possible to speak about sexuality, desire and those drives that help chart, delimit and threaten to exceed, the boundaries of appropriate behaviour. At the same time repression and prohibition offer possibilities for what at first are articulated as transgressions, but which in fact turn out to be part of a pattern of conformity. Foucault (1977, 194) thus proposes a 'productive' conception of power in which power and 'true' discourses about sexuality are not opposed, but interconnected.

My argument is that the double movement Foucault describes, which offers both limits and the opportunity for transgression, for the constant shifting of desire, is crucial to a consumer-driven economy, and perhaps finds its ultimate manifestation in *cool*.

In this dissertation, I will utilise poststructuralist literary theory to explore the implications of this interplay of conformity and transgression. I will utilise strategies derived from Foucauldian influenced literary theory, particularly as manifested in new historicism and cultural history/criticism, to deconstruct a range of postmodern marketing texts and to consider how the play of conformity and transgression informs both these texts and the construction of a *cool* subjectivity. But first it is necessary to offer a brief overview of the configurations of history's own reflexive theorising with regard to history, historiography, the linguistic turn and poststructuralist debates.

History

It is the question of history that is the significant point on which the difference between structuralism and poststructuralism turns. In turn, history, its methodologies, critical and historiographical approaches have been a crucial part of the debates concerning the implications of the the linguistic turn, the postmodern and poststructuralism.

As a discipline that has at it's centre the interpretation of documentary evidence - to which history is itself constantly contributing - and the construction of narrative 'relating' this evidence, it was somewhat inevitable that the linguistic turn would have a significant impact on debates concerning History's epistemological status and methodologies. And as Berger et al (2003) observe: 'Even if they do not explicitly use theory themselves, the writing of historians is subtly informed by theoretical assumptions.' (p. xi)

Regardless of the linguistic turn, it is also the case that History was not without its difficulties with regard to terminological exactitude. As Arnold (2000) writes in a primer on History:

Language can be confusing. 'History' often refers to both the past itself, and to what historians write about the past. 'Historiography' can mean either the process of writing history, or the study of that process. In this book, I use 'historiography' to

mean the process of writing history; and 'history' to mean the end product of that process. As we will see, this book argues that there is an essential difference between 'history' (as I am using it) and 'the past'. (p. 5)

This confusion is perhaps indicative of the divisions and tensions in History's own history as to the epistemological status and value of its texts. As Spargo (2000) argues, such tensions reach back to Aristotle, who distinguished between history as the study of events that had actually taken place and poetry as the imagining of possible events. History was deemed to be dealing with specific truths, while the focus of poetry constituted something of a philosophical speculation on more universal truths. As Spargo (p. 3) observes: 'In insisting on history's more mundane recording role, Aristotle established a tension about the value of the activities that has fuelled disciplinary squabbles ever since.'

However, during the early modern period, the elevation of rationalism and empiricism resulted in the 'mundane' and detailed forensic activity of history being granted a more serious epistemological status. History now became a key part of the Enlightenment project in which the progressive improvement of human society was the aim, but in so doing such histories have been charged with being susceptible to idealist and teleological readings of the past in ways that sought out, and focused on, signs of progress that accorded with Enlightenment values to begin. A key figure in this development of history was Leopold von Ranke whose detailed empirical approach was governed by the imperative 'to show the past as it really was'. But as Spargo (p. 4) notes, of comparable significance in Ranke's work was his providentialism in which history is viewed as part of God's greater plan, and which humanity strives to comprehend. This aspect of Ranke's work can be seen to accord with Hegel's philosophy in which history is seen as constituting a metaphysical unfolding of reason. Not surprisingly, this idealism constituted a source of some tension with historians' empiricist aspirations at that time and which has continued to reverberate. It is manifest in the writings of Marx and subsequent Marxist historians reaching into the twentieth century, such as E.P. Thompson, who, in striving to recover alternative histories of the repressed and under-represented, continue to subscribe to the assumptions of progressive project, albeit of a different character. Such histories, in spite of their empiricist grounding, can be viewed as continuing to underwrite a concern with a search for the universal, metaphysical truths that Aristotle had associated with poetry.

A somewhat chequered relationship between history's focus on empirical truths and literature's focus on metaphysical truths was very much in evidence at the turn of the century as the two began to carve out ever more discrete disciplinary boundaries. As Passmore (2003) notes:

When history diverged from literature in the late nineteenth century, aristocratic practitioners of literary history were as contemptuous of the 'tradesman-historian'

grubbing about in public archives as were professional historians of the 'non-scientific' methods of the gentlemen-scholars. (p. 118)

A number of scholars also note that the aftermath of World War One had a profound impact on both the study of literature and history and which gave rise to them pursuing significantly different trajectories. The crisis the 'Great War' engendered in conceptions of civilisation and the enlightenment project contributed to a rethinking of social and cultural structures and priorities. (Doyle, 1982; Eagleton, 1983; Newton, 1992; Pope, 2002; Spargo, 2000; Storey, 2001). In literature, Leavisite criticism and New Criticism saw a turning away from history and the taking up of a more metaphysical, Aristotelian approach by way of seeking a more profound and nuanced understanding of the human condition. History for its part became more scientific and at the same time deepened and broadened its fields of study to obtain a more detailed picture of the past. The overall aim, as exemplified in the French school of history known as the '*Annales*', was to establish the deeper patterns of human thought and to explore genealogies that would provide insights into the character or '*mentalites*' of particular historical periods (Green 2008; Miri 2002 and Spargo 2000). Miri also hints at the cross fertilization that is likely to have taken place with their neighbours in the *Maison des Science de l'homme*, which included Levi-Strauss, Benveniste, Derrida, Bourdieu and Foucault.

Matters with regard to the crisis of civilisation would have only been further exacerbated by World War Two. As the implications of the political, social and technological changes that followed in the aftermath of the war began to unwind, changing expectations and aspirations began to impact on educational and academic institutions. Even more sceptical of History's implicit preoccupation with the grand, 'progressive' narratives of political and constitutional history, the discipline subjected itself to further epistemological reflection as to its status and modes of enquiry. E. H. Carr's (1961) 'What is History' proved a seminal text in acting as a conduit for these debates. In many respects Carr's text helped consolidate and pave the way for the emergence of more keenly differentiated social and cultural histories that incorporated methodologies from sociology and anthropology, aided and abetted by changing social, cultural and political aspirations, along with modes of enquiry made possible by advances in computer technology, (Cannadine, 2002; Evans R, 2002; Green, 2008; Spargo, 2000). As Evans (2002) observes: 'Carr's *What is History?* was influential not least because its plea for a more scientific approach to history came at a time when the means were becoming available to fulfil it' (p. 4). For Cannadine (2002), Carr was offering a very different history from what he characterises as 'Trevelyan's national narratives and admiring biographies' (p viii) Perhaps the key difference in Carr's work is the approach he establishes with regard to the unique and individual events of the past. As Evans (2002) observes, Carr conceded:

Establishing that something happened was an important part of the historian's work. It was the foundation on which everything else rested. But the really important part of the historian's work lay in the edifice of explanation and interpretation which was erected on this foundation. (p. 1)

Evans (2002) argues that as a former civil servant, Carr took an instrumental view of history, seeing it as a means to enabling better policy making. Insofar as history was a means of helping to understand how human society had been shaped in the present, it was being perceived as having the potential to help mould the future. As Cannadine (2002) notes, in articulating history as a dialogue between the past and the present, Carr was acknowledging that the timebound preoccupations of the scholar needed to be recognised. But more controversially, Carr was seen as arguing that greater primacy needed to be given to the articulation and interpretation of the impact of long-term economic and social forces. And as Cannadine (2002) observes:

It was precisely this kind of history, as defined and described by Carr, which became very fashionable on the new and expanding campuses of Britain, Western Europe and North America during the 1960s and 1970s, as economic and social history (aided and abetted by the cult of quantification) threatened to marginalize traditional political history, as the preoccupation with causes and with analysis superseded the conventional interest in narrative and chronicle. (p. viii)

But however much and however controversial the impact of the social sciences, their influence would not have been uniform given these disciplines were in turn experiencing their own degree of flux and reflexive questioning. What is also exposed is that history is not the homogeneous discipline it is sometimes taken to be. As Green (2008) observes, the 'linguistic turn', in posing a direct challenge to the core principles of empirical epistemology that had formed the bedrock of historical research for over a century, also drew on the work of cultural historians, such as Jacob Burckhardt and Wilhelm Dilthey, that since the nineteenth century had provided a parallel stream within historiography that emphasized the interpretive, and provisional nature of historical representation.

Cannadine observes the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a profound array of critical developments that contributed to a questioning of history's epistemology and methodologies that Carr did not foresee, not least of which were the influence of anthropology, the linguistic turn, the incursions of the literary and the postmodern challenge to grand metanarratives and teleologies.

Munslow (1997) characterises this historiographical trajectory as having comprised reconstructionist, constructionist and deconstructionist theories of history. He argues that what he terms 'reconstructionists' such as Elton, Marwick, Trevor-Roper, Lawrence Stone hold to the modernist 'craftsman' approach, maintaining that history is still about objective and forensic research into the sources, the reconstruction of the past as it actually

happened, and the freedom of the whole process from ideology. The second historiographical perspective, constructionism refers to the 'social theory' schools, which constitute a search for general laws in historical explanation, as for example in the work of Carr, French Annalists, Modernisation theory and Marxist schools. This approach is significantly structuralist in its orientation. The third perspective, Munslow describes as deconstructionist, comprising intellectual and cultural historians who tend to read history and the past as a complex series of literary products. And these readings are taken to derive their chains of meaning from the nature of narrative structure as much as from other factors helping to determine the priorities of cultural and social discourse at a given time.

Accompanying this more eclectic, fragmented approach to history there was, as Cannadine (2002, p. viii) argues: 'a broader shift from the search for causation to the search for meaning.' As part of this process of rethinking and reconfiguring its priorities and methodologies, history might be viewed as being subject to a wide array of influences from other disciplines, not least of which was the literary. However, at the same time, reconfigured historicist approaches were coming to be seen as integral, if not central, to the problematical search for, and construction of, meaning with regard to the shaping of culture more generally. Hamilton (1996) notes that what he terms anti-enlightenment historicism develops a characteristically double focus,

Firstly, it is concerned too situate any statement - philosophical, historical, aesthetic or whatever - in its historical context. Secondly, it typically doubles back on itself to explore the extent to which any historical enterprise inevitably reflects the interests and bias of the period in which it was written. On the one hand, therefore, historicism is suspicious of the stories the past tells about itself; on the other hand, it is equally suspicious of its own partisanship. It offers up both its past and its present for ideological scrutiny. (p. 3)

Moreover, in literary studies, a number of its poststructuralist critical approaches are now specifically historicist. Profoundly influenced by Foucault, it is the case that New Historicism, Cultural Materialism and Cultural History have emerged as critical approaches and 'methodologies' that address not only the study of the 'literary' but all categories of 'text', written or otherwise. For Spargo (2000) such approaches view all texts, including those of history itself, as being implicated in:

a complex web of relationships with social and cultural institutions and practices, relationships that are mutually determining. The critic's challenge is to explore the representations of the past, without assuming the nature of those relationships in advance in accordance with a determining narrative, while acknowledging his or her own inevitably present-centred position. The techniques include juxtaposing or connecting apparently unrelated types of text, and attending to previously overlooked details, to types of activity or text that might seem trivial, and to the conflicts, tensions and debates evident in any historical moment. (pp. 10/11)

It is this 'suspension' and refusal to privilege disciplinary boundaries with their implicit constraints, and a resistance to the assumption of a founding, external reference point, that constitutes Foucault and Belsey's distinctive approach to the reading and interpretation of texts.

Belsey: Towards Cultural History & Criticism

Foucault's discourse theory and historicist approach, along with Derridean deconstruction, have had a significant influence on modes of literary theory as circumscribed by new historicism, cultural materialism and cultural history. As stated above, Belsey as both a commentator on first-wave poststructuralists such as Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and Lacan, and as a literary theorist in her own right has sought to problematise and reconfigure the boundaries of the literary to incorporate these poststructuralist perspectives. From this engagement she has explored and proposed different modes of critical practice and literary history that has traversed new historicism, cultural history and cultural criticism.

As argued above, it is the question of history that is the significant point on which the difference between structuralism and poststructuralism turn. By way of setting a trajectory for this difference, I would argue a poststructuralist new historicism constitutes a movement on from an enlightenment, more structuralist historicism, with the task of the historian being not simply to find the facts but, also, to construct a narrative based on a critical interpretation and examination of the ways in which a society constructs its records, documents and histories. New historicism, Brannigan (1998) argues, tends to distance itself from historicism on the grounds that historicist critics often viewed the past through the emollient prescriptions of epochal trends, orders and *zeitgeists*, whereas new historicist critics tend to view the past as consisting of diverse and conflicting configurations of beliefs, values and trends.

Consequently, new historicism takes issue with literary critical approaches that claim to ground their accounts of literature in a factual historical reality that can be recovered and related to the poems, plays and novels that reflect it. Equally, they take issue with criticism that reduces literary works to articulations of some grand metanarrative, be that Christianity, Humanism or Marxism. Crucially, new historicism looks to move beyond both positivist and metaphysical versions of historicism, what Munslow describes above as reconstructionist and constructionist approaches. From a new historicist perspective their tendency towards master narratives, are deemed as compromised stratagems, seeking to ground their readings in an unmediated reality or idealized space beyond the text.

The contention of new historicism, as Ryan (1996) points out, is that history is perceived as being accessible only through its textual traces, its 'documents'; and the idea of these texts or documents as a suffix of the social or biographical realm, as a mirror of its age or its author's mind, yields to an argument for the text's constitutive role in what qualifies as reality. And this constitutive role is informed by the play of power.

What is also significant, given the trajectory taken up by certain marketers with an interest in the literary field, is the way in which new historicism adverts to the literary school known as New Criticism, the principles and procedures of which it seeks to contest. Part of the new historicist aim is to dethrone and demystify the privileged literary work, to expose its claims of immunity from an intertextual network, along with its claims to occupying a space that does not bear the imprint of the social and the political.

This concern with the play of power, reveals not just the influence of Foucault but also that of Levi-Strauss. As Brannigan (1998) points out:

A formative study for new historicism was Claude Levi-Strauss's recognition that culture is a self-regulating system, just like language, and that a culture polices its own customs and practices in subtle and ideological ways. For new historicists this recognition has been extended to the 'self', particularly in Stephen Greenblatt's early and seminal study *Renaissance Self Fashioning*. What makes the operations of power particularly complex is the fact that the self polices and regulates its own desires and repressions. (p. 6)

Power in the new historicism lexicon takes its lead from Foucault (1979), where it usually refers to the relations of domination and resistance which saturate our social, political and cultural relations, but it can also refer to the ways in which power is a productive, even pleasurable, part of our existence.

In his discussion of cultural materialism, Brannigan states that, like new historicism, it also privileges power relations as the most important context for interpreting texts, whereas new historicists deal with the power relations of past societies, Cultural Materialists explore literary texts within the context of contemporary power relations. This is appositely demonstrated by reference to a Royal Ordnance advertisement for defence equipment in 1989 utilising Shakespeare in promoting itself as a bastion of security and tradition (Sinfield 1992, cited Brannigan, 1998). In this advertisement, a reading is produced which contrives to position Shakespeare as a signifier for a secure English tradition, an idea of England representing timeless values reaching back over 400 years, an England that can be relied upon. Sinfield argues its politics is revealed as one of endorsing a conservative approach to English politics and society. He further argues this is not to argue that Shakespeare is inherently conservative, but that a Shakespearian text can be represented and re-presented by relocating it in documents with a different generic function to inscribe a reading with a

particular resonance. In the above example, the meanings attached to Shakespeare through his positioning as a cultural icon, as a genius and a master figure, as a brand, are put into play through the media of education, industry, theatre, the heritage business and marketing. What Cultural Materialists are particularly concerned with are to develop strategies for registering and contesting the readings through which contemporary politics and culture preserves, represents and remakes the past.

As Brannigan points out, the practices of Cultural Materialist enable us to examine literary texts as part of a wider context of cultural and political institutions, not least of which is marketing. In many respects, this re-working and re-contextualising of texts and signifiers is the stock-in-trade of any advertising or design agency creative working with their source manuals. In marketing terms, a noteworthy reworking of the Shakespeare signifier took place with the branding of Hamlet cigars, which played upon an extended variety of characters achieving moments of tranquil reflection while the world around descended into chaos.

Intriguingly, Brannigan (1998) goes on to argue that:

If new historicism and cultural materialism are the products of clever marketing and selling strategies in the academic sphere, this may not altogether be something to be frowned upon. We need to recognise that literary studies is not outside the world of sales and marketing, but in fact is an industry in some ways itself. (p. 22)

In similar fashion, Catherine Belsey reflects upon the place of literary studies in this changing theoretical landscape. Belsey (1989) opens her essay entitled 'Towards cultural history' with a question – Is there a place for English in a postmodern world? This question is formulated as a consequence of the observation that during the course of the 1980s the institution of English had been stripped of its mask of polite neutrality by a range of literary theorists, including Eagleton, Easthope, Hawkes, MacCabe, Norris, Widdowson, and not least Belsey herself. These analyses, Belsey (1989) argues, reveal that the limitations of the English academy lay in two main areas:

First, its promotion of the author-subject as the individual origin of meaning, insight, and truth; and second, its claim that this truth is universal, transcultural and ahistorical. In this way, English affirms as natural and inevitable both the individualism and the world picture of a specific western culture, and within that culture the perspective of a specific class and a specific sex. (p. 82)

Given this observation, and returning to Belsey's original question, she nevertheless argues against severing all ties with the English canon. While the English canon has operated to elevate certain texts and relegate others, the assumptions underpinning this process are nevertheless open to challenge and re-reading (and as argued when considering Brown's (1999) engagement with the literary canon, what he neglects precisely is to question the assumptions underpinning the construction of a canon, be it literature or marketing based).

Returning to Belsey, what she proposes for English is not to abandon it, but to move it – towards cultural history. As Belsey (1989) proposes:

The cultural history I should like to see us produce would refuse nothing. While of course any specific investigation would find a specific focus, both chronologically and textually, no moment, no epoch, no genre and no form of signifying practice would be excluded a priori from the field of enquiry. Cultural history would have no place for a canon, and no interest in ranking works in order of merit. . . Without wanting to deny the specificity of fiction, of genre and, indeed, of the individual text, cultural history would necessarily take all signifying practice as its domain.

And that means that the remaining demarcation lines between disciplines would not survive the move. Signifying practice is not exclusively nor even primarily verbal. (pp. 83/4)

To this extent both Literary and marketing texts would be considered from the perspective of their textuality, rhetoricity and wider social and cultural impact, rather than with the project of seeking to place particular texts within a canon of great works. Belsey (1989) goes on to map the terrain for what it is that poststructuralist approaches to cultural history might enable us to know and to reflect on why it is we might want to know it.

Poststructuralism now displays truth as a linguistic tyranny which arrests the proliferation of meanings, assigns values and specifies norms. Truth recruits subjects. The history of truth is the history of our subjection. Its content is the knowledges that constitute us as subjects, and that define and delimit what it is possible for us to say, to be and to do.

It might be worth a digression here to stress the argument that to abandon truth is not necessarily to embrace the free-for-all of radical subjectivism. And it is not inevitably to endorse a politics of relativism or, worse, expediency. The proposition is that we cannot know that any existing language maps the world adequately, that there can be no certainty of a fit between the symbolic and the real. This is not the same as encouraging people to subscribe to whatever conviction happens to come into their heads, or inciting them to make things up. Nor is it to settle for believing them when they do. It is perfectly possible to recognize lies without entailing the possibility of telling the truth, least of all the whole truth. (pp. 85/6)

Belsey goes on to argue that if the project of cultural history is the history of truth, its location is the history of meanings. She elaborates on this as the identification of meanings in circulation in earlier periods, the specification of discourses, conventions and signifying practices through which meanings are fixed, norms agreed and truth defined.

In differentiating her project from cultural materialism, Belsey argues that cultural history provides a space for the analysis of textuality as inherently unstable and for the identification of culture as itself the place where norms are specified and contested, knowledges affirmed and challenged, and subjectivity produced and disrupted.

If meanings are not fixed and guaranteed, but as Derrida has consistently argued, indeterminate, differed and deferred, invaded by the trace of otherness which defines and constitutes the self-same, texts necessarily exceed their own unitary projects, whether these are subversion or containment, in a movement of instability which

releases new possibilities in the very process of attempting to close them off. And if power generates the possibility of resistance as its defining difference, the signified truth necessarily produces alternative knowledges. . . If we succeed in relativizing the truth, then we release as material for analysis the play of signification, Foucault's 'games of truth', which necessarily have more than one player, or more than one side, and which are not a reflection of the struggle for power, but its location. To give a historical account of what constitutes us as subjects is to specify the possibilities of transgressing the existing limits on what we are able to say, to be and to do. (p. 89)

Belsey begins drawing her exposition to a close with a rhetorical questioning of what cultural history has to do with English; and to which she answers that English, more than any other discipline has been concerned with the study of signifying practice. While not taking issue with this proposition, I would contend that marketing is increasingly the location at which signifying practice is the most pervasive, intense and dynamic. But on the issue of creativity and interpretation, Marketing can undoubtedly learn from English departments, which supremely, Belsey (1989) contends:

have attended to the formal properties of texts, their modes of address to readers and the conditions in which they are intelligible. Cultural history needs to appropriate and develop those strategies, putting them to work not in order to demonstrate the value of the text, or its coherence as the expression of the authorial subjectivity which is its origin, but to lay bare the contradictions and conflicts, the instabilities and indeterminacies, which inevitably reside in any bid for truth. We need only extend the range of texts we are willing to discuss, to put on the syllabus. (pp. 83/4)

Given the impact marketing has on culture, it too might 'appropriate and develop strategies' that pick up on the literary theories that have pervaded English departments. Indeed, there is a strong argument for extending the range of texts Belsey references to include those of marketing. While not suggesting marketing becomes part of a newly constituted English syllabus, the stratagems and modes of analysis being circumscribed in this movement towards cultural history would clearly be relevant to the analysis of marketing discourse as part of a wider ranging dissolution of disciplinary boundaries and the more trenchant perspective it provides for the study of culture.

Belsey further develops her argument with the observation that while univocal notions of truth have become increasingly untenable, they are still inclined to be subjective, the unique and inalienable property of each unique individual subject. But even this subjective truth has become increasingly susceptible to challenge.

Because the tyranny of truth (including the subjective truth) becomes visible to us now only in consequence of the postmodern condition. It is no accident, but a precise effect of cultural history, that postmodern practice and poststructuralist theory coincide in their assault on truth to the extent that they do.

This is not to say that our own position as individuals - for or against truth, theory, change - is determined for us in advance: that too is a site of struggle, of subjections and resistances. There are choices constantly to be made, but they are political choices, choices of subject-position, not recognitions of the truth. It is, however, to

emphasize our location within a continuing history, and the relativity of our own meanings, knowledges and practices. And perhaps this above all is the pedagogic and political importance of cultural history. It addresses and constitutes students, readers, practitioners who are themselves an effect of the history they make. Belsey (p. 90)

And in drawing her argument to a conclusion, Belsey (1989) maintains:

The project, then, is a history of meanings, and struggles for meaning, in every place where meanings can be found - or made. Its focus is on change, cultural difference and the relativity of truth. And its purpose is to change the subject, involving ourselves as practitioners in the political, and pedagogic process of making history, in both senses of that phrase. (pp. 91),

Belsey is important for the critical approach (methodology) deployed in this work. Her engagement with poststructuralist theory entails a sustained focus on the problematisation of subjectivity, the materiality of the signifier and in following through the implications of not taking language as a transparent medium providing access to the 'real' or to the 'truth'. For Belsey, language and culture constitute sites in which truth claims are played out. In pursuit of this project, a key aspect of her argument is that our taken-for-granted assumptions, disciplinary boundaries, institutional and 'ordering' practices need to be subject to constant scrutiny to avoid granting (instituting) a degree of hegemony to truth claims that suppress their constitutive and disruptive 'other'.

Belsey's work is distinctive because, of the many theorists who have grappled with the implications of these issues, she is one of the few who consistently guards against the all-too-easy re-inscription of a subjectivism that reconstitutes the founding logos by way of securing and 'authorising' one truth claim over another. It is my contention that her theoretical approach enables this Dissertation to offer a more nuanced account of how the material signifying practices of marketing contribute to the constitution of the *cool* subjects of a postmodern consumer culture.

Given the all-encompassing embrace of cultural history - and of marketing as part of that cultural history - particularly in its designs on the consumer/subject, the deconstructive approach offered in this Dissertation constitutes an opening contribution to the project of rendering a more nuanced and trenchant consideration of the implications of marketing's practices and processes in the configuration of the subject and the making of history, its own and that of culture more generally.

Knowledge, Power, Interpretive Practice

Belsey's work (1980; 1985; 1989; 1994; 1999; 1999a; 2002; 2005) is a key element in elaborating further upon the issues of expressive humanism, subjectivity, identity, consumer sovereignty and interpretive practice. But before elaborating further on Belsey, Brannigan

(1998) provides a significant point of access in establishing the grounds of her arguments. As alluded earlier, Brannigan's discussion of new historicism, cultural materialism and cultural history brings into sharper focus the question of power and knowledge and its implications for interpretive practice. As modes of critical interpretation, they privilege power relations as the most important context for texts of all kinds. Brannigan (1998, p. 15) locates this use of the term power in the context of Foucault's work, where it is taken not only to refer to the relations of domination and resistance which saturate social, political and cultural relations, but also – and crucially - to the ways in which power is often a productive, pleasurable process.

Brannigan argues that this mode of critical interpretation is not so interested in power plays on the big stage, as in the operation of power within self-regulating ideologies, in the 'policing' of the self. And as he points out, this brings about a certain complexity in the operations of power. Because the self polices and regulates its own desires and repressions, there is no need for power to be repressive. Brannigan (1998) comments:

No physical or military force need be deployed or exercised for power to have operated effectively in the interests of dominant ideological systems when the self, ideologically and linguistically constructed, will reproduce hegemonic operations. (p. 7)

In effect, positioned as the *knowing* subjects, as the authors of our desires, but at the same time through desire or the pursuit of desire we are offered and accept, or not, particular positions in the prevailing discursive formation and, in so doing, subject ourselves to a certain power.

From the point of view of critical practice Brannigan maintains that:

New historicists usually see their practice as one of exposition, of revealing the systems and operations of power so that we are more readily equipped to recognise the interests and stakes of power when reading culture. (p. 7)

However, where new historicists deal with the power relations of past societies, cultural materialists, claims Brannigan, explore texts with reference to contemporary power relations.

Although she gives her unqualified support to the major thrust of new historicism, Catherine Belsey (1999a) points to differences and refinements that inform cultural materialism or the cultural history she proposes. In particular, she argues, new historicism tends to treat texts as relatively transparent, failing to appreciate the inconsistencies and instabilities of meaning that are her primary concern. As a consequence, she argues, the cultural moments new historicism depicts are seen as more unified, more harmonious and more homogeneous than she would contend. What Belsey is concerned to emphasize is change: 'As evidence that the way things are is no more natural or inevitable than the way they used to be.' (1999a, pp 18)

For Belsey, change, uncertainty, undecidability, are factors that cannot be so easily written out in the determination to subject the 'way things are' to some form of classificatory system, including that of language itself.

In many respects, marketers would find it difficult to argue with this proposition concerning the dynamic of change, as their activities are predicated on continuous market change and their role in driving, and being driven by, the desire for change and the unsettling of a certain decidability. Belsey (1994) holds that the drive behind fictional writing in particular is to mark out, imagine, delimit and inscribe new possibilities, which implies a certain working of, and desire for, change. The argument can be readily made that marketing communications is predicated on a similar fictionalizing process and play on desire in mapping consumer motivation. The centrality of change, this insinuation of a certain undecidability, also underpins scenario planning. Such planning entails envisioning, imagining and constructing fictional narratives as a means of speculating how various possibilities might be met and dealt with as consumers' desires and markets are subject to change. But while the aim of scenario planning is to resolve particular issues, on bringing about a certain closure, a feature of narrative is that it remains open to endless, alternative possibilities, to the relating of events according to otherwise priorities. The outcome is that any final decidability is ultimately denied and always subject to ongoing deconstruction.

Importantly, Belsey (1999a) is at pains to point out, it does not follow from the undecidability of meaning that inattentive readings are just as good as any others. She argues that as readers we need to focus on the signifier,

to tease out, by detailed attention to the textuality of the text, its nuances and equivocations, its displacements and evasions, the questions posed there and the anxieties on display about the answers proffered. (pp 14)

In analysing the *texts* (data) in their specificity, a key issue for Belsey is that any reading must take account of the signifying practices and modes of address of the texts it interprets. The choice and use of diction, metaphor, rhythm, syntax, convention and breaches of convention, genres and generic surprises, do not simply represent the author's facility for creative expression in revealing hidden truths. They are part of a rhetorical process of offering the reader a specific subject position from which texts can be rendered intelligible.

Belsey is also concerned to emphasise the implications of the modes of address deployed in texts in offering the reader a specific subject position from which to make sense of the text's explicit propositions. Consequently, she maintains, 'Subjectivity, identity, is learnt; it is an effect and not an origin; it depends on the signifier.' Belsey (1999 p 133). What Belsey's approach offers, in attending to the signifying practices and rhetorical strategies of the text, is to draw attention to the persuasive power of the signifier across a range of practices, be

they found in news bulletins, Mills & Boon romances, Hollywood movies or advertisements. In effect, no category or genre of text is beyond the poststructuralist remit of textual deconstruction.

Accordingly, the texts addressed in this Dissertation comprise a varied and eclectic mix, problematising conventional categorization and include Literary texts, academic marketing texts, counter-cultural, anti-marketing texts and a selection of *cool*, life-style and ironic marketing advertisements as a constitutive part of the wider social, cultural and historic milieu.

In resisting a certain objectivity, these selections might be deemed arbitrary, and even accidental – although they might also be deemed to bear the imprint of a particular history. Indeed, I would argue the incidence of the postmodern and its assault on the idea of correct methodologies for determining the ‘truth of the matter’, not just in the texts being studied, but in a recognition of the relativity of interpretations and ‘truths’ to be found in texts generally, is becoming more pressing. As Belsey (1989,) observes, this is:

Because the tyranny of truth (including the subjective truth) becomes visible to us now only in consequence of the postmodern condition. It is no accident, but a precise effect of cultural history, that postmodern practice and poststructuralist theory coincide in their assault on truth to the extent that they do. (p. 90)

What is distinctive and intriguing about Belsey’s approach to cultural history is that it offers a challenge to the more conventional empiricist critique in its refusal to treat texts or documents as transparent. Accordingly, texts are not taken as merely transcriptions of experience and are worth analysis not as access to a truth or reality beyond them, but as themselves locations of power and resistance to power. For Belsey(1988) a post-structuralist history needs to address a different series of questions:

These include the following (borrowed, in modified form, from Foucault):

What are the modes and conditions of these texts? Where do they come from, who controls them, on behalf of whom? What possible subject positions are inscribed in them? What meanings and what contests for meaning do they display? (cf. Foucault, 1977a, p 138)

Such a history is not offered as objective, authoritative, neutral or true. It is not outside history itself, or outside the present. On the contrary, it is part of history, part of the present. It is irreducibly textual offering no place outside discourse from which to interpret or judge. It is explicitly partial, from a position and on behalf of a position. It is not culturally relative in so far as relativism is determinist and therefore a-political: ‘I think like this because my society thinks like this’. But its effect is to relativise the present, to locate the present in history and in process. (p. 405)

Taking into consideration the various modes and conditions of the texts being studied, a key stratagem of this deconstructive cultural history is to map ways in which, through the deployment of postmodern and ironic perspectives, positions of *knowingness* and inclusivity

are configured, which at the same time constitute an exclusive appeal to the sovereign consumer.

Conclusion

The issues raised in this chapter are crucial to the stratagem of this Dissertation in following through the implications of the linguistic turn and for arguing there is no position outside the text, no escaping the instability of the text, no secure logos, no escaping the determination of our linguistic constitution as subjects, and which bear the imprint of cultural and historical priorities and tensions. This stratagem extends to arguing there is no scope for privileging the objectivity of this particular text (this Dissertation), nor in securing a place outside its own textual, discursive, cultural and historical precursors. At the same time, this has implications for any claims as to the originality of this text, other than to argue that the Dissertation's intertextual origins are perhaps made more manifest – but which can never be exhausted.

The specific 'methodologies' or critical approaches that have been deployed in this research draw on Derridean deconstruction, Foucauldian discourse theory, Belsey and cultural history/criticism. These will be used to locate and consider academic marketing and consumer culture texts, the work of anti-marketing gurus and a selection of *cool*, life-style and anti-marketing advertisements as a constitutive part of a wider social, cultural and historic milieu. To this end, these texts – some of which might be deemed more appropriate to a literature review, but which would be to grant them a certain status that denied their rhetoricity – constitute part of the primary data for this study. In engaging with this 'data', this research will focus on the signifying practices and modes of address of the texts being interpreted. It will be argued they constitute part of a rhetorical process in which readers are engaged by the prospect of subject positions that hold out the promise of rendering texts intelligible from familiar, common-sense, hegemonic perspectives.

An important aim of this Dissertation is to problematise and contest configurations of the marketing and consuming subject, and to introduce readings that marketers grounded in the expressive humanist paradigm will have simply attempted to efface or suppress. Crucial to this endeavour will be the mapping of a certain bifurcation in modes of irony, which has had the effect of setting off a logocentric *knowingness* against the play of difference. A further consequence of this is an opening up of lines of enquiry that question modes of *cool* that acknowledges only itself and aspire to a certain imperviousness to the other.

It is an important contention of this dissertation that irony – often deemed a key characteristic of the postmodern - plays a key role in unsettling and insinuating the

possibilities of change, both for the literary and marketing academics. Consequently, it will be argued that the intervention of irony might function as more than simply the manifestation of a postmodern, worldly-weary consumer *knowingness*, but rather attest to the possibility of otherwise perspectives. In the next chapter, I offer a study of irony by way of providing important pointers in determining otherwise trajectories for how the consumer is represented and in the charting of consumers' changing priorities.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MARKETER IN THE IRONIC MASK

Introduction

Irony as a [dis]position of knowingness has been characterised as a key element in postmodern marketing and its articulation of the knowing subjects of modern and postmodern consumption. A key issue for this chapter is to problematise marketing's approach to irony as representing only a partial engagement with the implications of the literary turn. It is argued that the configuration of irony as an attitude towards existence, an attitude marked by a worldly knowingness does not tell the whole story.

I argue that Marketing's growing interest in the literary, particularly with regard to irony, has helped articulate a shift in focus from a production paradigm to one that is increasingly focused on the marketing-literate, sovereign consumer, who is knowing, inscrutable, impervious to the wiles of marketers and can only be reached by an acknowledgement of his/her ironic knowingness (Brown, 1995, 1998, 1999; Brown et al, 1999; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al 1995; Hirschman, 1998; Ritson & Elliott, 1997, 1999; Scott, 1994a; Stern, 1989a). But as in literary theory, the play of irony and the question of where sovereignty resides needs to be subjected to greater scrutiny.

By way of offering a more nuanced narrative, I chart a history of different modes of irony from Ancient Greece and Rome to the present day in order to argue that difficulties are encountered in any attempt to define irony. Particular attention is given to the use of irony in the works of Shakespeare, Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, Swift's *Modest Proposal*, the work of Dickens and postmodern writers. I will argue subsequently that viewing irony as simply a dissimulation of ignorance, a somewhat sceptical attitude toward existence or a tacit form of knowingness is to belie its complexity with regard to the priorities of a postmodern consumer culture.

Challenging ironic marketing and the knowing consumer

The 1990s, as everybody knows, yawn, was the Ironic Decade. The essential groundwork was laid in the 1980s - though irony has been with us since at least Socrates' day - but the closing years of the twentieth century were the moment when irony became not just a useful device, to be applied when some specific occasion demanded it, but a routine, everyday attitude, a mass way of being, a social default. What irony offered users was an all-purpose form of protection. Just spray it on and nothing would pierce your psychological defences . . .

(Poyner, Rick, 2001, pp 82)

Cool, it seems, is the make-or-break quality in 1990s branding. It is the ironic sneer-track of ABC sitcoms and late-night talk shows

(Klein 2000, pp 70)

There would seem to be little argument that since the 1990s the use of irony has become a significant component in marketing communications strategies. What might be argued is whether it constitutes anything new. The question that also needs to be considered is whether the prankish, anarchic irony of the Tango campaign is different from Apple's challenging 1984 smashing Windows campaign, is different from the subtle questioning of received wisdom in U.S. automobile culture with DDB's (Doyle Dane Bernbach) Volkswagon campaign of the late 50s and early 60s. While there is ample empirical evidence for the increasing use of irony, there is little consideration as to what is taken to constitute irony; its manifest articulations; its modes of address; how it achieves its effects and the conditions and implications of its deployment.

Irony has been characterised as a key creative and innovative element in contemporary marketing, invariably deployed as a structural literary device which acknowledges the primacy and knowingness of the consumer: but not just any consumer – more specifically, a consumer who is positioned as not-easily-taken-in, who does not accept at face value the stratagems of marketing and for whom the concept of *cool* is a key attribute. Increasingly, irony is regarded as a concept that one simply recognises when it is encountered. The layers of irony that can be recognised mark a certain level of sophistication and *knowingness*. At one level, it can be argued this increasing shift into ironic mode affirms a reconfiguration of the marketing discipline from a production to a consumer-focused paradigm. It also strikes a particular resonance with Barthes (1977) 'Death of the Author' and the concomitant elevation of reader-response theory. Whether it is coincidence or something more extensively discursive, following the loss of meaning guaranteed by the self-same author, irony has thrived, with intention and meaning increasingly addressed as, fragmented, dispersed, sometimes contradictory, signifying perhaps the traces of an elusive intertextuality.

But liberation of the signifier from the control of the author/producer would seem to have been re-inscribed in the authority of individual readers/consumers - psychologically self-enclosed and self-maintained. In the process irony has moved from being a mode of challenging the truth-claims of authors and corporate marketers with their prescriptions on the human condition, to being expressive of 'a routine everyday attitude', an assertion of the primacy and authority of the reader/ consumer. The primacy of sovereignty has simply been reversed from the producer to the consumer. Ironic detachment with its tendency towards solipsism - as opposed to irony in averring to the capacity to question everything - ultimately

questions nothing. Poyner's (2001) metaphor for irony as 'spray-on sealant' has the effect of projecting a veneer of *cool* detachment and degree of knowingness, but which at the same time insulates itself from articulating the constitution of its knowingness. Not only is there a sense of Poyner's (2001) consumer being sealed from the outside: increasingly there is a sense of the consumer being sealed from the inside out.

As Poyner (2001) points out, Irony as a mode of writing is nothing new, reaching back to Socrates as received primarily via Plato's *Dialogues*. What is new and intriguing perhaps is the increasing sublimation of irony as an interrogative mode of writing calling meaning into question for irony as an expressive mode of signification that refuses questioning.

By way of expanding on different modalities of writing Belsey (1980) modifies Benveniste's classification of declarative, interrogative and imperative statements to offer a model for distinguishing particular kinds and genres of texts. Belsey observes that classic realism conforms to the declarative mode of address in which knowledge is imparted to a reader from a position of authority, in turn providing a stable, unified subject position for the reader. Belsey suggests that the imperative text is what is commonly thought of as propaganda. And indeed, as Frye (1957) elsewhere notes, the imperative form also characterises much of marketing communications. Belsey (1980) further observes that the imperative text operates by exhorting, instructing, ordering the reader, "constituting the reader as a unified subject in conflict with what exists outside" (p. 91). But as with the subject of declarative statement this is predicated on a unified, *knowing* subject. However, as Belsey observes, the interrogative text, 'disrupts the unity of the reader by discouraging identification with a unified subject of the enunciation.' (ibid) During the course of this Chapter it is argued that part of irony's effect is achieved from a confusion of declarative and imperative with interrogative modes of address.

In a postmodern context, as the focus continues to shift from the author to the reader, from the producer to the consumer, this [re]classification of different modalities of writing has some intriguing resonances for marketing texts and strategies. It offers a means of accounting for the growing use of irony in marketing, not just for determining the diversity of *knowing* postmodern consumers but, at the same time, for disrupting the unity of the reader; keeping at a distance identification with the unified subject of the enunciation, destabilizing subject positions and, hence, perpetuating desire.

What will be examined is how irony has moved from being predominantly a mode of address challenging the prejudices of its audience to one where it takes those prejudices as read, as simply the expression of a postmodern sensibility. Charting this shift and challenging

the basis of its appeal in the rearticulation of current marketing discourse provides an alternative perspective on the privileging of consumer sovereignty.

Arguably, irony has become a form of shorthand, signifying a shift in the [re]articulation of marketing's priorities. Following the critiques of marketing by writers such as Packard (1960) it can be viewed as an acknowledgement of the consumer's intelligence and is, perhaps, a necessary corollary for emerging customer-centric strategies predicated on a determined, but accompanying, proliferation of consumption choices.

This recentring of marketing discourse on the reserved, ironic *knowingness* and distinctive individuality of the consumer has been accompanied by a questioning of the singular rationale of positivist methodologies. In the main, positivist approaches have been associated with a concern for the wider economic operation of markets, whereas its rejection and the turn to irony is seen as constituting a move to better understand the more nuanced motivations of individual consumers - where the focus is on determining individual desire rather than aggregated needs and wants. It is still the case that even the most cursory examination of marketing textbooks suggests that *marketing communications theory* still bears the imprint of modern, positivist modes. Marketing textbooks and consumer research are still dominated by models predicated on positivist paradigms, e.g. Schramm's hypodermic theory of communication (Fill 2005, Picton & Broderick, 2005). But while irony has the potential to disrupt such unique, univocal perspectives, it does not necessarily follow.

Consequently, marketing has experienced something of a crisis with regard to its modes of knowing. Marketing is not alone in this regard: the dethroning of positivism, the crisis of representation, the turn to irony are invariably viewed as constituent elements of a wider condition – the questioning of the grand narratives of modernism. The questioning of knowledge paradigms; articulations of self; how, why and with what we identify is prevalent across and between a wide range of discourse; and would seem to be contingent on the gathering determination of postmodernity to a consumer culture.

There is now a distinct, if decidedly amorphous, body of literature describing and debating what is understood by the postmodern; how it has come about; why; and its implications for how we interpret and articulate the world in which we live. While the postmodern turn in marketing theory has brought about a more receptive environment within the marketing academy to more critical approaches, picking up leads and threads en route from critical theory, literary theory, structuralism, poststructuralism, the continuing modernist inscription of logocentrism and re-centring of the humanist subject, as source and origin of reason (logos) and knowledge, suggest postmodern marketing does not constitute the radical liberation of the consumer many would claim.

Increasingly, irony is regarded as a concept that one simply recognises when it is encountered. The layers of irony that can be recognised mark a certain level of sophistication and *knowingness*, but it is an ironic *knowingness* centred on the subject-ego, as opposed to being a questioning of the discourse in which the subject-ego is located. The next section is concerned to question whether it has always been this way.

My ongoing aim is to maintain a focus on the ways in which the modern, inadvertently or otherwise, continues to make its presence felt. This is done not with a view to accurately and definitively marking off a clear terrain for the postmodern, but by way of understanding and charting the continuing force and power of postmodern's ironic relation to the modern. And by focusing on a bifurcation in irony, this study will chart its continuing capacity to disrupt the unique, unilinear perspectives of an ordinary logos, be that in the form of calculating marketers or knowing consumers.

Looking back with Irony

A brief review of the literature attests to a degree of intractability in how the term irony is understood. And this intractability is further exacerbated by attempts to bridge literary/linguistic, marketing, social science and cultural studies paradigms. Muecke, 1970; Booth, 1975; Hutcheon, 1994 & 1998; Colebrook, 2000 & 2004 detail at some length irony's different categories, ranging from early Socratic irony through to what are labelled as more recent deconstructive manifestations of the form. Writers such as Hutcheon (1998), Sim (2002) and Colebrook (2004) also draw links between irony and the postmodern, with Hutcheon viewing it as a defence against an increasing commodification seen to be characteristic of the postmodern.

The tensions evident in the ways irony is understood are teased out by Colebrook (2004). She begins a discussion of irony by attributing to the Roman orator, Quintilian, the most commonly understood definition: saying what is contrary to what is meant. From here Colebrook follows a trajectory which traces back the history of irony as a form of concealment through the comic plays of Aristophanes to the Socratic dialogues in Plato's *The Republic*, the first recorded use of the term. Etymologically the word derives from the Greek 'eironia' meaning dissembler and has associations with acts of 'dissimulation', pretence, often referring to the feigned ignorance that is characteristic of the rhetorical strategy of Socrates as manifest in the Platonic dialogues. It is argued the strategy of Socrates in the *Dialogues* is to question opponents' arguments from the inside, adopting an adversary's views as a means of better foregrounding their flaws, shortcomings, the 'partial' positions they adopt and in so doing their failure to attain a particular objective they overtly,

and all-too-loudly and assuredly, proclaim. Colebrook observes that the word *eironia* was first used to refer to artful double meaning in the Socratic dialogues and that this practice of concealment, dissimulation, masking, which the audience is brought to recognise.

In Greek Comedy, the strategy of Socratic dialogue is made manifest in the form of the stock devices of the Eiron and Alazon characters. Eiron, the undersized and understated underdog usually got the better of the braggart Alazon through a range of subtle comments often carrying contradictory meanings that the braggart is unable to determine, but the audience does. (Latter day equivalents might be recognisable in the form of Laurel and Hardy and Morecambe and Wise.) In this, the audience is conscripted with Eiron as having a degree of *knowingness* that bears testimony not only to a more subtle understanding of life's complexities, but their inclusivity *viz-a-viz* Eiron. This becomes a mark of their exclusive knowingness, dependent of course on the structural exclusion of Alazon. It is important to differentiate the stock devices of Eiron and Alazon from the fully formed characters of classic realism articulating and expressing individual viewpoints, flawed or otherwise. Eiron and Alazon serve as ciphers for articulating moral and social issues, values and positions relating to society, as opposed to exploring the flaws and travails of individuals set against society.

Colebrook argues Socratic irony opened out the Western philosophical tradition, instigating the art of playing with meaning and a questioning of the fundamental concepts of our language. Socrates, she claims, tried to show that it is always possible that what we take to be the self-evident sense of a context or culture is far from obvious. What the Socratic dialogues also inscribe, she argues, is not just irony as a particular mode of dialogue, of language use, but irony as an entire personality, a capacity not to accept everyday values and concepts. Colebrook maintains that Socrates' capacity to live in a state of perpetual question, is the birth of philosophy, ethics and consciousness. While acknowledging irony as a particular mode of language use, of the play of difference, whether attributing it as a function of a particular personality type perhaps raises idealist issues that Socratic irony sets out to challenge.

As an aside Colebrook argues it was no accident that Socrates used irony to challenge received wisdom at an historical moment of cultural insecurity, in the transition from a closed tribal community to a polis of political expansion marked by competing viewpoints and the inclusion of other cultures. While acknowledging differences, the point is made that postmodern irony is marked by a similar distancing function and, presumably, cultural insecurity. There is also a case for arguing this political expansion and cultural broadening constitutes an earlier mode of globalisation in which the imperative for incorporation provides for a degree of contingency in the articulation of particular perspectives.

One of the reasons Colebrook charts these differences in understanding of irony is to account for the relative absence in Medieval and Renaissance works of irony as an attitude towards existence, as an artful mode of self and consciousness. The observation is made that manuals on Rhetoric that were written up until the Renaissance knew the Greek sources by means of what was available through Cicero and Quintilian, whose prime interest in irony was as a trope, a figure of speech, an artful way of using language. And these manuals were primarily focused on the technical detail of constructing speeches for the purpose of defence, praise and public persuasion in specifically juridical and political situations. It was a way of making positions held and what was being argued more effective; it was not a way of questioning belief, commitment or the ontological basis of knowledge.

From classical Roman literature, irony's more extensive use in Rhetoric, perhaps reflects a greater political concern not just to question particular perspectives, but to advocate *sotto voce* alternative perspectives. In counterposing alternate perspectives and values, irony operates as a structural device to promote undecidability as the first step to opening up a prevailing status quo. While not directly from classical Roman literature, Shakespeare's Mark Anthony speech at the funeral of Caesar, "Friends, Romans, countrymen. I come not to praise Caesar, but to bury him," operates on just such a basis.

The link between Shakespeare and Roman Literature in the form of Terence's New Comedy can be seen more directly articulated in comedies such as *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, where confusion of meaning, the masking of identity and ironic reversal abound. Here irony is picked up for its comic potential, but which is not to say comic irony does not have a serious side in exploring and charting changing values. In these comedies, it is usually the case that at a surface level things are represented as being rarely as they seem, brought about in the main by stock dramatic devices, such as magical forests and beings, the use of twins, disguise, confusions of gender. But at the same time, ironic uncertainty is deployed in the exploration of how, as an audience, we come to know characters' motivation or psychology. Perhaps what is introduced with Shakespeare's use of irony is a subtle shift of focus and re-articulation of priorities to incorporate the complex psychology of individuals as opposed to using characters as ciphers for a reaffirmation of established social values more characteristic of Terence's New Comedy.

Shakespeare's [re]deployment of irony constitutes an interrogative mode of writing and, if not questioning changing social, cultural, political values and mores, recognising certain inconsistencies. The subtle shift towards explorations of multiple perspectives is perhaps characteristic of societies and cultures in which discontinuity and change are critical features. This contrasts with the texts of Classic Realism, which it might be argued maintain a more

familiar mode of writing to the contemporary reader. But it can be argued, as Belsey does, that: 'Not all texts are classic realist texts, smoothing over contradiction in the construction of a position for the reader which is unified and knowing.' (Belsey, 2002, p. 83)

Sprezzatura: Renaissance cool

A work accredited with having influenced Shakespeare and his contemporaries is Baldesar Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. Castiglione's work was translated in 1561 by Thomas Hoby, a courtier at the court of Queen Elizabeth I, and later to be her ambassador to Paris. Taking the form of a dramatic dialogue, Castiglione's work is a recounting of a debate on the virtues of the ideal courtier by a gathering of 'noble and talented persons' at the Court of Urbino. Resembling Plato's *Symposium*, *The Courtier's* mode of address in charting a variety of perspectives raises the question that the virtues of a courtier are not taken for granted, as given, as already inscribed, but are open to debate. There is a sense in this debate that *The Courtier* transcribes the efforts of a nobility attempting to redefine its role in what might be described as the emerging latter-day knowledge economy that came to be known as the Renaissance. As something of a handbook for aspiring courtiers, Castiglione's text communicates a sense of a social order and culture in transition, in which the values of a feudal order are giving way to, and interacting with, those of an emerging mercantile capitalism. While not offering any simple analogies, the advice to aspiring courtiers as to how 'to be' at times bears uncanny resemblance to contemporary representations of *cool*. Indeed, what *The Courtier* effects is a charting of what is to count as cultural capital in a reconfigured economic and cultural order.

In the debate that constitutes a key element of *The Courtier*, The Count Lodovico da Canossa, who is given the lead, implicates from the outset a sense of changing social parameters and mobility. While predominantly the preserve of the nobility for social reasons, virtue, and by implication, social advancement is no longer perceived as simply a function of birth: 'So, for myself, I would have our courtier of noble birth and good family, since it matters far less to a common man if he fails to perform virtuously and well than to a nobleman.' (Castiglione, 1967, p 54) Resorting to organicist analogies that continue to be a feature of Humanist paradigms, Canossa goes on to argue that while the skills and 'worthy' activities necessary to a courtier can be learned, those of 'good breeding' will have a significant advantage.

Thus as a general rule, both in arms and in other worthy activities, those who are most distinguished are of noble birth, because Nature has implanted in every thing a hidden seed which has a certain way of influencing and passing on its own essential characteristics to all that grows from it, making it similar to itself. We see this not

only in breeds of horses and other animals but also in trees, whose offshoots nearly always resemble the trunk; and if they sometimes degenerate, the fault lies with the man who tends them. So it happens with men, who, if they are well tended and properly brought up, nearly always resemble those from whom they spring, and are often even better; but if they have no one to give them proper attention, they grow wild and never reach maturity. (Castiglione, 1967, p 54)

The text/Canossa further adds:

So, in addition to noble birth, I would have the courtier favoured in this respect, too, and receive from Nature not only talent and beauty of countenance and person but also that certain air and grace that makes him immediately pleasing and attractive to all who meet him; and this grace should be an adornment informing and accompanying all his actions, so that he appears clearly worthy of the companionship and favour of the great. (Castiglione, 1967, p 55)

Not only must the courtier be worthy by dint of his birth, breeding and activities, he must be seen to be worthy. To use marketing terminology, it would seem that in a changing, competitive environment, the Courtier's brand needs to reflect the services being offered to the court. At the same time because of the changing environment, the array of services on offer now extends beyond the force of arms and chivalric code that had been the 'mark' of their predecessors, the medieval knights.

As part of the game that constitutes the debate, Canossa's position is countered by Signor Gaspare Pallavicino, who avers to the changing social dynamic and the valency it had already established:

So that our game may proceed as it is meant to, and to show that we are not forgetting our privilege of contradicting, let me say that I do not believe that nobility of birth is necessary for the courtier. And if I thought I was saying something new to us, I would cite many people who, though of the most noble blood, have been wicked in the extreme, and, on the other hand, many of humble birth who, through their virtues, have won glory for their descendants. (Castiglione, 1967, p 55)

As the figure of Pallavicino points out the changing environment in which the courtiers now operate is not new and would seem to carry an implicit criticism of Canossa's resistance to inevitable change.

Canossa agrees to a degree with Pallavicino but asserts a nobleman is better positioned because of the importance of making an immediate impression. This is what from a marketing perspective might be thought of as first mover advantage: 'So you see how important are first impressions at the beginning if he is ambitious to win the rank and name of a good courtier.' (ibid p 57)

The debate continues to range across the various activities and dispositions that constitute a virtuous courtier, but a key passage for the whole debate is that concerning how the courtier might achieve 'that certain air and grace that makes him immediately pleasing and attractive to all'. The text attributes to Canossa the following reflection:

Having already thought a great deal about how this grace is acquired, and leaving aside those who are endowed with it by their stars, I have discovered a universal rule which seems to apply more than any other in all human actions or words, namely to steer away from affectation at all costs, as if it were a rough and dangerous reef, and (to use perhaps a novel word for it) to practise in all things a certain nonchalance which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless. I am sure that grace springs especially from this . . . So we can truthfully say that true art is what does not seem to be art; and the most important thing is to conceal it, because if it is revealed this discredits a man completely and ruins his reputation. (ibid p 67)

The novel word translated by the text as a 'certain nonchalance' is the term *sprezzatura*.

The text goes on to situate the stratagem for achieving this *sprezzatura*, nonchalance, carelessness (in the sense of without care as opposed to clumsiness), feigned indifference, urbanity, diffidence, what we might now recognise as effecting an ironic distance or *cool* disposition,.

Intriguingly, the term *sprezzatura*, was translated in Hoby's text as a 'certain Recklessness', suggesting perhaps a certain disregard for protocol and convention, a flamboyance, an affected rebelliousness that again find a resonance with contemporary accounts of counter-cultural articulations of *cool* (Danesi, 2000, Frank, 1997, Heath & Potter, 2005, Klein 2000, Nancarrow & Page, 2001, Pountain & Robins, 2000, Pumphrey, 2000, Poyner, 2001). This undecidability with regard to how the meaning of *sprezzatura* is configured, is perhaps a measure of the degree of change and flux with regard to the representation of newly emerging modes of being.

As Richards (2001) points out this use of *sprezzatura* and its perceived elitism, is integral to its classical source, Socratic eironeia or understatement, as discussed by Aristotle in Book Two of *Nicomachean Ethics*.

As Colebrook (p. 7, 2004) notes, when the Renaissance became aware of the original Greek and extended Latin references to Socrates the concept of irony acquired a [re]newed dimension. Perhaps the key point here is that even as Socratic irony [re]emerged, the priorities established for irony during the intervening period, and even though defined in reference to Socrates, had the effect of muting its original transformative philosophical potential for questioning how the world/reality is configured in and through language. As Colebrook observes, irony as received via the Latin rhetorical manuals based on Cicero and Quintilian, which constituted the main commentary on irony prior to the Renaissance, were focused more on the technical construction of speeches for the purposes of defence, praise or public persuasion. Intriguingly, Colebrook (2004) then observes:

When the Greek and Latin descriptions of Socrates became available to Renaissance writers, irony was still not what it was to become for the Romantics (an attitude to

existence) . . . Ironia, as defined by those who followed Cicero and Quintilian, had little to do with creating an artful mode of self and consciousness. (p. 7)

It would seem that Colebrook attributes later perspectives on irony - as an attitude towards existence, as a means of self-fashioning, as a way of abstaining from belief or commitment, as exemplary of particular modes of creativity and literariness - to the rediscovery of Socrates. But it would be equally valid to reverse the priorities of cause and effect here, in that an emerging humanist discourse was able to ascribe to Socrates a perspective that accorded with changing social and economic imperatives. And as a reading of Castiglione (1967) testifies, irony as a particular mode of language-use designed to advance the standing and careers of Renaissance courtiers, as a means of fashioning the self in particular ways was not exactly new:

I remember once having read of certain outstanding orators of the ancient world who, among the other things they did, tried hard to make everyone believe that they were ignorant of letters; and, dissembling their knowledge, they made their speeches appear to have been composed very simply and according to the promptings of Nature and truth rather than effort and artifice. For if the people had known their skills, they would have been frightened of being deceived. (p 67)

Setting forth what has come to be recognised as an ideal of the Renaissance man, *The Courtier* provides interesting perspectives on the fashioning of particularly artful forms of identity or subjectivity. It is also interesting for the role afforded to ironic understatement in the fashioning of this newly emerging, multi-faceted individual. In so doing, the text charts debates, fissures, contradictions, uncertainties emerging in the social order of the time. Reading back from a position in the present, these tensions have a familiar resonance as I will illustrate.

Modesty Forbids

Colebrook (2004) maintains that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with their particularly self-conscious recognition of being modern marked a historical shift in the status of irony to one in which it was seen to characterise life as a whole. And since the nineteenth century, she argues,

Socratic irony has come to mean more than just a figure of speech and refers to a capacity to remain distant and different from what is said in general. If there has always been irony, both in practice and in name, it has not always taken the same form. (p. 8)

Whether irony might be allowed an ontological, logocentric dimension is problematic, given its modes of address necessarily entails questioning the reality of a given situation. Arguably, irony is without form, occupying that space between the determinate and indeterminate. As such, irony challenges the possibility of ontological and epistemological guarantees, including

that of irony ~~itself~~. From this perspective, the irony deployed by Swift might be viewed as a way of drawing attention to simplistic, univocal - what now might be termed logocentric - claims of knowledge, arguing instead for its provisionality, superficiality, and directing attention to what the text excludes.

Perhaps what is significant in Swift's (1996) *A Modest Proposal for preventing the children of poor people in Ireland from being a burden to their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the public* is that the reader is positioned via more discursive modes of address and implicitly invited to determine the merits of the argument being proposed.

By taking instrumental, unilinear, economic reasoning to its logical extreme, Swift insinuates the problem of determining and delimiting meaning, bringing into sharp relief the dangers of taking words literally, superficially. Swift's irony effectively cautions against taking words as corresponding with clearly defined concepts and ideas, of circumscribing them within a unidimensional knowledge paradigm that masks out conflicting, contradictory, differing perspectives. In this case, masking out an ethical perspective, has the effect, ironically, of making its presence all the more keenly understood. In what are arguably the defining paragraphs of *The Modest Proposal*, a key facet of its instrumental, utilitarian argument is shown to be based, both literally and ironically, on a dubious, superficial *knowingness*, on an unquestioned, received wisdom. With mock, ironic humility, Swift (1996) writes:

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout. (p. 53)

The author's 'own thoughts', far from being the source and origin of the *Proposal*, are determined by the assurances of a 'very knowing American', the relationship with whom – attending to the irony in the use of the term 'acquaintance' - might be taken as conveying a degree of superficiality. The difference brought into play through the singular reading that is on offer in the *Modest Proposal* is the determined lack of differing perspectives. In some respects, Swift's *Proposal* might be described *avant la lettre* as a classic marketing text on the shortcomings of consumption and customer centrality. Swift's text is particularly significant from a poststructuralist perspective for its manifestation of power, ironically rendered, that at the same time constitutes the resistance on offer in the text.

Singular Perspectives

In the nineteenth century, Dickens makes use of irony in his work, but it would seem to be of a different order. Dickens' representation of reality from a perspective that ultimately offers clarity and resolution is in distinct contrast to the mode of representation deployed some 100 years previously by Swift (1996) in *A Modest Proposal*.

In the early picaresque work, *The Pickwick Papers* (1999 (1836/37)), irony is arguably Socratic in mode, being used to represent comically the lack of worldliness, discrimination, knowingness on the part of certain characters, most notably Pickwick and Sam Weller. However, by the time of *Bleak House* (1971 (1853)), the use of irony has become more complex. Far from being simply a comic device, it has become a means for engaging, positioning and guiding the reader in a journey of self-discovery concerning the ways of the world. In *Bleak House*, the world is represented from the perspectives of the anonymous third person narrator and Esther Summerson, the main protagonist. The scenes in the novel are usually described to the reader from a position alongside or behind-the-shoulder of Esther, with the third person narrator usually offering a more detached, circumspect, ironic perspective. But the novel also relies for its effect on the ironic interplay between the two narratives. While the reader might be more engaged by the good sense of Esther, the irony at play results by stages in a greater degree of circumspection concerning her early emotional naivety.

At the same time, the difference and ironic play between the two narratives cuts both ways. The initially innocent and naive narrative of Esther throws into relief the detached, ironic, somewhat cynical disposition articulated by the anonymous narrator, perhaps uncomfortably close to the discourse of the courts of chancery, which would seem to be the focus of the novel's criticism. The overall effect and resolution of these two modes of address is to chart, not just for Esther, but also for the consumers of the text a journey of self-discovery. And this forensic teasing out and resolving of events is mirrored in the generic expectations raised by and ironic characterisation of detective Bucket, who from his first appearance, with an air of familiar knowingness that alludes to an ethos of business and client confidentiality, continually intimates an awareness of layered perspectives and that there is more to be considered than might first appear to be the case (Dickens, 1971 p 361-363). At the same time there should be little doubt that these positions and resolutions derive from a careful articulation of the narrative.

The trajectory of the story is achieved in part from the unfolding and development of a narrative perspective – a particular relating of events across space and time - from which the plot, the characters, are seen to make sense, with events being observed from the outside-

in. The reader is invited to take an otherwise position on events in the narrative in which they are afforded privileged access to the author's perspective, confidence, and in so doing, their knowingness affirmed. But this, of course, is simply a trick of the text, a function of the signifying practices and conventions of Classic Realism. Arguably the deployment of particular ironic modes of address has become a key factor in achieving this outside-in perspective.

It is apposite at this point to note that Frye (1957) argues:

The fact that we are now in an ironic phase of literature largely accounts for the popularity of the detective story, the formula of how a man-hunter locates a *pharmakos* (a scoundrel in Frye's lexicon) and gets rid of him. (p. 46)

He avers to the *pharmakos* as a structural counterpart to the Alazon and the picaro of the picaresque novel. And according to Frye the study of ironic comedy must start with the theme of driving out, excluding the *pharmakos* from the point of view of society. The argument is made that in the growing brutality of the crime story, detection begins to merge with thriller as one of the forms of melodrama. He adds:

In melodrama two themes are important: the triumph of moral virtue over villainy, and the consequent idealising of the moral views assumed to be held by the audience. In the melodrama of the brutal thriller we come as close as it is normally possible for art to come to the pure self-righteousness of the lynching mob. (p 47)

Continuing this polemical note, Frye states,

We should have to say, then, that all forms of melodrama, the detective story in particular, were advance propaganda for the police state, in so far as that represents the regularising of mob violence.

The argument being made here would seem to be that the structural role of naïve melodrama, whether because or in spite of itself, points to the absurdity of attempting to define the enemy of society as a person outside that society.

In similar fashion to naïve melodrama the twists and turns of marketing narrative seek to operate within consumers' frames of reference and an idealizing of the moral views assumed to be held by the audience, but perhaps blind to the possibility of its role as advance propaganda. But as he goes on to argue, the opposite pole to naïve melodrama, what he terms true comic irony or satire, defines the enemy of society as a spirit within that society. This can be interpreted as an injunction not only to look beyond the obvious, but also beyond the obvious ironies.

During Literature's Classic Realist and early Modernist phase, the iteration of ironic forms seem to circumscribe a subtle transformation. In this dominant Classic Realist phase, texts re-present the world, life, for a growing and increasingly varied readership, in which unanimity of perspective assumes a certain priority. When considering classic realism it is

difficult not to be attentive to the development of mass media and mass audiences, deriving from the growth of industrialisation, urbanisation and consumption. The impact of these technological and social changes on the configuration of texts, on the role of texts, their modes of address and the ways in which texts are taken to mean, are issues that merit further investigation.

In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye (1957) seeks to map out a terrain for literary criticism analogous to the evolutionary unfolding of knowledge in the sciences marked by inductive leaps. This appears to operate by moving from a position of taking for granted and mapping chronologically the data under investigation to one in which this data is connected within a conceptual framework. In his theory of modes Frye offers a conceptual framework, mapping out what are taken to be predominant literary forms corresponding to five epochs of Western literature, moving from heroic myth through romance, high mimetic mode, low mimetic mode to irony. In the ironic mode the reader is positioned as superior in power or intelligence to the hero of the literary work. It is a movement, which on the face of it, tracks the liberal democratisation of the Western world, the growing primacy of individual sovereignty, and from a marketing perspective a gathering focus on customer centrality.

But in a way not dissimilar to that of Leavisite criticism and the Frankfurt School, Frye inscribes a guarded note with regard to this teleological, democratic movement of history. It would seem that a literature and a culture that is serious has to guard against and be differentiated from corrupt artistic forms. Frye writes:

Cultivated people go to a melodrama to hiss the villain with an air of condescension: they are making a point of the fact that they cannot take his villainy seriously. We have here a type of irony which exactly corresponds to that of two other major arts of the ironic age, advertising and propaganda. These arts pretend to address themselves seriously to a subliminal audience of cretins, an audience that may not even exist, but which is assumed to be simple-minded enough to accept at their face value the statements made about the purity of a soap or a government's motives. The rest of us, realising that irony never says precisely what it means, take these arts ironically, or, at least, regard them as a kind of ironic game. Similarly, we read murder stories with a strong sense of the unreality of the villainy involved. Murder is doubtless a serious crime, but if private murder were a major threat to our civilization it would not be relaxing to read about it. (p. 47)

This latter point begs the question why, if 'private murder' is not a threat to our civilization, it is so much read about. What might be apposite here is to raise questions about the role of such melodramas or urban myths and their ironic modes of address. While they might or might not be taken seriously, this doubling of the text nevertheless inscribes a focus on the values that have to be guarded. And of course, advertising - whether ironic or not - is not averse to playing to and perpetuating urban myths and fantasies. The issue here is how can we be sure that 'cultivated people'/'the rest of us', realising irony never says precisely what

it means, are not in turn the subject of a certain 'condescension'? Indeed, in similar fashion to Foucault's comments on prohibition above (p. 71), it could be that a *cool* condescension, as a form of tacit and exclusive knowingness, comprises a ruse to make it into a constitutive element from which it is possible to write the history of what is said about ironic modes of being in a postmodern consumer culture. A key aim of this Dissertation is to pay heed to the possibility that condescension and exclusivity similarly constitute a ruse through which ironic dispositions are rendered and discourses of cool are written.

But rather than engaging in and perpetuating acts of condescension with regard to establishing the validity of privileging certain voices, perhaps it would be useful to think about Classic Realist texts in contradistinction to the perspectives available on pre-modern texts. The latter would seem to be less authorial and more discursive, dialogical in their configuration, with the reader more directly implicated and addressed in the text as constituting a site for debate. (Belsey, 1985) In this sense, they are structurally positioned across a network of voices, engaging in and engaged by the social issues and debates of the time. Authority in the guise of the authorial voice, at least, is considerably more problematical. The narrative perspective of the Classic Realist text, however, as in Dickens *Bleak House*, in which the reader accompanies the author as a detached observer tends to a configuration of the text as a site of consumption, rather than debate. To this end, rather than seeing irony from a Classic Realist perspective as a self-contained, somewhat condescending attitude towards existence, it would perhaps be more productive to chart the possibilities of irony as a play of voices/signifiers.

Ironic Turns

Albeit for different reasons, the authorial voice is equally problematical in the postmodern rendering of texts. It would seem the reworking of irony in the modernist phase has carried over into the postmodern. If early ironic modes had constituted a challenge to the hubris of knowingness, now it is prescribed as an unwritten guarantee of *knowingness*. Irony as a reminder of the destabilisation of meaning endemic in writing now gives way to an ironic disposition - in the affectation of *cool* - to a self-fashioning that affirms a tacit, unwritten knowingness, but which denies any semblance of accountability to the signifying practices of culture. In a postmodern era, irony's propensity towards a manifestation of exclusivity, for narrowcasting, is in danger of bringing about the semblance of a private language. But what in effect is being achieved is an intensification of the inscription of individualism, of a particular configuration of perspectives and values based on the *logos* of the centred humanist subject - and which includes a commitment to individualism and the private.

From what Colebrook (2004) has argued and from the more general problems of determining irony's varying articulations, it would seem plausible that irony's different configurations offer a register of changing and contested values and priorities. As Colebrook (2004) notes:

We know a word is being used ironically when it seems out of place or unconventional. Recognising irony, therefore, foregrounds the social, conventional and political aspects of language: that language is not just a logical system but relies on assumed norms and values. (p 16)

And there are postmodern perspectives on irony that take this a step further, resisting the very possibility of norms and values as stable and shared, and instead maintaining irony as a continuing inscription of undecidability and scepticism.

Beginning with an observation by Foucault, Colebrook (2004) elaborates on the implications of what is registered as a bifurcation in Socratic irony, and the subsequent subordination of irony as a play on the instabilities of language:

According to Michel Foucault, it is with the routing of the sophists, or those who saw rhetoric as the ultimate political art, that human life becomes subordinated to some putative objective truth. Foucault draws on a tradition going back at least as far as Nietzsche, a tradition that sees the elevation of philosophy (or pure truth) over literature (or active and creative speech) as symptomatic of Western politics and its model of ethics as knowledge rather than as active self-formation. Socrates is poised at the brink of this repression. On the one hand, his irony is a mode of practical and affirmative self-creation, always different and distant from what is said and presented. On the other hand, Socratic irony is subsequently interpreted, from as early as Plato and Aristotle, as a play with language that moves from the instability of irony to the fixity of ultimate moral truths. It is precisely the Socratic occupation of an ambivalent place that is neither within nor outside Platonism that, according to Jacques Derrida, precludes us from closing the truth claims of philosophy and its supposed purity. (p 40)

For Colebrook irony is viewed on the one hand as a mode of practical and affirmative self-creation, while on the other it is seen as a play with language that moves from instability to the fixity of ultimate moral truths. But in drawing up the binary in this way, Colebrook would seem to be privileging a logocentric affirmation of self-creation, which might be deemed yet another fixation on an ultimate moral truth.

However, from a contemporary marketing and consumer behavioural perspective a Socratic irony that promotes a [re]productive ethic of active self-formation has some obvious attractions in terms of the ongoing exchange dynamic it affords. But at the same time it would appear to conflict with a still prevalent Platonic mode of thinking whereby language, including its ironic forms, is a means for representing, determining a pre-existing truth, reality, including those of the market and consumer needs. From a marketing perspective, the implications of this paradox are making themselves felt in the subtle shift from attempts

to identify consumer *needs*, which might be characterised as fixed, to that of determining consumer desires, which are endlessly elusive and reproducible.

Taking another turn on irony's heterogeneous history, the reconfiguration of Socratic irony as a capacity to remain distant, indifferent and to mark out a space of difference, easily merges with irony as a mode of elitism in which the 'true' meaning of an ironic statement or speech can only be recognised and differentiated by an exclusive audience. This process of ironic identification then enables particular audiences to mark themselves as an exclusive elite. This conservative tendency in irony finds further echoes not just in Castiglione but in Greek writing on irony as an art in keeping with the cultivation of an urbane and elevated personality. As Colebrook (ibid) points out this sense of irony's necessary exclusiveness was reinforced in the twentieth century in *Fowler's Modern English Usage*:

Irony is a form of utterance that postulates a double audience, consisting of one party that hearing shall hear and shall not understand, and another party that, when more is meant than meets the ear, is aware both of that more and of the outsiders' incomprehension. (p 20)

And as Colebrook (ibid) further observes,

Irony [. . .] from Socrates to the present, has been regarded as politically ambivalent. Irony is both questioning and elitist, both disruptive of norms and constructive of higher ideals. On the one hand, irony challenges any readymade consensus or community, allowing the social whole and everyday language to be questioned. On the other hand, the position of this questioning and ironic viewpoint is necessarily hierarchical, claiming a point of view beyond the social whole and above ordinary speech and assumptions. (p 153)

While not necessarily agreeing with Colebrook that an ironic viewpoint has to be articulated from beyond the social whole, there would appear to be a significant paradox for irony. Taking up an ironic position implies a privileging of perspective, which arguably is an integral aspect of what irony calls into question.

The American philosopher, Richard Rorty, attempts to address this paradox by differentiating between the public and the private. For Rorty, irony is a private attitude, an awareness that one's language is just one among others. As Colebrook (ibid pp155/6) points out Rorty argues for the value of irony as, 'the only way we can abandon grand claims about truth and foundations, claims that have allowed the West to think of itself as a privileged home of reason.'

But at the same time, argues Colebrook (ibid, p 156), Rorty does not want to establish irony, or the perpetual questioning of one's public language by private individuals, as a universal truth or theory.

To do so would mean establishing the ironic viewpoint that questions Western values, as one more central Western value. Rorty parcels out this paradox into a distinction

between public and private. Publicly and politically, we have to speak and act as if we believed and stood behind the values of the West; we commit ourselves to the language of rights, humanism and democracy. Privately and philosophically, we know such values to be contingent and context dependent; we remain ironic at a private level. This might mean that philosophers who play with and recreate language games might invent new ways of speaking that could be adopted publicly and politically, but such inventions would be ironic: not seeking to find the truth, but speaking with a sense of creation, renovation and infidelity.

Whether parcelling out the paradox irony poses into a distinction between the public and the private is an adequate response is open to question. While there is merit in Rorty not wanting to establish the ironic viewpoint as one more central Western value, it would seem that he nevertheless subscribes to irony as an attitude towards existence, as opposed to it constituting a mark of linguistic instability and a mode of questioning social and cultural values, Western or Eastern. Further, the effect of drawing a dividing line between the private and the public is that, in privileging the private, it still constitutes a commitment to a logocentric *knowingness*. It also evades the ethical implications of activities such as consumption, which bridge the public/private opposition. Ostensibly, consumption is a private matter, but its aggregated effect has become only too obvious as a matter of public concern through issues such as global warming. It is a contention of this dissertation, that this resort to a public/private binary can also be seen at play in the articulation of discourses on *cool*: indeed *cool* is so private that it refuses to identify itself. But the aspiration to determine what is *cool* is driving a wave of consumption that is global in scope and scale.

Conclusion

This chapter began by arguing that contemporary marketing perspectives tend to move between ironic detachment as a mark of consumer circumspection and scepticism, and irony as an abstract literary concept signifying a complicit, exclusive knowingness between marketers and consumers, authors and readers. It has also been argued these ironic modes of address invariably constitute a positioning of the centred, privileged humanist subject, *knowing* origin and arbiter on what is valued.

In charting a particular trajectory for irony via Shakespeare, Castiglione, Swift and Dickens, attention has been drawn to how, through an examination of their varying modes of address, irony's priorities have changed, with it becoming increasingly representative of an exclusive *knowingness*, rather than constituting a challenge to our representations of the world. The observation is made that while early ironic modes invariably constituted a challenge to the hubris of *knowingness*, now it is inscribed as an unwritten guarantee of knowingness. Irony as a reminder of the instability of meaning now gives way to an ironic disposition - in the affectation of *cool* - to a self-fashioning that affirms a tacit, unwritten *knowingness*, but which

denies any semblance of accountability to the signifying practices of culture. What also became apparent in charting this trajectory is that *cool* dispositions are not exactly a new phenomenon; do not constitute evidence of a more enlightened, knowing individualism. Indeed, a first reading of Castiglione (1967) would suggest that early forms of *cool* are circumscribed in the charting of a consumer culture in which the sovereignty of the individual and questions of achieving a distinctive identity attain an increasing priority.

In charting the heterogeneity of irony, it has been argued that viewing irony as simply a dissimulation of ignorance, a somewhat sceptical attitude toward existence or a tacit form of knowingness is to belie its complexity. Rather, a poststructuralist approach to irony served as a reminder as to the undecidability entailed in the linguistic configuration of our being in the world. The subject as sovereign source of *knowingness* is precisely what was called into question. To this end, taking subjectivity as linguistically and culturally constructed throws into relief how the particular modes of irony often deployed in postmodern marketing have the effect of legitimising consumer sovereignty. In so doing, the deployment of the signifier in the designs of marketing texts are subordinated, masked.

By way of problematising the issues raised, this study explored a number of literary texts and their relation to ironic modes of address. In charting the variety of ironic modes of address, a history/genealogy of irony was traced from the cool, *sang-froid* of contemporary marketing narrative (Frank, 1997) through the literary realism of Dickens (1971), the Enlightenment (Swift 1996), Renaissance humanism (Castiglione, 1967), and Shakespeare to Socratic dialogue. The aim has not been to reveal the essence of irony or why it is deemed apposite to a postmodern condition, but to seek out discontinuities, to consider irony's varied and excluded modes of address. The focus has been with exploring contingent, alternative, overlooked modes of irony and an assessment of their implications for the marketing project.

A nuanced approach to the study of irony attests to the importance of reading carefully, with an awareness of the designs and the signifying practices that texts manifest, reminding us to be on our guard against taking signifiers and signifieds as having a simple one-to-one correspondence. Importantly, irony itself cannot be simply taken as read. Irony intensifies an awareness of the 'determination' of readings, which while never the final word on the matter, are neither completely open. As Hillis-Miller (1995), citing de Man, points out, 'Irony is dangerous, because, as de Man says, it is "the systematic undoing . . . of understanding"' (p 114).

Similarly, the deconstruction of texts, in manifesting their binary oppositions, in seeking out the traces of their otherness, mark a space for irony as a manifestation of resistance to any

one dominant/determined reading. The issue is not one of simply reversing the binary opposition, of seeking out a more profound truth, reversing injustices, but, rather, affording an opportunity to explore, to tease out the instabilities of meaning, the issues being staked and the play of power; and perhaps registering that irony is never wholly absent from any text.

In the following chapter a number of academic marketing texts are deconstructed with a view to guarding further against any easy literary interpretation of texts as simply providing profound and nuanced insights into the nature of our being as consumers, however ironically represented.

CHAPTER SIX: DECONSTRUCTING THE MARKETING LITERATI

The Marketing Academic: Anxiety, Significance, Signifiers

Brown, (1999 p 1) notes that: 'Literary criticism, according to leading theorist Frank Lentricchia, involves striking texts together to see if they spark.' To this end, this chapter strikes together a number of academic marketing and literary texts to consider the issues that are generated in the play of their differences, calling into question modes of representation, categories, rationales and disciplinary boundaries.

I begin by bringing together Stephen Brown's (1999), 'Marketing and Literature: The Anxiety of Academic Influence', and Catherine Belsey's (1999) 'English Studies in the Postmodern Condition: Towards a Place for the Signifier', to consider not only the sparks that they generate but to establish the significance of their difference.

The reason for choosing these two texts is their textual engagement with Harold Bloom. A constant theme within the writing of Brown is with what is described as the crisis in marketing, the end of marketing as we know it, but which the literary and literary criticism might help overcome, particularly with the help of erstwhile literary critics such as Harold Bloom. Catherine Belsey references a similar sense of crisis in English studies, but here she argues that far from providing salvation, we are witnessing the end of literary criticism and the movement of English studies into the postmodern condition.

Brown's text draws on the literary criticism of Harold Bloom (1997), as articulated in *The Anxiety of Influence*, as the basis for striking together the published works of marketing thinkers, Theodore Levitt and Morris Holbrook. Brown argues that far from being positioned at opposite ends of the academic spectrum - pure versus applied – they are, in literary terms at least, father and son, one and the same. By arguing they are one and the same, be it Milton and Wordsworth or Levitt and Holbrook, what is being argued for here is the continuity of a particular body of work; the literary canon in the first case and the marketing oeuvre in the second.

In making her argument about the status of literary criticism Belsey, too, explores the work of Harold Bloom (1995): *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. But unlike Brown, she does not treat the work of Bloom as a transparent medium through which literary insights can simply be drawn. Rather, by paying attention to the detail of Bloom's signifying practice she reveals a literary criticism that, although overtly denied, is shown to be partial, ideological and political. What Belsey (1999) shows is that, while Bloom insists the principles behind the selection of the literary canon he puts forward are not ideologically

driven but resolutely aesthetic, attention to the detail of his argument exposes contradictions that reveal otherwise:

The logic of Bloom's position requires . . . that if what makes literature strong, deep and dark is not a matter of content, morality and ideology, then the value that elicits his passionate defence, literature's aesthetic autonomy, must reside at least in part elsewhere. What is aesthetically exciting, his book reiterates, is not only meaning but form, language, the signifier itself. As a self-proclaimed Romantic, Bloom repudiates any theory that would enable him to account for the power of the signifier, or to identify its materiality, so the textuality of the text is necessarily collapsed back into a property of the Author, recuperated as a psychological propensity, a 'will to figuration', and barely differentiated from the signified, the meaning as insight or understanding. But the signifier is named, nonetheless, and repeatedly, as a constituent of 'aesthetic strength', which is said to reside in 'mastery of figurative language...exuberance of diction', 'linguistic energy'. (pp 129)

What Belsey appears to be arguing here is that both in the canon he proposes and in his commentary, Bloom all but denies the impact and import of the rhetorical strategies and signifying practices that are put into play, but then essentially draws on the self-same. The postmodern criticism that Belsey calls for is one that takes full account of the signifying practices – modes of address, conventions and breaches of conventions, genres and generic surprises - of the texts it interprets. (Belsey, 1999) continues:

The frisson engendered by certain signifying instances is not best understood either as Romantic self-indulgence, or as an encounter with a mystery that can be named and relegated as genius. On the contrary, it can more usefully be read as a reminder of our own linguistic constitution as subjects, and our consequent vulnerability to the meanings and values in circulation in our own culture. Whether our motive in reading is solitary self-cultivation or a struggle against social injustice, we should, in my view, do well to remember what we are, and the relativity of the position we speak from. (pp 136)

It is the relativity of the positions from which we speak that Brown effectively occludes, by accepting at face value the literary canon proposed by Bloom. In doing so, he effaces the question of power and knowledge and its implications for interpretive practice. Indeed, in the testy and dismissive responses of Holbrook (2000) and Levitt (2000) to his proposed canonisation, Brown is brought to book with regard to texts as a space where power relations are played out.

In summary, while Brown holds to a crisis of representation in marketing, he takes Bloom's text as read and is content to subscribe to a continuity in the representation of Literature. As such, there is a failure to question the processes of canonisation that might be seen as constituting a building of the literary brand for certain texts and authors, and all that implies for subscribing to, perpetuating and promoting particular sets of values and norms. However, Belsey's deconstructive reading, in paying attention to the detail of Bloom's signifying practice, renders the literary canon and criticism on which he draws as problematic. Far from being based on an impartial and resolute aesthetic, it is rendered as

somewhat partial and contradictory. A further crucial aspect of Belsey's argument is that paying close attention to a text's signifying practices is a reminder of our own linguistic constitution as subjects, about how we are subject to the meanings and values in circulation in our own culture and the relativity of the positions from which we speak. The effect of this is to make apparent that Brown neglects to question the implications of the ways in which the Literary perpetuates and promotes particular sets of values and norms. To this end, the fact that in the UK alone in 2008 some £18.5 billion pound was spent on advertising cannot be insignificant with regard to the meanings and values it helps promote and circulate.

Frye's Appeal

The writing of Northrop Frye constituted a key text for many literary theorists charting the trajectory of literary studies from New Critical and Leavisite perspectives into structuralist and poststructuralist domains. Eagleton (1983, pp 91) explains the impact of Frye during the 1950s as a consequence of an increasingly scientific and managerial North American society demanding a more ambitious form of critical technocracy. He argues that what Frye offered was a timely supplement to a New Criticism engaged in a rearguard action against modern science and industrialism. Similarly, Belsey, (1980) locates the structuralism of Frye's writing as in part a reaction to and development of New Criticism. She cites Frye's argument that criticism as it then existed was, 'without system, atomistic, intuitive and so finally elitist, a ritual of sensibility which mystifies the possession of an illusory "good taste."' (pp 21) Belsey further observes that in place of this 'mystery-religion without a gospel' Frye proposed a criticism that would constitute 'a coherent and systematic study'."

For marketing what Frye's scientific approach and privileging of literature as an originary structure seems to offer is a bridging of an epistemological gap for those marketers interested in drawing on literary theory. A key inscription in Stern's (1989) engagement with the literary draws on a rhetorical question posed by Frye as an epigraph to what has been perceived as a seminal work in opening up a new trajectory for marketing:

Is it true that the verbal structures of psychology, anthropology, theology, history, law, and everything else built out of words have been informed or constructed by the same kind of myths and metaphors that we find in their original hypothetical form in literature? (p 322)

With a marketing academy in something of a crisis with regard to its origins and originary purpose, and with an increasing recognition of how its trajectory traverses other disciplines, not least of which was the literary, it was hardly surprising that Frye was to become a key figure for a number of the early marketing literati (Belk 1995, Belk et al 1989, Brown, 1998, Brown et al 2001, Buttle 1995, Stern, 1988, 1989, 1989a, 1995, 1996 Holbrook &

Hirschmann, 1992, Shankar et al 2001). The marketing literati had designs on challenging the prevailing positivist paradigms of the marketing academy, seeking to provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of marketing communications and consumers.

Frye's seminal *Anatomy of Criticism*, with its sociological and anthropological dimensions, has been particularly influential in mapping out a terrain for a more interpretivist approach to marketing and which, at the same time, allowed the discipline to take its place alongside others in mapping a greater structuralist project. It might also be argued that Frye's text offered a less challenging, accessible route into the literary for a marketing discourse dominated by a positivist paradigm, against which it sought suitable ground to mount a challenge, because as with many structuralist texts it ultimately maintained an expressive realist ontology.

Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) make the observation that in the *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye (1957) puts forward a Formalist theory of literary analysis to argue that literature of all cultures and periods followed a system of objective laws. They cite Eagleton by way of offering an authoritative summary:

These laws were the various modes, archetypes, myths and genres by which all literary works were structured. At the root of all literature lay four narrative categories: comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony... The modes and myths of literature [were viewed as] transhistorical... Literature ... is not to be seen as the self-expression of individual authors, who are no more than functions of this universal system: it springs from the collective subject of the human race itself, which is how it comes to embody archetypes or figures of universal significance. (Eagleton, cited Hirschman and Holbrook (1992), p. 68)

Frye's project had been to argue for the crucial importance of criticism to literature - and the arts in general - but from a position which recognised a need to address its disparate articulations and lack of intellectual rigour. He offers a series of essays that constitutes *Anatomy of Criticism*, as an attempt to introduce a conceptual framework with the necessary scientific, systematic and progressive rigour that will provide a comprehensive overview of the scope, theory, principles and techniques of literary criticism.

A key concern for Frye is that of differentiating what constitutes genuine, progressive criticism focused on making intelligible literature as a body of knowledge from that which belongs to the history of taste, following the vagaries of fashionable prejudice. He takes pains to assert the progressive credentials of the unity that he attempts to determine at the heart of the literary, and which constitutes evidence of its potential for offering up a scientific knowledge. Frye (1957) calls for,

[A] form of criticism, a coherent and comprehensive theory of literature, logically and scientifically organised, some of which the student unconsciously learns as he goes on, but the main principles of which are as yet unknown to us. The development of such

a criticism would fulfil the systematic and progressive element in research by assimilating its work into an unified structure of knowledge, as other sciences do. . . . We should be careful to realise what the possibility of such an intermediate criticism implies. It implies that at no point is there any direct learning of literature itself. Physics is an organised body of knowledge about nature, and a student of it says that he is learning physics, not nature. Art, like nature, has to be distinguished from the systematic study of it, which is criticism. It is, therefore, impossible to 'learn literature': one learns about it in a certain way, but what one learns, transitively, is the criticism of literature. (p.11)

Indeed, what Frye offers marketing is the institution of a new model for reconfiguring the boundaries of the discipline. To this end, Frye (1957) argues for a development of Aristotle's critical approach to poetics as the starting point for his systematic study:

A theory of criticism whose principles apply to the whole of literature and account for every valid type of critical procedure is what I think Aristotle meant by poetics. Aristotle seems to me to approach poetry as a biologist would approach a system of organisms, picking out its genera and species, formulating the broad laws of literary experience, and in short writing as though he believed that there is a totally intelligible structure of knowledge attainable about poetry which is not poetry itself, or the experience of it, but poetics. (pp14)

Frye (ibid) intimates that whereas natural history or science in its primitive state has progressed, literary criticism remains in what he later describes as a state of naive induction. Quite simply, post-Aristotelian literary activity and poetics has not kept pace with the progress made in natural history.

Frye argues that most disciplines begin from a state of naive induction - the tendency to take the phenomena being interpreted as data in and of itself, lacking any overarching conceptual framework. Among other examples, Frye (ibid, pp 15) explains the progress of scientific thinking beyond that of naive induction by reference to biology and history. Initially, the different branches of biology were largely efforts of cataloguing, but this was completely reconfigured with the theory of evolution. And similarly, argues Frye, history began as chronicle; but the modern historian now sees these events as historical phenomena, to be connected within a broader, conceptual framework.

The issue becomes one of coming to an understanding of how these conceptual frameworks are to be determined and configured. Frye argues these are dependent on what Bacon termed inductive leaps, the taking up of new positions from which existing data can be viewed as new phenomena to be explained, most notably exemplified in the form of what has come to be known as the Copernican revolution. Quite literally almost, a change of standpoint or position opens up a whole new realm of understanding. And what Frye's inductive leap appears to comprise in *Anatomy of Criticism* is not just a project that articulates a systematic classification of modes, symbols, mythic structures and genres, but which offers a new progressive rationale that crosses the traditional boundaries of literary studies based

on the work of authors or on somewhat dubious literary periodisation. It would seem that rather than simply focusing on the knowing, atomistic insights of gifted authors deemed to be giving voice to the spirit of their times, Frye's structural, scientific conception of literature, or rather literary criticism, has the capacity for offering deeper, more universal insights into the human condition. And this appears to include the human potential for achieving a progressive enlightenment.

Intriguingly, Frye's style at this point mirrors this process of revelation, this movement from a state of naive induction, comprising a sequence of personalised, thoughtful reflections, which initially register a degree of uncertainty and contingency, followed by a shift to a more generalised, objective assertiveness. The movement in Frye's style appears to constitute an emulation of the selfsame reflective process as a mode of progressive epistemological and historical enlightenment. Taking Aristotelian poetics as a starting point, Frye speculatively reflects on the contingency of what Aristotle might have meant, while at one and the same time inscribing the validity of his interpretation of Aristotle's project as the basis for a theory of criticism.

Reciting elements of the quotation from Frye above with an emphasis on its rhetorical style will register its material impact as a signifying practice. The passage begins with an intimation that Frye (1957), or Aristotle, or both, are somewhat tentative about their account of a poetics or theory of criticism:

A theory of criticism whose principles apply to the whole of literature and account for every valid type of critical procedure *is what I think Aristotle means* by poetics. Aristotle *seems to me* to approach poetry as a biologist would approach a system of organisms . . . and in short writing *as though he believed* that there is a totally intelligible structure of knowledge attainable about poetry which is not poetry itself, or the experience of it, but poetics. (p. 14)

Arguably a reflective, tentative signifying practice (as indicated by my italics) bears witness to a certain contingency here, reinforcing a sense of this intelligible structure not being necessarily discernible to either Aristotle or Frye in the form of their direct experience, but rather apprehended, intuited on the basis of a *belief in* an intelligible structure as a basis for making sense of their experience. And this belief from which all else appears to follow, to originate from, is predicated on, a form of what Frye has termed naive induction, deriving from primary facts and crucially, the belief in a natural order.

Frye (1957) seeks authority for this position by citing the introduction to the Bywater translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* as a reliable, time-tested inscription for the kind of approach, the form of aesthetics, he attempts to pursue. The quotation concludes with the exhortation: 'Let us follow the natural order and begin with the primary facts', (p. 14). And the origins of these primary facts on which this aesthetic order is based are the 'immediate

sensations of experience', be these of a poem or the properties of physical materials. Arguably, the use of the term 'natural order' implies not just a patterned design, but a particular, in-built, teleological sequencing or progressive movement.

With this suggestion of an ordered sense of movement, a certain progression, so the style shifts its register. A more assertive, objective, third-person case begins to emerge in Frye's writing (1957), albeit with a continuing note of contingency at the outset: 'Sciences *normally* begin in a state of naive induction: they *tend* first of all to take the phenomena they are *supposed* to interpret as data.' (pp 15), The movement of the language then mirrors a discourse exhibiting a growing confidence; the choice of diction, style and tone suggests a movement on from the contingent to the assertion of a sense of progressive revelation and enlightenment through the passage of narrative time:

'Thus physics began by taking the immediate sensations of experience . . . as fundamental principles.'

'Eventually, physics turned inside out, and *discovered* [] its real function.'

'History began as chronicle, but the difference between the *old* chronicler and the *modern* historian . . .'

'As long as astronomers regarded . . .'

'Once they thought of movement as itself explicable . . .'

'So the way was cleared for . . .'

'As long as biology thought of . . .'

'As soon as it was the existence of forms of life themselves that had to be explained, the theory of evolution and the conceptions of protoplasm and the cell poured into biology and completely *revitalised* it.' (ibid, p 15)

Arguably, the movement of Frye's language, in mirroring a progression from a state of fragmented, naive induction to one in which there is the apprehension of a bigger picture, reinforces the perception that new, more comprehensive insights were revealed as the sciences progressed. By extension, Frye calls for a similar revitalisation and co-ordination of literature and criticism which, as with the theory of evolution, will come to see the phenomena it deals with as part of a more comprehensive whole. The overall thrust of Frye's (1957) argument is that the literary is not so much concerned with individual instances of literature but with the 'organising or containing forms of its conceptual framework' (p. 16).

Within this context it is no surprise that Frye eschews literary significance as a function of particular authors, their intentions or in the specificity of what they write. The significance of literary texts lies beyond what might be termed their day-to-day meaning. Writing that is focused on achieving correspondence with the outside world is not literature, rather it is an

aspect of writing's centrifugal force and direction, in which we go outside our reading, from the individual word to the things they mean.

For Frye, the literary is concerned with the centripetal or inward movement or force of writing, in which there is the attempt to discern from the words a sense of a larger verbal pattern. And in this context, Frye (1957) argues for words, verbal elements as motifs.

In all literary verbal structures the final direction of meaning is inward. In literature the standards of outward meaning are secondary, for literary works do not pretend to describe or assert, and hence are not true, not false . . . Literary meaning may best be described, perhaps, as hypothetical, and a hypothetical or assumed relation to the external work is part of what is usually meant by the word 'imaginative'. This word is to be distinguished from 'imaginary', which usually refers to an assertive verbal structure that fails to make good its assertions. In literature, questions of fact or truth are subordinated to the primary literary aim of producing a structure of works for its own sake, and the sign-values of symbols are subordinated to their importance as a structure of interconnected motifs. Wherever we have an autonomous verbal structure of this kind, we have literature. Wherever this autonomous structure is lacking, we have language, words used instrumentally to help human consciousness do or understand something else. (p. 74)

Ultimately, Frye is arguing for literature as a means of apprehending the deeper truths and drives that are a marker of the human condition, and it is this which perhaps constitutes the appeal of his writing for the marketing literati concerned to chart and sanction more interpretivist models of consumer behaviour.

Incorporating Disruptive Desire

For Frye, the aim is to locate the literary within a formal or structural system of classification of modes, symbols, mythic structures and genres. And it is the interconnections across and between literary texts that manifest the apprehension of a bigger picture, an autonomous culture - what Frye (1957, p. 127) defines as 'the total body of imaginative hypothesis in a society and its tradition.' This autonomous culture, untrammelled by history, would seem to constitute something of a metanarrative, with its defence forming part of the social task of the intellectual. It is through maintaining the autonomy of culture that a space is maintained for its diverse, recurring, formal articulations. For Frye (1957), poetry, or literature, in its formal phase, exists between the example and the precept and 'in the exemplary event there is an element of recurrence; in the precept, or statement about what ought to be, there is a strong element of *desire* (Frye's italics), or what is called "wish-thinking"'.

Moving his argument on Frye argues that these elements of recurrence and desire are brought to the foreground in archetypal criticism. Here, the narrative aspect of literature is seen to constitute a recurrent act of symbolism, a ritual; while the 'significant content' marks

the space for the conflict of desire and reality, having for its basis the work of the dream. For Frye, this recurrence and desire interpenetrate and are equally important in both ritual and dream. Consequently, he argues, literature in its archetypal phase, imitates nature not as a structure or system, but as a cyclical process. However, it would seem it is a higher order desire that is the driving, originary force in this process. A sense of what Frye (1957) means by this emerges as he broadens the scope of his argument:

Civilization is not merely an imitation of nature, but the process of making a total human form out of nature, and it is impelled by the force that we have just called desire. The desire for food and shelter is not content with roots and caves: it produces the human form of nature that we call farming and architecture. Desire is thus not a simple response to need . . . nor is it a simple response to want, or desire for something in particular. It is neither limited to nor satisfied by objects, but is the energy that leads human society to develop its own form. Desire in this sense is the social aspect of what we met on the literal level as emotion, an impulse towards expression . . . (pp. 105 -106)

Echoing Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the sense of a movement towards self-actualisation, a mainstay of received marketing and consumer behaviour wisdom, Frye moves on to chart a binary opposition for this desire, what he terms its moral dialectic:

Poetry in its social or archetypal aspect, therefore, not only tries to illustrate the fulfilment of desire, but to define the obstacles to it. Ritual is not only a recurrent act, but an act expressive of a dialectic of desire and repugnance We have rituals of social integration, and we have rituals of expulsion, execution and punishment. (ibid, pp 106)

It is not difficult to see how this articulation of desire would find a degree of resonance within a marketing discourse, in which advertising's two most basic modes of address are predicated on tropes which invoke the binary opposition of social inclusion and exclusion. Classic forms include slice-of-life advertising such as those promoting washing powder signifying not just across-the-fence neighbourliness, but, also, the fear of not 'keeping up with the Jones'. In the UK, Persil's 'Whiter than White' campaigns of the 1960s was a classic example of such stratagems. Further advertising forms based on fear and guilt, invoking and resolving the possibilities of social rejection, disapproval and irresponsibility, are common to toothpaste, deodorant, life-assurance and drink driving campaigns. Arguably, such advertising constitutes structural variations on the archetypes of the knowing Eiron and the ultimately ignorant Alazon.

Through the mapping of archetypes, recurring motifs, images, symbols, Frye offers to chart not the recurring cycle of actual, historical human experience, but humanity's fundamental desires and the anxieties and obstacles, which constitute the other to this desire. In this regard, it seems archetypes recur because human nature is constant in its desire for forms of stability and civilisation, for order in the face of anxiety, for 'the energy that leads human society to develop its own form' - what might be recognised as the Maslow pyramid. But

while the outward cultural forms of succeeding generations might change and articulate new modes of expression, the underlying structural processes remain constant. Indeed, each generation and culture is viewed as generating its own particular counter-culture, as it strives to channel its energies and desire into new forms of expression. So what at first sight might appear as a radical challenge or counter-blast, turns out to be little more than a new form of self-expression, what might be regarded as another manifestation of logocentric thinking.

As Eagleton (1983, pp 93) observes, the beauty of Frye's approach, deftly combining a highly structured aesthetics with an efficiently classifying scientificity, is that he is able to position literature as offering an imaginary alternative for modern North American society in the 1950s, while rendering criticism in a discursive mode that strikes a chord with the values of that society. While at first reading, Frye's structuralist and scientific approach appears at odds with that of the New Critics, he ultimately articulates a position that is not dissimilar, wherein literature is claimed to transcend history and ideology, manifesting the timeless desires and anxieties of an unchanging human nature endlessly re-articulating and reiterating universal motifs and archetypes, albeit in different form. Commensurate with this, the possibility of the social, linguistic, cultural, historical specificity and determination of these desires and anxieties is downplayed. And as Belsey (Belsey, 1980) argues, in spite of its claims to science and systematicity, Frye's theory, like that of the New Critics, is non-explanatory.

Meaning for Frye inheres timelessly in 'verbal structures', intuitively available to readers in quite different ages and places because they recognise in them the echo of their own wishes and anxieties. But the only evidence for this concept of an essentially unchanging human nature is precisely the body of literary texts which the concept apparently offers to explain. The relationship between desire and language and between language and meaning is not discussed. (p. 26)

Frye's Stern Appeal

For marketing, Frye's structural strictures with regard to the human condition and desire has the effect of maintaining a detached, objective, scientific aspiration. At the same time, Frye has the effect of circumscribing a space for marketing's increasing articulation of the more complex needs of individual customers, but which intimates that, while particular needs may be many and diverse, they all stem from the same basic desires and anxieties.

For a marketing academy characterised by positivist and empirical approaches, it can be argued that Frye offers both scientific respectability and an articulation of human nature - albeit implicit - that predicated on anxieties and desires, opens a space for marketing to determine and restructure its own discourse so that it reaffirms these anxieties and desires

as a prelude to offering the means - the paradigms, the products and the services - to allaying them.

As one of the early marketing literati, Stern has been a key figure in charting links between marketing and the literary. And what Stern's project seems to comprise is an exploration of marketing communications, consumption activities and rituals as a manifestation of the constantly shifting, cyclical forms and priorities of consumers underlying structural desires and anxieties. In taking up Frye's structuralist, taxonomic approach she is able to maintain a bridge with the positivist modalities of marketing; so while proposing that literary theory can provide access to a more complex and less reductive approach, the reality under investigation nevertheless remains taken as read. Although it is a reality that needs to be reconfigured, to be read more deeply and imaginatively.

Brown (2004) identifies the paper published by Stern (1989) as a landmark event in mapping the way forward for postmodern marketing.

It is 15 years since Barbara Stern married marketing thought and literary criticism, thanks to a landmark article in the journal of Consumer Research (Stern, 1989), and in that time 'lit-crit' has made many significant strides. Although it is less high profile than, say, ethnography, grounded theory or phenomenology, literary theory is one of the driving forces of the 'postmodern' turn in marketing and consumer research. (p. 209)

The article in question, 'Literary criticism and consumer research: overview and illustrative analysis', offers a summary of what it takes to constitute both the diversity and the essence of the literary. In so doing it provides a comparative taxonomy of schools of literary criticism and consumer research interests. The paper proceeds to map the various ways in which the methods of literary study might provide insights into consumer research.

While Stern's mapping of various schools of literary criticism demonstrates plurality and contingency, she nevertheless ascribes a measure of agreement to their various positions, and that 'as a branch of humanistic enquiry' literature's overall focus is on 'some aspect of human nature, creativity, or life'. The purpose of the article, it is announced, is to propose literary criticism as defined by Frye - the systematic and organised study of creative fiction - as a branch of humanistic inquiry that might provide additional insights into consumers.

From a rhetorical perspective, Stern's citation of Frye begs questions as to what is to be understood by creative fiction and about the basis of its organisation - key issues for literary theorists. Literary criticism's focus on and assumptions about literature and its relationship to human nature - both implicit and explicit - has already been offered in the Literary Review above as contributing to the emergence of a literary theory that began to call into question the organisation and constitution of the literary as a revelatory subject/object articulating aspects of deep, multi-layered truths about the nature of human existence and desire.

It is no surprise that a deconstructive reading of Stern suggests a contradictory perspective on what constitutes literature's relationship to human nature and cultural norms. In setting out the argument that humanistic researchers are focused on aspects of human nature, Stern, (1989, pp 322) implies a degree of concern with a founding logos. But at the same time, while ostensibly engaged in impartially charting a taxonomy of different literary schools, Stern introduces something of an aside to privilege particular modes of literary criticism, such as feminist critiques. With this inscription of a different discursive priority, Stern argues that feminist critiques expose what literature sometimes deems to be part of the natural order of experience and reality as anything but, and more a function of cultural norms (ibid, pp 325). As part of this critique, Stern offers a pedagogical anecdote on testing for sexism in fictional works; this entails reversing male/female roles as a strategy for exposing common assumptions about what is natural. Stern's anecdote, in reversing the implicit binary opposition of her opening observations, now privileges the cultural over the natural. This somewhat compromises the commitment to literature as a means of representing those values that characterise the human condition and by extension the deep-seated, natural proclivities of readers and consumers.

As well as the various contributions the different schools of literary criticism can make, the contributions of literary criticism as a whole are differentiated from and added to those of other disciplines on which consumer research draws. In this context, the effect of Stern's commitment to a plurality of approach is to render a reading of human nature, experience, values, as a more complex phenomenon than hitherto granted.

Stern's position on the value of literary criticism for consumer research seems to be that a similarly inclusive and pluralist approach can reveal a complexity not previously recognised, while retaining the capability for providing telling insights and a more complete picture of what can nevertheless still be regarded as the 'structural', universal, timeless needs, desires and aspirations of consumers.

This sentiment is affirmed in the use of the Frye epigraph cited by Stern (1989) on page 108 above which implies that myths and metaphors found in literature provide the originary verbal forms and structures that inform a diverse range of disciplines. In using this quotation there is the suggestion that literary criticism offers a useful array of structural methods and approaches that might help in determining the codes underlying the conventions and modes of representation through which consumers are deemed to be expressing their needs, wants and desires. As Stern (1989) argues:

Connecting the two disciplines may enable literary criticism to provide insight into current consumer research by focusing on how consumers read ads and on how ads can be used to 'read' an audience. (p. 323)

This proposition carries with it a suggestion that a better understanding is needed about how consumers read ads and with which the methods of literary study can help. At the same time those selfsame advertisements in encapsulating those key values that have been distilled from consumers can be used as ongoing templates for better communicating with consumers. While enclosing the term *read* in ironic quotes alludes to a certain affinity with the discourses of literary theory, it also adverts to advertisements as already bearing the prescriptions of the particular values and needs of their audience, which can be read back and forth in a self enclosed *pas de deux*. It further manifests a degree of occlusion with regard to the possibility of discourse itself being a factor in generating the readings subsequently determined by an audience.

What on initial reading appears to be a binary opposition on the origin of meaning, juxtaposing the reader/consumer to that of the advertisement as text, turns out not to be the case. The advertisement as text turns out to be not so much a source of meaning for the reading subject, more a potential cipher, an already inscribed, encoded articulation of what it is that readers/consumers are *given* to essentially value. But the effect of this turn to the literary is to suggest that what marketing and consumer research are able to gain from the literary academy in this reciprocal relationship are insights and variations into the original forms that are taken to constitute human needs and desire.

In later discussing archetypal and genre critics, among whom Frye is included, Stern (*ibid*) reiterates this essentially formalist sentiment when she draws on originary, organicist metaphors characteristic of humanist criticism: 'The genre critics . . . locate form within the actual or physical structure of the literary artefact, much as the embryonic oak lies at the core of each individual acorn.' (pp 323). She also observes how archetypal and genre critics continue their 'critical perspective beyond a single textual unit to the more extensive taxonomic task of identifying and characterising forms of text.' (pp 323) In proceeding to offer a comparative taxonomy of both literary schools and consumer research domains, what Stern achieves is to suggest that both the literary and consumer research projects, while having evolved quite complex structures, remain focused on what lies at the heart of 'human nature, creativity or life' - much like the embryonic oak. This branching and subdividing of the respective literary and consumer projects into various domains and schools seems to take on an element of mirroring the evolution and growth patterns of natural forms, constituting an extension of the organicist metaphor. The various literary schools detailed by Stern, far from occupying disparate, heterogeneous positions, are viewed as simply the diverse manifestations of the unfolding structures inherent in the natural world, and by extension human nature.

Although not taking issue with the overall project, there is something discomfoting about Stern's lack of differentiation between, and conflation of, literary theory and literary criticism; her modes of address; articulations of originary desire; the consistency of the positions she appears to take across her various interventions; and appropriations of the literary and a certain lack of critical self-reflection with regard to her own rhetorical representations. But what does come across with a degree of consistency is an affinity for a logocentric rationality grounded in a 'Stern' view of an unmediated reality.

Pleasure and Persuasion

In 'Pleasure and persuasion in advertising: rhetorical irony as a humour technique', Stern (1989a) offers to extend the domain of literary criticism, and rhetorical irony in particular, to show how this form of humour might be deployed to enhance advertising communications, especially with regard to elite audiences. But while Stern offers to extend the domain of literary criticism into marketing, it remains within a positivist paradigm. The parataxis evident in Stern's sentence construction might be a mark of positive thinking, but it also maintains a positivist ontology, invoking an aura of authority. The paratactic construction of Stern's (1989a, pp 25) assertion that: 'The conceptual link between advertising and literary art derives from classical aesthetics, ultimately based on Aristotle's *Poetics*.' might be described as matter-of-fact. It brooks no argument and bears a strong resemblance to positivist modes of address, which take for granted an objective, ontological reality. Given that marketing's literary turn was in part predicated on challenging the discipline's positivist epistemological and theoretical premises, Stern's syntax displays a singular objectivity and authority with regard to the epistemological basis of the literary project.

There is a certain irony here given that, at the time of Stern's writing, the literary academy had for some twenty years been engaged in an intense and protracted theoretical debate concerning the epistemological and ontological basis of what constituted the literary and its function. This aside, the privileging of a classical aesthetics based on Aristotle's *Poetics* testifies to a particularly Eurocentric literary discourse. It also attributes an homogeneity to the literary, constituting it from a particular perspective, that of eliciting deep, metaphysical insights into the human condition. As such, while claiming to be forward looking, claiming to chart areas for future research in marketing and consumer research, it nevertheless sanctions a privileging of the classical over the modern.

Continuing in assertive mode of address, Stern (ibid) conflates advertising's mission with that of literature: 'Advertising is a modern descendent of the classical tradition, for prior to the

eighteenth century, pleasure and persuasion were assumed to be coequal artistic goals.' (p. 25) But in asserting the primacy of a classical literary tradition, predicated on 'teaching with delight', by means of a mix of this 'pleasure and persuasion', there is an implicit admission of alternative possibilities for the literary - the incorporation of the classic to a particular re-configuration of the modern. Adopting a more tentative tone, Stern (ibid) speculates that, 'The classical literary mission may be more relevant to modern advertising's sugar-coated persuasive pills than to art for art's sake creativity.' (p. 26) In so doing, the choice, or the further binary opposition, brought into play is that of literature with a social purpose or that of literature with its own intrinsic aesthetic appeal.

Having already invoked a classical literary mission, the design Stern achieves here is that of privileging literature with a social purpose, which by extension validates a space for advertising as a close affiliate. Stern invokes Frye (ibid, pp 25) in support, citing his comments that nearly every work of art in the past had a social function that was not primarily aesthetic in its own time. Frye's comments here are then conflated with those of Booth (In Stern, 1989a) who postulates, 'Rhetorical irony as a technique for forging social bonds entails the building of communality.' (p. 29) This double conflation is then extended by Stern to intimate that a social function of rhetorical irony entails the building of communality 'between a company and a consumer by means of a shared humour.' What Stern attests in this 'building of communality' is a view of irony as an attitude towards existence, a form of shared, tacit *knowingness* between company and consumer, and which becomes the means for establishing a stronger bond and access to the consumer's mindscape.

While not taking issue with the proposition that literature has a social purpose, what is discomfiting are Stern's own rhetorical stratagems for constructing a form of exclusivity and a side-stepping of the challenge posed by literature as art for art's sake creativity, in pursuit of an alternative privileging of what constitutes the literary. Neither should this be taken as a call to reverse the opposition and privilege art for art's sake creativity. What is being argued is that marketing's turn to the literary ought to entail an engagement with the substantive theoretical debates taking place with regard to the purview of the literary rather than simply engage those conceptions of the literary that play to preconceived, logocentric perspectives on the nature of the human condition and the function of the literary. Stern's (1989a) designs on the literary are further articulated in the assertive tone of the conclusion:

The rhetorical goal of teaching with delight has found new application in modern advertising. A universal human desire for entertainment lies behind the adaptation of irony to commercial messages. The need to create kinship between the marketing company and its consumers by means of shared enjoyment has been transmuted by a new frame of reference, but the goals and techniques are little changed.

Contemporary advertisers often modify literary devices, for time-honoured ways of crafting messages have evolved over the centuries. The value of irony as a supremely persuasive way of reaching the elite ensures that it will continue to be used in modern advertising as it has been in classical literature. (p. 38)

Now it may well be that the functions of conclusions are to be conclusive, to convey a certain authority, based on the development of the preceding argument. The form of conclusion on offer from Stern is more suited to a positivist empirical investigation than to an interpretivist speculation seeking to chart new trajectories for modern advertising.

What is significant in Stern's conclusion is the deployment of a certain rhetoric to bridge this gap. The choice of diction, the parataxis, the intimation of revelation, the assumptions about human nature and needs offered as axiomatic truths, the generalised appeals to common-sense empiricism and the progressive refinement of timeless human values, all combine to inscribe a certain authority to the conclusion, but which do not progress beyond assertion, nor derive from any critical reflection on the theoretical basis of the literary. Stern simply takes it as axiomatic that insights provided by literature through the application of its 'time-honoured' rhetorical methods and devices will help marketing develop richer truths concerning relationships between marketers and consumers. What is effaced in this invocation of 'time-honoured' rhetoric is any sense of what is at issue, what constitutes the debate, the uncertainty.

In asserting the play of irony as a mark of an exclusive literary sensibility appealing primarily to an elitist audience, Stern is simply privileging a particular inscription of the literary. What she designates by the classical technique of rhetorical irony, characterised by a blend of pleasure and persuasion in messages that 'teach by delight' are constitutions of the literary that poststructuralist, feminist, post-colonialist critics for the past forty years or so have sought to deconstruct. It is a use of irony which assumes a reality, but with access to and understanding of its truths dependent on privileged, exclusive readings that engage the consumer/reader in enactments of revelation, but which simply bears testimony to a privileging already conferred by the text. As MacCabe (1979) intimates it is a configuration of reality that is dependent on an:

hierarchy of discourses which places the reader in a position of dominance with regard to the stories and characters. . . . Classical irony is established in the distance between the original sentence and the sentence as it should be, given the knowledge of reality that the text has already conferred on us.

There is a certain irony in Stern elevating the role of ironic advertising in bringing about enlightenment through pleasure/delight, particularly given Frye's categorisation of advertising, along with melodrama and propaganda, as forms of irony that are treated condescension, whose overt claims and propositions are in any case not to be taken seriously. Frye argues that these naive ironic forms are overblown, operating at a level that merely plays to

prejudice - and arguably to stereotyping, the troubling source and destination of much advertising - rather than calling it into question. According to Frye (1957):

These arts [melodrama, advertising, propaganda] pretend to address themselves seriously to a subliminal audience of cretins, an audience that may not even exist, but which is assumed to be simple-minded enough to accept at their face value the statements made about the purity of a soap or a government's motives. The rest of us, realising that irony never says precisely what it means, take these arts ironically, or, at least, regard them as a kind of ironic game. (p. 47)

What Stern effaces in pressing her claims for classic irony is Frye's institution of a division between naive forms or irony, which attempt to position the object/ subject of its 'exclusion' as a person outside that society, and what is termed true comic irony, which defines the enemy of society as a spirit within that society. But in ascribing 'true comic irony' as also constituting and constitutive of a division within society, Frye opens up a space from which there are no safe grounds for the articulation of exclusion and exclusivity - for appealing to an elite sensibility. Instead, there is only the play of difference/*differance*.

Paradox and Provocation

By 1996, Stern appears to be taking a more circumspect perspective on literary theory in relation to marketing and consumer research. She addresses the research convention of construct definition from a Derridean perspective, namely its elusiveness and cites Derrida to note that:

The difficulty of defining . . . [a] word stems from the fact that all the predicates, all the defining concepts, all the lexical significations, and even the syntactic articulations which seem at one moment to lend themselves to this definition or to that . . . are also deconstructed or deconstructible. (p. 137)

She also admits Derrida's citation that meaning derives 'only from its inscription in a chain of possible substitutions,' which constitutes something of a rejection of representation theories of reality, of the impossibility of drawing up the boundaries of an ineluctable, one-to-one correspondence between signifier and signified.

Having enthusiastically signed up to radical deconstructive criticism, Stern lapses. In concluding that paradox is an essential feature of texts, Stern (1996) observes: 'Paradox is rooted in the multiple and contradictory meanings of words.' (p. 137) But this simple statement with its resort to an organic metaphor reintroduces the idea of an accessible, unmediated reality to which the text relates - albeit one that is more problematical and in which a greater degree of cultivation has to be expended in order to unearth the meaning of texts.

An acknowledgement that texts reproduce the historical and institutional arrangements accepted as reality, while opening the way for that self same reality to be called into question, nevertheless locates the possibility of a reality that is beyond the text. While admitting this reality can be read in multiple, contradictory ways, it remains implicit there is the possibility of access to an unmediated reality, albeit one that needs to be better configured to account for the blind spots and meanings repressed by prevailing historical and institutional arrangements characterised by the Western preference for presence, unity and certainty.

However, it would seem the denial of the guarantee of presence proves too radical a move. While acknowledging Derrida's reservations concerning American appropriations of the term deconstruction as a methodology for reading and interpretation, Stern (1997) insists on following what she terms the 'applications route' (p 365), proposing a deconstructive strategy as a means for analysing the language by which the consumer is constructed and consumption represented. Aligning herself with second-generation, American pragmatic deconstructionists, Stern (1996) strikes a declamatory position, invoking the guarantee of 'following Derrida's practice rather than his preaching' (p 138). In advocating following Derrida's practice, Stern effectively privileges those texts guaranteed by Derrida's self-presence, rather than deferring to Derrida's textual engagements.

At the same time, opting for Derrida's 'practice', allows for the constitution of a definitive methodology, being grounded in what Stern (1996) articulates as: 'Derrida's original strategy of letting interpretations unfold by beginning with a close reading, moving through structuralist analysis, and then undoing the readings in a deconstructive act.' (p 138) What Stern advocates here constitutes a familiar teleological ideal, progressing from a close reading (in the mode of new criticism), moving through a scientific structuralist analysis, and on to deconstructive readings through which a more nuanced understanding and enlightenment is purportedly achieved.

It would seem reading is a 'progressive' act of unfolding, which ultimately reveals a series of gaps that displace the 'philosophic imperative of a single, dominant, hierarchical structure,' (ibid, p 143). And in this space, multiple non-hierarchical relationships are brought into play, as a consequence of which the text is opened to an abundance of interpretations, part of the effect of which is to achieve a more privileged space for the reader.

Stern further argues for deconstruction's capacity to operate as an 'agent provocateur' (ibid, p 145) - and one might assume from the use of this term, an agent present to itself - opening discourse to skeptical re-readings that politicise what has erroneously been thought of as neutral. But in following Derrida's practice rather than his preaching, in offering up

deconstruction as a methodology for encouraging a more rounded skepticism, Stern - albeit as a radical oppositional agent - effectively aspires to a new, more considered neutrality that simply allows for a greater range of positions all guaranteed by a self-presence that is uniquely their own.

For Stern deconstruction constitutes an intervention in which: 'The skepticism that ensues when everything is called into question [breathes] life into a research discourse often stultified by the practical urge to forgo nasty questions,' (ibid, pp 145). At one level it is difficult to argue with this privileging of the living over the fossilised, the invigorating over the stultifying and constraining. While the immediate 'nasty questions', which Stern calls for consumer researchers not to forgo are those related to 'publish or perish' career imperatives, it also invokes a critique of ideological constraints more generally. It articulates a familiar call for a disinterested, impartial criticism, one that has the potential to supplement and liberate a marketing discipline characterised and constrained by positivist paradigms such as those of McCarthy's 4Ps (1960), the Product Life Cycle or the Boston Consulting Group matrix. For Stern (1996),

Deconstructive criticism is playful, optimistic and forward-looking. It is the only postmodern 'ism' that does not end in rage or despair but instead looks ahead to a fruitful clash of alternative points of view. Derrida . . . clears the way for reinvigoration, doing so generously, without acrimony, and with respect for his peers and predecessors - yet another instance of constructive provocation. The unique blend of passion, poetry, and play contributes a few more 'p's', ones that may help the discipline grow in new ways. (p 145)

Lapsing into what might be deemed characteristic marketing mode - offering a variation on that ubiquitous marketing paradigm encapsulated in McCarthy's 4Ps - Stern is unable to resist putting a positive PR spin on deconstructive criticism, and which forgoes its own 'nasty questioning'. For as Derrida (1991) writes:

All sentences of the type 'deconstruction is X' or 'deconstruction is not X' *a priori* miss the point One of the principal things at stake in what is called in my texts 'deconstruction' is precisely the delimiting of ontology and above all of the third person present indicative: S is P. (p 275)

And this is what Stern is unable to resist: defining what deconstruction is. What is offered is a perspective on reality from a familiar ontological position - and which by default rearticulates Derrida's reservations with regard to American deconstruction. What Stern ultimately effects is simply an inversion of a familiar binary opposition between ideological constraint and a liberating humanism - rhetorically eulogised by a logocentric assumption of 'fruitful' tolerance and further organicist metaphors that imply opportunities for productive new growth, but which effaces the possibility and potency of a humanism equally inscribed by a regulation in growth and rooting out of radical tendencies derived from its own configuration of discursive constraints.

What Stern misses in her reading of deconstruction, in offering it up as a methodology is that this implies a position outside discourse, a mode of analysis which suggests a, 'regression toward a simple element, toward an indissoluble origin' (Derrida, 1991, p 273) a progression toward a position of privilege and neutrality from which the truth, the fact of the matter, the real state of affairs can be revealed. In appropriating Derrida as part of Marketing's radical literary turn, there is a degree of irony in Stern's stratagem as it unabashedly engineers a return to a founding logos that it is the function of deconstruction to unsettle. While addressing a crisis in marketing theory, Stern's commitment to the logocentric perhaps indicates that the scope of the crisis addressed by literary theory has not been fully related by the marketing literati.

What Derrida's writing - and its location *in* other writings - overwhelmingly attests is the impossibility of ever achieving a founding logos, an impartial position or perspective, regardless of the play of pleasure, persuasion, paradox or provocation.

Hirschman & Holbrook: Schism & Progress

In similar fashion to Stern, Hirschman & Holbrook, have been significant influences on the direction afforded by marketing's turn to the literary. Like Stern they called for a more balanced, more tolerant, more cultivated, more nuanced, more enlightened and progressive approach to marketing paradigms afforded by the interpretive paradigms taken to be characteristic of the literary. And like Stern, they advocated a turn to literary theory, but the degree of balance and tolerance in that turn is what this Dissertation call into question, particularly with regard to its implications for marketing, questions concerning free choice and the construction of the sovereign consumer.

In the preface to *Postmodern consumer research: the study of consumption as text*, Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) state that their book, 'traces a continuum of epistemological positions and validity issues' that stem from Cartesian dualism. Having implied a progressive continuum they invoke its authority to advocate a greater tolerance towards the divergent perspectives of consumer researchers.

Taking a citation from Eagleton (1983) as an epigraph to their first chapter Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) suggest that their advocacy of greater tolerance in intellectual life is itself part of a continuum, an ongoing social revolution that followed in the wake of the First World War.

Social revolution rolled across the continent . . . The ideologies on which order had customarily depended, the cultural values by which it ruled, were also in deep turmoil. Science seemed to have dwindled to a sterile positivism, a myopic obsession with the

categorizing of facts; philosophy appeared torn between such a positivism on one hand, and an indefensible subjectivism on the other; forms of relativism . . . were rampant. (p.1)

According to Hirschman and Holbrook the legacy of that period has constituted an ongoing questioning of the cultural values that failed to prevent the breakdown of social order and which, in many respects, have become a key reference point in the articulation of the postmodern. The catastrophic breakdown in order that was World War Two is deemed to have been the consequence of a lack of tolerance, a failure to avoid the corrosive, narrow-sighted mix to which Eagleton alludes. For Hirschman and Holbrook a similar obsession with narrow, positivist measures and a failure to incorporate a wider, more tolerant vision is taken to be hampering the progress of consumer research studies.

While it is always difficult to argue against calls for greater tolerance, what needs to be questioned is how such tolerance is configured and the limits to which it is subject. Operating as something of a precursor as to the configuration of their tolerance, the elisions in Hirschman and Holbrook's citation of Eagleton constitute a certain division in their respective readings with regard to the causes and legacies of World War Two. From Hirschman and Holbrook's reading there is the suggestion that the ideologies on which the liberal order 'customarily depended', while in turmoil, might be reconciled, given a degree of tolerance. However, a fuller reading of Eagleton's elided citation intimates a radically different perspective. This fuller reading suggests that fractures in the social order of European capitalism, were exposed not just by the events of the First World War but also by what Eagleton sees as *laissez-faire* Liberalism's violent suppression of worker movements in the aftermath of the War; and which would seem to constitute a refusal to tolerate, to incorporate alternative perspectives. In certain respects, who offers the more valid perspective on the turn of events post World War Two is not what is at issue here. What is questionable, given Hirschman and Holbrook's call to heed a greater multiplicity of voices, is the lack of a more considered, more rigorous reading of Eagleton in pursuit of their own, unacknowledged single-minded perspective.

The Limits of Rapprochement

Turning to the opposite end of the political spectrum, Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) cite the authority of Scruton (1981 (1984)), both by way of practising what they preach with regard to manifesting tolerance and to progress their argument that developments in modern philosophy were witnessing a *rapprochement* in divisive epistemological paradigms, that had resulted from the impact of the mind/matter, subject/object binary oppositions that emerged with Cartesian dualism.

To this end, Hirschman and Holbrook allow Scruton's further claim that this rapprochement reached its fulfillment in the work of Wittgenstein where the criterion of truth is deemed to be based on the intersubjective use of language by a linguistic community. Hirschman and Holbrook elaborate on Wittgenstein's theory of language as a game governed by custom and involving the conventional character of meaning. They argue that through the work of Wittgenstein and the American Pragmatists - James, Dewey and Peirce - has emerged a language and community-based emphasis on shared meanings among individuals with intersubjective truth criterion. This, they claim, constitutes part of a postmodern perspective engaged by neo-pragmatists such as Richard Rorty.

What Hirschman and Holbrook appear to be propagating with their reading here is a cultivation of the value of rapprochement and a pragmatic reconciliation that seeks to recognise the virtue of balancing opposing perspectives and paradigms. While this appears eminently reasonable, it is possible to introduce a reading that raises some troubling issues. The rapprochement between rationalist and positivist philosophical approaches is not necessarily as significant a move as implied by Hirschman and Holbrook. Both philosophical approaches rely on a centred, knowing subject. The rationalist position invokes thoughtful, reflecting subjects with a *knowingness* to avail themselves of mental categories that enable insightful articulations of a reality and truth characterised by complexity. The positivist, empiricist position assumes a *knowingness* about the theoretical possibility of achieving an homogeneous, objective articulation of truth, however reductive, in which reality is taken as given and configured in relation to the ideal of an objective gaze.

On the face of it, the linguistic turn wrought by twentieth century philosophy and its relation to truth and reality is one that Scruton, and in turn Hirschman and Holbrook, seek to reconcile through their readings of Wittgenstein. Seeking a rapprochement between the language and truth, individual and community, Scruton and, by implication, Hirschman and Holbrook argue it is language's public usage that guarantees the objectivity of its reference via individual instances of its usage. According to Scruton's reading of Wittgenstein: 'Public usage describes a reality available to others beside myself. The publicity of my language guarantees the objectivity of its reference' (Scruton, 1982 (1984), cited Hirschman and Holbrook, 1992, p 6). But this appeal to public usage suggests a linguistic construction of reality that is prior to, and a prescriptive factor in, individual articulations. And using publicity as a synonym evokes more than just a sense of public usage, calling into play the operation of a rhetorical and economic power that has a degree of determination with regard to the achievement of public consensus. As any public relations practitioner or marketer will know successful publicity is achieved via a number of stratagems - advertising, public relations, branding, sponsorship, relationship marketing, corporate reputation - that

depend in no small measure on access to, and deployment of, resources. The degree to which we concede the truth of the matter with regard to such publicity is, perhaps, not so much a function of rapprochement as of the power implicit in the degree of access to resources.

Crucially, the freedom entailed in this rapprochement, this resumption of friendly relations seems not to extend to theoretical positions that challenge the centred, *knowing* subject configured by the rationalist/empiricist and mind/matter binary oppositions. The offer of a beguiling and attractive reconciliation, a cessation of hostilities, fails to remove all traces of exclusion in the proposed rapprochement. The rapprochement articulated by Scruton, and supported no doubt in good faith by well-intentioned readings, is distinctly lacking in friendly relations with regard to certain poststructuralist articulations of knowledge and their uneasy and uncompromising questioning of truth. Little more than a year after Derrida's death, Scruton (2006) writes:

Faced with a page of Derrida and knowing that this drivel is being read and reproduced in a thousand American campuses, I [find] the page in my hand is clearly the product of a diseased brain, and the disease is massively infectious.

It is difficult to consider such venal writing - even allowing for its polemical status - as either reflective or objective. Given Scruton's prior prescriptions, it is no surprise there is scant evidence of friendly relations or rapprochement in this statement, but, significantly, it calls into question Scruton's logical consistency given his claim concerning the guarantee afforded by public usage. It also makes manifest the contest for power that is played out and proliferated across texts. Somewhat ironically, given that 'a thousand American campuses' are choosing to reproduce Derrida, this would seem to be putting a strain on any liberal commitment to tolerance and constitutes a tacit admission that the freedom by which one comes to choose is subject to a degree of prescription. But perhaps the difference is that Scruton is like an old-fashioned pharmaceutical company that keeps the basis of its prescriptions a closely guarded secret, while Derrida has been intent on achieving a degree of transparency with regard to the prescriptions by which we aspire to a healthy culture.

The Tolerance of Texts

Setting to one side this troubling underside to Hirschman and Holbrook's call for rapprochement, they seek to demonstrate the progressive and pragmatic scope of their commentary by acknowledging the sheer variety of perspectives on ways of knowing, whether from individual, social, philosophical or academic standpoints.

Having acknowledged the diversity of theories that seek to offer a perspective on reality and the place of the individual with regard to this theorising, Hirschman and Holbrook look to overcome the tensions resulting from these heterogeneous perspectives by proposing a unity in diversity. They argue that these diverse philosophic and academic perspectives on reality can be united by referring to them as texts. They justify this by arguing that the use of the term text in contemporary semiotic literary theory has expanded so that it is now used to refer to a diverse range of knowledge structures. To this end, the subsequent trajectory of their book entails a progressive recounting and rapprochement of various theories that culminate in what is effectively a championing of Reader-Response theory and subjective introspection, and which in the final instance are deemed to be integrally related to, and a function of, deep mental structures.

By way of setting out on their trajectory, Hirschman and Holbrook's initial commentary entails achieving a conflation of text and action. Citing Ricoeur (1971, 1981), Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) put forward the concept of text as action, as act of interpretation. They claim that this concept of text as action has gained increasing prominence in the social sciences, helping to justify a view of social science as an act of interpretation. Given the pragmatic orientation of this claim, it is feasible that acts, events, might be read and interpreted as texts, teasing out a sense of what and how they signify. Nevertheless, equating action as text implies a privileging of presence and rather effaces the possibility that prior circumscription by textuality might precede our actions.

Although utilising the discourses of literary theory, structuralism and poststructuralism, in which the decentring of the subject as source and locus of meaning is a key issue, and even though allowing for the heterogeneity of interpretations of reality, Hirschman and Holbrook nevertheless accede to meaning centred on, and originating in, acts of interpretation by already *knowing* subjects.

Hirschman and Holbrook (1992), seek further justification for their pragmatic perspective by arguing the further utility of the term text is that it helps in the:

avoidance of the undesirable connotations associated with such terms as ideology and theory, which have served to segregate the belief systems of people from those of the social scientists who observe them. (p. 56)

In a somewhat reductive move, Hirschman and Holbrook effectively privilege an everyday, pragmatic, prosaic use of text over the more complex articulations of ideology and theory. Setting aside the possibility that the avoidance of such terms might in itself be construed as ideological, Hirschman and Holbrook fail to elaborate on the articulation of this segregation. At the same time the insinuation of this opposition assumes a primacy for a position beyond ideology, beyond discourse. Arguably, this division, suggests a reluctance, a reticence to call

into question an assumed simplicity and homogeneity concerning the possibility of belief systems unmarked by ideology or theory. In opting for a simple, prosaic conception of the term texts Hirschman and Holbrook's approach constitutes something of a failure to acknowledge more complex configurations of textuality inscribed by literary theory and poststructuralism.

Bearing the traces of some uncomfortable equivocation, Hirschman and Holbrook conclude this particular section of their commentary with the suggestion that people acquire texts through socialisation processes, both primary and secondary. Drawing on Berger and Luckman (1967) they intimate that members of a particular society undergo a primary acculturation process in childhood with further successive inductions into specialised bodies of knowledge in secondary phases of acculturation. Moving from suggestion to assertion, Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) argue:

Thus primary socialisation leads towards submersion in the overall cultural text of a society, whereas secondary socialisation encourages the acquisition of texts, or subtexts, pertinent to specific groups, segments, sectors or subcultures. (p. 57)

A redoubling of binary oppositions here seems to offer texts that on the one hand entail a primary submersion - submission and subjection - while at the same time leaving a secondary space whereby the knowing subject is allowed a degree of determination in the choice of acquisition of further texts or subtexts pertinent to groups or subcultures: a mark perhaps of an undecidability with regard to primacy in the first instance.

Tracking through to the individual as distinct and separate from society, Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) argue that, 'individuality arises through the idiosyncratic combination, internal generation, communication or innate possession of texts' (p. 57). So it would seem that the final arbiter on all texts is ultimately the knowing, albeit idiosyncratic, individual, the innate, knowing subject. And while it is conceivable there is primary and secondary socialisation, along with texts and subtexts, what is less clear is the basis of these divisions and the play of power implied in the modes of encouragement deployed in the acquisition of texts. This begs the question as to whether the move towards individual expression that is assumed to emerge is a function of the constraints inscribed in the primary/secondary socialisation opposition, and in accepting the fixity and subordination of subtexts.

But arguably, what constitutes primary and secondary, and what constitute the main text and subtext, is likely to be a function of perspective and classification deriving from particular forms of socialisation, and which entail a certain play of power. While the individual freely striving to give voice to his or her perspective over and above the constraining forces of society has a beguiling appeal, what emerges is a degree of unease as to whether this relates the whole story, the whole narrative.

Capping off this opening gambit, Hirschman and Holbrook (1992), take another linguistic and literary turn in a discussion of vocality. They distinguish between univocal and multivocal or plurivocal texts, arguing these refer to the single or multiple/ambiguous meanings a text may possess. As an example, Hirschman and Holbrook cite Seung's (1982) discussion of Plato's use of the term *pharmakon* as signifying both remedy and poison to suggest a degree of ambiguity, a multivocality inherent in the term itself. Accordingly, it would seem that the heterogeneity of meaning and interpretation is not just a function of the diversity of perspectives brought to bear on texts, but can be compounded further by the potential for multivocality and ambiguity in particular texts. It would now seem that meaning is a function not just of the perspectives brought to bear by a centred, knowing subject, but is also conceded as being manifest and fixed in the (multi-) vocality of the text.

However, this concession is not all it seems. It would appear that those meanings intended at its original 'presentation' can, if read correctly, be apprehended. This requires the 'listener' (sic) to take heed of the context as a means of determining '*which, of many possible meanings the speaker intended,*' (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1992, pp 57). In maintaining a commitment to a logocentric perspective, multivocality - rather than admitting a 'fracturing' - allows that the particular voice intended by the speaker might be determined, unravelled from within its context through a process of careful, intelligent reading. Consequently, it would seem that the reader sovereignty, and by extension consumer sovereignty, towards which Hirschman and Holbrook tend, nevertheless remains dependent on a prior intelligence, on determining the ultimate meaning of the text.

By contrast, Derrida's (2004) discussion of *pharmakon* reads the term as exemplary of the undecidability and open dynamic that is a feature of linguistic systems, in which signifiers derive meaning from their relation to other signifiers and in which the play of difference and deferral is constantly shifting. This is in contradistinction to a logocentric perspective that assumes a relation between the signifier and the event that is grounded in an unmediated realist epistemological ontological axis.

This desire to ascertain the original meaning, this logocentrism, is further affirmed in Hirschman and Holbrook's citation of the ethnomethodologist Leiter.

Without a supplied context, objects and events have equivocal or multiple meanings. . . . The context consists of such particulars as who the speaker is, . . . his current purpose and intent, the setting in which the remarks are made, and the actual or potential relationship between speaker and hearer. (Leiter, 1980, cited in Hirschman and Holbrook, 1992, p. 57)

But this affirmation also constitutes an admission of a 'lack' that has to be supplied, made up - the constitution of a supplement. From a Derridean perspective, supplementarity, in testifying both to a completion and displacement of an original plenitude of meaning, signifies

a certain lack of determination in the desire that constitutes a founding logos. In detailing the conditions for arriving at the speaker's intentions, Leiter effectively undermines the metaphysics of presence, the privileging of speech over writing. In so doing the relationship between text and context, speaker and hearer, author and consumer is problematised.

The opening of this citation in arguing for the importance of a supplied context in determining the intended meaning makes the case for detailing the conditions that were present at the time of the original articulation of the remarks made by the *originating* speaker, not least of which are his or her identity and intentions. But this begs the question as to whether identity and intentions are so readily determined.

A cornerstone of New Criticism, let alone poststructuralist literary theory, was Wimsatt and Beardsley's (1970) 'Intentional Fallacy' which questions the validity and possibility of determining authors' intentions. At the same time, the opening of the Leiter citation, if we take objects and events as signifiers, allows that a key feature of the linguistic system is that it is characterised by equivocal or multiple meanings, opening the possibility that it might resist the purposes and intentions of speakers that seek to supplement its meanings.

There also appear to be evasions with regard to how or by whom Hirschman & Holbrook's context is to be determined. If it is the 'speaker' then we are simply returned to the question of the intentional fallacy. If the context is invoked from others, then we have the possibility of equivocal or multiple contexts. But as Derrida (1991) argues, a condition of language/writing is that of proliferating contexts:

This is the possibility on which I wish to insist: the possibility of extraction and of citational grafting which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark as writing even before and outside every horizon of semiolinguistic communication; as writing, that is, as a possibility of functioning cut off, at a certain point, from its 'original' meaning and from its belonging to a saturable and constraining context. Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be cited, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any centre of absolute anchoring. (p. 97)

If literary theory is a key touchstone for postmodern marketing it is important to acknowledge how Derrida diverges from classical discourses on writing, in which a written sign is proffered in the absence of the addressee, a deferred presence. Derrida ((1991), however, contends it is the distance, division, *différance* between the sender and the addressee that constitutes the very structure of writing, of texts; and which can no longer be seen as simply an ontological modification of presence.

The Play of Agency and Culture

In further pursuit of modes of research better suited to a postmodern rapprochement, Hirschman and Holbrook examine the structural approach of Frye. By way of Eagleton's (1983) reading, they consider Frye's contention that the literature of all cultures followed a system of objective laws, that might be classified into various modes, archetypes, myths and genres, and according to which all literary works manifest their structural basis. Hirschman and Holbrook observe that Frye's classification scheme functions much like the taxonomies, which are used in biology to categorise and structure understandings of the natural world. However, they note that a key difference for Frye was that literary classifications arose from inherent mental patterns, rather than reflecting environmental processes of natural selection. From this they argue Frye subscribes to the mental construction of reality characteristic of rationalism.

The appeal of Frye's structuralism, in mirroring the taxonomic approach of natural history is that while aspiring to a degree of objectivity, it avoids a reductive positivism. This in turn entails a rapprochement with literary discourse, characterised in no short measure by the resort to organicist metaphors, that are taken to resonate with the complexities of lived experience and the equally complex pursuit of human – organic and psychological - needs. And with virtually every definition of marketing predicated on determining and meeting consumer needs, such an approach was being seen as having the potential to open up new insights into a better understanding of consumers.

Hirschman and Holbrook (1992, pp 68-71) further admit the structuralist appeal of Frye's work by citing the authority of Chomsky, Lentricchia, Saussure, Geertz, Levi-Strauss, Culler and Eagleton. They point out that according to this position a wide range of cultural activities and objects, other than linguistically structured texts, when read as texts, manifest innate, universal mental structures. In next focusing their discussion on Levi-Strauss, Hirschman and Holbrook observe that his concern with the deep meanings of mythic and cultural practice mirrors Freud's (unconscious) latent content and Chomsky's (innate) deep structures.

Hirschman and Holbrook attempt to achieve a further rapprochement with the trans-historical, deterministic tendencies of formal structuralism by resort to the hermeneutics of Gadamer (2004 (1975)). Hirschman and Holbrook allow that according to Gadamer researchers can never escape their pre-existing mental structures or pre-judgements, and that they are essential to comprehension, particularly when it comes to interpreting culturally distant texts. But again, while intimating a towards a degree of textuality, the conflation of mental structures and pre-judgements is somewhat troubling in marginalising

the possibility of prejudgements as discursively constructed. Indeed, it seems to run counter to Gadamer's (2004 (1975), p. 273) observation that: 'The fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power.' Further, if what constitutes culturally distant texts is relativised then the opposition between near and distant texts, between what is one's own world-view and yet-to-be-known, are arguably incorporated by the same processes of dissemination.

Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) go on to observe that:

As a fundamental proposition, Gadamer's hermeneutics assumes that understanding always depends on the viewpoint of the person who understands. One's own beliefs and worldview invariably and inevitably enter the hermeneutic act and contribute to the interpretation. Following Heidegger, Gadamer accepts the utility of preconceptions or prejudices, which he terms 'conditions of understanding', on the grounds that if we had no a priori meaning structures to guide our initial approach to a text, we could not begin to interpret it at all. Hence Gadamer's concept of the Hermeneutic Circle envision the process of interpretation as both interactive and iterative. (p. 89)

While allowing the process of interpretation as both 'interactive and iterative', the question emerges as to whether the origins of one's own beliefs and worldview have been inadvertently ceded by Hirschman and Holbrook as being not so much a function of innate, pre-existing mental structures or experience of material reality, but of pre-judgements, acts of prior arbitration and authority, Gadamer's 'conditions of understanding', located in what might be recognisable as culture, be it near or distant.

In spite of their best attempts to achieve a rapprochement between the influence of tradition and culture and that of the innate, *knowing* subject, Hirschman and Holbrook invariably tend towards the latter, often in spite of the detail of their argument to the contrary. And it is this knowing subject that is tolerant of diversity that provides fertile ground for boosting the growth of postmodern articulations of cool.

Textual Prejudice

Moving further along their continuum of theoretical approaches Hirschman and Holbrook (1992, pp. 93 – 107) discuss the view that meaning is conferred upon a socially constructed external text via a deepened probing of the idiosyncratic, introspective, impressionistic world of the researcher. They refer to this mode of interpretation as an *active* reading. According to this research strategy there is no correct interpretation, as these will be a function of the unique perspective each researcher brings to the interpretive task. They argue that within this 'plurality of individual perspectives' there are three contrasting methodological strategies, based on phenomenology, existentialism and psychoanalysis.

In discussing phenomenological strategies, Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) quote Eagleton, ascribing his work as characteristically phenomenological in approach. They extract from Eagleton what they purport to characterise his interpretive method:

The reader will bring to the work [text] certain 'pre-understandings,' a dim context of beliefs and expectations within which the work's various features will be assessed. As the reading process proceeds, however, these expectations will themselves be modified by what we learn from the text, and the hermeneutical circle . . . will begin to revolve. Striving to construct a coherent sense from the text, the reader will select and organize its elements into consistent wholes. . . . He or she will try to hold different perspectives within the work simultaneously, or shift from perspective to perspective in order to build up an integrated [interpretation]. . . . (p 94)

However, this citation, while perhaps seeking to engage a degree of official, authoritative commendation, offers a decidedly partial reading of Eagleton's writing on phenomenology, hermeneutics and reception theory - and not simply because of the ellipsis they offer by way of brevity and summary.

The passage Hirschman and Holbrook cite is taken to constitute Eagleton's endorsement of the phenomenological approach as represented in reception theory. However, an anxiety to enlist the authority of Eagleton, has engaged a partial reading that omits the opening of the paragraph from which their citation is taken and which makes it clear that what is subsequently articulated is a summary taken to be characteristic of reception theory and not a proclamation of Eagleton's position concerning his interpretive method. Added to this, Hirschman and Holbrook's partial reading and parenthetical gloss ascribes a completeness, an integrity to this citation that is absent on closer examination of Eagleton's writing.

Examination of Eagleton's (1983) final sentence from the above citation, without Hirschman and Holbrook's latter ellipsis, hints at a more fractured process. The sentence continues,

. . . into consistent wholes, excluding some and foregrounding others, 'concretizing' certain items in certain ways; he or she will try to hold different perspectives within the work together, or shift from perspective to perspective in order to build up an integrated illusion. (p 77)

Part of the effect of glossing 'illusion' as 'interpretation' and substituting 'together' with 'simultaneous' is a blatant disavowal of Eagleton's engagement with ideology, his suspicion of organicist readings and the reader's complicity in the process. As such, Hirschman and Holbrook's reading reveals itself as decidedly partial, both incomplete and partisan. One effect of the reading they offer here suggests the position they adopt is not quite the tolerant, impartial one to which they purport to aspire - above and beyond, arbitrating on the various perspectives, theories and texts outlined in their book.

When Hirschman and Holbrook (1992, pp 94) claim that Wolfgang Iser takes a similar phenomenological approach to Eagleton, the partial trajectory of their reading becomes more pronounced. When Eagleton (1983) writes:

The whole point of reading, for a critic like Iser, is that it brings us into deeper self-consciousness, catalyzes a more critical view of our own identities. It is as though what we have been 'reading', in working our way through a book, is ourselves. (p 79)

From this citation, it would appear to be a position that accords by and large with Hirschman and Holbrook's reading of Wolfgang Iser. However, this perspective changes, when the Eagleton (ibid) citation is extended to include his immediate elaboration of Iser:

Iser's reception theory, in fact, is based on a liberal humanist ideology: a belief that in reading we should be flexible and open-minded, prepared to put our beliefs into question and allow them to be transformed. . . . But Iser's liberal humanism, like most such doctrines, is less liberal than it looks at first sight. He writes that a reader with strong ideological commitments is likely to be an inadequate one, since he or she is less likely to be open to the transformative power of literary works. What this implies is that in order to undergo transformation at the hands of the text, we must only hold our beliefs fairly provisionally in the first place. The only good reader would already have to be a liberal; the act of reading produces a kind of human subject which it also presupposes. . . . In this sense, the plurality and open-endedness of the process of reading are permissible because they presuppose a certain kind of closed unity which always remains in place; the unity of the reading subject, which is violated and transgressed only to be returned more fully to itself. (p 79)

Eagleton (ibid, pp 80) concludes that the doctrines of the unified self and the closed text surreptitiously underlie the apparent open-endedness of much reception theory. He argues that there is a dogmatic presumption that literary works form organic wholes, with the role of the reader being that of filling in their 'indeterminacies' in order to complete their harmony. He claims further that behind what he calls 'this arbitrary prejudice' concerning organic unity lies the influence of Gestalt psychology, which seeks to integrate discrete perceptions into an intelligible whole. He argues this prejudice runs so deep it is difficult to see it precisely as that, and no less contentious than any other.

Eagleton (1983) raises further issues with regard to phenomenological, reception theories, which affirm that far from being an unquestioning advocate he never loses sight of the constraints imposed on the reader by the text itself. He writes:

For an interpretation to be an interpretation of this text and not some other, it must be in some sense logically constrained by the text itself. The work, in other words, exercises a degree of determinacy over readers' responses to it, otherwise criticism would seem to fall into total anarchy. (p 85)

Whether one subscribes to Eagleton or Hirschman and Holbrook is not the issue. Rather it is that Hirschman and Holbrook's reading of Eagleton's text merits close attention for gaps, inconsistencies, omissions, and the implications of the self-same with regard to an

unconscious privileging of a deep-seated logocentric, liberal perspective that belies their call for greater tolerance and rapprochement.

Having re-cited Eagleton to a particular perspective, Hirschman and Holbrook (1992, pp 101) announce that this phenomenological thrust is in sympathy with their focus on the experiential aspects of consumption, what they describe as 'introspective phenomenology'.

In furthering their articulation of postmodern consumer research strategies Hirschman and Holbrook (1992) ponder what they see as more radical, existential versions of person-centred interpretation, which they take as being characteristic of the so-called 'new' new critics, Tel Quel theorists and Deconstructionists such as Derrida and the later Barthes.

By way of promoting this person-centred interpretation, Hirschman and Holbrook cite early Barthes [as read by by Hunt (1983) and Muncy & Fisk (1987)] to claim Barthes commitment to a radical relativism and celebration of the individual's subjective interpretation.

But it is somewhat questionable that in having tacitly admitted and acknowledged a difference, and seemingly accorded a degree of privilege to the later Barthes, Hirschman and Holbrook's resort to the earlier Barthes to make their claim. However, it is perhaps more a signifier of a commitment to a logocentric humanism than a committed engagement with literary theory. It is also distinctly possible that their reading of Barthes, in sanctioning the celebration or authority of the individual's subjective interpretation might be read differently. So while Barthes early pronouncement that: 'The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author,' it does not necessarily follow that it is simply a question of reversing this binary opposition so that the reader subsequently assumes authority over the text. Indeed, the implications of this difference in the reading of the break between the early and later works of Barthes is noted by Eagleton (1983).

The 'work of the break' is Barthes astonishing study of Balzac's story 'Sarrasine', *S/Z* (1970 (1975)). The literary work is now no longer treated as a stable object or delimited structure, and the language of the critic has disowned all pretensions to scientific objectivity. The most intriguing texts for criticism are not those which can be read, but those which are 'writable' (scriptible) The reader or critic shifts from the role of consumer to that of producer. It is not exactly as though 'anything goes' in interpretation, for Barthes is careful to remark that the work cannot be got to mean anything at all. (p 137)

Deconstructing the consumption of consensus

This difference in the reading of early and later Barthes and deconstruction more generally is an issue Eagleton (1983) addresses when he argues that the narrative of deconstruction in Europe is different from the Anglo-American deconstruction to which Hirschman and Holbrook subscribe.

Essentially, it is the difference with regard to the logocentric that marks the dividing line between Anglo-American and European deconstruction. Eagleton, along with others (Belsey, 1988; Easthope, 1998; Eliot and Owens, 1998; Gallagher and Greenblatt, 2000; Lodge, 1998; Rice and Waugh, 1992), argue that Anglo-American deconstruction is something of a return of the old New Critical formalism in intensified form and even more estranged from social reality

For Eagleton, Anglo-American deconstruction simply signals the latest stage of a liberal scepticism that largely sidesteps areas of contention and dislocation by continuing to 'churn out its closed critical texts' (Eagleton (1983, pp 147) and which, perhaps, entails the danger of a solipsism to which Holbrook anxiously alludes above. For Eagleton, Anglo-American deconstructionists seem to be locked in a cycle of endless self-referentiality, capable of doing little more than endlessly poring over the failures of language 'like some bar-room bore' (Eagleton 1983, pp 146).

But as Eagleton (1983) points out, all stories have another side. He observes:

If the American deconstructionists considered that their textual enterprise was faithful to the spirit of Jacques Derrida, one of those who did not was Jacques Derrida. Certain American uses of deconstruction, Derrida has observed, work to ensure 'an institutional closure' which serves the dominant political and economic interests of American society. (p 148)

And Eagleton's (ibid) observation that Derrida's project sought to achieve more than simply develop new techniques of reading suggests a significant difference with the project imagined by Hirschman and Holbrook:

Deconstruction is for [Derrida] an ultimately political practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system thought, and behind that a whole system of political structures and social institutions, maintains its force. He is not seeking, absurdly, to deny the existence of relatively determinate truths, meanings, identities, intentions, historical continuities; he is seeking rather to see such things as the effects of a wider and deeper history - of language, of the unconscious, of social institutions and practices. (p 148)

Radical interpretive reading practice, such as it is articulated by Hirschman and Holbrook (1992, pp 102/103) in their glossary and citation of Fish (1980), while conceding that personal accounts are bound up with those of others who form an interpretive community, nevertheless sustains a familiar binary opposition between personal and community, and in which the privileged term is not really in doubt: 'Thus Fish (1980) notes that even our attempts to create radical interpretations must implicitly embody tacit aspects of the existing structures against which we rebel.' While Hirschman and Holbrook attempt to maintain a more impersonal note, the use of the first person, albeit plural, maintains a privileged position for individual subjects outside the structures and impact of linguistic and discursive

practice. As such the constitution of an interpretive community constitutes little more than an aggregate of individual subjective experiences and, as such, remains problematical.

While, as their citation of Fish affirms, any new position announcing itself as a break is structurally radically dependent on the old, what is not addressed is the possibility that the old position is configured from a position in the present. Holbrook's elaboration of his position in which he proceeds to provide a personal vignette of subjective self-interpretation on his loss of 'hipness' illustrates the problem. His self-reflexive commentary admits to being structured according to conventional academic norms and reliant on pre-existing, consensually structured and commonly shared structures of meaning. But the trajectory of how this interpretive community, these academic norms and pre-existing consensus, comes about is not addressed. It also begs questions as to why it is the loss of 'hipness' is an issue of concern. It is a more rigorous reading that helps constitute the wider, deeper history towards which Eagleton takes Derrida to be striving.

The question of this consensus, the constitution of an interpretive community are issues that Eagleton picks up in a further discussion of Reception Theory and Stanley Fish in particular. Eagleton (1983) observes that Fish is not embarrassed to concede that the text is indeterminate and dependent on the construction readers choose to place upon it:

For Fish, reading is not a matter of discovering what the text means, but a process of experiencing what it does to you. His notion of language is pragmatist: a linguistic inversion, for example, will perhaps generate in us a feeling of surprise or disorientation, and criticism is no more than an account of the reader's developing responses to the succession of words on the page. What the text 'does' to us, however, is actually a matter of what we do to it, a question of interpretation; the object of critical attention is the structure of the reader's experience, not any 'objective' structure to be found in the work itself (p 85).

At this point Eagleton raises the intriguing question as to what it is Fish believes he is interpreting when he reads. As Eagleton (*ibid*) points out: 'For an interpretation to be an interpretation of this text and not of some other, it must be in some sense logically constrained by the text itself.' And as Belsey (2003) points out, if the reader, or the reader's community, was the sole source of meaning, interpretations of texts were in principle already available in advance. Followed to its logical conclusion this would imply there was no need to carry out the labour of reading at all. However, as Eagleton (1983) observes, Fish pulls back from the brink of hermeneutical anarchy by appealing to certain interpretive strategies which readers share and which mediate their personal responses:

Not any old reading response will do: the readers in question are 'informed or at-home' readers bred in the academic institutions, whose responses are thus unlikely to prove too wildly divergent from each other to forestall all reasoned debate. He is, however, insistent that there is nothing whatsoever 'in' the work itself - that the

whole idea of meaning being somehow 'immanent' in the text's language, awaiting its release by the reader's interpretation, is an objectivist illusion. (p 86)

In his concluding comments on Reception Theory, Eagleton again addresses the shortcoming in what he sees as liberal configurations of the literary. He argues that Fish's appeal to a shared interpretative strategy is predicated on a common competence, powerfully determined by an academic institution, further aided and abetted by a literary institution which includes publishers, literary editors and reviewers. From a marketing perspective these institutional determinants of a common competence bear direct comparison with the 'cultural gatekeepers' of marketing communications and consumer studies discourse, who similarly play a distinctive role in determining particular trends with regard to what is acceptable to the market, fashion trends and configurations of *cool*.

It would seem that the text is simply a means for enacting the reader's/consumer's desire, but taking place within a pre-scripted, limited institutional consensus. Consequently, it is not difficult to see why Fish's mode of Reception Theory, positioning the reader as consumer/producer, has achieved a resonance within marketing and consumer discourse, with its increasing focus on engaging and propagating a consumer desire for self-expression. As Chapter Eight will illustrate, almost without exception, those brands that aspire to the category of *cool* are predicated on providing consumers with a means of self-expression, a means of producing and manifesting their unique identity, but which is always, already limited by an exclusive, institutional consensus.

Eagleton argues that what the interpretive strategies of those such as Fish neglect is that within an institution there can be a struggle of interpretations, not just with regard to the merits of particular literary texts, but one waged around the categories, conventions and strategies of interpretation itself. Eagleton effectively argues for interpretive strategies that transgress the accepted boundaries and procedures of literary criticism, that explore what is at stake in accepting the values, techniques and constitutive procedures of literary criticism. So an interpretive strategy that on first appearance seems characterised by plural, multifarious readings as a marker of individual expression and desire, as having a certain affinity with a liberated postmodern consumer, on closer inspection perhaps turns out to be more constrained than at first acknowledged. As Eagleton (1983) argues:

Literary criticism does not usually dictate any particular reading as long as it is 'literary critical'; and what counts as literary criticism is determined by the literary institution. It is thus that the liberalism of the literary institution . . . is in general blind to its own constitutive limits. (p 89)

Eagleton further argues that while few people would subscribe to the idea that the reader comes to the text as a kind of cultural virgin, free of previous social and literary inscriptions,

there is a notable absence of those prepared to pursue the implications of this lack of readerly innocence.

In full polemical mode, Eagleton (1983) adds:

One of the themes of this book has been that there is no such thing as a purely 'literary' response: all such responses, not least those to literary form, to the aspects of a work which are sometimes jealously reserved to the 'aesthetic', are deeply imbricated with the kind of social and historical individuals we are. In the various accounts of literary theories I have given so far, I have tried to show that there is always a great deal more at stake here than views of literature - that informing and sustaining all such theories are more or less definite readings of social reality. It is these readings which are in a real sense guilty, all the way from Matthew Arnold's patronising attempts to pacify the working class to Heidegger's Nazism. Breaking with the literary institution does not just mean offering different accounts of Beckett; it means breaking with the very ways literature, literary criticism and its supporting social values are defined. (pp 89/90)

What is apparent in Hirschman and Holbrook's partial reading of Eagleton is that rather than breaking with how literature, literary criticism and its supporting social values are defined, they look to maintain and further propagate such an ethos into the field of marketing and consumer studies. Whether Hirschman and Holbrook or Eagleton are right is not the issue here, but how what claims to constitute a radical, counter-cultural approach effectively testifies to the incorporative powers of a logocentric humanism.

In his conclusion, Eagleton (1983, pp 200) maintains his polemical mode, arguing that literature departments constitute part of the ideological apparatus of the modern, capitalist state. But he also acknowledges that such institutions are not homogenous, wholly reliable carriers of ideology, and that they are crossed by a range of values, meanings and traditions which run counter to the priorities of the state. Eagleton locates this unreliability in what he articulates as liberal humanism's contradictory relationship with late capitalism. With its distaste for the reductive and its evangelising of spiritual wholeness, liberal humanism's attempts to counter or ameliorate the ideology of late capitalism is deemed by Eagleton to be ultimately ineffectual, but tolerated because it valorizes the unique individual, the centred subject, with the right and the capacity to choose.

At this point it is germane to offer the observation that while it might be the case that individuals take positions that seemingly run counter to the priorities of capitalism, the institution of marketing, along with others, has become quite adept at incorporating such challenges as part of a counter-culture that testifies to a liberal, tolerant outlook. Indeed, the counter-cultural, in sustaining, adapting, determining and proliferating obverse priorities, nevertheless, maintains the valorization of the *knowing* reader/consumer and the desire to make good one's lack, one's needs, as the origin and locus of all human action. Hirschman and Holbrook's partial reading of Eagleton constitutes just such a case. They marginalize

otherwise aspects of the discursive, the institutional and the cultural that Eagleton raises in order to press home their claims for giving priority to a tolerant, subjective introspection, but which ultimately fails to question the source, constitution and socio-political implications of its logocentric *knowingness*.

Literature: Without limits

Shifting to a Foucauldian perspective, Eagleton elaborates further to argue that the literary theorists and critics that have been discussed during the course of his book, should not be regarded as purveyors of doctrines, unwitting or otherwise, offering a convenient fit with the socio-economic priorities of the day, but as custodians of a discourse, crossed by contradiction and heterogeneity. Consequently, argues Eagleton (1983):

Their task is to preserve this [literary] discourse, extend and elaborate it as necessary, defend it from other forms of discourse, initiate newcomers into it and determine whether or not they have successfully mastered it. (p 201),

But, argues Eagleton, in seeking to resolve certain contradictions, in striving to determine what constitutes the literary both to extend and delimit the authority and power of its critical discourse, literary theory has called its own project into question. According to Eagleton (1983), the theoretically limitless extendability of critical discourse has called into question the literary canon and the objects of literary criticism.

. . . you cannot engage in an historical analysis of literature without recognizing that literature itself is a recent historical invention; you cannot apply structuralist tools to *Paradise Lost* without acknowledging that just the same tools can be applied to the *Daily Mirror*. Criticism can thus prop itself up only at the risk of losing its defining object; it has the unenviable choice of stifling or suffocating. If literary theory presses its own implications too far, then it has argued itself out of existence. (p 204),

And it is this which Eagleton advocates - the final move in a process which began by recognising literature as an illusion needs also to recognise literary theory as an illusion. Eagleton argues that the trajectory of his book has been to show that literary theory is an illusion because:

[Firstly, it] is really no more than a branch of social ideologies, utterly without any unity or identity which would adequately distinguish it from philosophy, linguistics, psychology, cultural and sociological thought; and secondly in the sense that the one hope it has of distinguishing itself – clinging to an object named literature – is misplaced. We must conclude, then, that this book is less an introduction than an obituary, and that we have ended by burying the object we sought to unearth. (p. 204)

Somewhat contradictorily, while Hirschman and Holbrook view Eagleton's take on literature and literary theory as marking the birth of a new, more accommodating approach to the

disciplines of marketing and consumer studies, Eagleton would seem to view these disciplines as yet more pallbearers at the funeral of literature.

The reason Eagleton (1983) gives for pursuing the implications of the position he has outlined with regard to literary theory, is precisely to question:

whether it is possible to speak of 'literary theory' without perpetuating the illusion that literature exists as a distinct, bounded object of knowledge, or whether it is not preferable to draw the practical consequences of the fact that literary theory can handle Bob Dylan just as well as John Milton. (pp 204/5)

Part of the aim of this Dissertation is to draw the practical consequences and effects of literary theory's engagement with, and questioning of, the texts of marketing and consumer behaviour; although this conjures both positive and negative dimensions for the marketing literati. While affirming a degree of validity for marketing's engagement with the literary, the way in which Eagleton proposes configuring such texts is markedly at odds with those of the marketing literati. It is readily apparent that the marketing literati maintain the category of literature - what Eagleton articulates as an illusion - as an exemplary mode of discourse for revealing insight into the human condition, desires and aspirations. However, Eagleton (ibid) concedes that,

It is most useful to see 'literature' as a name which people give from time to time for different reasons to certain kinds of writing within a whole field of what Michel Foucault has called 'discursive practices', and that if anything is to be an object of study it is this whole field of practices rather than just those sometimes rather obscurely labelled 'literature'. I am countering the theories set out in this book not with a literary theory, but with a different kind of discourse - whether one calls it of 'culture', 'signifying practices' or whatever is not of first importance - which would include the objects ('literature') with which these other theories deal, but which would transform them by setting them in a wider context. (p. 205)

Conscious this proposal runs the danger of over-extending the boundaries of the discourse he is proposing to a point where any particularity is lost, Eagleton argues for the kind of study that would have as its focus the effects discourses produce and the means by which they are produced. A key element of this Dissertation is precisely to study the linguistic, discursive and cultural means by which marketing and consumer studies discourse is configured and the effects they manifest.

Eagleton's proposal, as he goes on to acknowledge, is the oldest form of literary criticism in the world - rhetoric. Elaborating further, Eagleton argues that rhetoric encompasses nothing less than the field of discursive practices in society as a whole, with a particular concern to determine such practices as forms of power and performance. Rhetorical devices were a means of pleading, persuading, inciting forms of activity inseparable from the wider social relations in which writers and readers find themselves.

As Eagleton (1983) observes:

Rhetoric, or discourse theory, shares with formalism, structuralism and semiotics an interest in the formal devices of language, but like reception theory is also concerned with how these devices are actually effective at the point of 'consumption'; its preoccupation with discourse as a form of power and desire can learn much from deconstruction and psychoanalytical theory, and its belief that discourse can be a humanly transformative affair shares a good deal with liberal humanism. The fact that 'literary theory' is an illusion does not mean that we cannot retrieve from it many valuable concepts for a different kind of discursive practice altogether. (p 206)

Whether literary theory as illusion constitutes a fact is decidedly questionable both from a deconstructive and an humanist perspective, and perhaps gestures towards Eagleton's own rhetorical play. Nevertheless, the concern with how discursive practices promote their designs at the point of consumption stands in contradistinction to Hirschman and Holbrook's position of viewing the text as a cipher through which insights into the human condition and desire can be unlocked. And precisely what this Dissertation is concerned to understand and highlight more fully are the details and techniques of how the discursive practices of marketing and consumer studies, whether academic, social or commercial, promote and privilege their designs and values.

Discourse as strategy

Having determined that attempts to define the study of literature in terms of either its method or its object is bound to fail, Eagleton goes on to argue that distinguishing between the merits of one discourse or another becomes a matter of strategy as opposed to one of ontology or methodology. Rather than asking what the object is or how we should approach it, it is, according to Eagleton, a case of asking why we should want to engage with it in the first place, of starting from what we want to do and selecting the theories and methods that will best help in achieving these ends. He argues that the object of study will very much depend on the practical situation. For Eagleton, a radical critic would reject the dogmatism that would insist the study of Shakespeare or Proust as always more worthy of study than television advertisements. The choice of what to study is seen to be a function of what is being attempted and in what situation. Eagleton also claims that radical critics are equally pluralist when it comes to questions concerning choice of theory or method. However, the determining factor is that the choice made will contribute to the strategic goal of human emancipation.

A problem with Eagleton's argument is that it begs questions as to how it is we come to achieve a position outside the discourses in which we are circumscribed, how it is 'what we want to do' is constituted and what exactly constitutes emancipation. In many respects the criticism Eagleton levels at reader response theorists might equally well be made of his

position - the paradox entailed in resorting to a metalanguage as a means of asserting the validity of an otherwise perspective and which runs the risk of taking as read rather than actively reading, engaging with the texts on offer.

Eagleton concludes with a call to arms, arguing that there are times when cultural practice can become charged with a significance beyond itself, particularly with regard to any politics that puts questions of identity and relationships at its centre. He cites post-colonial and feminist discourse to make the point about how cultural and political action have become closely intertwined. He also argues for the deployment of defensive critiques against the hegemonic powers of the culture industries, for guarding against rhetorical and discursive practices that might be more than they seem. And while making the case for alternative writing, Eagleton (1983, pp217) takes pains to stress that he is not arguing for abandoning the study of Shakespeare and Proust, but that such texts should no longer be seen as

. . . hermetically sealed from history, subjected to sterile critical formalism, piously swaddled with eternal verities and used to confirm prejudices which any moderately enlightened student can perceive to be objectionable. The liberation of Shakespeare and Proust from such controls may well entail the death of literature, but it may also be their redemption. (p217)

Eagleton's approach to the category of the literary is one of problematising its 'illusory' potential, while recognising the radical possibilities entailed in the extension, reconfiguration and rearticulation of its theories, practices and modes of criticism in relation to what is fundamentally a political strategy concerning matters of identity and relationships.

Holbrook and Hirschman (1992), however, take the category of the literary for granted. Adopting a simple, pragmatic pluralism, their means of differentiating between the various textual theories on offer comes down to a simple act of faith:

Researchers must decide for themselves what assumptions about reality they will embrace and then follow the research strategies appropriate to those assumptions. Consumer research inquiry, in this sense, is very much an act of faith; research practices, like religious practices, must spring from that faith.

The key to appreciating this ecumenical perspective lies in viewing the researcher's subject as a text and the researcher's task as one of interpretation. (p 112)

While an ecumenical perspective might allow for the variety and openness of interpretations, what it does not question is the founding subject, the *logos*, with its assumption that all interpretation constitutes a stage in a process of revelation, of determining a deeper truth.

In calling for the ideal of pluralism and tolerance Holbrook and Hirschman render its binary opposite to bemoan what they invoke as the harsh reality of intellectual turf wars. While it is not difficult to recognise some of the mean-spirited activities they describe as characteristic of these turf wars, it does not necessarily follow that invoking the ideal of pluralism and tolerance for the *knowing* humanist subject does not constitute its own play of

power. Perhaps what can be recognised is that politics, uncertainty, anxiety cannot be avoided precisely because a discourse constituted by the institution of a founding logos, by the inscription of binary opposites, invites submission and exclusion.

Readings, whether they go under the label of new criticism, 'new', new criticism or deconstruction, are in danger of doing no more than affirming ironic detachment, the play of the text or undecidability as a mark of the multiphrenic, fragmented, postmodern consumer. As such it might be argued they constitute a refusal to engage with crucial ethical, historical and political dimensions of the ways in which consumption is configured and the forms of its institution in the 'flex-spec' of a globalising economy.

Conclusion

The 'striking together' of the range of texts considered in this chapter sparked a number of significant issues. In the first instance, counter-arguments from Belsey suggest that Brown takes the literary canon as read. The effect of this is to make apparent that Brown fails to question the processes of canonisation that might be seen as constituting a building of the literary brand for certain texts and authors and all that implies for subscribing to, perpetuating and promoting particular sets of values and norms that derive from, and affirm, the logocentric, humanist subject as the source of *knowingness*. A further crucial aspect of Belsey's argument is that paying close attention to a text's signifying practices reminds us of our own linguistic constitution as subjects, about how we are subject to the meanings and values in circulation in our own culture and the relativity of the positions from which we speak.

In the second instance, it is argued that the appeal of Frye's structuralist ethos for Stern and the marketing literati more generally is that it offered a rigorous intellectual counterbalance to the scientific claims of positivism. (However, at the same time a close reading of Frye indicates that he relies as much on rhetoric as intellectual rigour.)

The further appeal of Frye for a marketing academy was that he offered a shift in focus from a concern with positivist determinations of consumer needs to a mapping of archetypal desires and how these might be related to a rethinking of how we understand more complex configurations of the consumer. Thus, while Stern advocates a greater pluralism in coming to an understanding of the consumer, this is ultimately subsumed by her resort to Frye's use of archetypes as comprising universal insights into the human condition.

Ultimately, in arguing for the deployment of literary devices and forms that call for a tolerant, playful, provocative pluralism, Stern simply celebrates the freeplay of the signifier,

which has the effect of consigning change to the realm of the ephemeral, as simply varied manifestations of deeper archetypal truths. This in turn simply enables Stern to accommodate a more diverse, but, nevertheless, logocentric humanism as the origin of *knowingness* and consumer sovereignty.

Similarly, Hirschman & Holbrook's engagement with, and deployment of, Eagleton makes the case for a greater tolerance, pluralism and rapprochement with regard to broadening approaches to the study of marketing. Having mapped and deconstructed Hirschman & Holbrook's various encounters with a range of literary theories by way of making their case and in the build-up to their appropriation of Eagleton, it is argued they marginalise and mis-cite crucial aspects of his argument. To this extent, however well-intentioned, Hirschman & Holbrook belie their calls for a greater tolerance and rapprochement by engineering a reading that conforms Eagleton to their unacknowledged, unannounced humanist perspective.

Crucially, it is noted that in contradistinction to Hirschman and Holbrook's 'arbitrary prejudice' with the literary as characterised by a striving for organic unity and bearing the influence of Gestalt psychology, Eagleton focuses on the implications of literary discourse as contradictory and heterogeneous. It is argued the virtue of Eagleton's approach is that it focuses on the more strategic issue of how discursive practices 'promote' their designs at the point of consumption and stands in marked contrast to Hirschman and Holbrook's position of viewing the text as a cipher through which insights into the universal human condition and desire can be unlocked.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MARKETING AND THE DISCOURSE OF COOL

The third rule of cool fits perfectly into the second: the second rule says that cool cannot be manufactured, only observed, and the third says that it can only be observed by those who are themselves cool. And, of course, the first rule says that it cannot accurately be observed at all, because the act of discovering cool causes cool to take flight, so if you add all three together they describe a closed loop, the hermeneutic circle of coolhunting, a phenomenon whereby not only can the uncool not see cool but cool cannot even be adequately described to them.

Gladwell, 1997

Introduction

The concern of this Chapter is to interpret and deconstruct a varied range of marketing texts that specifically address the question of cool. In so doing, questions will be raised concerning the role and practices of marketing in mapping a theoretical and philosophical terrain for this emerging discursive regime, and with a view to intensifying the questioning of how logocentric cultural perspectives are brought to bear.

The texts in question might be assigned classifications according to a range of criteria - generic, philosophical and functional - that would have a bearing on their reading. It would be possible to assign them classifications as academic monographs and journal papers, 'airport' management bestsellers and high-brow journals of the 'chattering classes', theoretical and practical 'how-to' texts; and, crossing the boundaries between management and cultural studies, texts mapping and offering perspectives on consumer culture, its genesis and exploration.

The texts in question are: Gladwell's (1970) *New Yorker* article 'Cool Hunting', Naomi Klein's (2001) anti-corporate manifesto *No Logo*, Southgate's (2003) academic paper 'Coolhunting, account planning and the ancient cool of Aristotle', Frank's (1997) seminal text *The Conquest of Cool* and Danesi's (2000) review of Frank and an interview with Frank for the *Harvard Business Review*.

Slaves to Cool

The above epigraph is taken from Malcolm Gladwell's (1997) article entitled 'Coolhunt' that appeared in *New Yorker* magazine. It neatly encapsulates the paradox, the conundrum that is taken to constitute contemporary articulations of *cool*. But perhaps the real argument here is not whether or not *cool* can be adequately described, but what are the effects of inscribing a closed hermeneutic loop as the inscrutable, mysterious origin and essence of *cool*. While, *cool* has been recognisable as a disposition since the texts of Castiglione (see Chapter Five),

in its more recent manifestation, *cool* discourse increasingly renders the phenomenon as a function of branding stratagems and consumer resistance to such stratagems (Burleigh & Eyre, 2004; Danesi, 2000; Nancarrow et al, 2001; Pountain & Robins, 2000; Pumphrey, 2005; Southgate, 2003; Thomas, 1997). Significantly, as a consequence of this dialectical *pas de deux*, there has emerged something of a tacit agreement that a *cool* brand cannot simply be manufactured or fashioned, only acknowledged; and recognisable in the first instance only by an exclusive cognoscenti. To this end, Gladwell's article has become a seminal text in more recent articulations of *cool*, tracing its origins as emanating from the 'street', from the consumer. No longer is *cool* authored by the fashion houses, but by the consumers' reading and reinterpretation of existing fashion texts.

Gladwell's article offers a commentary on the emergence and modus operandi of two influential coolhunters - Baysie Wightman and DeeDee Gordon. According to Gladwell what these coolhunters had was a 'window on the world of the street'. The argument is put forward that when the big fashion houses set the trends - when *cool* was trickle-down - surveillance of street trends was not a priority. But, and without being specific, Gladwell goes on to argue that, 'sometime in the past few decades things got turned over, and fashion became trickle-up.' As part of this process, he observes that designers eighteen month lead-time between concept and sale had been reduced to six months in order to react faster to new ideas. This reversal and speeding up of the producer consumer dynamic, rather than claiming to satisfy the needs of *cool* consumers, contented itself instead with securing a position closer to the cutting edge of street *cool*, enabling it to be maintained as the signifier of objects of desire rather than as the fulfillment of desire.

As has already been argued, simply reversing the binary opposition, adding to and varying those discourses ceding the primacy of the consumer over the producer, nevertheless remains enmeshed within a logocentric rhetoric. That the baton of authority, knowledge, knowingness, percipience, *cool*, is passed on from the author to the reader, from the producer to the consumer does not alter the logocentric assumptions within which such arguments are made, that the origin of those ideas, perspectives, arguments, observations, assumptions, lie within and are centred upon the integrity of those individuals who *know* and express their own minds. What is missing, perhaps, is a recognition of the insemination that has already taken place, the consequence of a textual practice that has already ceded itself to the logocentric assumptions of expressive humanism. DeeDee Gordon confirms this priority, 'I'm looking for somebody who is an individual, who has definitely set himself apart from everybody else, who doesn't look like his peers.' (Gladwell, 1997, pp 87)

Gladwell reiterates this logocentric priority through the signifying practice he deploys when describing Baysie Wightman and DeeDee Gordon. Gladwell begins his article with what

might be describes as reasonably straightforward, matter-of-fact reportage: introducing Baysie Wightman and DeeDee Gordon, how their coolhunting careers began, what marked them out as successful and setting this in the context of a perceived change from trickle-down to trickle-up patterns of consumption. To begin, the article comprises mainly terse, self-contained, matter-of-fact assertion interspersed with equally terse observation and qualification that brook no argument. Final authority for their status as trackers of *cool* trends is achieved by the morbid invocation of a cultural icon - Kurt Cobain:

[The *cool* kids] wanted simplicity and authenticity, and Baysie picked up on that. She brought back the Converse One Star, which was a vulcanized, suede, low-top classic old-school sneaker from the nineteen-seventies, and, sure enough, the One Star quickly became the signature shoe of the retro era. Remember what Kurt Cobain was wearing in the famous picture of him lying dead on the ground after committing suicide? Black Converse One Stars. (ibid, pp78)

Gladwell offers a similar commendation and 'proof' of DeeDee Gordon's percipience and insight with regard to an ability to spot a trend and to act upon it.

But as Gladwell moves into description of Baysie Wightman and DeeDee Gordon, the syntactical structure changes. If Baysie Wightman and DeeDee Gordon's are to be accepted as gifted with insight into matters *cool*, then convention might suggest there ought to be good grounds for ceding them this exclusive status. While Gladwell points to success in terms of the sales that have resulted from their identification of particular trends, the first rule of *cool*, 'the act of discovering *cool* is what causes *cool* to move on', means that increased sales effectively constitutes an impending loss of *cool* status.

Intriguingly, when it comes to describing what makes Baysie Wightman and DeeDee Gordon special individuals, the syntactical register changes somewhat. The description of DeeDee Gordon begins with Gladwell's hitherto style of matter-of-fact assertion, but which is then juxtaposed with a somewhat reserved qualification that has the effect of inscribing an idiosyncratic, enigmatic character: 'DeeDee is tall and glamorous, with short hair she has dyed [so often],' constitutes straightforward assertion; this is then juxtaposed by, '[so often] that she claims to have forgotten her real colour.' DeeDee Gordon constitutes her enigmatic character both visually and linguistically - and which Gladwell further inscribes - by playfully withholding aspects of her self, deploying a certain reserve in the cultivation of her persona.

Gladwell (pp 78) goes on to provide a series of statements which constitute in themselves, or within them, a series of oppositions that offer straightforward observation juxtaposed with a hint towards the enigmatic. 'She drives a yellow 1977 Trans Am with a burgundy stripe down the centre,' is a straightforward description of the 'bold' car she drives, but hints at a contrasting layer of individuality with the addition of the burgundy stripe. Added

to this, in case there were any doubts about her distinctive individuality, the text informs us that she also drives, 'a 1973 Mercedes 450 SL, and lives in a spare, Japanese-style cabin in Laurel Canyon.' No hint of colour here, just the make and model of the car she drives and the curious juxtaposition of the Japanese-style retreat that hints at a contrasting spare, pared down lifestyle, and the perhaps obvious tracing of a space for being oneself. The effect of these binaries within binaries has the effect of representing DeeDee Gordon as both extrovert and introvert, both excitable and reflective, mature.

Gladwell continues to comment on DeeDee Gordon's use of language, which articulates further the binary opposition being traced. Again Gladwell (1997) focuses on the excitable representation of DeeDee Gordon: 'She uses words like "rad" and "totally," and offers non-stop deadpan pronouncements on pop culture . . .' (p. 78) But this is balanced by the reinscription of the more mature, more knowing, even calculating, DeeDee Gordon.

She sounds at first like a teen, like the same teens who . . . it is her job to follow. But teen speech - particularly girl-teen speech, with its fixation on reported speech ('so she goes,' 'and I'm like,' 'and he goes') and its stock vocabulary of accompanying grimaces and gestures - is about using language less to communicate than to fit in. (p. 78)

But significantly, while she sounds like a teen, it is made clear that DeeDee is aware of the power of language: 'DeeDee uses teen speech to set herself apart, and the result is, for lack of a better word, really *cool*.'

What is at issue in raising these subtly shifting registers is a questioning of the motivation behind this stratagem of fitting in, this linguistic mirroring, and what more precisely is being mirrored. On this basis, 'the window on the world of the street' that Gladwell claims for Gordon and Wightman is equally capable of acting as a reverse portal: carefully positioned fitting-room mirrors revealed as the ultimate source of inspiration for street *cool*.

Baysie Wightman is also described as a larger than life character and by means of what are articulated as seemingly deceptive and contradictory juxtapositions, Gladwell (ibid) provides a parenthetical perspective on Baysie Wightman which suggests there is more to her than meets the eye:

Baysie is older, just past forty (although you would never guess that), and went to Exeter and Middlebury and had two grandfathers who went to Harvard (although you wouldn't guess that either). (pp. 78/79)

Utilising a poetic parallelism, a cascade of repeated conjunctions linking a series of terse statements and a degree of hyperbole, Gladwell (ibid) effects what constitutes a mirroring of Baysie's breathless energy and as someone extra-ordinary:

She has curly brown hair and big green eyes and long legs and so much energy that it is hard to imagine her asleep, or resting, or even standing still for longer than thirty seconds. (p. 79)

Following such representations, there is almost a degree of inevitability about their status as harbingers of *cool* when Gladwell announces that: 'The hunt for cool is an obsession with her, and DeeDee is the same way.' (p. 79)

Arguably, the desire to chart the next wave, to be part of a progressive move forward, a *cool* enlightenment, in whatever discursive domain this might take place, leads to a self-fulfilling rhetoric that reinforces the validity of the subject in question. Whether it is the coolhunters Baysie Wightman and DeeDee Gordon, or the New Yorker magazine, what accompanies the mapping of *cool* is a certain status and prestige, a certain play of power.

Gladwell (pp 81) describes an episode in which he accompanies Baysie on a coolhunt to the Bronx and Harlem. They find themselves in Dr Jay's, 'the cool place to buy sneakers in the Bronx'. Baysie offers a range of sneakers for comment by the store's customers. Gladwell (ibid) focuses on Baysie's interchange with 'one guy' who has been marked out as *cool*, not just by his look, but by the somewhat visceral, guttural brevity of his responses.

Baysie would hand him a shoe and he would hold it, look at the top, and move it up and down and flip it over. The first one he didn't like: 'Oh-kay.' The second one he hated: he made a growling sound in his throat even before Baysie could give it to him, as if to say, 'Put it back in the bag - now!' But when she handed him a new DMX RXT . . . he looked at it long and hard and shook his head in pure admiration and just said two words, dragging each of them out: 'No doubt.' (p. 81)

The signifying practice deployed here promotes a distinct sense that the assertive responses made are instinctive, visceral, almost pre-linguistic, emanating from deep within. And for Gladwell (ibid), just why Baysie focused on this particular teenager 'was a mystery', although it would seem to have something to do with having a natural, almost animal-like affinity to blend in, to make herself tribally acceptable: 'Baysie is a wasp from New England, and she crouched on the floor in Dr Jay's for almost an hour, talking and joking with the homeboys without a trace of condescension or self-consciousness.' (p. 81)

In another episode, Gladwell (ibid) describes a meeting with the principals of the Sputnik coolhunting group. Again, there is an emphasis on what are ascribed as speech patterns that are distinctive of a unique, street-*cool* persona:

Once, when I was visiting the Sputnik girls - as Misdorn and DeLuca are known on the street, because they look alike and their first names are so similar and both have the same 'awesome' New York accents - they showed me a video of the girl they believe was the patient zero of the whole eighties revival . . . (p 85)

This representation of an ability to operate at the fragmented level of the street, to occupy an instinctive, neo-tribal, originary space that eschews the complexity of linguistic signifying

practice is again referenced by Gladwell (ibid, pp 86) when he writes: 'What DeeDee argues, though, is that cool is too subtle and too variegated to be captured with [...] broad strokes. Cool is a set of dialects, not a language.'

While the language deployed by Gladwell has the effect of captivating the reader by means of the larger-than-life appeal of the coolhunters, what is effaced in his article is the operation of power. With a degree of linguistic inevitability, the word from the street is channeled and filtered via the pre-existing binaries, presumptions, prescriptions, pronouncements and signifying practices of those able to make such views count. In this respect the coolhunters as cultural gatekeepers bring with them a colonial mindset, focusing on what has a capacity for exploitation. While it can be argued those addressed as *cool* have some indescribable quality intrinsic to their being, it can similarly be argued they secure their *cool* by simply mirroring the stratagems and structures of the colonisers - the coolhunters - in determining to set themselves apart, as having their own brand of exclusivity. Perhaps what we now have is a hint that *cool* is something of a myth (in the Barthesian sense) that helps map and perpetuate a particular configuration of consumer culture.

Consequently, there is an argument that what Gladwell (1997, p 87) describes as the hermeneutic circle of coolhunting, a progressive acquisition of knowledge and enlightenment is anything but. Rather than viewing the hermeneutic circle as a work in progress, an ever-shifting network of perspectives and texts, which acknowledge that final understanding is always deferred, never complete, always beyond any claim to being the final word, Gladwell seems to be arguing that hermeneutic enlightenment is a prescriptive abstraction, a spontaneous revelation and *knowingness* that is the exclusive preserve of a *cool* cognoscenti. But the case can be made equally that the hermeneutic circle resists exclusivity in offering enlightenment as a nuanced process that intimates at the possibility that more might be included, that more might be said or written, rather than a closed loop of exclusive, tacit knowledge. Unsurprisingly from a logocentric perspective, Gladwell (1997, p 81) claims the tacit knowledge that coolhunting manifests is not about the articulation of a coherent philosophy of *cool*: 'It's just a collection of spontaneous observations and predictions that differ from one moment to the next and from one coolhunter to the next.' But what Gladwell does invite us to accept as having a degree of coherence, as self-evident, are 'gifted' individuals who are party to and origin of privileged, exclusive insights that are denied to others.

The closed loop of hermeneutic enlightenment Gladwell describes, is more analogous to the danse macabre: a timely reminder that the manoeuvring entailed in aspiring to exclusive perspectives and positions beyond and apart from the world is an age-old myth that has simply been reconfigured, losing its religious, ethical dimension in the process. While now

operating with different texts and priorities, it remains the case that securing a privileged position outside and beyond linguistic and cultural structures remains questionable, entailing a certain blindness rather than insight.

Gladwell effectively opens up a distinctive line of significance for *cool* when he explains what he terms the 'triumphant circularity of coolhunting', in which the act of discovering *cool* causes *cool* to move on. As to the reasons for this Gladwell remains somewhat elusive. It would seem the dynamic that is instrumental in the configuration of *cool* is not only related to the unspecified change from trickle down to trickle up, but, also, gave rise to a chase-and-flight syndrome: those who are *cool* taking flight from those chasing the secrets of *cool*. As Gladwell (1997) observes the whole process is given an added twist: 'because we have coolhunters like DeeDee and Baysie, *cool* changes more quickly, and because *cool* changes more quickly, we need coolhunters like DeeDee and Baysie.' (p. 78) In this regard, *cool*, as well as being a manifestation of some inner percipience, is also a tactical or strategic manoeuvre for maintaining a position of influence and power over the ways in which consumer desire is brought into play, of perpetuating an undecidability as to what constitutes *cool*. Indeed, it is the 'hegemony of the street' as Florida (2005) describes the changing focus of consumer priorities on to creative experiences that is having the effect of causing government planners to look to *cool* as a means of revitalising cities and urban spaces, populated by the creative and the *cool*. (Florida, 2002, 2004, 2005; Hartley, 2005) However, as Tay (2005) observes in relation to the Labour Government's attempts to bring about a 'Cool Britannia' brand, the initiative was unsuccessful. Despite its best efforts, the initiative came up against the expressive humanist limits of the power at play in the discursive configuration of *cool*. Tay (2005, 224/225) in citing a major cultural guardian of British style, 'Vogue' magazine, effectively reveals this play of power: 'the prodigious wealth of talent and all that is excellent in this country needs no fanfare. We know we're *cool*'.

In this close reading and deconstruction of Gladwell's seminal '*Coolhunt*' article from the 'New Yorker' magazine, particularly in its charting of *cool* and representation of the coolhunters Baysie Wightman and DeeDee Gordon as single-minded, mercurial, larger-than-life individuals, questions have been raised concerning the construction of their authority and percipience in determining *cool* consumers with the selfsame qualities. But, it is also recognised that regardless of the validity of this critique, what also has to be accommodated is the cultural gatekeeping status of 'New Yorker' magazine and the power this vests in its writers and contributors in making their views count.

I would argue that regardless of whether authority, knowledge, knowingness, percipience, *cool*, is passed on from the author to the reader, from the producer to the consumer, from the cultural gatekeeper to the 'street' – or whether the reverse applies - what does not alter

are the logocentric assumptions within which such arguments are made. In this take on *cool*, the logocentric operates to privilege the origin of ideas, assumptions, observations, perspectives, arguments, as lying within and centred upon the rational integrity of individuals who *know* and express their own minds, and more particularly with those individuals who are deemed to have a certain percipience and capacity for insight

And in this regard, Baysie Wightman and DeeDee Gordon might be viewed as operating not so much as cultural guardians or gatekeepers maintaining exclusive canons of taste, but as 'cultural midwives', determining what new trends have the capacity for further cultivation, growth and nurturing. From this perspective I would argue that coolhunting entails something of a colonial mindset, the mapping of new territories, the charting of new desires that bring opportunities for further exploitation and consumption.

It was further argued that while *cool* might be configured as a manifestation of some inner percipience, it might also be configured as a tactical or strategic manoeuvre for maintaining a position of influence and power by perpetuating an undecidability as to what constitutes *cool*. One effect of this undecidability, this uncertainty, is a proliferation and speeding up of the cycles by which products are brought to market. In addition, while coolhunting may well be a product of the need to track what Gladwell terms *cool*'s 'chase and flight' syndrome, it cannot be inconsequential that such a strategy has the effect of maintaining a more nebulous desire. In addition, it has the effect of obviating producers from the chore and limitations of specifying determinate needs; the further consequence of which is that in perpetuating an ongoing undecidability, it also has the effect of increasing stockturn and ongoing profit cycles.

No Logo(s)

In *No Logo*, Klein (2001) directly addresses the question of *cool* branding and its mapping and colonisation of the mental spaces of youth culture that left no uncharted space for what she terms journeys of self-discovery. She opens the third chapter, 'Alt.everything: the youth market and the marketing of *cool*' by reflecting on 'morbid discussions' with a close friend during the final year of high school. Looking back Klein (2001) observes their stereotypical teenage angst and narcissism was compounded by a recognition that everything had already been done.

The world stretched out before us not as a slate of possibility, but as a maze of well-worn groovesTo us it seemed as though the archetypes were all hackneyed by the time our turn came to graduate, including that of the black-clad deflated intellectual. (p. 63)

While acknowledging the advent of a worldly wisdom that comes with the passage of time, Klein nevertheless confesses to being haunted still, not by the absence of literal space, but by

a deep craving for metaphorical space - release, escape, open-ended freedom. The argument is put forward with no little irony by way of contrast with her parents' generation, who charted their route to freedom by taking to the open road in a VW Camper. There is a hint that it marked a beginning for the commodification of escapism, now serviced by what is effectively a global marketing ethic. It would seem this trend constitutes a process of constantly and restlessly colonising and proliferating routes into niche lifestyles and experiences, (re)presenting them as ripe for cultivation and consumption: 'From the occult to raves to riots to extreme sports, it seems that the eternal urge for escape has never enjoyed such niche marketing.' (Klein, 2001, pp 64) But while Klein articulates concern over the commodification of the vehicle for escape - the issue of, the desire for, escape, freedom is taken as a given, an universal feature of human nature.

Klein (2001) recalls another moment of epiphany during television coverage of the controversy surrounding Woodstock '94:

[It] hit me that my frustrated craving for space wasn't simply a result of the inevitable march of history, but of the fact that commercial co-optation was proceeding at a speed that would have been unimaginable to previous generations. (p 65)

Staking out further the ground for her 'present' critique, Klein notes that the controversy and debate that emerged over Woodstock '94 revolved 'around the sanctity of the past, with no reference to present-tense cultural challenges' (p. 65). The crux of Klein's argument is that in contrast to the original Woodstock generation, the commoditising, the selling-out and colonising of contemporary youth culture was taking place as they were living it. While acknowledging its somewhat mythical status, Klein nevertheless allows that it was part of a vast project of generational self-definition. And the point for Klein (2001), is that this is what is being denied to the current generation:

for whom the search for self had always been shaped by marketing hype, whether or not they believed it or defined themselves against it. This is a side effect of brand expansion that is far more difficult to track and quantify than the branding of culture and city spaces. This loss of space happens inside the individual; it is a colonization not of physical but of mental space. (p 66)

Klein argues this move on youth culture by corporate brands was a consequence of the crisis engendered by Marlboro Friday, 2 April 1993. The crisis resulted specifically from the announcement by Philip Morris that it would slash the cost of Marlboro cigarettes in an attempt to compete with the bargain brands on the basis of price rather than brand values. This event is seen as a marker of the day advertising itself was called into question by the very brands the industry had been building.

The crisis of faith in brands this event engendered led to a root and branch re-evaluation of the market and emerging modes of consumption. What this crisis threw into sharp relief for

the industries driving Western consumerism was that even as they were, 'still catering to the citizens of Woodstock Nation, now morphed into consumption-crazed yuppies', those self-same baby boomers had decided to drop their end of the consumer chain. According to Klein, what Wall Street picked up on as part of this re-evaluation was that not all brands were bombing. Certain brands were holding steady and even taking off, which, when considered in light of demographic changes, led to the conclusion that the wrong audience was being targeted. It would seem that the potency of branding was exceeding its limits with the parent generation - who had gone bargain basement. The focus of the branding effort and ethic had begun to shift.

The challenge for the market, as Klein describes it, was the fashioning of 'brand identities that would resonate with this new culture', that would turn lacklustre products into transcendent meaning machines. This led to brands modelling themselves in the image of nineties *cool*. The holy grail, not just for advertisers and brand managers, but also music, film and television producers, became one of capturing the essence of *cool*; identifying and isolating what might be described as *cool* memes. But, the logocentrism of Klein's writing - in the Derridean sense as opposed to the thematic focus of the book - leads to a certain complicity with regard to the priority afforded to the forces of natural desire in this process. Klein has already argued that what drives young people is a deep desire for an open-ended freedom, escape, the opportunity to carve out their own unique sense of identity, untrammelled by pre-existing influences, particularly those of all-consuming brands. But when Klein (2001) writes of the efforts 'to isolate and reproduce the precise attitude teens and twenty somethings were driven to consume' (pp. 68/69), it is not clear exactly how this drive or force is constituted.

Klein appears to take as axiomatic a universal desire for expressing and fulfilling one's sense of self or identity and that the accompanying anxiety entailed in this process is co-opted by brands as a means of appropriating, frustrating and perpetuating desire. This begs the question that if what is perceived as innate is also subject to the cultural - by the power of branding - then it is possible that what is taken as an innate, universal desire for self-expression is, first and last, cultural. But to acknowledge the materiality of markets and brands, and yet to locate resistance to such stratagems in the ideal of the fulfillment of such desire is another manifestation of the hold of the logocentric. But regardless of questions of ontology, what this new articulation of 'finding oneself' provided was simply yet another opening for a frenzy of reconfigured marketing and branding activity, which, with its emphasis on the individual, the experiential, the idiosyncratic, the fragmentary, the ironic, the inscription of difference and counter-cultural independence, has come to dominate articulations of postmodern consumer culture.

It is possible to argue that youth culture was being set to binge on brands ramped up as exotic, excitingly different, marginal, edgy; that would hold out the promise of securing a *cool*-fit identity. Diesel and Benetton are two obvious examples of brands that pushed this stratagem to its limits in order to secure a share of the *cool* mindspace. But, at the same time, with regard to the marketing project of maximising returns, these brands needed to carry an exoteric as well as an exotic appeal. The brand's exoteric appeal, while offering security in numbers, has the effect of perpetuating the quest for *cool* - the seeking of a distinctive identity that needs, while marking itself off from, others. The quest for *cool* requires a degree of acknowledgement, to have the appeal of being accessible to a wide audience, but at the same time *cool* pulls in the opposite direction, resisting universal categorization, constantly shifting, and shifting to, the domain of the exotic, in the quest to place itself beyond reach. In the quest for *cool*, the quest for individual differentiation, undecidability plays a key role; but it is one that is as much strategic as manifestation of anxious teen shoppers who are, 'by nature riddled with self-doubt'. Klein's (2001) logocentric articulation that 'the harrowing doubts of adolescence are the billion-dollar questions of our age' (p 69), somewhat effaces its strategic potency as a discursive inscription subject to endless reiteration. It is precisely this elusion of self-doubt that enables the perpetuation of the billion-dollar quest(ioning). But by locating undecidability as a function of individual anxiety, Klein diminishes the space that might allow for a Derridean undecidability, in which language and discourse - structured through a proliferation of traces and ultimate lack of fixity - constitute the locus from which these doubts *originate*.

Regardless of where such doubts originate, boardrooms across the post-industrial world - from IBM to Gap - became obsessed with achieving the exclusivity that is associated with *cool*. Without exclusivity all that remains is exclusion. As Klein (2001) opines:

The companies that are left out of the crowd of successfully hip brands . . . now skulk on the margins of society: the corporate nerds. 'Coolness is still elusive for us,' says Bill Benford, president of L.A. Gear athletic wear, and one half expects him to slash his wrists like some anxious fifteen-year-old unable to face schoolyard exile for another term. No one is safe from this brutal ostracism, as Levis Straus learned in 1998. (p 69)

The dividing line that is *cool* is all that lies between exclusivity and exclusion, but it is a line that resists simple inscription. Both invoke a sense of being set apart, with *cool* the final arbitrary and dividing power, and which in similar fashion to particular instances of irony refuses categorisation, refuses to admit the basis of its judgements, simply taking knowings as read. As Klein trenchantly observes, 'Cool, it seems, is the make-or-break quality in 1990s branding. It is the ironic sneer-track of ABC sitcoms and late-night talk shows.' (p. 70)

Cooling the Zeitgeist

However elusive, the purveyors of *cool*, the coolhunters, have come to be represented as harbingers of change, as being in touch with and part of the youth market, of a new zeitgeist that held out the prospect of new business opportunities. Having struck an alienated, defiant, rebellious pose, these harbingers found themselves in demand as agents of change. As Klein observes these representatives of the youth demographic found themselves incorporated into the corporate world anxious to be at the cutting edge. Furthermore, these hoped-for conduits of *cool* were no longer required to transform themselves into clone-ish company men.

Significantly, Klein (2001) denies that these change agents are imposters, scheming suits. For Klein these young workers are the real deal, 'the true and committed product of the scenes they serve up, and utterly devoted to the transformation of their brands.' (p. 71) While they might be seen as the latest in a long line of alienated, defiant, rebellious youth, the difference this time is that the discursive formations through which the *cool*, youthful harbingers of change manifested their dispositions, resonated with an older generation, who had also once considered themselves alienated, defiant, rebellious. Klein (2001) recognises this crossover when she writes:

And what do the change agents' bosses have to say about all this? They say bring it on, of course. Companies looking to fashion brand identities that will mesh seamlessly with the zeitgeist understand as Marshall McLuhan wrote, "When a thing is current, it creates currency." (p. 71)

When Klein recounts the story of MTV's 'Melissa Manifesto', there is a strong sense that what she appears to relate - and relates to - is the zeitgeist of rebelliousness, of independent spirits' doing one's own thing. Suspending her critical project Klein (2001) writes admiringly:

At MTV, a couple of twenty-five-year-old production assistants, both named Melissa, co-wrote a document known as the 'Melissa Manifesto', calling on the already insufferably bubbly channel to become even more so. ('We want a cleaner, brighter, more fun MTV,' was among their fearless demands.) Upon reading the tract, MTV president Judy McGrath told one of her colleagues, 'I feel like blowing everybody out and putting these people in charge.' Fellow rebel Tom Freston, CEO of MTV, explains that 'Judy is inherently an anti-establishment person'. (p 72)

Klein effectively recognises an element of the 'emperor's new clothes' here. Pointing admiringly at rebellion in its latest guise might entail a certain mythic collusion, but it never quite crosses the line into illusion: a more complex perspective ultimately prevails. While Klein along with the MTV president and CEO might admire the single-minded self-confidence and belief of the Melissas, it might be safely assumed these fearless young rebels weren't immediately handed the levers of power.

It would seem the change agents engaged in *cooling* the corporate world from the inside out find such formulations as embodied in the Melissa Manifesto offer a useful short-hand, a to-the-point, discursive resource for signalling and promoting an anti-establishment, *cool* ethic. But at the same time there is a degree of tacit questioning as to whether such an ethic has any material substance. In dealing with a newly emerging cadre of consultants promising to *cool* companies from the outside-in, a different ethic prevails. From what Klein observes, there appears to be an acknowledgement that the equivocal claims of the *cool*-hunters and the guarded accession of clients to the latest manifestation of *cool* indicates that it is a domain full of pretenders vying for the excalibur of *cool*. As such both sides mitigate their desire for mastery of *cool* with a judicious, if costly, pinch of salt:

Cool hunters and their corporate clients are locked in a slightly S/M, symbiotic dance: the clients are desperate to believe in a just-beyond-their-reach well of untapped *cool*, and the hunters, in order to make their advice more valuable, exaggerate the crisis of credibility the brands face. On the off-chance of Brand X becoming the next Nike, however, many corporations have been more than willing to pay up. (Klein 2001, p 73)

Betwixt and Between

Klein finds that during the nineties the market most aggressively mined by the *Cool* brandmasters are the views of young black men in American inner cities. Hardly surprising, given the premium placed on alienation, rebelliousness and the trajectory the charting of *cool* has taken in the United States. Pountain & Robins (2000) also afford a certain precedence to the views of young black men in charting the trajectory of *cool*. They make the claim that:

It seems indisputable to us that the roots of modern Cool lie in African (and later African American) culture, but that should not blind us to the fact that phenomena very similar to our notion of Cool have arisen independently in other places and at other times. (p. 52)

In addition to Klein and Pountain & Robins, a similar observation is perpetuated by Nancarrow et al (2001). And the significance of this stratagem is not lost on Klein (2001). She notes that for a brand such as Tommy Hilfiger the first step in its repositioning entailed achieving a ghetto credibility by appealing to the *living large* philosophy of hip-hop. This manifested itself in, 'poor and working-class kids acquiring status in the ghetto by adopting the gear and accoutrements of prohibitively costly leisure activities, such as skiing, golfing, even boating,' (Klein, 2001, p. 75) an inner city version perhaps of Veblen's conspicuous consumption. As Klein further notes:

Once Tommy was firmly established as a ghetto thing, the real selling could begin - not just to the comparatively small market of poor inner-city youth but to the much larger market of middle-class white and Asian kids who mimic black style . . . (p. 75)

Crucially in terms of the structural inclusion/exclusion binary Klein (2001) charts, it is one that locks in place the fixation with, and desire for, *Cool*:

Like so much of *cool* hunting, Hilfiger's marketing journey feeds off the alienation at the heart of America's race relations: selling white youth on their fetishization of black style, and black youth on their fetishization of white wealth. (p. 75)

The one group seeks *cool* via authenticity, the other via the trappings of wealth. What Klein effectively argues here is that corporate America appropriates and misrepresents an authentic alienation that is the symptom of a failure of identity, which, as a consequence of disingenuous marketing stratagems, they are instrumental in fomenting and perpetuating. What is less clear from Klein is by what means the representation of alienation might be made that doesn't leave itself open the charge of being inauthentic.

Klein notes that as part of a movement to project an anti-establishment, of-the-street image, major brands soon learned that 'indie was the pitch on *Cool Street*', launching a series of faux-indie brands. However, it would seem that no sooner than these faux-indie brands were recognised for what they were, than it was a case of seeking new forms of escape. But in this ever intensifying marketing *danse macabre*, pursuit by the brands was all-consuming and unavoidable. With escape impossible, Klein (2001) argues the next move for those, 'ever-elusive, trend-setting *cool* kids [was] to express their disdain for mass culture not by opting out of it but by abandoning themselves to it entirely - but with a sly ironic twist.' (pp 77/78,)

It is in itself ironic that in a sub-section entitled 'Ironic consumption: no deconstruction required', the logocentric focus of Klein's argument again comes to the fore. She argues the stratagem of engaging in ironic consumption allowed the trend-setting *cool* kids a number of points of resistance:

Not only were they making a subversive statement about a culture they could not physically escape, they were rejecting the doctrinaire puritanism of seventies feminism, the earnestness of the sixties quest for authenticity and the 'literal' readings of so many cultural critics. Welcome to ironic consumption. (Klein 2001, p 78)

Klein (2001) cites the editors of the zine *Hermenaut*, who in turn cite Michel de Certeau as offering the basis for this stratagem.

Following the late ethnologist Michel de Certeau, we prefer to concentrate our attention on the independent use of mass culture products, a use which, like the ruses of camouflaged fish and insects, may not 'overthrow the system,' but which keeps us intact and autonomous within that system, which may be the best we can hope . . . (pp 78)

The difficulty with these preceding statements is that if we are unable to escape the culture in which we find ourselves, then it is questionable to what extent it is possible to make independent use of mass culture products. Interestingly, Klein attempts to overcome this

problem by invoking a logocentric idealism. By pointing out that culture is something from which it is not possible physically to escape, she leaves open a space for the denial or mediation of culture's impact on our mental space. What this achieves is to leave individuals free to express themselves and to freely contest such issues as the 'doctrinaire puritanism of seventies feminism', not least by imputing more reasoned alternatives - invariably articulated within the assumption of a new, progressive, if somewhat ironic, zeitgeist.

It is difficult to concede, given culture's pervasive intellectual and aesthetic bearing, how it is possible to argue that its saturation by branding impacts primarily on our physical, material space. Perhaps it is an argument that attempts to account for the implied corrupting effects of the non-independent uses - presumably deemed material, because thought-less - of consumer or brand culture. In seeding this binary opposition, Klein effectively privileges the independent use of mass culture by those presumed to be thought-ful; and yet at the same time, in-dependence is nothing if not an acknowledgement of a prior dependence, only from which it is possible to become independent. On the one hand there is the prospect of mass, thought-less culture that is invisible, insignificant in being without real significance, and, on the other, a thought-ful culture that is acknowledged, but the prior significance of which is effectively denied by being subjected to the persistence of a continued and pervasive logocentric presence. As with prior versions of mass cultural critiques, it is difficult to see on what grounds it is possible for Klein to justify a privileged, exclusive position, with which, and from within which, to pass judgement on that selfsame culture.

From the same Klein (2001) citation, the editors of *Hermenaut* add that this position is:

What de Certeau describes as 'the art of being in-between,' and this is the only path of true freedom in today's culture. Let us then be in-between. Let us revel in Baywatch, Joe Camel, *Wired* magazine, and even glossy books about the society of spectacle [touché], but let's never succumb to the glamorous allure of these things. (pp 78)

Leaving aside what might be described as a privileging, an exclusivity, in the logocentric allure of true freedom, this appeal rather begs the question as to how it is possible to know whether being 'in-between' similarly constitutes a position which is subject to 'the glamorous allure of these [signifiers]'. In more prosaic terms, and however layered with irony, the enjoyment, the consumption, of these such brands sounds suspiciously like having one's cake and eating it. There is no guarantee that deploying irony or the art of being in between as something of a camouflage stratagem will keep us intact and autonomous within a culture dominated by the predations of the brands. In opting for a logocentric, as opposed to a discursive perspective, it is questionable as to as to how irony as dissimulation constitutes a means of protecting one's 'authentic self' against the machinations of consumer culture.

Indeed, it can be argued that the camouflage effectively constitutes as much an 'authentic self' as that of the stick insect.

But, as Klein observes, irony offered a cozy, self-referential niche; for brands in search of *cool* new identities, irony and camp have become all-purpose. A further consequence of ironic detachment would seem to be the opening up of the past. Retro enabled the re-consumption of the past - mining its resources and nostalgia, served up with a dash of irony - that allowed for an accompaniment of sponsorship and merchandising opportunities.

Having charted what she views as branding's progressive incorporation of youth trends, styles, ideas and identities, Klein argues that the voracity of the corporate *cool*-hunt, by reaching into every crevice of youth culture, provoked the rise of brand-based activism. It would seem this activism was given added impetus by something of a re-evaluation. Reflecting on the beginning of the youth-culture feeding frenzy at the beginning of the nineties, Klein observes that, steeped in their own sense of rebelliousness and subversiveness, few of them questioned why it was youth scenes and ideas were proving so packageable and unthreatening:

In retrospect, a central problem was the mostly unquestioned assumption that just because a scene or style is different (that is, new and not yet mainstream), it necessarily exists in opposition to the mainstream, rather than simply sitting unthreateningly on its margins. Many of us assumed that 'alternative' . . . was also anticommmercial, even socialist. (Klein, 2001, p. 82)

Others it seems held a different position, and were, as was Courtney Love, according to Klein, quite content to sell out. The degree of hubris in Klein's 'many of us' is testimony to the easy allure of a logocentric perspective. Having been brought to an abrupt rethink by a recognition that others might be reading from different scripts, Klein reconciles this uncomfortable disjunction by questioning whether what was happening constituted a sell-out. Somewhat piously, she argues, it is necessary, 'to buy in to something earnestly before you can sell it out cynically' (p 83). The issue it seems was a lack of earnestness, a lack of commitment on the part of certain anti-heroes to a clear position or cause. But perhaps the issue Klein does not address is the crucial issue of difference and the appeal of the marginal, the ex-clusive, as a structural manifestation of a logocentric individuality. With specific reference to the counter-culture in Seattle, Klein (2001) argues:

What was 'sold out' in Seattle, and in every other subculture that has had the misfortune of being spotlighted by the *cool* hunters, was some pure idea about doing it yourself, about independent labels versus the big corporations, about not buying in to the capitalist machine. But few in that scene bothered to articulate these ideas out loud, and Seattle - long dead and forgotten as anything but a rather derivative fad - now serves as a cautionary tale about why so little opposition to the theft of cultural space took place in the early to mid-nineties. Trapped in the headlights of irony and

carrying too much pop-culture baggage, not one of its antiheroes could commit to a single, solid political position. (p 83)

It would seem that what Klein (2001) is advocating is a reversal; making the alternative dependent on a commitment to a 'single, solid political position', in turn dependent upon 'some pure idea about doing it yourself' (p. 83).

While recognising irony as problematical, resulting it would seem in a derivative faddishness for those without commitment, Klein argues for its continued use as an essential element in maintaining that subtle state of in-betweenness. And for Klein (2001):

That art of being in-between, of being ironic, or camp, which Susan Sontag so brilliantly illuminated in her 1964 essay 'Notes on Camp,' is based on an essential cliquiness, a club of people who get the aesthetic puns. 'To talk about camp is therefore to betray it,' she acknowledges at the beginning of the essay. (p. 83)

Perhaps Klein is right to identify commitment as an issue but, at the same time, what might be at issue in offering irony as a form of private language for maintaining a clique, an exclusive group of those in-the-know, needs to be raised. Regardless of how downbeat, there is a distinct possibility that such exclusive cliques are subject to, and further help constitute, the allure of a conspicuous consumption. And arguably, the admonition on talking about irony or camp as a betrayal, only adds to its exclusiveness and allure.

Klein notes that Sontag advocated the use of camp as a dandyist imaginative stratagem for asserting a space for the marginal, for those resisting the strictures of a mass culture. Klein (2001) further cites Sontag, to make the observation that camp was put forward as the answer to the problem of how to be a dandy in an age of mass culture, before adding the rider: 'Only now, some thirty-five years later, we are faced with the vastly more difficult question. How to be truly critical in an age of mass camp?' (p. 84) This rather begs the question as to whether dandyism - individualism writ large - was the answer in the first place, or whether indeed it is a constitutive part and intensification of the logocentric metaphysics of presence. It also intensifies questions as to the deployment of irony as knowingness as opposed to irony as a reminder of the discursive and linguistic play of difference.

For Klein the problem is effectively one of how to resist the cool hunters seeking to colonise culture from within, with their appropriation and reduction of vibrant (sub) cultural ideas, stripped of their authenticity and original meaning. Her response is one of simply side-stepping the problem:

... though style-based movements are stripped of their original meanings time and time again, the effect of this culture vulturing on more politically grounded movements is often so ludicrous that the most sensible reaction is just to laugh it off. (Klein 2001, p 84)

For Klein, it would seem, real cultural and political movements that genuinely challenge the structures of economic and political power will ultimately prevail. And if their revolutionary edge is somewhat blunted by the co-option of brands, then Klein's advice to look for 'sharper utensils' might be a solution. But in simply offering a sharper, more incisive version of these port-able utensils, devices for reworking what is already to hand, Klein is effectively taking up and re-reporting, transferring back and forth, the stratagems brand colonisers are content to engage. Far from asserting any original, authentic position, Klein's claims would seem to be enmeshed in re-reporting and reworking a shifting Babel of logocentric voices all laying claim to a certain authenticity and authority. While a somewhat foreboding call to arms might constitute a stratagem, it would be well to have more fully articulated on behalf of what cause they were being wielded.

In sum, while Klein comes to a recognition of irony as problematical, it is not as a marker of linguistic undecidability, but because of questions of disingenuousness. Klein observes that while *cool*, anti-heroes might manifest alternative, ironic dispositions, this did not necessarily constitute rebelliousness or anti-commercialism, because not accompanied by a commitment to a '*single, solid political position*', and because it was not authentic. I would argue this attribution of a moral fecklessness simply constitutes a logocentric impasse for Klein, in effect resorting to the doubling of the psychological imperatives of one persuasive discourse against another, but claiming greater moral force.

As a way of overcoming this lack of earnestness on the part of those *cool*, anti-heroes found wanting, Klein introduces Sontag's notion of camp, of being in-between, of being ironic, what she describes as an imaginative dandyist stratagem that asserts a space for the marginal, for those genuinely *cool* enough to resist the strictures of a mass culture. For Klein, the problem of *cool* branding is one of devising stratagems for resisting the brand masters and *cool* hunters seeking to colonise culture from within, with their appropriation and reduction of vibrant (sub-)cultural ideas, stripped of their authenticity and original meaning. But ultimately, her response, in spite of the stratagems and reservations, is one of simply side-stepping the problem, of maintaining a teleological faith in an ultimately progressive enlightenment. For Klein, real and authentic cultural and political movements that genuinely challenge the structures of economic and political power will ultimately prevail, albeit there will need to be a sharpening of their position from time to time to maintain their incisiveness.

With regard to Klein's deployment of camp, I would argue it simply attests to another form of exclusivity and captivity. It is almost an exact mirror of what Gladwell inscribes as *cool*'s 'chase and flight' syndrome – a means of maintaining the exclusivity of the coolhunters. A key argument for this Dissertation is that what needs to be questioned is why camp and *cool* are so configured that any critical reflection as to what they entail is deemed to

constitute a betrayal, a sign of being uncool, because bringing a certain reasoning to bear. It rather begs the question as to whether camp and 'dandyism' - individualism writ large - ever was the answer, or whether indeed it is a constitutive part and intensification of a logocentric metaphysics of presence that finds its latest manifestation in *cool*. Significantly, it also intensifies questions as to the implications - and limitations - of deploying irony as *knowingness*, as opposed to irony as a reminder of the discursive and linguistic play of difference.

Aristotelian Cool: the search for authenticity

Arguably, the central precept of Southgate's (2003) paper, 'Coolhunting, account planning and the ancient *cool* of Aristotle', is that *cool* is based on the most ancient of virtues as inscribed by Aristotle (1998) in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As such, he challenges the belief that *cool* is in some sense beyond analysis, exclusively recondite. He puts forward the argument that drawing on ancient wisdom will enable account planners to adopt a rational approach to the creative process of developing *cool* products and services. As part of the overall argument he calls for a more balanced approach, arguing that ultimately the cycle of *cool* consumerism that is so predominant is in danger of accelerating to such a pitch that the expense entailed in the coolhunt will lead to it ultimately collapsing in on itself.

Southgate effectively agrees that *cool* offers important insights into the mysteries of the creative process, but sounds a warning to beware of false prophets. Part of the problem he identifies is that the search for *cool* by the large brands had created a climate in which coolhunters had flourished. These self-appointed, high priests of *cool* held out the promise of unlocking the gates to the kingdom of plenty. With no little irony, Southgate (2003) observes: 'They alone understood *cool*'s abstruse, obfuscated and opaque rules. If we paid sufficient attention, and money, to them they might just let us in on the secret.' (p 453)

Nevertheless, Southgate (2003) acknowledges that coolhunters and their claims to having the inside track on the mysteries of *cool* had achieved a resonance with, and provided a new trajectory for, market research and its account planners: 'This mystique and hubbub meant that although coolhunting touched few of us in the account planning community directly it touched us all indirectly.' (p. 453) Southgate continues by resorting to an ironic, semi-religious register, hinting perhaps at a recognition of rediscovered and reconfigured virtues and insights - ancient and timeless - that were at one and the same time threatening and illuminating:

Some of us are blessed to work with large clients with large budgets to match who can afford the luxurious services of coolhunters. However, most planners work with

clients who do not have these resources. Yet these clients read of *cool* hunting and saw that it was good. They wanted the *cool* too - and so coolhunting became a yardstick for planning to deliver against. Coolhunting was living proof that there were smarter people out there doing things in a smarter way. Planners' reactions to coolhunting were consequently conflictingly enthusiastic and defensive. (p. 453)

And it would seem that the enthusiasts of coolhunting were achieving the upper hand in this conflict. As Southgate (2003) opines, 'Planners were captivated by the glamour of the coolhunt.' Through a particular configuration of language, Southgate signifies a sense of the breathless, non-rational excitement at the prospect of being part of this exclusive group. The repetitious use of an inclusive, first-person plural address and terse phrasing creates the sense of an onward dash. Combined with a shift into a vernacular register, it perhaps mirrors an excitableness that barely disguises an anxiety about the prospect of being left behind:

No longer did we want to be the eggheads with the charts and graphs. We wanted in on the action, we wanted to be part of the hunt because we knew when we bagged our first piece of the coolhunt's big game we too would be cool. (p. 453)

At this point, Southgate's writing again achieves a shift in register. In setting up a binary opposition between the enthusiastic, excitable and the rational, he now introduces a more measured syntax of reason. This hypotactic syntax, with its qualifying adverbials and prepositions, and balanced, subordinate phrasing, signifies a more thoughtful, reflective approach to the question of *cool* and its relation to creativity.

Yet at the same time coolhunting was obviously usurping part of planners's traditional role. Where planning offered 'consumer insight', coolhunting now offered insight into the only consumers that truly mattered, the *cool*. What is more, whereas planning offered a link between the consumer and creativity, coolhunting claimed to offer a link to consumers so *cool* and creative themselves that no such interpretive bridge was required. (Southgate, 2003, p. 453)

While Southgate acknowledges the concerns of planners and agencies worried about getting left behind, he nevertheless sounds a warning about acting precipitously. He does so by recalling Vance Packard's (1960) *The Hidden Persuaders* as a reminder that if marketing becomes too self-possessed and ignores the wider social implications of what might be perceived as manipulative activities there is a danger in the longer term of negative consequences for brand reputations.

Southgate's (2003) project is not to take issue with *cool* in itself, but with how it should be interpreted. The binary opposition he sets in train is between coolhunters and planners, between the non-rational and the rational, which has the effect of inscribing a degree of tension as to which group is best placed to register what counts as *cool*. In contradistinction to Gladwell's (1997) first rule of *cool*, Southgate's focus is with how the rules underpinning *cool* might be made manifest. For this he turns to the authority provided by Aristotle's

'virtue ethics' in which correct behaviour, and by extension *cool* behaviour, is judged in comparison to virtues such as courage, temperance, generosity, wit and truthfulness.

Southgate makes the observation that according to Aristotle the correct pursuit of life is happiness and that this is only achievable when each of the virtues are exercised in moderation. He argues that this approach might be typified as taking the appropriate response to one's situation. He further argues the idea of an appropriate response finds rich parallels with ideas central to the notion of *cool*.

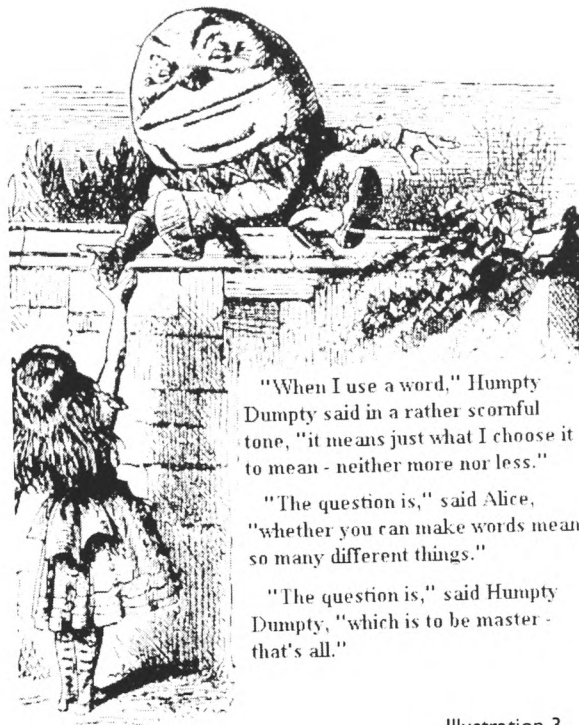


Illustration 3

Unsurprisingly, what Southgate effects here is a classic liberal humanist ideology. It is a trajectory that can be traced from Aristotle through the *cool sprezzatura* of the Italian Renaissance to its latter day reinscription as a form of postmodern *cool*. While Southgate's articulation of Aristotelian *cool* has a certain common-sense appeal, it begs a number of questions. What exactly are to be characterised as virtues and by whom? What constitutes an appropriate degree of moderation? Is moderation always the appropriate response? (Some configurations of *cool* set great store in showing no response.) And while the idea of astute decision-making might resonate with articulate configurations of *cool*, there are other configurations that make a virtue out of denying rational, balanced, astute decision-making processes.

But what Southgate misses in this quest to reveal the truth about *cool*, in subscribing to a conventional logocentric rationality, is to raise more mundane questions with regard to how *cool* is put to work and to what effect. What the term *cool* might be said to exemplify, to write large, is a perspective on Humpty Dumpty's commentary on 'words' in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. Words - in this case, *cool* - can mean whatever the logocentrically configured subject has the power and resources to make it mean. In effect, Southgate's project is the attempt to overcome such undecidability and in so doing circumscribe an authentic *cool*, but without recognizing the implications of the play of power.

For Southgate, part of the problem with the coolhunter's modus operandi are the double standards which they are almost bound to adopt, given a widespread subscription to Ryan and Gross's (1943) diffusion model of trends (cited in Gladwell 1997), further developed by Rogers (1962) and which is now regarded as almost axiomatic in conventional marketing theory. The precepts of this model classify consumers into innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards. As Southgate (2003) postulates, 'For coolhunters, diffusion theory has the strength and power of a law of nature: universal, all-encompassing and irresistible.' (pp 455) And the power that the coolhunters were claiming was that they had the ability to spot those trends that were about to set off a new process of diffusion. As Southgate (2003) observes, it is:

The elusiveness of the *cool*, combined with the inevitability of today's niche *cool* being tomorrow's mass *uncool*, underwrites the coolhunter's power. Client's needed them because, as an inevitable consequence of the way markets work, what was *cool* amongst the *coolest* would be mass, if *uncool*, tomorrow and only the coolhunters could guide them to these few individuals who determined all our futures. (pp 455)

Put more simply, coolhunters and their clients are driven by a commercial imperative. They are not interested in *cool* per se but in the commercial opportunities it offers as a consequence of the relative dominance of the diffusion model of market trends. With what Southgate describes as their 'laying on of hands' approach to identifying *cool* and the observation that they are in the pockets of their clients, a measure of scepticism concerning coolhunters' claims is somewhat inevitable. As Southgate (2003) argues:

The coolhunter [. . .] is not truly interested in understanding or documenting what *cool* is. The coolhunter is, instead, interested in documenting *cool* consumerism.

Hopefully, it is self-evident that consumer behaviour is only a subset of all human behaviour. It is possible to be *cool* in all of one's behaviour. Therefore, if one limits one's search for *cool* only to when it is demonstrated through consumption, or something that can be made consumable, then the remit of the coolhunt will fall short of a full investigation of all that is *cool*. (p. 456)

The shift from an assertive register that signifies coolhunters specific vested interests to a register in which objective reasoned reflections, signified by the use of the impersonal and universal 'one', and taking into account various contingencies (hopefully, therefore, if . . . then), effects a form of signifying practice that helps Southgate determine and privilege what he is positioning as a more reasoned line of argument.

While critical of the coolhunters commercial imperative, Southgate accepts the inscription of a nature/culture opposition. His criticism of the coolhunters would seem to be predicated on the observation that their claims are based on cultural priorities, more specifically that of consumer culture. And as he observes, the coolhunters promise to unlock the secret of *cool* entails a degree of deception. In their hunt to make the *cool* manifest to a mass audience, they inevitably compromise *cool*'s capacity as a signifier of authentic, self-expression, whether

of an individual or an exclusive group. As a consequence, both the *cool* and the coolhunters are compelled to move on, to renew the cycle, and consumption, of *cool*, in what Southgate identifies as an endless quest for novelty. What Southgate offers to articulate is the 'true nature' of *cool*.

Although Southgate is keen to dissect the flaws in the coolhunting process, he maintains the concept of *cool*, albeit differently configured, as an indicator of more fundamental needs, which, if identified correctly, might be put to better use in building solid, authentic, meaningful brands. Part of the concern with coolhunting is that it follows in the footsteps of the 'depth-men' identified by Packard (1960). To this extent Southgate argues that the coolhunt has failed to uphold the main imperative of *cool* and that this failure is being increasingly exposed in the writings of anti-marketers such as Klein, Moore, Frank, Lasn and Rushkoff. However, this effectively leaves the way open for Southgate to accept as given, the natural law of the market in meeting real, authentic needs, provided it is not subject to manipulation and takes due account of more extended needs.

Southgate travels a well established route in attesting to a binary which sets a search for the authentic against the excesses of a market driven by the imperatives of mass consumption and what, from a Frankfurt School perspective, are viewed as the promotion of false needs (Brown et al, 2003; Goldman & Papson 1996; Holt, 2002; MacKay, 1997; Nancarrow et al, 2001; Paterson, 2006; Pountain and Robins, 2000; Storey, 1999, 2001). By insinuating a binary opposition between authenticity and novelty, between the authentic and the ephemeral, between the authentic and the artificial, between the authentic and the deceptive, Southgate inscribes a difference between needs that are deep, universal and persisting and needs that are transient, whimsical and the product of fashion. In pursuing his argument, Southgate manifests an anxiety to differentiate and separate *cool* from *cool* consumerism, with authentic *cool* signifying a deep, natural authentic sense of self whereas *cool* consumerism is deemed a manifestation of cultural manipulation and artifice.

For Southgate, it seems a persisting and universal desire is the search for a distinctive identity, a means of marking off one's authentic sense of self. It is the process of achieving this differentiation of an authentic identity and acting with appropriate moderation according to a particular situation, which underpins Southgate's articulation of *cool*.

However, from a deconstructive perspective, as a process of achieving distinction, *cool* cannot be an inherent quality of a particular person or object. Rather, it entails the process of marking off an authentic identity from a designated other; and at the same time it is an attitude that registers a certain guardedness towards the problematic issue of achieving self-expression that unsettles what Southgate defines as the universal desire that drives the

search for *cool*. Consequently, it is proposed that the logocentric assumption of a deep need to manifest a distinctive, self-contained identity would be usefully countered with an alternative that viewed identity as a function of the process of differentiation across varied sets of relationships. On the basis of such a perspective, it is argued that identity and the ongoing pursuit of *cool* entails the process of mapping the trajectories and borders of distinction that circumscribe *cool*, rather than that of simply distinguishing oneself as *cool* by means of claims to an authentic, inner logos.

As a means of justifying the impulse to 'distinguish oneself', Southgate maps a number of parallels between this authentic *cool* and Aristotle. In the first of the parallels he maps – 'Cool and the life of reason', Southgate makes a number of assumptions, taking it as axiomatic that the aim of human life is to pursue happiness or what is good for human life. In danger of lapsing into tautology, Southgate cites the authority of Aristotle to account for 'the good of something' as being best served when it acts in its most characteristic way. This immediately begs the question as to the articulation of how such characteristics are defined. Southgate (2003, p. 458) simply asserts: 'The defining characteristics of humans is having and exercising reasoning. Happiness, therefore, is to be achieved by correct exercise of the reason in accordance with the virtues'.

In making his case Southgate slides between using the syntax of authority and the syntax of reason, and in so doing the ontological assumptions this entails have the effect of drawing attention to the limitations of the logocentric trajectory of the argument proposed, as further authority and justification is continually sought. According to this line of argument, happiness for humans is to be achieved by actions that maximise expression of their defining characteristic - the exercise of reasoning; but it has to be the 'correct' exercise of reason and 'in accordance with the virtues'. And these are, might it be assumed, dependent on the authority of prior discursive construction?

Indeed, Southgate's drawing of 'parallels' suggests a measure of discursive intertextuality and prescription. (In total, he uses the term fourteen times in his paper.) As he argues, Aristotle's reasoning 'finds its parallel with *cool* because *cool* responses are always appropriate.' (p. 458) Acting with a degree of *cool* is acting with due consideration, which is a function of the correct exercise of reason. In support of this contention, Southgate, with no little degree of intertextual prescription, cites the commonplace discursive construction of someone 'keeping their *cool*' as a signifier for a model of appropriate, moderate(d) action.

Manifesting yet another outwardly contrasting position to that of Gladwell and Klein, Southgate argues it is possible for what constitutes *cool* to be known and that it is based on the virtues inscribed by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In contradistinction to

Gladwell's (1997) first rule of *cool* - that there are no rules - Southgate's focus is with how the rules underpinning *cool* might be made manifest. For this he turns to the authority provided by Aristotle's 'virtue ethics'. The effect of this is to open the way for Southgate to inscribe *cool* within a classic liberal humanist discourse that incorporates it to a mainstream, rather than counter-cultural, position. He critiques coolhunters as little more than false prophets, countering their 'enthusiastic' discourse and the somewhat irrational appeal of the glamour of the coolhunt with one that bears testament to Aristotelian rationalism. However, a close reading suggests Southgate's text does not rely on rationalism alone. A further deconstruction of Southgate's signifying practice and modes of address chart a form of rhetoric, which supplements the inscription of a binary that privileges the rational over the enthusiastic.

Inscribing a new perspective on the by now familiar binary of consumerism as either the exploitation of the naïve consumer, as opposed to being a means for consumers to express their identity, Southgate purports to offer a more nuanced differentiation of *cool* – as opposed to *cool* consumerism. Rather than it being the mark of a rebellious consumer resisting the predations and manipulations of marketing, *cool* is configured as an indicator of a more fundamental need. And this need is with manifesting an authentic, distinctive sense of self, of one's true nature, while at the same time acting with a (prescribed) 'virtuous' moderation appropriate to particular situations, especially with regard to one's consuming activities.

Cool's Conquest

In the process of charting a genealogy of hip and *cool*, Thomas Frank's (1997) *The Conquest of Cool* points out that *cool* as a symptom of a counter-culture is not as straightforward a concept as is often represented. By means of mapping discourses of corporate culture that have been rarely frequented by cultural theorists, Frank (1997) articulates a counter-argument that challenges the standard binary narrative of the sixties; a narrative in which cultural studies theory is viewed as complicit:

From both the anti-sixties bombast of Newt Gingrich and from cultural studies' celebration of difference, transgression, and the carnivalesque, a curious consensus emerges: business and hip are irreconcilable enemies, the two antithetical poles of American mass culture [T]he historical meaning of hip seems to be fixed: it is a set of liberating practices fundamentally at odds with the dominant impulses of postwar American society. As in the standard binary narrative of the sixties, cultural studies tends to overlook the trends, changes, and intricacies of corporate culture, regarding it as a monolithic, unchanging system with unchanging values Despite its ever changing surface and curious excesses, management theory is, generally speaking,

not a popular subject of cultural studies, and few cultural theorists bother with the various histories of American business that have appeared in recent years.

Yet the subject couldn't be more compelling. Today corporate ideologues routinely declare that business has supplanted the state, the church, and all independent culture in our national life. Curiously enough, at the same time many scholars have decided it is folly to study business. For all of cultural studies' subtle reading and forceful advocacy, its practitioners often tend to limit their inquiries so rigorously to the consumption of culture-products that the equally important process of cultural production is virtually ignored. (pp 18/19)

Frank (1997) observes that these 'oversights' on the part of cultural studies and a certain blindness with regard to capitalism as a dynamic order of endless flux and change has serious consequences for scholarship. Quite simply, the way business people think and how corporations are organised had been shifting dramatically over the previous forty years, belying the simple binary oppositions of cultural studies. But the main concern being articulated is that ultimately something much greater than simple academic error is at stake:

To identify capitalism, its culture-products, and its opponents according to an inflexible scheme of square and hip – 'homogeneity' versus 'heterogeneity,' the 'power bloc' versus 'the people,' 'conformity' versus 'individualism' - is to make a strategic blunder of enormous proportions. (p 19)

Frank further points out that this simple binary narrative is directly contradicted by recent American cultural history:

Despite the homogeneity, repression, and conformity critique favoured by so many avatars of cultural studies, historians like Warren Susman, William Leach, and Jackson Lears have pointed out that the prosperity of a consumer society depends not on a rigid control of people's leisure-time behaviour, but exactly its opposite: unrestraint in spending, the willingness to enjoy formerly forbidden pleasures, and abandonment of the values of thrift and the suspicion of leisure that characterised an earlier variety of capitalism. (p 19)

What Frank concludes is that the perception of the 1960s revolt as a challenge to the 'conformity' of the 1950s is yet another historical rendering of a non-stop pageant of rebellion against order identified in so many structuralist analyses of literary discourse (C. L. Barber, 1972; Bakhtin, 1984; Hawkes, 1986). What is clear, according to Frank (1997), is that:

Capital remained firmly in the national saddle, its economic and cultural projects unimpeded even though the years of conformity that had given way to those of cultural radicalism. What changed during the sixties, it now seems were the strategies of consumerism, the ideology by which business explained its domination of the national life. Now products existed to facilitate our rebellion against the soul-deadening world of products, to put us in touch with our authentic selves, to distinguish us from the mass-produced herd, to express our outrage at the stifling world of economic necessity. (pp 228/29)

Frank's charting of this shifting binary leads to the conclusion that it helps lock in place a new ideology and strategy for consumerism. Product and consumption experiences are now

promoted as facilitating a form of rebellion and resistance apropos products as signifiers of materialist acquisition for its own sake. The new consumer ethic is promoted as a means of connecting with our authentic selves, of achieving a point of distinction from the mass-produced herd. Frank argues that from the perspective of forty years on, the efforts of American business to break with the received consumerist wisdom of the fifties, can now be seen as a first stop in the creation of a new ideology of consuming. And while the focus and priorities of that ideology might change, the structural premise of constraint and rebellion, duplicity and disgust, remains constant. For Frank (1997) hip consumerism operates by feeding on, 'the alienation, boredom, and disgust engendered by the demands of modern consumer society, [making] of those sentiments powerful imperatives of brand loyalty and accelerated consumption.' (p 231),

Frank argues this mode of consumerism entails a circular cultural operation. It is an operation that deploys a strategy of pre-emptive irony, of advertising that works by mocking advertising convention, and which Frank notes first emerged in the sixties VW advertisements produced by the Madison Avenue advertising agency, Doyle, Dane, Bernbach (DDB). The advertising campaign they implemented for VW at that time was highly distinctive for engaging a mass society critique as part of the brand's marketing appeal. The advertisements that featured in this long-running campaign manifest a high degree of intertextuality, playing off against what Frank describes as Detroit's planned obsolescence strategy in which not particularly well-engineered cars were subject to annual restyling as a means of sustaining unwarranted consumer demand. By virtue of its simplicity and durability, the VW was contrasted with the changeable, highly stylised, soon-to-be-obsolete automobiles manufactured by Detroit. And it was on the basis of exploiting this difference that DDB conceived its VW advertising campaign. Intriguingly, this stratagem of playing on difference was carried through in the signifying practices of DDB's VW advertisements. As Frank (1997) observes:

Thanks to the agency's signature visual style (simple photographs, minimalist layout, large, clever headlines), DDB advertising of the early sixties is generally easy to distinguish from the other ads in the glossy magazines where it appeared. (pp 68)

Frank notes that while DDB was accorded the status of unchallenged leader of the creative revolution in the advertising industry of the sixties, the implications of this shift in approaches to advertising communication is not accorded due status in the mapping of the counter-culture. Frank (1997) observes:

It is a curious quirk of sixties historiography that, when running through the list of seismic shifts (in music, literature, movies, youth culture) that gave the decade its character, annalists never include advertising. And yet, given advertising's immense presence in American public space, the big change in the attitude and language of advertising must be counted as one of the primary features distinguishing the cultural

climate of the sixties from that of the fifties. Read as a whole, the best advertising of the sixties constitutes a kind of mass-culture critique in its own right The difference between the advertising critique and the others, though, is the crucial point: for the new Madison Avenue, the solution to the problems of consumer society was - more consuming. (pp 53/4)

While manifesting some reservations, Frank manifests a degree of admiration for Bernbach's achievements:

Bernbach was at once a hard-headed adman and one of postwar consumerism's most trenchant critics, Madison Avenue's answer to Vance Packard. The ads his agency produced has an uncanny ability to cut through the overblown advertising rhetoric of the 1950s, to speak to reader' and viewers' skepticism of advertising, to replace obvious puffery with what appeared to be straight talk. Bernbach was the first adman to embrace the mass society critique, to appeal directly to the powerful but unmentionable public fears of conformity, of manipulation, of fraud, and of powerlessness, and to sell products by so doing. He invented what we might call anti-advertising: a style which harnessed public mistrust of consumerism - perhaps the most powerful cultural tendency of the age - to consumerism itself. (pp 54)

Frank provides a further hint of how this operates with a description of Apple Macintosh's '1984' advertisement:

Unlike the telescreens in 1984, which demand that people revere authority (and which made up the central symbol for one of the all-time greatest installments of commodified hip, the famous commercial that introduced the Macintosh as an implement of counterhegemonic empowerment in 1984), television gains their assent by mocking authority, leaving only itself. (p 231)

It is a pseudo-subversiveness that enlists and makes an ally of resistance to promote and empower a particular configuration of consumerism. It paves the way for a consumerism that deploys ironic modes of communication that effaces its own play of power; mapping modes of consumption which thrive on establishing binary oppositions in which consuming subjects, most notably the vanguard of early adopters, are pressed and conscripted into a certain configuration of resistance. This resistance achieves resonance by means of a binary opposition in which productive modes of consumption are promoted to offer an other to deleterious modes of consumption. But the end remains that of supplanting and empowering one form of consumerism over another. However, the extent to which the individual consumer is empowered remains problematical.

There has been a shift of emphasis, which at the same time resists resolution, from consumption as material acquisition underpinned by a rationalist drive for ever greater efficiencies and discipline to consumption as symbolic representation. At the same time an effect of this symbolic consumption is a certain resistance to resolution, invoking questions of taste and distinction. This has added potential in providing greater scope for the carnivalesque play of shifting signifiers, particularly with regard to how choice and power are

exercised. And irony is a key component of the play that allows for this contradictory representation of consumption as both a form of oppression and resistance.

In effect, the essence of Frank's argument is that hip consumerism offers a 'contradictory rationale' in which it is possible to submit both to the bureaucratised monotony of our productive lives by day while indulging in a non-stop carnival of consumption by night. As Frank (1997) observes:

Hip and square are now permanently locked together . . . in a self-perpetuating pageant of workplace deference and advertising outrage. Our celebrities are not just glamorous, they are insurrectionaries; our police and soldiers are not just good guys, they break the rules for a higher purpose. (p 231)

Frank further observes, that while our imagined participation in whatever is the latest permutation of the rebel Pepsi Generation might give the impression of resolving the problems and challenges presented by mass society, it in essence only defuses them. And, it might be added, has the effect of diffusing such challenges. It is a mode, a structure of being, the rules of which allow for reverence and irreverence, for order and disorder, but retaining in place the ultimate sanction of a logocentric knowingness, which is re-cognised as, and defers to, that always unnameable 'higher purpose'.

It is a contention of this Dissertation that irony as knowingness, the disposition towards *cool*, as reference to and reverence for an unnameable higher purpose helps lock in place the contradictory rationale of hip consumerism. It is a mode of irony, which, in resisting and appropriating particular cultural and historical narratives, affects to deny history altogether, with subjective knowingness consequently promoted as a determining facility of the humanist rationale.

In the final chapter's concluding section, entitled 'Find your own historical consciousness', Frank (1997) wearily relates the 'discovery' of Generation X (after the novel by Douglas Coupland, 1992), an all-new angry generation with a panoply of musical styles and signifiers ready-made to effect the next cycle of hip and oppositional discourse with which advertising's sagging credibility might be restored. What Frank notes is how quickly the media and publishing industry propagated and [re]produced a strangely familiar discourse on the rebellious challenge of the inscrutable Generation X. As Frank (1997) notes:

The strangest aspect of what followed wasn't the immediate onslaught of even hipper advertising, but that the entire 'Generation X' discourse repeated - almost mechanically and yet without betraying the slightest inkling that it was doing so - the discussions of youth culture that had appeared in 'Advertising Age', 'Madison Avenue', and on all those youth-market panel discussions back in the sixties. The boomers had been said to be extraordinarily cynical and savvy about advertising, impervious to the blunt techniques of the fifties and responsive only to clever pitches that shared their skepticism about mass society: so was Generation X. (p 233)

Frank goes on to draw parallels between statements about the media-savvy consumers of Generation X represented in a variety of contemporary publications such as the 'New York Times', 'Business Week' and 'Advertising Age' and those attributed to the equally savvy boomers in the media of the sixties. Frank concludes that what the rebel successors of the nineties achieved was simply to breathe new life and imagery into the basic wisdom established during the rule-breaking baby boomer years: that hip is the cultural life-blood of consumer society.

Invoking a structuralist intertextuality, Frank (1997) observes, the sixties are more than just the homeland of hip, they offer: 'a commercial template for our times, a historical prototype for the construction of cultural machines that transform alienation and despair into consent.' (p. 235) With history as a homogeneous template rather than a dynamic, heterogeneous process, what would appear to remain is history as a cycle endlessly repeating the vicissitudes of human nature. And according to this version of history, business is able to find whatever it chooses to find in youth culture, a consequence of which, as Frank observes, is that, 'any creative lifestyle reporter can think of a dozen pseudo-historical platitudes to rationalise whatever identity they are seeking to pin on the demographic at hand.' (p 234) As Frank trenchantly observes, business always seems to discover the same thing. While it might look and sound different it is always found to fit the same profile and its cultural task does not change. The effect of history as prototype or archetype is to constantly allow for a process of co-optation, because almost by definition the lessons of history in its specificities are subsumed, marginalised by the [re]articulation of such archetypal, encompassing representations.

Frank's book ends on a curious, ambiguous, somewhat resigned note. Having offered a critique of what is entailed in establishing a *cool* ethos and charted its various modus operandi, any response as to how it might be resisted seems rather muted. The response, such as it is, seems to depend on the hope that youth culture will ultimately make good and achieve a position in which they are able to manifest genuinely their 'own historical consciousness'. Frank (1997) writes:

No matter what the kids are actually doing, youth culture as we see it in ads, television, and mass circulation magazines is always a flamboyant affirmation of the core tenets of hip consumerism. Regardless of whatever else the newest 'generation' is believed to portend, it is always roughly synonymous with that human faculty known as 'skepticism'; it is always described as hostile to mass culture, as a foreign, alien group not as easily convinced as others have been, as a standing challenge to marketers . . . (pp 234/5)

Implicit in what Frank writes is the binary argument that what the kids are actually doing is different from what is presented in ads, television, and mass circulation magazines; and while

the flamboyance of these representations serves to focus attention on a youthful scepticism, it also suggests a somewhat consuming, disingenuous, contrived, scepticism.

The problem, of course, is that differentiating genuine from disingenuous historical consciousness and aspirations is problematic because, ultimately, there is no resort to an originary, extra-textual sanction and arguably each and every articulation of such aspirations is always the subject of [re]presentation and co-optation. So while Frank seems to suggest the youth have something genuine to offer, it is always and already compromised by a cultural system that is lying in wait to adapt and co-opt any challenge to its preinscribed template for leveraging commercial advantage from rebelliousness and scepticism. Frank (1997) concludes with a citation from adman Merle Steir's 1967 assertion that, 'Youth has won. Youth must always win. The new naturally replaces the old,' driving his point home with no little irony: 'And we will have new generations of youth rebellion as certainly as we will have new generations of mufflers or toothpaste or footwear.' (p. 235)

Cool Review

In a review of *The Conquest of Cool*, Danesi (2000) picks up on the somewhat muted conclusion of Frank's analysis, allowing a more ameliorative perspective to what he describes as Frank's 'bitter diatribe against the consumerist empire'. (p. 147) In offering this positive perspective, Danesi sets his review in the context of a debate entered by Emile Durkheim at the beginning of the twentieth century, which, in the articulation of reservations about perceptions of a growing consumerism and materialism, sought to re-establish the spiritual over the material.

Danesi begins his review by picking up on Frank's speculations as to why *cool* came about when it did and why it was that it had achieved such a stranglehold on contemporary life. Danesi (2000) argues that the central thesis of Frank's book is that, 'the countercultural movement of the 1960s fortuitously provided the commercialist ideologues with a powerful means of converting social protest into social norm, lifestyle dissidence into lifestyle *cool*.' (p. 139) As a consequence of what Danesi describes as this cultural oxymoron, it is argued that many of the self-proclaimed, counter-culture revolutionaries became the 'incognizant trend-setters of the very culture they deplored.' (p. 140) What both Frank and Danesi both seem to agree on is that this contradictory state of affairs was a consequence of a valorization of youth. But where Frank, according to Danesi, sees this juvenilization process as a stratagem on the part of a slick business community to appropriate a 1960s counterculture, Danesi attributes this focus on youth as part of a wider social trend.

It is on this point that Danesi (2000) begins to inscribe a difference with Frank's position. While there is a measure of agreement with the concern that this juvenilization was rendering society 'less wise, less capable of determining its future course through genuine ideological debate, and more inclined to let business leaders dictate its mores, values and aesthetics,' (pp 140) Danesi argues that Frank's analysis does not probe deeply enough into those issues that were facilitating the 'conquest of cool'. Danesi accuses Frank of not having 'done his homework all that thoroughly' (p. 140), arguing that the origin of the juvenilization process can be traced back to the first decades of the twentieth century. He argues juvenilization was one consequence of an increasing economic affluence providing people with more leisure, wealth and the wherewithal to ameliorate, nurture and enhance their well-being and that this, manifesting itself in 'a desire to preserve youth for a much longer period of life started to define the collective state of mind.' (p. 140)

While the proposition Danesi offers is coherent and plausible, what is of interest here are the rhetorical consequences of the binary he inscribes. The effect is one of Danesi purporting to offer a thorough analysis as opposed to Frank's superficial analysis. In a patronising tone that invokes the authority of the mentor, Danesi's writing affects to offer a trenchant scholarly historical analysis to uncover the origins of the trend towards juvenilization as opposed to Frank's perceived deployment of the concept in an opportunistic way as a means of maximising what 'began as a doctoral dissertation'. Danesi (2000) further invokes this binary, to affirm the depth of his analysis, both in detail and time, by asserting that, 'Frank's analysis of cultural cool [] starts in *media res*, at the point in time when the diffusion of juvenilization had reached a critical mass, on the verge of becoming the defining feature of the *forma mentis* of an entire society.' It is also difficult not to conclude that Danesi's liberal use of the Latinate does not contribute to a rhetorical stratagem to assert the primacy of his scholarly position.

While not exactly damning with faint praise, Danesi's further use of a superficial/depth binary, can be viewed as an attempt to articulate the primacy of his argument over that of Frank. In a discussion of what Frank described as the 'Culture Trust' that advertising and entertainment moguls had formed with young people, Danesi (2000) offers the comment that:

The underlying subtext of this clever discourse allowed buyers to believe that what they bought transformed them into ersatz revolutionaries without having to pay the price of true nonconformity and dissent. (p 141)

Danesi imparts a measure of ambiguity to suggest that it is not just a 'slick business community', but also Frank's analysis that is superficially clever - barely scraping the surface

of what was actually entailed. Extending his metaphor by way of privileging the trenchancy of his analysis, Danesi (2000) adds:

To understand why this trust was able to gain a foothold in the late 1960s, it is necessary to dig a little deeper into the social roots of *cool* and hip as lifestyle metaphors than Frank does. (p. 141)

Danesi goes on to admit Frank's observation that *cool* and hip have since the late 1960s entered into common discourse; and then he goes further:

The conquest of *cool* by the business world has thus bestowed upon the discourse of advertisers and entertainers the same kind of authority that the more traditional forms of discourse - sermons, political oratory, proverbs, wise sayings, etc. - had in previous eras. But unlike previous privileged discourses, the grammar of *cool* exalts and inculcates Epicurean values, not wisdom . . . In the semantic system of this language, the individual human being is hardly envisioned as a spiritual being with a unique individuality: but rather as a nameless entity whose behaviour can be inferred from the laws of Gaussian statistics, and thus easily manipulated. (p. 142)

As Danesi digs a little further, the effect is one of further accentuating difference and division, preparing the ground by way of offering an explanation as to why the co-option strategy far exceeded its original goal of infusing the majority of people with a constant craving for new products of consumption. The reason the strategy worked so well was not because of the materiality, the propagation, the power, of particular signifying practices, but because 'there already existed in the social genes of the Western world a built-in tendency towards consumerism.' (p. 142)

In terms of justifying the origins of *cool*'s inculcation of Epicurean values and a constant craving for new products of consumption, there is nothing more 'originary' than our genetic coding! But intriguingly, Danesi has to make this genetic blueprint subject both to the force of nature and the social. In so doing, Danesi is able to maintain an idealist logocentric position in which the true, evolving Rousseauian spirit of human endeavour, while subject to social corruption, novelty and manipulation, will ultimately always return to a recognition of the need to ameliorate social injustice.

And we are asked not to take Danesi's (2000) word for it but, no less an authority than pioneering structuralist, Roland Barthes:

As Roland Barthes aptly remarked over three decades ago, Western society has, since the Industrial Revolution, been beset by what he called 'neomania', a pathological appetite for new objects of consumption. (p. 142)

Not without justification, Barthes is assigned a perspective which positions his writing within the corpus of the mass society critique. But while it would be somewhat perverse to argue against the aim of ameliorating social injustice, it would seem naive to rely on the ultimate triumph of the human spirit, that will, 'Sooner or later, provoke other movements, other revolutions', (Danesi, 2000, p. 147).

While Barthes may well have been a pioneering structuralist utilising early semiotic discourse to focus attention on signifying practices, his ongoing work, particularly that of *S/Z* marks a significant break with the fixed categories and codes of structuralism. Barthes later work helped in mapping the emergence of poststructuralist articulations that disavow any originary, fixed or final categorisations and readings of the signifier. What Barthes later writing and that of many poststructuralists maintain is the need for constant vigilance with regard to resisting the 'conscription' of the signifier.

What also should not be looked over are the rhetorical effects of omission: Barthes engagement with poststructuralism signalled a shift and acknowledgement of limitations in his earlier work and with the plausibility of ever being in a position to offer a definitive code - be it genetic or otherwise. Similarly, Danesi overlooks Frank's (1997) acknowledgement that the focus on youth culture and imagery was not, 'of course, an entirely new thing in the 1960s. It had appeared extensively, if sporadically, since the 1920s.' (p. 118)

Arguably, it is the function of the re-view, the commentary, to look again at a text, to re-focus it, to smooth over difficulties with regard to its reception, to elaborate and pronounce on what the text meant to say or ought to be saying; and to incorporate such texts within the prevailing discursive paradigms of the day. As Foucault (1981) paradoxically observes, commentary as a discursive mode concerned with classification, ordering and distribution, on the one hand permits us to create new discourses ad infinitum, while on the other, commentary's only role, is to say finally, what has silently been articulated deep down. In constituting a prime textual and discursive stratagem for inscribing a moderation to a particular perspective, the function of the review effectively operates as a supplement to the text, making good what are perceived as its shortcomings and assisting in its wider dissemination; and in so doing, offering a final word on the original text's efficacy with regard to a 'greater' narrative that often constitutes something of a subtext. To this extent, it is possible to argue that the incorporative function and tenor of Danesi's review, that assumption of a certain finality, bears comparison with the co-optation stratagems that Frank articulates in *The Conquest of Cool*.

Danesi invokes a spiritual/material binary by way of sympathising with Frank while at the same time opening a space in which to inscribe an ameliorative perspective. But whereas Frank's reading by and large charts interpretations that are a function of the materiality, the play, the undecidability of the signifier, Danesi offers a teleological, logocentric reading that offers the human spirit and sentiment as the foundational basis for interpretation. The metaphysics of presence underpinning Danesi's (2000) reading is unmistakable:

As I read Frank's overall analysis, it would seem that the conquest of *cool* has put a virtual end to social evolution. But in concluding this brief commentary on his bitter

diatribe against the consumerist empire, I beg to differ. The human spirit is hardly a manipulable one. The causes of the hippie revolution were provoked by human sentiments - by an abhorrence of social injustice, by a disgust over discrimination against specific groups (such as blacks and women), and so on. These sentiments will, sooner or later, provoke other movements, other revolutions. (pp 147)

While Danesi might well have a point with regard to the possibility of further movements, further revolutions - and it is unlikely from what has been written that Frank would disagree - the trajectory of Frank's argument or theory revolves around the prospect that such movements and revolutions will be simply co-opted, appropriated, ironically, as yet another expression of a human desire to achieve a better life; but what is unlikely to be addressed is the materiality of the signifiers and the play of differences through which such desires are [re]articulated. And it is Danesi's concluding sentence that betrays and undermines his own argument for the unfolding of the human spirit, for the prospect of a continuing social evolution, when he effectively argues for a status quo with the observation that: 'the greatest paradox of all and something that neither Frank nor anyone else can really fathom, [is that] life is really much more complicated than any theory or historical analysis will allow.'

Cool Interview

In an interview published in the Harvard Business Review, Frank's position is further elaborated. The received wisdom with regard to the function of the interview is that it is designed to tease out and reveal the essence of an author's position and thought, which their own words, in the final analysis, are deemed as never quite managing. Indeed, the summary strapline to the article's headline, 'Management Theory - or Theology?' alludes to Frank's (2001, p. 24) oppositional stance, setting the scene for just such a 'teasing' approach: 'These days, management books aren't about managing better, says a critic of the genre. They're quasi-religious tracts meant to win converts to modern corporate life.'

Contrary to what might be expected of management books as a genre - rationalist prescriptions for managing more effectively - Frank points out what is blindingly obvious, but for an 'emperor's new clothes' syndrome. While claiming a measure of authority and objectivity with regard to their knowledge as to how organizations and the markets operate, a large proportion of the management gurus who dominate management literature's best-selling lists effectively operate as apostles for a corporate vision driven ultimately by a cool, consumerist ethic, that defines itself as unknowable. As the title of the interview with Frank alludes, there is this unresolved, unacknowledged paradox in management discourse. It lays claim to being an objective, common-sense, disinterested, functionalist process while doing so by resort to a discourse which entails subscribing to the evangelising prognostications of gurus, whose claims to enlightenment - as the name implies - invoke the advancement of

somewhat metaphysical, cult interests and ideas. Consequently, attributions of guru status, while no doubt flattering, compromise management prescriptions as having any foundation in an objective, day-to-day, empirical reality. It is difficult to conceive of a guru who as an evangelist for a particular cause does not have the aim of winning over unquestioning converts and disciples, and the hope that they will spread the word – and with it the proliferation of sales.

When addressed directly by the interviewer as to possible reasons for this shift away from the practical and factual on the part of management theory, Frank's response focuses on what is articulated as the corporations' continuing struggle for legitimacy. As an historian of management literature, Frank cites and locates his mapping of the trajectory for this struggle - not least as a result of rooting among the bin-ends of remaindered, out-of-print, overlooked management tomes - in the changes wrought by wider shifts in the social and political fabric. And he articulates this as a movement from oligarchic to democratic rule.

For Frank, while perspectives might have changed with regard to the issue of legitimacy, maintaining rule and power remains central. He locates this change at the turn of the nineteenth century and, in what is a familiar interpretation, invokes the crisis and legacy of World War I for what might be articulated as the final catalyst for a growing democratic conscription. From this point, Frank's (2001) historical studies chart the emergence of a change of style in management texts that sought to legitimate their position as an integral part of a living, organic community:

By World War One, business people had figured out that . . . they needed public relations to make their case. That's when you start to see companies referring to themselves as a 'family' - as a force for good in the community, as something other than an entity that exists to make a profit.

The added significance of this anecdote about 'rooting' among the bin-ends of remaindered books is the reflection that:

What amazes me is that you find the same themes, sometimes even the same words, in the management theory of the 1990s. (pp 24/25)

Intriguingly, what appears to emerge from a reading of, and across, Franks's texts is that a close study of management history suggests that it does not move in a progressive, linear fashion but by a series of fits-and-starts. Not only is it the proposition that the template for the contemporary, market-driven, consumer ethos can be found in the sixties, but also that its early emergence can be traced back to the turn of the century. Perhaps what this suggests is not just an attempt to articulate and assert the 'democratic' legitimacy of the market over that of a corporate oligarchy, but a sustained attempt to ascribe and assign a particular, partial hegemonic articulation of democratic legitimacy. And it would seem this project entails achieving legitimacy not on the basis of privileging one side or the other of

the binary opposition, the head or the heart, rational market planning as opposed to non-rational market forces, but on an amalgam of the two wherein one serves as a rhetorical emollient for the other.

Frank's 'amazement' is perhaps the ongoing consequence of a sustained privileging of a *sotto voce* idealism, a logocentrism that attributes *knowingness* to the force of the individual persona, regardless of those contravening, countervailing and contradictory discursive currents; and which serve as a reminder that even with the most modest of sceptical readings, history is far from being so homogeneous and compliant. Perhaps the import of what Frank (2001) observes is that legitimisation is achieved by the ascription of a human persona to the corporation - and with it several centuries of logocentric thinking:

If you're going to be giving your life to this corporation, it had better be something special. That's why the corporation has to be described as bigger than any individual, as something with feelings, as something that lives on after you're gone, that has values, that has transcendent brands, that has a soul. That's why you have these hardheaded, no-nonsense managers reading this incredibly woolly-minded stuff. [They] aren't looking for practical advice; they're looking to have their faith affirmed. (p. 26)

This said, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that such affirmations of faith might also be a means of justifying and inscribing particular practices, particular forms of discourse that effectively marginalize and occlude more sceptical, theoretical interrogations. At the same time, this extension of the corporation beyond the boundaries of the workplace to accord with a particular logocentric sense of being, opens a space for propagating an unquestioning acceptance of the virtues and legitimacy of particular forms of productive and consumption practices based on the apprehension of transcendent desires.

So, with this breaching of corporate boundaries, it is not only managers and corporate employees who become subjects for the affirmation of faith, but these selfsame as consumers, along with those consumers beyond who, as subjects of corporate branding stratagems, are invited into the corporate family as a means of remedying their needs and desires. It rather adds weight to Danesi's (2000) points above that the discourse of *cool* is attaining the same kind of authority as more traditional forms of discourse - sermons, political oratory, proverbs, wise sayings - that invoke and propagate consumer allegiances to particular communities of interest, niche markets, psychographic segments, neo-tribes. It is intriguing to consider the implications of this being the case. Significantly, what is common to all these remedial discourses is a paratactic syntax, a variety of nostrums - particular forms of material signifying practice that depend on a metaphysics of presence and worldly wisdom - that brook no argument and which serve to inscribe affirmations of authority, faith, common-sense, particular value systems. The effect is that the contradictions, the

occlusions, the evasions, the inconsistencies, the inconvenient truths and symptoms are effectively written out, overlooked.

Conclusion

In pursuing a critical, intertextual approach, this Chapter came to focus on the significance that might be attributed to the ironic modes of representation seemingly characteristic of the postmodern and the (re)emergence of attitudes, dispositions characterised by the term *cool*. More specifically, the links between irony, cool, branding priorities and the configuration of the contemporary, postmodern consumer became key issues for consideration.

A number of texts that specifically addressed the question of cool from a range of generic perspectives were deconstructed and, in so doing, further questions raised as to the role and practices of marketing, its theoretical and philosophical terrain. In turn, this raised a variety of issues with regard to the intertextual imprint of differing cultural perspectives and practices, most notably the continued and intense insinuation of the *knowing* logocentric subjects, ushering in the latest in a line of evangelists and heretics, while at the same time charting the terrain for a *cool* persona that maps on to the postmodern.

More specifically, this chapter charted the interplay between postmodern marketing's resort to irony in circumscribing the knowing consumer and the increasing hegemony of cool as the holy grail of marketing. To this end, the concern was equally with charting the discontinuities that call into question the integrity of the logocentric subject as with the continuities that chart the progression of what is often articulated as the advent of an increasingly sophisticated consumer. These interests are concerned not so much with proving the dispensability or indispensability of cool as a marker of success, nor its efficacy or inefficacy as a signifier for an inscrutable consumer. Rather the issue was one of mapping the claims and counter-claims made on cool's behalf and the possible implications it holds out for [re]configuring and offering an alternative subject of marketing.

In this regard, Thomas Frank's (1997) *The Conquest of Cool* is arguably the seminal text of recent years in its charting and contesting of *cool*. What is distinctive about Frank's thesis is that it challenged the standard binary narrative of the sixties with regard to the counter-culture that invariably is taken as the source of what constitutes *cool*.

Frank makes the crucial argument that a cultural studies focus on the consumption of culture-products has by and large been at the expense of the equally important process of cultural production and which effaces capitalism as a dynamic order of endless flux and

change. Consequently, the thrust of Frank's argument in *The Conquest of Cool* is that the prosperity of a consumer society depends not on the manipulation of consumption priorities, but with promoting unrestraint and an unbridled hedonism. In many respects, this bears comparison with Foucault's (1979) repressive hypothesis in *The History of Sexuality* in which what is seen as repressed, sexuality, had never been so much the subject of discourse. And it is this emergence in discourse which gives impetus to the mapping and delimiting of how sexuality might be understood and interpreted and the parameters for this debate – or in this case consumer desire and excess. The argument is made that the efforts of American business to break with the received consumerist wisdom of the fifties can now be seen as a first step in the creation of a new ideology of consuming. This new consumer ethic was promoted as a means of connecting with our authentic selves, of achieving a point of distinction from the mass-produced herd. Thus it would seem that far from being a signifier of one's resistance to corporate imperatives, *cool* turns out to be one of its most successful 'products'.

McGuigan (2000, 2006, 2009) makes a similar argument in his critique of Fiske's (1987) concept of 'semiotic democracy' claiming it constitutes little more than a restatement of a neo-conservative philosophy that privileges the sovereign consumer. This has given rise to the argument that through modifying their modes of consumption, consumers effect a form of resistance. It is taken to constitute something of a binary opposition in marketing and consumer culture studies between that of consumer exploitation and consumer resistance (Desmond et al 2000; Firat & Venkatesh 1998; Goldman & Papson 1996; McFall 2004; McFall & du Gay 2002; Paterson 2006; Rumbo 2002; Williamson 2002).

Frank's argument is that, by way of maintaining a distinctive individuality, this mode of consumerism entailed a circular cultural operation – the deployment of a mode of advertising that worked by mocking advertising convention. It was a strategy of pre-emptive irony, a mode of advertising that has been read as implementing and incorporating what was in effect a mass society critique. But as Frank recognises, it is a pseudo-subversiveness that enlists and makes an ally of resistance to promote and empower a particular configuration of consumerism, which offers itself as a space for, and a means to, liberation. The essence of Frank's argument would appear to be that hip consumerism's 'contradictory rationale', offering itself as a means of resisting the strictures of a corporatist conformity, serves only to defuse them, constantly recycling permutations of the rebel Pepsi Generation.

The effect of this contradictory rationale integral to the articulation of a *cool* consumerism is that it entails a mode, a structure of being, the rules of which play on conformity and rebellion, reverence and irreverence, order and disorder, as a universal feature of the human condition, but which is leavened by the ultimate sanction of rule-breaking based on an ironic,

logocentric *knowingness*. In the process, history is effaced and a timeless continuity interposed in the guise of an ongoing pageant of rule-breaking.

In sum, Frank's observation that rule-breaking is the cultural life-blood of consumer society begs trenchant questions as to the implications of taking this to be the case. McGuigan (2006, 2009) offers a similar critique with regard to the perceived autonomy of the consumer, but with his commitment to a critical realist position, he leaves no room for exploring the implications of the construction of subjectivity and material effects of the signifier. It is a major contention of this Dissertation that attention should be focused on deconstructing the discursive stratagems by which rule-breaking is manifested as constituting a timeless truth about the underlying momentum driving consumerism, particularly of the postmodern variety.

However, despite Frank's thoughtful, critical approach, part of the reason his book ends on a curiously ambiguous, somewhat resigned note, not dissimilar to that of Klein, is that it does not adequately account for the discursive configuration and operation of power. As a consequence Frank and Klein are left with little more than a hope that youth culture will ultimately make good and achieve a position in which they are able to manifest genuinely their 'own historical consciousness'. But while laudable, differentiating genuine from disingenuous historical consciousness and aspirations is problematic, because ultimately there is no resort to an 'originary', extra-textual sanction and arguably each and every articulation of such aspirations is always subject to further [re]presentations and co-optations.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE BRANDING OF COOL - FASHIONING THE EXOTIC AND EXOTERIC

Introduction

While there are varying perspectives about the implications of the emergence and growing hegemony of *cool*, the holy grail of most commercial organisations in a brand conscious world is to have their brands deemed *cool*. In this chapter a deconstruction of a number of brands designated as *cool* is undertaken, while at the same time taking account of a cultural history that has given rise to a particular manifestation of the postmodern. Consequently, rather than taking *cool* as symptomatic of the postmodern, I follow Belsey (1988, 1999, 1999a, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005a) and Foucault (1977) in order to pose a series of questions that focus on the material impacts of these texts/brands:

What are the modes and conditions of these texts? Where do they come from, who controls them, on behalf of whom? What possible subject positions are inscribed in them? What meanings and what contests for meaning do they display?

(Belsey 1988, p 405)

Such techniques are highlighted by way of pointing to the varied instantiations of what Foucault (1977, p 139) describes as a micro-physics of power, subtle and varied changes of practice and representation that have the cumulative effect of marking shifts in the way discourse and disciplines are configured.

Cool: emerging into the mainstream

The selection of brands deconstructed is made from a number that have been conscripted into a proposed *cool* hall of fame, an enterprise initiated by the Superbrands Council in 2001 to identify the UK's coolest brands. However, a key issue and a major stumbling block according to theorists of *cool* and the purveyors of this enterprise is that attempts at defining *cool*, necessarily entail it becoming non-cool.

Nevertheless, recognising the importance of *cool* to its ongoing success, the marketing and allied industries came up with a solution of sorts. A collection of leading figures from those industries and professions that have a major input – and vested interest - in the design of products and brands were brought together as part of a commercial project to pronounce

on those brands that might be admitted to an exclusive canon of the great, the good and the *cool*. As the judging criteria for the Superbrands Council (Superbrands, 2008/09) itself attest:

Cool is subjective and personal. Accordingly, voters are not given a definition but are asked to bear in mind the following factors, which research has shown are inherent in a CoolBrand:

1. style
2. innovation
3. originality
4. authenticity
5. desirability
6. uniqueness

The Voters comprise an 'independent and voluntary Expert Council' – the collection of leading figures, cultural gatekeepers referred to immediately above - who initially refine a shortlist of brands nominated for CoolBrand status, along with a nationally-representative group of more than 2,500 UK consumers. Subsequently, the opinions of the Expert Council (70 per cent) and the British public (30 per cent) are combined and the 500 highest-ranking brands are awarded CoolBrand status.

The awards have courted some controversy over the years. While the enterprise had achieved the endorsements of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising and the British Brands Group, its credibility was compromised when the *Independent on Sunday* newspaper revealed the companies that achieved CoolBrand status were required to pay thousands of pounds for the privilege (Burleigh and Eyre, 2004). Subsequently, the process for making the awards has been revised and the project is now carried out in conjunction with the *Observer* newspaper. Nevertheless, the weighting of the voting and the controversy over payment suggests the operation of a definite hegemony in promoting particular priorities with regard to *cool*. So while *cool* may or may not be 'of the street,' or a signifier of those individuals, products and places that are instinctively in tune with the latest trends, what is apparent is that to sustain a brand's position in the pantheon of *cool* entails paying one's dues – whether financially or ideologically. And it is a deconstruction of the texts of *cool* that will enable the values and priorities that are being privileged to be made more manifest.

Unlike the Superbrands Council, the aim of this Dissertation is not with identifying or promoting the concept of *cool* itself, those brands that best epitomise *cool* or with judging the right or wrongs of the process. Rather, the primary concern is, and has been, to map

the materiality of the signifying practices that help constitute the appeal and power of *cool*, to problematise the role of cultural gatekeepers in this process and to draw attention to the possibility that the wider discursive promotion of *cool* is closely bound up with a degree of economic and corporate power. On this last point, the promotional copy for the CoolBrands initiative alludes to the project's aspirations:

The [CoolBrands] programme has been running since 2001 and has grown and developed significantly each year to become a key barometer of the nation's coolest brands, people and places. It is debated widely in the media and amongst the public and is always much anticipated.

(Superbrands, 2006/07)

The selection of *cool* brands deconstructed in this chapter are taken from the 2005 and 2006 printed editions of CoolBrands (Pumphrey (ed) 2005; Cooper (ed) 2006), which features the top fifty awards. The deconstruction carried out comprised three brands ostensibly relating to products (Asahi, Blackberry, Chanel) and one to a service experience (The London Eye). Although given how *cool* is invariably configured, all four brands set great store by the experience on offer, over and above any simple consumption of the product or service in itself. The deconstruction of these brands was undertaken for both 2005 and 2006 to map the implications of any changes that occur as these brands seek to maintain their *cool* status, the dynamic and parameters of which are constantly shifting. The selection of brands selected for deconstruction have been chosen by way of offering a range of representations from different business sectors: drinks, technology, entertainment and fashion. As established hitherto, deconstruction is not concerned with quantitative, reductive or positivist modes of analysis, but entails rendering a teasing, forensic questioning of the issues at stake. No privileging is implied in the selection offered and they appear at various points in the CoolBrands top fifty. As a deconstructive project, the aim is primarily to engage the 'unsaid', the 'unwritten' of the text in question, to address the 'excluded other', but which is necessary to the textual project in hand and, thereby, to open up the texts to further readings. The deconstruction of these commercial brands constitutes a continuation of the deconstruction of the various texts - academic studies, social and cultural commentaries - of the two previous chapters. All, in their various ways, can be read as paving the way for, and circumscribing, a mapping of *cool*.

What the deconstruction of the following 'select' brands provides is a means for mapping the materiality of their signifying practices and the intertextual forces at play. This, in turn, is designed to pave the way for a questioning of these brands as demonstrating an inherent originality and uniqueness that is taken to be characteristic of *cool*

A word from our Sponsor

In the foreword to *Coolbrands: an insight into some of Britain's coolest brands, 2005*, managing editor, Angela Pumphrey tentatively articulates the issues, motivations and uncertainties encountered in putting together the publication on behalf of the Superbrands Council.

The function of the foreword often entails looking back over the writerly project, establishing a forward-looking perspective that articulates the uncertainties, the tensions, the contradictions, that provided the initial motivation, holding out the promise of their forthcoming resolution, notwithstanding the acknowledgement of certain limitations in the project - present and past. Intriguingly, this is a text in which changeability and undecidability are constitutive components of the writerly project and yet it bears the tensions of maintaining a logocentric disposition.

Arguably, even before the foreword, these tensions are manifest in the title of the publication. That the publication's focus is on 'some of Britain's coolest brands' alludes to a measure of undecidability with regard to mapping the limitations of what constitutes *cool* - of what is to be included and what excluded. At the same time the title further maps the ground for a more limited space attesting to a subjective dimension, with the text purporting to offer 'an insight', singular perspectives that are often masked by more conventional, seemingly objective outward appearances; and which hints at how *cool* resists the full plenitude of meaning for those not gifted with such insight. Arguably, the title constitutes both an admission and assertion of the subjective, changeable and uncertain limitations of identifying what is *cool*. From the outset a reading emerges which suggests that *cool* brands resist comprehensive articulation because they are a function of individual perception and responses, and will vary accordingly. The effect of this is to engender and intensify uncertainty and undecidability, constituting the signifiers of *cool* as a product of an independent, indeterminate and intangible desire.

The prosaic opening sentences to Pumphrey's foreword help set the tone for the idea of *cool* as something that at first reading is obvious, ordinary and understated, yet masking more complex layers of meaning that are subjective, contingent, uncertain and even contradictory:

I think my favourite dictionary definition of *cool* is 'Somewhat cold. Usually pleasantly so'. However, the numerous other cited meanings, some of which are more applicable to describing a brand than others, include staying calm, very good, fashionable and sophisticated as well as being used to describe a style of jazz, popular in the mid 20th century, characterised by a relaxed rhythm. (2005, p. 9)

The reflective, tentative opening sentences initially suggest a favouring of the definitive with regard to the significance of *cool*, but proceed to admit the alternative possibilities of the signifier *cool*. Nevertheless, Pumphrey seems to maintain there is an essence to *cool*, and

while it's difficult to pin down, it is ultimately secured by a metaphysics of presence. It would also seem that *cool's* 'presence' - in its capacity for understatement and play - has the effect of not manifesting any obvious revelations and in so doing achieving a certain status as being both present and non-present. Any obvious manifestations towards *cool* [dis]qualify themselves as non-*cool*.

Pumphrey goes on to reinforce the claim that the essence of *cool* brands is so much more than outward appearances, 'so much more than their logo alone'. Indeed, the absence of normally prominent logos from among the featured case studies is viewed as testament to: 'the confident and understated nature of CoolBrands and to the strength of the unique values and intrinsic personality of each brand.' (p. 9) Arguably, what this anthropomorphic attribution of natural, human qualities to *cool* brands achieves is an evasion of the material inscription of the signifier, instead assigning meaning as the product of a founding logos, the product of a unique and intrinsic personality.

Maintaining the sense of a founding logos as constitutive of the 'stylish and original nature of the CoolBrands,' Pumphrey shifts register by enlisting empirical support in the form of 3,000 urbanite interviewees. Now, it would seem that far from being difficult to pin down, the essence of *cool* comprises five key, inherent factors: not only are they stylish and original, they are innovative, authentic and unique. There is an issue here that such attributes are equally 'indefinable'. Nevertheless, having distilled the essence of *cool* from 3,000 interviewees the Superbrand Council – for whom Pumphrey acts as a representative - formulated a definition to be borne in mind when rating those brands under consideration as worthy of the epithet *cool*: 'CoolBrands are brands that have become extremely desirable among many leaders and influencers. They have a magic about them, signifying that users have a sense of taste and style'.

Having distilled from the 3,000 interviews what are little more than tautological propositions as the basis for rating *cool* brands, the final arbitration and articulation is assigned to the Superbrands Council, who are assigned positions as leaders and influencers, guardians and gatekeepers, and not without some vested, pecuniary interest. It seems rather inconsistent that while the interviewees can be relied upon to distill the essence of *cool*, that they cannot be relied on to recognise *cool* brands. What can be inferred from this is that seeking mass sanction would mitigate against the exclusivity that is constitutive of the project to which CoolBrands aspires.

The published text of *Coolbrands, 2005* comprises the best part of 100 entries, chosen by a panel nominated by the Superbrands Council. Each of the case studies comprises text and visuals to manifest and proclaim something of the biographical narratives, historical

trajectory and ethos that help articulate and give direction to the meanings of these brands. A close textual analysis and deconstruction will seek to provide a general sense of how it is these brands come to signify, not by way of offering a definitive rendition, but by way of drawing attention to the ways in which the project both exceeds and fails in pursuing a certain desire to render the secrets of *cool*.

The first observation to make is that the style and presentation of the text in these case studies would suggest that it is the product of various marketing copywriters, writing on behalf of their respective brands. It is equally likely this copy will have drawn on pre-existing marketing copy effectively co-authored, pre-figured and agreed by a team of internal and external contributors; and it is likely this pre-existing copy will have been modified to fit a brief set for the 'Coolbrands' project. Intriguingly, copy that is the product of multiple authors might be seen as symptomatic of a discursive shift in the mapping of the commercial and aesthetic terrain of the *cool* project. This said, what is also apparent is that these authors conform to the rhetorical demands of marketing copy. What is consistently noticeable across the copy in these various case studies is the resort to hyperbole, the use of parataxis to assert various claims as axiomatic and authoritative, the use of adverbial constructs and idiomatic expressions to invoke a conversational style that proposes a measure of intimacy in the moment of reading, further reinforced by an occasional use of the second-person address. What is also common to the majority of the case studies, no doubt as part of the commissioning brief, is the attempt to personalise the brands by reference to an inventive, innovative, idiosyncratic founders. Further, what is consistently determined across these texts are links into cultural and lifestyle imperatives. Perhaps what all the brands featured in these case studies attempt is to secure their claims to *cool* by means of advertizing to their exclusiveness; almost of necessity this entails postulating a series of binaries to determine this privileging, but which as a consequence inscribes a certain difference and the self-same source of its own resistance.

Super Signifiers

The 2005 case study for Asahi beer is certainly not short of superlatives by way of connoting its exclusiveness. As in all of the case studies the brand name takes up the headline position, supplemented by a strapline (immediately beneath the headline), which articulates a positioning statement that attempts to inscribe the essence of the brand. These are presented overlying a full-page image taken to be representative of the brand on the verso page of each double-page spread. The body copy on the recto page then provides the extended narrative and supplementary images that provide further elaboration of the brand. In this case the main image is a photographic image of a bottle of Asahi beer, taken slightly from below which has the effect of not just straightforwardly identifying the product, but somewhat emboldening its presence.

The difference in the ways in which Asahi's positioning statements are articulated bear testimony to the indeterminacy of *cool*. These positioning statements vary from the straightforward, to the cryptic, elliptical, aphoristic and ironic. All seem to allude to the elusiveness and 'concealment' of the brand's essence.

The strapline to the Asahi headline in this particular text runs:

Asahi
super clean
super crisp
super dry and
super fly

Illustration 4

Asahi
Super clean
super crisp
super dry and
super fly

024

Asahi, Japan's leading brewer, is at the cutting edge of the beer industry worldwide, always innovating. In the late 1980s, it revolutionised the Japanese beer market with the launch of Asahi Super Dry, now an established fixture in the world's trendiest bars and clubs and the beer of choice for the young, urban, stylish, socially active crowd...

Asahi has also pioneered some of the world's most advanced brewing technologies, such as the 'Super Dry' process, which produces a beer with a crisp, clean taste and a long shelf life. This process involves the use of a special yeast and a unique brewing technique that results in a beer with a clean, crisp taste and a long shelf life.

Asahi is also known for its commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. The company has implemented a range of initiatives to reduce its carbon footprint and improve its environmental performance. Asahi is also committed to supporting local communities and promoting social responsibility.

Asahi is a leading brand in the world of beer, and its commitment to innovation and quality is reflected in its products. Asahi is a brand that is always moving forward, and its commitment to quality and innovation is reflected in its products.

The use of the terms 'clean', 'crisp' and 'dry' invoke a degree of clarity with regard to the criteria by which the qualities of such products are conventionally judged; and clearly lays claim to the superlative qualities of this particular product. The somewhat elliptical addition of 'super fly' introduces an oppositional element of ambiguity, hinting at the product's more elusive qualities and in which the clarity of the signifier begins to reveal hitherto traces. 'Fly' opens up a space that alludes to a disguised cleverness or worldly wisdom, invoking a sense of the ability to see beyond the obvious. 'To fly' also has connotations of pushing sensory experience to the maximum, of pushing matters to the limits. The rhyming of 'fly' with 'dry' signifies a mode of humour based on a 'delayed' irony, that positions itself beyond the immediate and the obvious. This reading of the strapline is provided with a degree of intertextual leverage by the pictorial representation of a bottle of Asahi with the outline trace of its shadow incorporating a devil's horns and tail. An ambiguity and undecidability has been pressed into service here to signify there is more to this beer than meets the eye.

Having articulated the essential character of the brand through what might be described as its more overtly creative copy, the main body of the text for this case study goes on to provide further narrative justification and elaboration of Asahi's appeal and qualities. At this point, marketing as a discourse of propaganda - in a non-pejorative sense - offers the articulation of an unique and virtuous presence that locates and differentiates the brand by means of a series of binary oppositions. And it almost goes without writing that the syntactical structure of marketing discourse comprises a significant degree of paratactic assertions and proclamations.

Asahi, Japan's leading brewer, is at the cutting edge of the beer industry worldwide, always innovating. In the late 1980s, it revolutionised the Japanese beer market with the launch of Asahi Super Dry, now an established fixture in the world's trendiest bars and clubs and the beer of choice for the young, urban, stylish, socially active crowd...(Pumphrey (ed) 2005, p. 25)

As marketing copy, it is little surprise that Asahi immediately extols its virtues as a leading brewer as opposed, presumably, to being a follower or derivative brewer. Again, one would expect the claims to being innovative and revolutionary to be set off and differentiated against the staid, established and traditional. But conventional expectations of marketing discourse exploiting structural oppositions begin to break down. The desire to establish Asahi as a fixture in the 'world's trendiest bars and clubs' with 'the young, urban, stylish, socially active crowd,' entails something of a contradiction faced by any brand seeking the mantle of innovation. Once established, the brand, almost by definition, runs the risk of losing its 'cutting edge', its claims to *cool*. Arguably, this contradiction is mediated by using a lively form of address that gives the impression of continuously operating in the present, to being continuously innovative: 'Now, Asahi has done it again'.

But, as with its mode of address, there is a further measure of ambiguity and undecidability in that the brand encounters something of a clash of discursive priorities. While it offers a third-person mode of address, a certain ambiguity is maintained as it is not always clear whether the statements - particularly when they veer towards proclamation - are made on behalf of the brand or are third party observations about the brand. Arguably, this is further complicated by the use of adverbial qualifiers that stress a continuous present giving an immediacy and urgency to the text that hints at an active presence. The use of adjectival and adverbial qualifiers also promotes a tone of conversational immediacy and contrived intimacy: 'Now, Asahi has done it *again*', 'It has been the country's favourite super-premium beer *ever since*, and is *now* available in the UK'. This conversational, word-of-mouth immediacy is given further presence by advice as to the phonetic spelling of the brand - 'a-sa-hee'.

The latter paragraphs of the body copy are more conventionally in the third person in terms of the object of its address, but this is Asahi articulating observations viz-a-viz its sponsorship of a range of cultural activities, rather than dwelling on its own brand qualities.

Nevertheless, the use of hyperbole and colloquialism continue to maintain the copy's pretexts to immediacy and liveliness: 'Asahi has sponsored some of the UK's most famous young artists', 'What's more the brand is a major supporter of London fashion week', 'and has been involved with a host of other big bashes . . .' What is also clear here is that it is not just the tone of the text but the scope of Asahi's sponsorship activities that contrive to represent it as lively, immediate and *cool*.

The final paragraph concerning Asahi's advertising and its target audience is altogether more prosaic and tending toward the hypotactic. It marks a shift in register to a more reasoned mode of address, constructing the argument that the brand is underpinned by its Japanese heritage and the use of premium quality ingredients.

The Sliding of the Signifier

Intriguingly, Asahi's entry in the 2006 Cool/Brands initiative is more focused on establishing a distinctive presence for the brand by way of attesting to the 'understated' quality and heritage of the product.

The lead paragraphs of the body copy engages a more hypotactic structure from the outset and is altogether more circumspect and modest in tone, even to the extent of citing its sources. The effect is not so much a tempering of its claims but the demonstration of a concern to provide a more substantive rationale for them. This is mirrored somewhat in the new strapline: 'Pure beer: Japan style', which now focuses on the quality of the product and its provenance. Registering an intertextual engagement with the Cool/Brands initiative of the previous year, Asahi's 2006 text sets down the claim that there is a strategy which entails, 'Selective advertisements in style magazines and branded rickshaws through central London aid in highlighting its cool credentials' (sic). Arguably, their selectivity attends to a particular form of exclusiveness, reinforced by a signification of the exotic in the image of rickshaws in London.

Again the final paragraph of the 2006 text is intriguing, acknowledging a greater degree of ambiguity with regard to the source and transience of *cool*. The text makes the claim that, 'An ability to constantly evolve and adapt to market forces has kept Asahi at the forefront of imported premium beers, a position that the brand is keen to maintain for the foreseeable future.' By contrast with the text of the previous year this can be interpreted as constituting a reference to the invisible hand of the market and the ultimately determining power of the consumer - although there is the hint that how keen Asahi is to maintain its *cool* persona could change. No doubt if the *cool* zeitgeist is deemed no longer to be part of the 'foreseeable future' for Asahi there would be little surprise if a change of strategy entailed a moving on.

Illustration 5

Asahi
Pure beer:
Japan style

Established in Japan 116 years ago Asahi Beer has, over the years, built up an enviable reputation for producing clean, crisp, contemporary products.

Asahi pronounced 'Asah-beer' is not only Japan's best selling beer, but currently the most popular brand in Asia (Source: Pitcher 2005) and its core brand, Asahi Super Dry, launched in Japan in 1987 and the rest of the world soon after - now rates as the world's seventh largest beer brand (Source: Impact 2006).

Since its launch, Asahi has expanded to unique Asian and high standards in Europe, where it is now sold in more than 25 countries. Asahi's sale in the UK market has increased every year since its UK launch in 1996.

Asahi Super Dry has been available in Japan on draught since 1989 and is now on draft selling through bars. Combining this experience and facilities Asahi has been seen increasing their draught beer in the UK at several venues since 2005, which has resulted in a positive reaction from customers with regard to their serving temperature and overall brand presentation. As a result of this feedback, the brand officially launched Asahi Draught Beer in the UK in 2006.

As a brand, Asahi continues to go from strength to strength, its simple, clean, classic, which show on the brand's Japanese heritage, emphasize the premium value of the product and the uncompromising quality of its ingredients.

Asahi's belief that quality is more important than quantity, is proven through its marketing. To ensure current drinkers in the target concept Asahi selects venues that have contemporary style and have an eye for insider design, like the newly opened Museum Plaza Hotel, situated on the Thames, opposite one of London's iconic landmarks, Big Ben.

Asahi's assured credibility has contributed to its success. As a major supporter of many art and design-related events, such as London Fashion Week, it continues to sponsorable events in these select surroundings. The brand has also sponsored some of the UK's leading young artists - the sale of Stuart Laith, Tracy Stone and Damien Hirst, whose White Cube Gallery show in London's East End achieved over 1,000 percent selling Asahi. It is also an active sponsor of other major exhibitions such as the Queen Victoria Arts, the Arts & Photography exhibition and London Art in recent years it has also sponsored Abu and Ben Baker's in-class events and parties.

Asahi's marketing expertise must mean to be focus on a target audience of top, urban consumers. Selective advertisements in style magazines and branded rickshaws through central London aid in highlighting its cool credentials. In addition, Asahi is available at many top Japanese restaurants, such as Nishi, Nishi and Wagamama, and it also serves at other country's restaurants such as Empire, Brax, Connaught, Parkland and La.

An ability to constantly evolve and adapt to market forces has kept Asahi at the forefront of imported premium beers, a position that the brand is keen to maintain for the foreseeable future.

022

Asahi
LAGER BEER

The representation of the main image in the 2006 text is in distinct contrast with that of the previous year and arguably carries the brand's unspoken claims and rhetorical significance but which, nevertheless, testifies to a distinctive presence. In the 2006 edition, the main image is again a photographic shot of a bottle of Asahi beer, taken slightly from below. But this time, rather than being a straightforward shot of an Asahi bottle one might expect to purchase, the image engages a different complex of signifying practices. The bottle's label is shown having become detached and having slid to the bottom of the bottle where it has come to rest slightly bent and 'slouched'. Its curled edges perhaps suggest it has detached as the result of a certain 'steamininess'. Whereas the image in the previous year gave full prominence to the label with all its product information and marketing claims directly asserted, the 2006 representation dispenses with this mode of clear and consistent labeling, an acknowledgement perhaps that one-to-one correspondences between the signifier and the signified are not the whole story. With the product and linguistic label now to a degree redundant, although not entirely absent, a space is opened up for a play of difference and intertextuality in the interpretation of the brand. What the 'slippage' of the label brings into play is yet another signifier - etched on the bottle or the result of the rending of the label - the representation of a motif invoking the Manga comic art form. In straightforward terms the significance of this representation again plays to the articulation of an 'underlying truth' that there is more to this brand than meets the eye. In the context of the UK market the representation of the brand further sets off the binary between the exotic and the mundane. Manga, comic art imagery, at the time of writing, has achieved a *cool* status globally, but in what can only be described as a mundane, everyday world of all-consuming images. It is this degree of contradiction that, in pushing the brand to achieve a higher degree of currency, although financially rewarding, ultimately devalues its *cool*.

This shift in communication strategy is presumably deemed more in keeping with the mode of address commensurate with the consumer characterised and branded by their disposition towards *cool* - a centred, ironically detached subjectivity, but in control and author of their knowingness and able to apprehend the exclusive connotations of the revealed signifier. However, the materiality of the signifying practice, in being configured as a playful manifestation of logocentric knowingness, has the ultimate effect of effacing the contradictory project that is *cool* and its tendency to promote an ever escalating, all-consuming, consumer culture.

linkages that offset simple injunctions to self-willed courses of action, calling into question the locus of control. The mapping of this space renders the BlackBerry device a metaphor for a preceding world of intertextual signifying practice. The three-rowed keyboards and the three rows of screen icons attest to a degree of prior ordering that is the pretext and precursor for any assumption of control.

The first paragraph of the body copy plays on the significance of 'the freedom of being in control' through a series of implied binaries but which somewhat effaces its status as a disruptive oxymoron:

BlackBerry is about the freedom of being in control. Someone with a BlackBerry can go where they like, when they like. Whether you're a busy executive managing your work and social life, or a parent juggling a job and a family, with a BlackBerry you're still in control of your daily life, business and information, all from one simple device. With a BlackBerry, you will always be able to take a call, read or respond to an email, plan your diary and read a presentation. (Pumphrey (ed) 2005, p. 35)

Being in a position to go where one likes, when one likes, depends on having a BlackBerry - or not. Being in control of one's daily life will depend on having a BlackBerry - or not. With a BlackBerry a measure of freedom is possible because of the degree of control it affords. The BlackBerry entails a certain disruption with regard to the question of freedom, because it depends on having such a device. And as many users might testify the 'freedom' that comes with ownership has a price. While it might signify an elevation of status, it also entails a limitation of freedom. What is absent is the tracing of those intertextual references that beg the question as to what generates the need or desire for control that manifests itself in the freedom to be at a particular place at a particular time or, indeed, those determining motivations for always being available to take a call, to be constantly 'on call'.

The BlackBerry affects to be a 'simple device' that stands in contrast to, and as an accompaniment for dealing with, the complexity of modern life. This binary between simplicity and complexity is mirrored in the syntactical structure of the first paragraph, with the first and final sentences offering simple assertions as to the benefits the BlackBerry brings, while the more hypotactic structure of the middle and third sentences attest to the 'busy-ness' and complexity of juggling life's demands.

Although the BlackBerry itself is a complex piece of technology, as a 'simple device' it offers to simplify life. This binary between simplicity and complexity is reiterated further in the body copy, but this time by way of affording a resolution to this opposition. And this is achieved by means of affecting a partnership, a relationship that is predicated on simple, uncomplicated, unobtrusive, dependable virtues. An alliance of the human and the technological, endows the BlackBerry with an anthropomorphical status as both a dependable tool and a dependable ally:

Most of all, BlackBerry is about partnership. BlackBerry is a tool and ally - a pocket-sized resource that can be depended on to keep the user in touch with work, as well as family and friends. Quietly and unobtrusively, everything you need is there. Easy to use, dependable and indispensable. (p. 35)

Perhaps what is less clear is the basis for this alliance and against who and why it is set. In offering the BlackBerry as a 'simple device', this further oxymoron offers a continuing degree of discomfort and disruption as to the source of its indispensability and which potentially prefigures future perspectives. As a 'device', as that which is designed and planned out in advance - a stratagem, a contrivance, designed for a special purpose - questions perhaps emerge as to the basis of this alliance, as to where control and power lies.

The ongoing copy, resorting to a commonplace marketing convention, is marked by the use of the present tense, outlining the features, configurations, benefits, target audience and availability of the BlackBerry, interspersed with market research commendations and eulogy.

At the beginning of the penultimate paragraph the register and tense change:

BlackBerry has become cultural phenomenon featuring in pop videos, fashion photo shoots and cartoons. Why? Because it works. It doesn't ask someone to do anything that they don't already do - it just lets them do it quicker and more conveniently. From looking up contacts in their address list to making calls and filing emails, BlackBerry is completely intuitive. (p. 35)

The focus now is back on the brand rather than the product. The initial use of the past perfect renders as matter-of-fact that the BlackBerry has become a cultural icon. The register then shifts into discursive, dialogic mode, with the resulting sense of presence giving a certain consensual authority, reinforcing the claims made on behalf of the BlackBerry. The resort to these particular modes of signifying practice can be viewed as assisting with the inscription of the brand's claims for operating on the basis of a knowing, intuitive experience; the ultimate marker of successful connection between human and structural, technological processes.

The body copy finishes with a coda. 'BlackBerry. Cool because it changes forever the way we do things.' On this basis, the coolness of the BlackBerry is inherent in the device itself. The link between the BlackBerry as an intuitive device and the BlackBerry as cool would seem to be crucial in registering and providing the impetus for changing how we do things, for acting as a precursor to change. Although, as attested in the prior paragraph of the copy, it would seem this change is based on not asking 'someone to do anything they don't already do', somewhat contradictorily suggesting the maintenance of a certain status quo.

Cool Intuition pro-claimed

BlackBerry

Tools for success

In the 2006 edition of *CoolBrands*, *cool* does not so much bring up the rear but initiates an immediate assertion of intuition. According to the lead paragraph, *cool* is not so much a function of product design and process, a device that affects intuitive modes of operation, but is synonymous with the establishment of an intuitive person-to-person relationship. 'Cool isn't something that happens by design. It comes through people recognising the authenticity of somebody pursuing their passion.' Success now is not so much a function of being in control, but of being yourself.

In this 2006 edition, the strapline has also changed to: 'Tools for success', arguably supplanting and supplementing the previous edition's emphasis on the BlackBerry as a device. As a tool such a shift perhaps suggests the BlackBerry as a hand-operated implement and as such in the immediate control of the individual. The main image now features an individual BlackBerry, given a more overtly three-dimensional and tactile quality. This extends to the screen icons which, rather than being rendered as line-art, are represented as being contiguous with a more realistically rendered, three-dimensional space and perspective, alluding to a definitive presence in being from a specific position occupied by 'real' people. Belsey (2002b) offers some interesting commentary with regard to how the development of perspective in Western Art coincides with realistic representation and an increasing individualization in the culture more generally. This three dimensional perspective further comprises the representation of an open road leading the towards an horizon dominated by the skyscape. While it might well be a case of 'have BlackBerry, will travel', the relationship here manifests some subtle differences. In the 2006 BlackBerry case study, the only allusion to freedom, arguably the key trope in the previous edition, is in the imagery and the individually positioned perspective of the open road and skies.

The emphasis on success as a consequence of the power of technology is now downplayed, replaced with a play on success as emerging from the pursuit and fulfilment of individual intuition, passion and desire, the freedom to indulge in some blue-skies thinking. Success is a function of the BlackBerry's appeal to the 'individual'. And in the process of becoming a tool for fulfilling desire, it becomes an object of desire. This allows for the BlackBerry as the product of individual passion, intuition and desire, rather than as a device for tapping into an external network of inter-textual and social relationships.

The 2006 BlackBerry is represented as altogether more 'personable' and appealing to the individual. In contrast to the previous year, the emphasis for the origins of the BlackBerry is

switched from 'Research in Motion' as the corporate organisation behind the BlackBerry device to the founder, Mike Lazardis' individual drive and desire. Perhaps the effect is to re-prioritise relationships, representing them as one between individuals as opposed to a relationship with a device and its structured processes. After his initial introduction into the text and the registering of his motivation, 'the passion that motivated Mike Lazardis . . . was the desire to create a mobile device that would really help people who needed to work on the move,' he is subsequently represented by resort to the use of the familiar address, 'Mike'. Invoking a degree of familiarity and a judicious use of colloquialism centres 'Mike' and his determining characteristics, not so much as the formal CEO of a structured, corporate organisation, but as informal, familiar, recognisably 'one of us'. And as one of us, as the originator of the BlackBerry invention: 'Mike wanted to create an intuitive tool - a pocket-sized resource that can be depended on to keep the user in touch with work, family and friends.' Maintaining the personable tone, the text continues: 'He couldn't find one So he came up with the idea of 'pushing' email to a pocket-sized device. He called it BlackBerry. Mike's determination produced a hit'.

This personable, narrative pre-script in the 2006 edition places the emphasis on representing Mike's determination and imaginative capability to fulfill a need for people who worked on the move. In contrast, the narrative preamble in the 2005 edition emphasises the BlackBerry's benefits and represents its invention as more a case of overcoming a particular technological challenge – 'pushing' email to a device that could fit into a pocket - as opposed to fulfilling a particular desire, be it 'Mike's' or the market. The changes are subtle, but the effect is to render invention as a product of logocentric origins, rather than a structural

Illustration 7

BlackBerry
Tools for success

030

BlackBerry
Connected

BlackBerry

Cool isn't something that happens by design. It comes through people recognising the authenticity of somebody pursuing their passion.

The passion that motivated Mike Lazardis, founder of Canadian company Research In Motion (RIM), was the desire to create a mobile device that would really help people who needed to work on the move.

Mike wanted to create an intuitive tool – a pocket-sized resource that can be depended on to keep the user in touch with work, family and friends. A tool that lets quiet and unobtrusive, with everything you need to stay in touch, it needed to be easy to use, reliable and indispensable.

He couldn't find one – the closest match was a pager, but they only provided one-way communication. So he came up with the idea of 'pushing' email to a pocket-sized device. He called it BlackBerry.

Mike's determination produced a hit. Today there are over five million BlackBerry users around the world and this figure is increasing daily.

Perhaps just as importantly, BlackBerry is a cultural phenomenon. These millions of users have become evangelists for a more mobile and connected way of life. This passion stems from the end-to-end nature of BlackBerry (device, software and hardware integration) which provides a simple, seamless user experience that users really value.

Whether lawyer, banker, civil servant or Hollywood film star, BlackBerry has become the default choice for those leading busy lives and who want to get on with it.

How?
By putting people back in control. Much has been written about the intense relationship people have with their BlackBerry. It is because users really find that having a BlackBerry device puts them more, not less, in control of their everyday lives.

By being time.
Research conducted in 2004 suggests that users on average gain nearly an hour in a day by being able to manage their life on the move.

By being efficient.
People can now securely and reliably manage their e-mails, write on the move, BlackBerry allows people to view, create, and respond to emails and make decisions wherever they are.

BlackBerry applications now range from mobile business solutions like CRM and sales force support for enterprises to individual solutions like navigation and time management. All of these help enable individuals and corporations to be successful and get on.

As the BlackBerry story continues to unfold, the people behind its success seem determined to focus on continuing what they do best – delivering tools for those that want to get on with it.

working of and with pre-texts. It also suggests attempts to offset some of the problematic issues raised in the 2005 resort to the trope of freedom.

In posing the rhetorical question how is it that BlackBerry has become the default choice for those leading busy lives - lawyer, banker, civil servant, Hollywood film star – the response is: 'By putting people back in control.' Notably, there is no direct reference, as in the previous edition, to the term 'employees' and its connotation of dependency rather than dependability. However, this intimation of putting people back in control is supplemented with an inscription that suggests, in somewhat defensive mode, a degree of unease: 'Much has been written about the intense relationship people have with their BlackBerry. It is because users really find that having a BlackBerry device puts them more, not less, in control of their everyday lives.' If the phrase 'intense relationship' is interpreted as opening up the possibility of external pressure and a certain dislocation with prior intimations towards 'passionate relationships', it perhaps allows that the quality of relationships afforded by the BlackBerry are effected as much from without as within, and are not entirely able to move beyond texts previously written, prior prescriptions. This defensiveness begs the question as to whether, 'users *really* find that having a BlackBerry device puts them more, not less, in control of their everyday lives.' (Cooper, 2006, p. 31, my italics) or whether it simply demonstrates the discursive power of the strategic deployment of the signifier.

The final paragraph returns to the emphasis on the BlackBerry as a tool for aspiring, passionate, committed individuals: 'As the BlackBerry story continues to unfold, the people behind its success seem determined to focus on continuing what they do best - developing tools for those that want to get on in life.' (p. 31) What this final paragraph also affirms is this copy as the product of reportage. In contrast with the previous edition this copy affects to be the product of the editor's endeavours to relate the unfolding story as opposed to being written product accessed via the BlackBerry marketing department. And while there may or may not have been some concern with the linguistic implications of the BlackBerry as a device, it is possible to determine a degree of unease with regard to possible consequences for the BlackBerry brand, although drawing in supplementary tools does open possibilities for the inscription of the editor as unwitting 'tool'.

The Wheel of Fortune

The 2005 British Airways London Eye case study features a photograph of what is described as 'the biggest observation wheel in the world', with its illuminations picking it out against a night-time sky. The perspective created by a line of trees, similarly illuminated - machine and nature in harmony - focuses attention on the initiation point for the experience that is the London Eye. The cantilevered supports for the wheel, bestriding the embarkation point like the entrance to a circus big top, contrive to further heighten experience, expectation and excitement. The title and image are accompanied by a rather laboured strapline, which sounds a somewhat patriotic register: 'British architecture, innovation and engineering at its inspiring and visionary best.' As a commodified experience the Eye offers new perspectives on London, differentiated narratives, both for the city's inhabitants and visitors. As the lead paragraph asserts, it is claimed to instil pride and passion in London's citizens and awe and amazement among London visitors.

British Airways London Eye has quickly become one of Britain's most famous landmarks. It instills quiet pride and passion in its citizens and awe and amazement in all visitors. As well as providing spectacular views, it also animates the skyline, gives a whole new perspective on the city and has helped to inject new life into London's South Bank. (Pumphrey, 2005, p. 43)

The all-seeing Eye is represented as a testament to innovation, inspiration and vision: the pun is inescapable. As a metaphor for the wheel of fortune it invokes a narrative of highs and lows, of struggle and perseverance, the prospect of success and failure, the resolve and determination to open up and make available new experiences, new perspectives on life, all in the space of thirty minutes. All in all, with the postmodern diminishing of grand narratives

Illustration 8



and consumer culture's emphasis on living for the moment, the fatalism of the allegorical, medieval wheel of fortune or wheel of life is given a new turn.

In somewhat prosaic fashion, the copy recounts the struggles to get the project off the ground and of how the Eye was designed on the kitchen table of London architects David Marks and Julia Barfield as an entry into a Millennium competition that was eventually abandoned. But it was a project that they continued to pursue and eventually realised with the backing of British Airways.

By means of a series of oppositions the text charts an ongoing cycle of experiences characterised by highs and lows, success and failure, aspiration and resignation, exclusion and inclusion, that constitute the development and production of the Eye itself.

The text also elaborates the production of experiences that are part of the Eye's offering to consumers and arguably these too are characterised by difference, by the play of highs and lows. In addition to being a tourist landmark that offers views across the London cityscape, the Eye is also, 'a superb venue for parties, events, product launches and even weddings, with couples tying the knot 135 metres above the capital'. The Eye offers opportunities for the staging of special, exclusive events that mark high points, but which necessarily entail, literally and metaphorically, a return to earth and the everyday mundane.

Special experiences that attest to a certain exclusivity, the provision of highs that contrast with the lows of everyday existence is the focal point of the London Eye brand. The experience that is the London Eye maintains a constant differentiation through a dynamic cycling of 'encapsulated' highs and lows that render a shifting range of perspectives and injections of new life but which, necessarily, entail a return to the old, mundane way of life. The experience is perhaps maintained in ongoing personal narratives that are retold and recycled, perpetuating an attenuated desire for exclusive experiences that illuminate a mundane world. The cyclorama presented by the London Eye might stand as an allegory or metaphor for modern consumption - the production of exclusive, individuated experiences that are endlessly recyclable.

Cityscape to Dreamscape

In the 2006 edition of *CoolBrands*, the focus shifts. The strapline is less laboured: 'British Airways London Eye The best of British architecture, innovation and engineering'. And in the tightening of the strapline, the vision, the dream, becomes not just the province of British architecture, but what animates the London Eye brand. The main image of the London Eye now makes use of time-lapse photography to provide an impressionist representation of the London Eye, suggesting a dreamlike experience of energy and movement. But, not only is a dreamlike experience on offer, the narrative also focuses on the Eye as the realisation of dreams, rather than the accomplishment of a project. There is a subtle shift from emphasising the Eye as a landmark to be revered, an emblem of civic pride, to one in which consumer experience and excitement with the flight takes precedence. The retelling and reanimation of the story as to how the Eye came to be conceived and constructed takes on a new register. In the 2006 edition, the narrative relates the events leading to the development of the Eye as ultimately originating in the dreams and passion of particular individuals, as opposed to being the structured response to a brief inviting architectural entries to mark the onset of the new millennium. In this edition, the narrative of the Eye adds a degree of intensity to its representation as a metaphor for human passion, desire, tenacity and achievement. The narrative focus here downplays the sequence of somewhat mundane events, a government sponsored competition, displacing them with eulogies to the determination and dreams of those individuals represented as central to, and origin of, its construction.

Illustration 9

**British Airways
London Eye
The best of British
architecture,
innovation and
engineering**

034

With the best views offered from a height, it stands to reason that the 135 metre British Airways London Eye offers some of the most panoramic views across London; experienced through a rotational 30 minute flight in one of 32 state-of-the-art glass capsules.

The British Airways London Eye is one of the world's most iconic landmarks and a true symbol of London. The Eye's design and construction was a triumph of British engineering and innovation. The Eye's design was a result of a competition to design a new landmark for the millennium. Despite the competition being cancelled, the Eye project was determined to move forward.

With backing from British Airways and the Transport Secretary, the Eye is a partnership of the above, ensuring that the project could become a reality. In the year that it was built - just 18 months - in which they had to approve it, it into a landmark celebrating the success of government's construction technology and companies that, for the most part, had to be created from scratch. Over 1,700 people, in five-month periods, on the building were involved in the exciting process and commitment, comparable to that of building the pyramids. Innovation and creativity were essential to ensure that such a massive challenge could be solved. Involvement of the public was also a key element. For example, one of the 32 Flight Deck

Consumer capsules were designed to be just within the maximum weight tolerance for Project to ensure safe coverage to the UK.

By responding to the natural human desire to see the earth and cities from a great height and the organic fascination with cable-stayed structures and beauty, the London Eye has become a global icon. For the first time since London's 2,700 year history, the Eye has a 21st century symbol for modern Britain. It is an inspirational experience that offers spectacular views, safe, stylish design and a special occasion. Representing the best of British architecture, innovation and engineering, the London Eye offers a whole series of great and precious moments, and an unforgettable experience.

The Eye's product extension includes exclusive collaborations with other leading London attractions and top restaurants and hotels, offering a unique experience for events, parties, meetings and day trips, as well as the London Eye four-hour cruise experience, a 60-minute sightseeing cruise on the Thames.

Since opening in 2000, the British Airways London Eye has won a host of awards for tourism, architecture and engineering, reinforcing its position as London's number one visitor attraction and ensuring that its appeal extends further than its British shores. Planned activities include 'The Day Out for Londoners' People's Choice Award (2007) voted for by millions of Londoners, brought to you by the London Eye and London Eye four-hour cruise experience, and the first anniversary of the Eye's opening.

The Eye's promotional campaigns focus on the eye and the power of the Eye's vision. Humanism and Creativity with a clear aim to attract a wider range of customers, particularly

During the summer months, Sunray 2000, in a collaboration with the film festival, 'Sunray' first invited children to become British Academy of London Explorer (BAE) agents and taking part in club-breaking activities, as part of their mission.

The British Airways London Eye is one of the world's most iconic landmarks and a true symbol of London. The Eye's design and construction was a triumph of British engineering and innovation. The Eye's design was a result of a competition to design a new landmark for the millennium. Despite the competition being cancelled, the Eye project was determined to move forward.

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The British Airways London Eye shows what a combination of vision, passion and perseverance can achieve. The husband and wife team behind the concept, architects David Marks and Julia Barfield, drew up initial plans for the London Eye on their kitchen table, in response to a competition to design a UK landmark for the millennium. Despite the competition being cancelled the pair pressed on, determined to realise their dream. (Cooper, 2006, p. 35)

This re-framing of the Eye's origins establishes a significantly different register when contrasted with the way this aspect of the narrative is related in the 2005 case study:

[The Eye] almost didn't get off the drawing board. The Eye was designed on the kitchen table of London architects David Marks and Julia Barfield as an entry for a competition to create a structure to celebrate the Millennium.

The competition was eventually abandoned but Marks and Barfield knew they had a project worth pursuing. (Pumphrey, 2005, p. 43)

While acknowledging loftier human aspirations and desires as integral to the success of the wheel - 'a universal desire to see the earth and cities from a great height and the natural human fascination with scale, daring structure fused with beauty' - the 2005 copy proceeds to detail more mundane, marketing-based observations on the project as a feat of engineering, the involvement of experts, its product testing, its delivery, its ranking as a tourist attraction, the accolade of various awards, the management of the brand and the success of various marketing campaigns.

Although having its share of marketing-speak linked to descriptions of the various marketing campaigns - and conceivably drawing from the literature of those campaigns - the tone, use of hyperbole, metaphor and analogy in the 2006 edition makes the intense experience involved in delivering the Eye, from original conception to consumer delight, part of the enveloping 'aura' of its brand appeal. The fascination with scale is not only offered as an observation on human nature but inhabits the language. Phrases such as:

'the sheer enormity of the project',

'it was a mammoth project',

'the logistics [involved] comparable to that of building the pyramids',

'meticulous planning',

all help to focus not just on the scale of the project, but on the intensity of the individual commitment and endeavour entailed in delivering the project. And the 2005 edition's attribution of an abstract universal desire for seeing the earth and cities from a great height as the motivation for the architects' construction of the Eye has been modified in the 2006 text to offer a more distinctive, individualistic, experiential dimension. And by virtue of their responsiveness, the architects of the London Eye brand, cede their position as architects, as

authors, being incorporated with the use of the inclusive 'our' into the consumer community.

By responding to the natural human desire to see the earth and cities from a great height and our ongoing fascination with scale, daring structure and beauty, the London Eye has become quite literally, the way the world sees London. (Cooper, 2006, p. 35)

It would seem that in this 2006 text, desire is provided with a supplement - the universal and the abstract displaced, deferred by what is singularly natural and human, but which at the same time is taken to constitute a common humanity. So, while eschewing universality, it is not dispensed with entirely. It is more a case of reversing roles with the Eye part of an attenuated, communal, worldly response to dreams and desires rather than the manifestation of unique aesthetic intuition in communion with the metaphysical and the inspirational. In the 2006 edition, the consumer, as opposed to the architect, is the prime mover of the London Eye project. It would seem that instead of offering ontological prescription, what is now offered are tautological propositions, which is tantamount to much the same thing in taking for granted desire as simply a manifold manifestation of human nature.

In the 2006 edition it is not just a case of describing the sequence of events that gave rise to the London Eye project, but of emphasising the extraordinary, responsive qualities of the individuals that were the driving force behind the vision, and which continues to provide the corporatist vision for the ongoing development of the Eye. It would seem that what is extraordinary about the Eye, what makes it *cool*, is not the product or the service in itself, but the underlying vision and passion of those involved in pursuing the ongoing dream that is encapsulated by the Eye; in associating the Eye with the ongoing cycle of pursuing dreams that are the product of individual desire to make the most of, and from, exclusive experiences, unique moments, high days and holidays. As the copy attests:

The brand's product extensions include: exclusive collaborations with other leading London attractions and top restaurants and hotels; offering a unique location for events, parties, weddings and civil partnerships. . . .The brand's promotional campaigns focus on the key holiday periods of Easter, summer, Halloween and Christmas, with onsite activities aimed at enhancing guest experiences. (Cooper, 2006, p. 35)

As with desire, such brand extensions and campaigns perhaps mark a shift in marketing towards transitory experiences, ever open to re-enactment, to a continuous recycling and re-production.

Fashioning the (post)modern

Chanel: Fashion passes. Style remains.

Intriguingly the strapline for the Chanel case study, unlike those previously examined, does not change from the 2005 to the 2006 editions of *CoolBrands*. What the strapline offers is a binary opposition that would appear to be key to the Chanel brand philosophy. But it is not so much the opposition between fashion and style, as between that which passes and that which remains, between the ephemeral, the transitory and the enduring. In many respects the Chanel case studies epitomise the paradox that marks the emergence of postmodern consumption and *cool*. Does the challenging of convention by instituting change and rebelliousness pose questions as to whether this ultimately constitutes a 'new' convention. What is also problematical is how a brand, of itself, can be constituted as inherently rebellious.

The lead paragraph of the 2005 edition attempts to overcome the problem of abstracting rebelliousness by quickly cutting to the life history and philosophy of the founder behind the brand: 'Chanel's philosophy of design is simple, practical and comfortable, yet always elegant - and, at its heart, rebellious. That has been true for nearly 100 years, since Gabrielle Chanel - known to all as Coco - began making hats and then dresses.' Glossing the Chanel history, the text announces that when Coco Chanel set out, her ambition was nothing less than, 'to liberate women from the tyranny of conventional, early twentieth century dress, all corsets, wide-brimmed hats, stiff skirts and heavy chignons.' Here the text offers an obverse metaphor of rebelliousness and liberation with its description of early twentieth century

Illustration 10



dress and accompanying imagery of constraint, concealment and oppressiveness.

For Chanel, it would seem this oppressiveness is the negative corollary for a certain ostentation, of conforming to the dictates of fashion, of a conspicuous luxury that conceals a lack of confidence and the freedom to be true to one's inner self. With the mass consumption that accompanied nineteenth century industrialisation establishing itself as a major factor in the development of capitalist economies, the discourses of 'luxury' epitomised in early eighteenth-century Mandevellian economics and re-articulated in Veblen's (2005 (1899)) conspicuous consumption, found new expression in the ostentatious fashions of La Belle Epoque as a signifier of exclusivity and status. Chanel, however, provides a reverse take on ostentatious fashion as a signifier of exclusivity. The Chanel argument being put forward is that luxury is as concerned with the inner being as the outer being, as concerned with the spiritual as the material. To this extent, luxury is defined by understatement rather than over-statement: 'She believed luxury was as spiritual a need as love - but luxury, for her, was always low-key and stylish, never brash and vulgar.' (Pumphrey, 2005; p. 55)

For Chanel, it would seem the spiritual, the understated, the unseen, that which is beyond the signifier, is the essence of style. Embedding a citation from Coco Chanel at the heart - as origin and further elaboration - of their mission statement, the text re-emphasizes and privileges the unseen, meaningful 'within' and how it should be set to guard against any ostentatious, meaningless show 'without': 'For her [Chanel], what you don't see was as important as what you do - "luxury is when the inside is as beautiful as the outside"' (p. 55). But this citation begs questions as to whether the spiritual is also the subject of a certain fashioning. The text cuts to the singular eccentricity of Coco Chanel in pursuit of her philosophy of the understated, the unseen: 'She even lay on the floor so she could check that hems were perfect.'

As part of manifesting a measure of eccentricity, rebelliousness, the text also foregrounds Coco Chanel's denial of the status of genius, emphasizing a workaday, craftswoman ethos, based on understated rather than grand gestures. Inspiration was not a matter of genius, but a case of looking beyond, unconstrained by existing conventions to articulate new perceptions and experiences. And this unconventional approach is signified by characterizing her in part as 'freely' borrowing from men's fashions, pushing the boundaries of how material is used. Inspiration is further represented as being based on challenging existing practice with regard to when jewelry is worn or breaking the traditions of perfumery to invoke a nostalgia for childhood. The effect of relating the Chanel narrative in this way is that what comes through is that style is signified by setting simplicity, not so much against complexity, but against ostentation, pretension and claims to exclusivity. Style is signified by

a degree of comfort with one's everyday identity and sense of self. Her jewellery was designed to be worn throughout the day, to enhance a woman's beauty and sense of self, not to demonstrate vulgar wealth.

Having spent some sixty years in promoting a certain rebelliousness against convention, and in so doing becoming an icon of, and for, the fashion industry the Chanel brand eventually had to face up to the question of succession and the issue of instituting a 'rebellion' against this selfsame icon.

If Coco Chanel was a herald of the modern, or the precursor of the postmodern, then Karl Lagerfeld, her successor as artistic director, would seem to be a herald of the postmodern. The issue facing Lagerfeld might be construed as a typically postmodern one: what position to take when there are no new spaces, when all has already been said, already fashioned. There is the added issue of maintaining the Chanel brand complicated by the injunction to carry forward a rebellious ethos from within and against that selfsame institution. Arguably, the solution takes a postmodern turn that harbours the exclusive, one that both acknowledges and hems in the challenge.

A worthy successor to Coco, he respects her original rebellious philosophy so much that he is never afraid to reinvent her designs, borrowing from her combination of boldness and subtlety but always adding a pinch of his own wit. Lagerfeld believes 'not too much respect and a little bit of humour are indispensable for the survival of a legend'. (p. 55)

Where Coco Chanel is represented as rebelling and playing off against social mores and the fashion industry, Lagerfeld is constrained by maintaining the spirit of a logo-centric Chanel brand. He is consigned to playing with, and elaborating on, the exclusively focused Chanel signifiers. For Lagerfeld, rebelliousness is now a matter of adding touches of wit and humour, but within the long shadow cast by Chanel, the brand and the person having become indistinguishable.

It would seem Lagerfeld is limited to adding only a touch of his own wit, a modicum of artistic direction, purloining from his predecessor, pinched, constrained by the prescriptions already laid out. And while quality might be a staple ruling, the Chanel brand, its philosophy, its spirit, also has its rules, its material constraints, regardless of being offset by acts of faith and playful wit: 'faithfulness to the Chanel spirit without being constrained by it, continuing Coco's tradition of harmony and minimalism, allowing breathing space for products - and customers.' (p. 55)

The main image of the 2005 edition of *CoolBrands'* Chanel entry features a photograph of a female model (Coco Chanel herself) sat on a padded stool, half-turned, looking forwards, set against a blank background. The figure is wearing a simply cut, full length, long-sleeved black

dress and a scaled-down trilby-like hat with decorative pin. Around her neck are irregularly draped strings of pearls, their disarray contrasting with the formality of the dress and the symmetry of robust matching bracelets on each wrist. In her mouth is a lit cigarette - its near horizontal disposition, both a gesture to and a move beyond the masculine - adding to the direction and directness of a steadfast and self-confident gaze. The figure here is ostensibly of her time: early twentieth century. The image contrasts with the 'lesser' twenty-first century image on the facing page, which while constituting an updating, maintains the prescriptive spirit of Chanel, the simply cut black dress. But this time rather than affecting a certain disregard, independence is updated, signified via a direct engagement of the reader's gaze, which, at the same time, affects to draw the consumer into a more direct relationship, a modicum of dependence, with the Chanel brand.

As a matter of significance, this ubiquitous image of Coco Chanel represents her in her heyday, at the peak of powers and form. She is both origin of, and representative signifier for, the Chanel brand. Intriguingly, most representations of this image have it turned the other way so that Coco Chanel is looking backwards. It is also often cropped, so as not to convey the appearance of her turning back on herself and arguably to provide the image with an even more dynamic, self-confident disposition. The image as used in *CoolBrands 2005*, in perhaps requiring the more extensive image for the aesthetics of this particular page-layout, has, by the simple device of reversing the image, managed to maintain its dynamic quality.

(Not so) Brave New World

While the strapline remains the same for the 2006 Chanel case study, the main image and the lead paragraph signal a subtle change of priority, with the focus more firmly on Chanel the individual as opposed to the brand, and nostalgia becoming an altogether more prominent feature as the older Coco Chanel looks reflectively along the length of a mirror. Rather than beginning by setting out the Chanel brand philosophy, the lead paragraph is from the outset more directly focused on positioning Gabrielle Coco Chanel historically and ascribing to her a pioneering role in fashioning an era of new, more active, less constrained experiences. She is ascribed a position as a 'defining figure in twentieth century vogue', implying a prevailing, popular acceptance of her fashions, the careful phrasing capturing both a transitory and an enduring appeal. And while still seeking inspiration from the intertextual signifiers of the time, Coco Chanel is also represented as source of inspiration:

At the height of the Belle Epoque Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel fashioned a brave new world, liberating women from restrictive corsets and stiff fashions to offer an elegance and stylish practicality never experienced before.

Born in 1883, Gabrielle Chanel (Coco or Mademoiselle to her friends) was a pioneering French couturier whose modernist philosophy, menswear inspired fashions and pursuit of simplicity made her one of the defining figures in 20th century vogue. (Cooper, 2006, p. 45)

The main image in this edition similarly articulates a more specific historic locale, and a more specific reference and reverence. Rather than being set against a blank background, it is set in a particular locale (possibly Chanel's Paris apartment), evoking a certain periodicity and nostalgia.

In this image, an older, more individualised and private Coco Chanel, as opposed to Chanel as (role) model, is positioned leaning with her right arm outstretched against a classically-motifed fireplace. The fireplace is topped by a mirror, with Chanel looking back along the line of the top of the fireplace, adopting a reflective, nostalgic demeanour. She is wearing a classic Chanel full-length, black dress, but delicately gathered and with shoulders and full-length sleeves finished in diaphanous black lace. The style of dress, with its lack of masculine signifiers that characterised the previous year's image, attests to a change to gentler, less assertive representations of feminine subjectivity. The bold, imposing, decorative drapes in the background allude to a bygone opulence. A mixture of classic simplicity and understated decoration perhaps affects a nostalgia for an historical moment that marks a less assertive transition from the Belle Epoque. While the derivative nineteenth-century fashion of the Belle Epoque might be under attack, as a pioneer of the modern era, there would also appear to be a need to acknowledge the scientific, economic, social and philosophic changes and achievements of the self-same era, and the need to fashion a commensurate style of dress that encompasses both the masculine and the feminine.

Illustration | I



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Coco's first foray into fashion came as a milliner in 1910. The understated elegance of her hats may not have impressed the fashion-obsessed ladies of the Belle Epoque – who declared them 'unappreciated' – but as Coco herself declared in an interview in 1963, 'One can never be too modern'. Stealing in the name of discretion over ostentation, Coco's was a philosophy that would come to underline everything Chanel came to represent.

During World War I, a time of great upheaval in Europe, Coco began to experiment, plundering men's wardrobes for ideas she deconstructed the conventions of the time using materials such as jersey – that came that year and only been used for men's underwear – in place of dress fabrics. This, thanks to the war, came in short supply. The results were striking creations that would influence what, and how women wore their clothes for decades to come.

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CHANEL

Chanel became especially famous for its elegant little black dress – now a must-have item in every woman's wardrobe – and its signature Chanel No. 5 perfume, created in 1921 by legendary parfumeur Ernest Beaux. Beaux reportedly gave Coco a set of five samples to choose from after she'd instructed him to create a fragrance 'all about the scent, and nothing about the bottle'. She preferred No. 5, telling him, 'It will bring me luck'.

In keeping with her trademark modern, elegant lines, Coco designed the packaging for the fragrance, pure, austere and minimal. It has since acquired iconic status and is held up as a 20th century design classic.

Twelve years after Coco's death, in 1995, Karl Lagerfeld took over as artistic director of the brand – a bold move given that the designer had already cultivated a particular style and had built up an impressive reputation in his own right. Lagerfeld has succeeded in paying tribute to the design and stylish elegance of the 'Grande Mademoiselle' in his own definitive, witty fashion. His innovation has ensured that Chanel still retains strongly among those on the cutting edge of contemporary design.

While Chanel is perhaps best known today for its clothes, handbags and perfume, it continues to develop its range of accessories, including shoes, watches and jewellery.

The definitive Chanel suit – comprising of a knee-length suit and slim, long jacket with black trim and gold buttons – is an enduring design that has withstood the tests of modern times and is as possible now as ever. Chanel's classic bags are instantly recognisable for the brand's distinctive logo – an interlocking double C to represent its founders initials, Coco Chanel – that denotes the quality, craftsmanship and grace of its luxury status. The new Carbon line features

a larger diamond quilt with an off-centre, horizontal logo, while the Luxury Line, introduced in 2006 and featuring a metal chain embossed in the leather, is one of the most desired 'it' bags of the moment.

Fashion is no longer the privilege of Paris but a high profile, global affair. While Lagerfeld may, through his haute couture and ready-to-wear collections, present tongue-in-cheek interpretations of classic Chanel designs, the brand remains universally acclaimed as a model of continuity in fashion, perfume and name.



The contrasting images of Coco Chanel in the 2005 and 2006 editions of *CoolBrands*, the first with an assertive, dynamic, forward-looking representation of Chanel, and the second, discreet, reflective, measured, signals a shift of emphasis with regard to Chanel's brand values: 'Believing in the value of discretion over ostentation, Coco's was a philosophy that would come to underline everything Chanel came to represent.' (p. 45) While liberation might continue to constitute the founding moment, rebelliousness has been written out, as perhaps too unruly, too ostentatious, and replaced by a measure of discretion and discernment. Liberty now consigned to acting in relation to one's judgement, the limits, the origins of which would seem to be circumscribed by a Chanel brand embodying Coco Chanel's vision. But this again raises questions as to the origins of Chanel's vision, inspiration.

As with the 2005 edition, the 2006 edition marks World War I as a key factor, not just as a consequence of a shortage of supplies, but because of the wider social upheaval and dislocation it came to represent, constituting a breaking and resetting of prevailing regimes. The change is registered in the language and imagery of the 2006 edition. Chanel is represented as a modernist, imbued with an experimental, scientific disposition that is also a feature of the Belle Epoque, but the schismatic fault lines of which had been exposed by World War I. According to this narrative the impression is given of operating within an altogether more fractious, schismatic ethos, ruled by a breakdown of order. Instructively, rather than borrowing from men's fashions, Chanel is now represented as plundering them: 'During World War I, a time of great upheaval in Europe, Coco began to experiment. Plundering men's wardrobes for ideas, she deconstructed the conventions of the time . . . ' (p. 45)

The text hints at a rethinking, a reconstruction of a modernist agenda to reinscribe a place for enduring, classic values represented by understated signifiers that inscribe a place for a self-confident femininity, as opposed to the ostentatious femininity of the Belle Epoque, which was particularly disposed to configuring women as objects of the male gaze. Chanel might well have rejected the ostentation of Belle Epoque fashions and the representation of women as spectacle, as object of the male gaze, with no regard for their comfort, needs or aspirations. But as with any historical period there is the need to guard against taking too homogeneous a view of events, to adequately reflect what is at stake and to acknowledge the materiality of signifying practices in understanding how particular discourses come to prevail. It helps account for the emergence of an historical space in which Chanel challenges for the masculine signifiers and subsequent tensions in the representation of the Chanel brand that relies on a consuming, if not entirely masculine, gaze for its enduring success.

As van Noort (2006) notes the Belle Epoque saw an increasing commodification and consumption of women's fashions:

The Belle Epoque was obsessed by the figure of woman as spectacle. While women in the public sphere constituted the most visible objects of society's gaze - whether on stage, in the café, on the street or behind the feminist pulpit - the explosion of women's magazines and the advertisements they contained increasingly invaded the private domain. (p. 139)

But as Iskin (2006) observes in her discussion on the impact of Belle Epoque advertising posters in the construction of new identities and roles for women:

The fact that some Belle Epoque posters portrayed not merely the secretive or passive woman, but also the active modern woman, must be understood in the historical context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fin-de-siècle and the Belle Epoque were marked by fierce debates in the press about changes in the roles and identities of women. (p 95-96)

Chanel's early designs in their appropriation and challenging of the masculine might easily be interpreted as having their origins in such debates, in part of an emerging discourse, focused on the creation of alternative spaces for the modern woman. But the question that poses itself is whether such liberating discourses that are a consequence of a specific historical moment can sustain their ongoing fashioning in light of historical change and the brand's need for continuity and sales. While Chanel's 2005 entry seems to maintain this hope, the 2006 edition forgoes a philosophy of 'permanent revolution' and opts instead for a decidedly postmodern, tongue-in-cheek world of continuity, of playing to a globalising market, utilizing their particular brand of exclusivity to generate a mass appeal. Priority is given to recruiting acolytes after the fashion of Lagerfeld, content to pay 'tribute to the designs and stylish elegance of the "Grand Mademoiselle,"' the founding, originary logos of the Chanel brand, offered as ready-to-wear signifier of an exclusive, global *cool* and with markets to match:

Fashion is no longer the privilege of Paris but a high profile global affair. While Lagerfeld may, through his haute couture and ready-to-wear collections, present tongue-in-cheek interpretations of classic Chanel designs, the brand remains universally acclaimed as a model of continuity in fashion, perfume and name. (Cooper, 2006, p. 45)

As alluded to above, the contrasting images of Coco Chanel in the 2005 and 2006 editions of *CoolBrands*, signal the possibility of a subtle shift of emphasis with regard to Chanel's brand values. Whereas the 2005 text ascribes a modernist, 'brave new world' ethos to the brand and Chanel herself, the 2006 text hints at a rethinking of what was regarded as a liberating, modernist project. In so doing, a space is configured for a retro, backward perspective on the enduring, classic values represented by understated signifiers that secure Coco Chanel's place in history, but which at the same time allow the brand to move on.

The question that is posed by this subtle shift in representations of the Chanel brand is whether 'liberating' discourses that are a consequence of a specific historical moment can sustain their ongoing fashioning in light of historical change and a brand's need for continuity, particularly if it is seen to compromise sales. Arguably, the consequences of this dilemma accounts for the 2006 edition opting for a decidedly postmodern, tongue-in-cheek world of continuity, offering an ironic playfulness instead of representations of epoch-changing rebelliousness that threatens to leave the brand stranded. The postmodern play on nostalgia effectively allows for both a cutting-edge challenge to convention, while maintaining an appeal to enduring traditions that are viewed as transcending history.

Conclusion

In many ways the CoolBrands project bears similarities with the Oscars Awards for the film industry. Similarly self-appointed bodies serve primarily as promotional tools for their industries in maximising their impact on the wider culture and the ongoing consumption of their brands, be they concerned with celebrity or *cool*. What is interesting about such promotional projects is the deployment of a rhetoric that needs to testify to the exclusivity of their awards as constituting a recognition of distinctive, original work and achievement, while at the same time providing a rationale for making such awards that alludes to the recipients of the awards as possessing knowing insights into the human condition, to the spirit of the times.

The deconstruction of the *cool* brands chosen in this chapter questions such claims to exclusivity, originality and individual percipience, by locating them with wider discursive, intertextual frameworks that exert a particular 'conformity' that undercuts such claims. It is argued this 'conformity' usually entails lionising the sensitive, insightful individual, rather than individuals who admit themselves to be a constitutive part of a distinctive discursive and cultural milieu.

By way of a final reckoning, what the deconstruction of the above *cool* brands also attests is that the postmodern taxonomy proposed by Brown (1995) and Firat and Venkatesh (1997) (see Chapter Two) has become part of the discursive ether and caught up, whether directly or indirectly, in the configuration, design and promotion of *cool*. The manifestations of *cool* played out in these brands incorporate and adapt some or all of the taxonomy alluded to by Brown (1994) and Firat and Venkatesh (1997). What a deconstruction of these brands brings to the fore is that they deploy material signifying stratagems that help circumscribe them as manifesting and being characterised by: a degree of tolerance; their emergence from a hyperreal world; the blurring of history to give the sense of a perpetual present in which

nothing essentially changes; the use of paradoxical juxtapositions; fragmentation; the loss of commitment to any one overarching metanarrative; the decentring of the subject; a reversal of the priorities of consumption and production; the emphasis on form and style; the acceptance of a degree of dis-order that is consequent upon adopting a rebellious, counter-cultural stance.

But the crucial concluding observation is that by following through the implications of the 'Literary' as more heterogeneous than the marketing literati allow, helps create space for deconstructive readings. And this renders the possibility of *cool* as a discursive construct dependent on the deployment and materiality of the signifier, and which thrives on difference and undecidability as a dynamic facet of our linguistic and cultural being, rather than simply viewing *cool* as a mark or signifier of a distinctive, unique, original brand of individuality.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION - UNSETTLING MARKETING

Write of Passage

As a work, this Dissertation, in questioning particular aspects of marketing's questioning of representation, and representation more generally, acknowledges a certain instability in its own project and the danger of lapsing into its own form of enlightened rationality. As Bernstein (2001), citing Adorno and Horkheimer, observes:

In their 'Introduction' Adorno and Horkheimer state that since public opinion has become a commodity, and language the means for promoting that commodity, then established linguistic and conceptual conventions could not be trusted, relied upon, to chart the 'indefatigable self-destructiveness of enlightenment . . . [t]here is no longer any available form of linguistic expression which has not tended toward accommodation to dominant currents of thought; and what a devalued language does not do automatically is proficiently executed by societal mechanisms'. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is, as a consequence, a work of fragments. . . (p. 8).

It is as a work of 'fragments', in the charting of a course through a diversity of texts, rather than offering a singular, authorial, logocentric perspective, that this Dissertation calls into question the ultimate validity of any conventionally structured rationale that resorts to a founding logos as the centre and origin of its *knowingness*. Thus, while this work maintains a measure of academic conventionality in its structure and ethos, at the same time, it is supplemented by a deconstruction that operates to challenge, unsettle, fragment, deconstruct and keep open to question the imposition of conventional modes of rationality and the assertion of any singular truths.

Ultimately, it is not about offering more rational prescriptions, neither adding to, nor replacing, but with exploring and mapping the terrain, while at the same time offering an unsettling questioning of the modes of reasoning into which we are drawn. It is to argue there is always more that might be written, and that rather than offering con-clusions, to question the implications and conventions of the ex-clusions, the ex-centric and the marginal.

As argued in the Introduction, a key issue for this Dissertation in questioning representation has been the refusal to take texts as transparent, as providing – or holding out the possibility of providing – clear, unequivocal insights into the world, as securing a match between intentions and meaning, representation and reality, as marking a transition to a more enlightened status. To this end, this Dissertation constantly brings into question the rational modes of representation manifest in the texts being studied. And by way of maintaining consistency, the same applies to the modes of representation and conventions of doctoral theses, including this one. This makes for a degree of difficulty in the writing and reading.

To this extent, it is not a case of being wilfully obtuse or opaque, a refusal to write in clear, succinct prose, but with registering a commitment to not taking for granted language and texts as problem-free representations. It is a case of being 'mindful' of the undecidability that is the mark of our entry into language and culture.

It is a contention of this Dissertation that the stratagem of resisting and questioning conventional rationality, of committing to the play of difference – not least from the perspective of market and brand differentiation – has the potential to 'originate' new insight and innovation, be that with regard to products and services or critical thinking and ethics.

This Chapter continues by briefly drawing together the potential implications of questions and issues raised by this poststructuralist engagement of the literary in the configuration of postmodern marketing and the logos of *cool*.

Problematising the Knowing Subject

One of the key issues for setting the trajectory of this Dissertation was to map the tensions and differences in configurations of the postmodern by way of charting its bearings for marketing and consumer culture. What emerged from a review of a range of commentaries was a sense of the complexity of the postmodern as both an extension and a critique of the Enlightenment project. On the one hand the postmodern constitutes an increasing valorization of the individual, while on the other it offers a critique of the autonomous individual that bears comparison with poststructural critiques. With regard to the latter, it is the questioning of the validity of overarching metanarratives that constitutes the postmodern challenge to the traditional logocentric model of reason that Western 'man' has used since the eighteenth century, both to found and legitimate an understanding of reality, but which is often closed to reason with regard to the 'realities' of power it effaces.

For poststructuralist readings in particular, the major theoretical concern shifts to one of recognising the play of undecidability, of assessing the historical and cultural forces at play in mapping discursive spaces for particular forms of subjectivity. This is an issue of no little concern with regard to a deconstruction of marketing and consumer culture, with their configuration of rationales that promote and privilege, as they offer to explain, certain patterns of consumption as a function of, and originating in, the desire to achieve a distinctive, individual identity.

This dissertation argued that it is the questioning of subjectivity and its mediation that has constituted a key element in coming to an understanding of marketing and consumer studies' turn to the literary. However, perhaps what the Literature Review, along with the

supplementary Literary Review, also testifies is that the degree of attention and critique brought to bear on the implications of the decentring of the humanist subject is not always maintained.

With the Cartesian subject under 'review', questions were raised about the institutional implications of discourse theory in relation to the 'captivation' of the subject, power and the mapping of disciplinary boundaries: that is, what is to be excluded and included. This was carried out in the first instance in relation to the discipline of the Literary – as aesthetic work – by way of calling into question the play of power in the process of canonisation. It was argued that while literary theory raised serious questions about the literary canon as a means of representing and advocating particular interests and values, this point is somewhat marginalised by those marketers advocating a turn to the literary. A consequence of this, it was argued that in pursuing an uncritical literary agenda, certain marketers perpetuate, whether consciously or not, particular formations of interests and values.

It was argued that on first reading many of the marketing literati, appear to adopt and adapt what are fundamentally liberal humanist constructions of literature and aesthetics. While these might appear to have radical, alternative potential in challenging marketing's positivist predilections, such approaches do not constitute the full story with regard to the project of literary theory. In particular, it was argued that what the writing of many of the marketing literati appear to represent is not so much a decentring of the humanist subject, but a re-centring on an aesthetic paradigm, as opposed to an empiricist, positivist paradigm.

While not taking issue with the marketing literati's challenges to the truth claims of the scientific/positivist approaches with regard to the marketing project, there is a concern that the alternative adopted – subjective introspection or criticism - similarly efface the blind spots to be found in the literary project. What is at issue is whether the scepticism being applied to scientific and positivist epistemologies should also be applied to aesthetic epistemologies.

As a consequence, it was argued there is the danger of simply reconstituting and privileging a new configuration of marketing, based on a particular brand of literary theory, without entertaining the possibility that what is being offered is little more than a re-fashioning of prior prescriptions that fail to move beyond a positivist ontology that simply takes the 'real' as read.

To this end, a deconstruction of the marketing literati in Chapter Six indicated a tendency to select and sample various literary approaches and methodologies that consciously and unconsciously accord with a logos that privileges the *knowing* liberal humanist subject; and fails to follow through the epistemological, cultural and historical implications of their

engagement with literary theory. It was argued that this 'partial' reading, while often referencing literary theory as an all-embracing term, in practice, focuses upon literary criticism in the New Critical/Romantic tradition that accords with a commitment to subjective personal introspection and criticism.

It was further argued that as interesting and outwardly heterogeneous as the marketing literati might be, the discomfiting question persists that they remain further extensions of the unannounced, unacknowledged liberal humanist project that, while promoting the virtues of tolerance, balance, equality, discernment, freedom-of-choice and individual sovereignty, does so within a discursive framework that privileges the centrality of the *knowing*, transcendental humanist subject as the source and guarantor of meaning. All too often, what is not addressed is how that *knowingness* is constituted. Once we begin to challenge and deconstruct *knowingness* as ultimately grounded in and validated by individual consciousness, it becomes possible to open up the terrain for exploring the construction of knowledge and *knowingness* as discursively or textually situated.

The argument put forward was that the real failure is the lack of any challenge to the constitution of subjective forms of *knowingness* so readily purveyed in both literary and marketing texts. In contrast to many of the marketing literati, it is argued it is the textual strategies of sceptical European postmodernists or poststructuralists that demonstrate real potency, in maintaining the radical challenge that calls into question our sources of *knowingness*.

To this end, it was noted that part of literary theory's engagement of new historicism, cultural materialism and cultural history was to dethrone and demystify the privileged literary work and its claims to an exclusive *knowingness*, to expose its claims of immunity from an intertextual network, along with its claims to occupying a space that does not bear the imprint of the social and the political. A key issue for this dissertation has been to maintain a demystification of particular configurations of the literary appropriated by the marketing literati, to further question the implications of subjective introspection and reader response theory, particularly with regard to the operation of a neo-liberal inscription that takes as an axiomatic truth the sovereignty of the individual.

It was also argued that in similar fashion to Belsey's (1989) proposed stratagem for English, Marketing needs to be moved closer towards a cultural criticism and history, which takes all signifying practice as its domain, and which considers the implications of privileging one perspective over another. At the same time, it is important to come to an understanding of what it is that cultural criticism and history might enable us to know and to reflect on why it is we might want to know it. Belsey argues that cultural criticism and history provides a

space for the analysis of textuality as inherently unstable and for the identification of culture as itself a place where norms are specified and contested, knowledges affirmed and challenged, subjectivity produced and disrupted. It is a major contention of this Dissertation that the all-pervasive – and invasive - texts of marketing and consumer culture provide just such a space for contesting norms, challenging knowledge and disrupting subjectivity.

It was argued that the stratagems of new historicism and cultural history, particularly with regard to their resistance to viewing texts through the emollient prescriptions of seeking origins, trends, orders and *zeitgeists* that smooth over the heterogeneity and discontinuities of both the past and the present, offer a means for maintaining a disruptive questioning and undecidability. What became of interest for this Dissertation was to problematise postmodern marketing's turn to the literary as the expression, the unfolding, of a more progressive, enlightened approach to the needs of the consumer by examining in their specificity, articulations of the *cool* consumer.

As a consequence, it is argued that the insinuation of undecidability places an emphasis on change and raises significant issues for the [re]configuration of marketing. In many respects, marketers would find it difficult to argue against this proposition concerning undecidability, as their activities are predicated on continuous market change and their role in driving and being driven by desire and its constant unsettling of market offerings. In what might bear comparison with marketing communication stratagems, Belsey (1994) argues that the drive behind fictional writing in particular is to mark out, imagine, delimit, inscribe, new possibilities, which at the same time implies the possibilities of, and desire for, change.

It is an important contention of this dissertation that irony – often deemed a key characteristic of a postmodern sensibility – can be also deployed to unsettle and insinuate the possibilities of change, both for the literary and marketing academies. Consequently, it has been argued that the intervention of irony might function as more than simply the manifestation of a worldly-weary consumer knowingness, and rather attest to the possibility of differing perspectives. To this end a charting of irony helped initiate an undoing, a deconstruction, of the discourses competing to map contemporary marketing and consumer culture's emerging articulations and priorities.

It was observed that marketing's representation of irony as a [dis]position of and towards *knowingness* is integral to the construction of the knowing subjects of modern and postmodern consumption, but in which the primacy of the sovereignty afforded to the producer and consumer has simply been reversed. This reversal is invariably represented as evidence of an increasingly progressive and enlightened outlook on the part of marketers and consumers. However, it was argued that a deconstruction of marketing's deployment of

irony (as in the example of the advertisement for the PT Cruiser) raised the possibility of a masking of its own inadvertent questioning of consumer sovereignty as discursively constructed. Indeed, from a literary theory perspective, it was argued that irony as an interrogative mode of address can be deployed to contrary effect - disrupting the unity of the reader/consumer. But at the same time it is recognised that the hold of the logocentric is not so easily outdone; the ironic, multiphrenic subject/consumer is simply subject to readings that configure it as the recognition of an actively elusive, mercurial self. This idiosyncratic consumer, taken to be symptomatic of the postmodern, has become the epitome of *cool*. The question remains as to whether it is by design that an added effect is to make the consumer endlessly amenable to the diverse and proliferating stratagems of a marketing-driven consumer culture.

From a contemporary marketing and consumer behavioural perspective an irony that promotes a mercurial, [re]productive ethic of 'active self-formation' has some obvious attractions in terms of the ongoing exchange dynamic it affords. But at the same time it maintains an idealist mode of thinking whereby language, including its ironic forms, continues to operate as a means for representing, determining, a pre-existing truth, reality – including those of the market and consumer needs. From a marketing perspective, the implications of this double movement are making themselves felt in the subtle shifts of movement between attempts to identify consumer *needs* - which might be characterised as easily definable – and that of determining consumer *desires*, which are endlessly elusive and reproducible.

Deconstructing Marketing Texts

Part of the thinking behind the mapping of what is at stake in the discursive functioning of the 'Review', methodology and the issue of (ironic) representation has been the unsettling of any tendency to offer or privilege a singular, rational, logocentric perspective that claims to provide unproblematical access to the 'truth'. As part of this process this Dissertation sought to problematise disciplinary boundaries, the problem of meaning, claims to canonical status, the configuration of the subject, claims to knowingness, the scope for change and the ethical forces at play across a range of discourses.

To this end, it is important to acknowledge that academic practices and conventions both help determine and are determined by the configuration of their own cultural history and priorities, a deconstructive questioning of which needs to be rigorously maintained in order to cultivate a susceptibility to the discontinuities, inconsistencies and possibilities of otherwise perspectives. So, rather than simply taking Marketing and Consumer Studies as disciplines ultimately concerned with the rational progression of their study of consumer

needs and priorities, a critical intertextual approach has been adopted. This entailed pursuing the argument that meaning is not inscribed in texts but is differentiated and displaced across an intertextual network of signification.

Consequently, in denying for itself a logocentric perspective, insofar as this is possible, part of the intertextual stratagem followed by this research has been to 'strike together' texts to consider the issues that are generated in the play of their differences and in so doing adapting the deconstructive approaches of new historicism and cultural history. The texts chosen for this study comprised a varied and eclectic mix, with no privilege granted to any particular category, canon or genre of text, calling into question modes of representation and disciplinary boundaries, bringing to the fore a measure of interdisciplinarity and intertextuality. And it was precisely this suspending of disciplinary boundaries, categories and rationales that helped pave the way for an exploration and rendering of discursive cross-currents and issues, rather than being constrained by what is taken to constitute the essence, homogeneity and rational structure of particular disciplines. An intertextual stratagem that charted the inscription and play of difference, combined with an acknowledgement of the materiality of the signifier, helped map the ground for a preliminary identification and subsequent deconstruction of a range of discontinuous, intractable issues, notably, representation, subjectivity, logocentrism, consumer sovereignty, ironic *knowingness*, undecidability and *cool*.

This stratagem was pursued to offer deconstructive readings of a range of marketing texts, broadly defined. These included: a deconstruction of marketing literati, who sought to pave the way for a privileging of the literary in reconfiguring approaches to marketing; academic and non-academic commentaries on cool; and a range of brands designated as cool. The aim was to explore further what these discourses took for granted, the marginalised, the suppressed, the contradictions, the hidden priorities and the material effects of their modes of address in glossing those uncomfortable, intractable issues that permeate consumer culture - at this given historical moment what might be described as a rapacious consumer culture - and which are made all the more manifest at times of crisis. At the time of writing, the world is experiencing the recessionary shock waves that followed the collapse of the credit-fuelled consumer boom and the global credit crunch of 2008/2009. But while the economists rush to their history books to uncover the lessons of 1929, it remains an open question as to how these lessons will be read. As long as economic discourse continues to privilege the 'invisible hand of the market' as the founding logos determining economic progression then there is little hope it will recognise its own complicity in glossing and marginalising the fundamental economic contradictions of a free market, in which the control and distribution of capital remains an intractable issue.

In the first instance, the 'striking together' of a diverse range of marketing and literary texts raised a number of issues with regard to the appeal for a more tolerant, inclusive, pluralist, skeptical approach towards the configuration of marketing on the part of the marketing literati. In sum, a deconstructive reading of these texts showed that the tolerance, inclusiveness and skepticism did not extend to a questioning of the logocentric assumptions implicit in their critiques and in which the sovereign subject was deemed to be the final arbiter with regard to consumer desires and priorities.

It is argued that ultimately what is privileged with their resort to subjective introspection, introspective phenomenology, archetypal criticism, reader communities and gestalt psychologism is a valorisation of the sovereign individual, the discreet/discrete subject and mainstay of a neo-liberal humanism.

In drawing to a conclusion the chapter on the marketing literati, it was noted that in contradistinction to Hirschman and Holbrook's 'arbitrary prejudice' with the literary as characterised by a striving for organic unity, and bearing the influence of Gestalt psychology, Eagleton focuses on the implications of literary discourse as contradictory and heterogeneous. It was argued further that the virtue of Eagleton's approach is that it facilitates a focus on the more strategic issue of how discursive practices 'promote' their designs at the point of consumption and stands in marked contrast to Hirschman and Holbrook's position and, by extension many of the marketing literati, who view the text as a cipher through which insights into the universal human condition and desire can be unlocked.

While articulating reservations concerning Eagleton's resort to what is in effect a metalanguage that seeks a position beyond the text, a contrast is, nevertheless, drawn between his problematisation of the category of the Literary with the marketing literati's lack of scepticism with regard to the Literary, and whose only means of differentiating between various literary theories comes down to no more than an act of faith – the ultimate logocentric stratagem and 'origin' of *knowingness*. It was further pointed out that my concern was not to privilege Eagleton himself or the validity of his position, but with how the texts that bear his signature are themselves strategically deployed and the material effects of that deployment, be it in 1983, 1992 or 2009.

By way of establishing possible trajectories for marketing, further consideration was given to Eagleton's argument that the choice of what to study in a newly expanded discipline should be seen as a function of what is being attempted and in what situation – with the determining factor being the contribution it will make to the strategic goal of human

emancipation. It is argued that the appeal of invoking a strategic dimension with regard to the literary and the question of emancipation is that it creates a space for the importance of studying the effects of marketing stratagems and further problematising their ethical role in a wider social, historical and cultural context.

Charting Cool

As part of mapping a wider purview, this dissertation then shifted to a consideration and deconstruction of a range of discourses that inscribe and contest articulations of the *cool* consumer (the sovereign consumer writ large), the continuities and the discontinuities, and the possible implications for marketing. In offering this deconstruction, texts from a variety of genres were engaged. These included a hi-brow, lifestyle magazine article, an anti-corporate manifesto that made the best-sellers listings, an academic paper, a PhD turned scholarly monograph, an academic review and an interview that appeared in an international business magazine. The readings of this eclectic range of commentaries testifies to the discursive and intertextual forces at play. It also led to the conclusion that any delimiting and classification process of what *cool* signifies needs to extend far beyond any simple acceptance of it as the expression of an independent, knowing and mercurial individualism.

Part of the concern of this Dissertation has been with further exploring the implications of a postmodern resort to irony as a signifier of the *knowing* consumer and how this equates to the increasing hegemony of *cool* as the holy grail of marketing. Each of the texts examined in Chapter Seven provide a commentary on cool, albeit by means of different generic forms and modes of address: journalism, monograph, academic paper, review and interview. In effect, each offers a form of remedial commentary, whether consciously or subconsciously, on the category and implications of cool consumerism. But in so doing, each particular form of 'remedy' in privileging the metaphysics of presence, ultimately denies the materiality of the signifier in its prescription.

At the same time and in their various ways each commentary contributes to a mapping and delimiting of cool, its origins, its impact, its significance, its shortcomings, the inconsistencies, the indeterminacies and ultimately its relevance to what can be best described as a postmodern, consumer-driven capitalism.

The concern of this Chapter was as much with charting the discontinuities that call into question the integrity of the *cool, knowing* logocentric subject, as with the continuities that chart the progression of what is often articulated as the advent of an increasingly sophisticated consumer. It is not a case of proving the dispensability or indispensability of *cool* as a marker of success, nor its efficacy or inefficacy as a signifier for an inscrutable

consumer, but with deconstructing the claims and counter-claims made on *cool*'s behalf and the possible implications for [re]configuring the subject of marketing. Questions were also raised as to whether a poststructuralist 'undecidability' resonates with the priorities of marketing *cool* and the possible ethical implications for a reconfiguration of marketing.

The deconstructive reading of this eclectic range of commentaries on *cool*, in which the materiality of the signifier has been brought to the fore, has had the effect of highlighting the insinuation/inscription of discursive and intertextual stratagems that privilege a logocentric metaphysics of presence. It also leads to the conclusion that any delimiting and classification process as to what *cool* signifies needs to extend far beyond any simple acceptance of it as the expression of an intangible, *knowing* and mercurial individualism.

Branding Cool

Chapter Eight deconstructed a number of brands designated as *cool*. It sought to map the materiality of their signifying practices and the cultural histories that contribute to their *cool* designation. In so doing the play of institutional and corporate power is registered, along with the continuing inscription of an emerging postmodern ethos and consumer culture hegemony.

Arguably, all the brands featured in these case studies secure their claims to *cool* by means of advertizing to an exclusivity that is taken as read, founded on a metaphysical logos that constitutes the source of their claims to *knowingness*. However, it was argued that almost of necessity this entails postulating a series of binaries to determine this privileging of *cool*, and which as a consequence, entail the inscription of difference and the source of resistance to those self-same claims.

Intriguingly, what a deconstructive 'literary' reading of these brands also rendered was a sense of the degree to which *cool* and the postmodern are constituted by homologous discursive and signifying practices.

The Sliding of the Signifier

It was argued that the play of difference in Asahi's 2005 positioning statement(s), body-copy and imagery suggest designs on the articulation of an indeterminacy in the articulation of *cool*. Paradoxically, it was argued, these designs, while playing to *cool*'s indeterminacy, are a function of determinate signifying practices and conventions, particularly those associated with irony and intertextuality. Subsequently, this reading was set against a deconstructive

reading of Asahi's 2006 'Coolbrands' entry. Again, this text/entry reinforces the stratagem of making a virtue of ambiguity and undecidability, inscribing an indeterminate exclusivity, with the very material effect of signifying there being more to this brand than first meets the eye. The overall thrust of the argument I put forward was that the material signifying practices deployed by these texts work by design to promote the brand as having hidden qualities that are the preserve of a knowing and exclusive cognoscenti, as opposed to being simply the preserve of a knowing and exclusive cognoscenti.

BlackBerry Way

It was argued that what the copy for the BlackBerry brand understates, in its claim to be offering a means of achieving greater freedom, is the reverse proposition that the BlackBerry device subjects its user to an unprecedented degree of control and surveillance. With the deconstruction of the BlackBerry brand, the claim that part of what constitutes *cool* is the freedom of being in control, of doing one's own thing, of asserting one's own authority, was called into question. From a deconstructive perspective a careful teasing out of the text's claims was undertaken by way of drawing attention to the pitfalls of offering any simplistic reading of what arguably is among the most undecidable of signifiers - 'freedom'. Signifiers that play on freedom are not unfamiliar in marketing discourse, ranging from the freedom of the open road implicit in a multitude of automobile advertisements (the PT Cruiser Advertisement featured on p. 2 being a case in point) to the freedom of letting oneself go with the aid of an alcoholic beverage. But what is common to virtually all, and requiring little by way of deconstruction to ascertain, is a suppression of longer-term, hidden costs that compromise any immediate sense of freedom.

Intriguingly, in setting off the 2005 entry for BlackBerry against the 2006 version, there is a subtle, but not insignificant change. In 2006, a further de-differentiation and elision of hierarchies and boundaries, is brought into play. In this case a greater degree of authority is ascribed to the BlackBerry as a signifier of the intuitive knowingness of exclusive, aspirational, free-thinking individuals who determine their own needs, rather than being 'sold' a functional device as a means to an end. The focus shifts from the BlackBerry device and on to the consumer. It became a case of asking not what the BlackBerry can do for you, but what you can do with the BlackBerry. To this extent, the election campaign of Barrak Obama in 2008 could not have been more fortuitous for the BlackBerry brand. The BlackBerry became virtually synonymous with Obama's campaign slogan calling for change and a new vision of a progressive freedom. And in breaking new ground in becoming the first black president of the United States, Obama's election will have certainly raised the BlackBerrys *cool* credentials. But even here there are constraints. A report by Johnson

(2009) points to various security and political issues that would constrain Obama's use of his BlackBerry.

Perpetuum Mobile

The BA London Eye brand was deconstructed to render a reading which suggests the Eye as the fulfilment of a project – whether conscious or unconscious - to offer a consumer-culture, allegorical equivalent of the 'wheel of life'. It was argued that the Eye might be read as a symbol for the realities of life, its ups and downs. To this extent, the Eye offers a marketing, cultural experience characterised by a recognition of difference, by the play of highs and lows, by exclusive experiences set off against the more mundane – but which, crucially, are endlessly recyclable and consumable.

Charting the differences between the 2005 and 2006 copy and imagery there emerged the articulation of the need for a further de-differentiation, a refusal of hierarchy and a shift in representation that configures producer and consumer as being at one. It is a change of emphasis that effectively signifies the play of dreams – the aspirations and the anxieties – that constitute the founding logos of each and every individual. Arguably, the priority in this rendering of the eye invokes a postmodern 'Everyman', rather than simply viewing the project as the property of the exclusive, creative vision of the architects of the London Eye. In addition, it was argued the Eye effectively constitutes a signifier of the priorities of postmodern economies increasingly predicated on the perpetuation – and perpetuum mobile - of intangible, ephemeral experiences and desires redolent of dreams.

Fashioning Postmodern Cool

In many ways, the strapline for the Chanel entry - *Fashion passes. Style remains* - epitomises the paradox that marks the emergence of *cool* as the signifier that best characterises the contradictions circumscribed by a postmodern consumer culture: how to maintain an ethos of both change and continuity; how to fashion an appeal that plays to a mercurial, idiosyncratic individuality while maintaining an ongoing foundation for, and commitment to, the brand; how to sustain an ongoing ethos of consumption, while advocating a mode of *cool* exclusivity that as a matter of non-conformity sets itself beyond the injunction to consume.

It was argued the Chanel brand attempts to overcome this dilemma by manifesting a philosophy that is at heart rebellious, anti-foundationalist, laying claim to offering a form of liberation from social and fashion conventions. However, this begged the question as to whether challenging convention by resort to an ethos of rebelliousness simply institutes a

'new' convention. What was also problematical was how a brand, of itself, can be constituted as inherently rebellious. The lead paragraph of the 2005 edition of *Coolbrands* attempts to overcome the problem of abstracting rebelliousness by quickly cutting to the life history and philosophy of the founder behind the Chanel brand. But the dilemma facing the brand is that the need to maintain the Chanel logo(s) as a signifier of rebelliousness and distinctive individuality comes up against the need to maintain the continuity and recycling of the Chanel brand and reputation beyond the lifespan of its founder Coco Chanel. It was argued the attempt to overcome this dilemma entailed resorting to an inside/outside binary – invoking the inner, authentic spirit or essence of Chanel, as opposed to the outward manifestations of its fashions. But taking a deconstructive perspective raised the question as to whether the spiritual in turn is not similarly the subject of a certain fashioning and as such offers no guarantee of its truth-claims beyond a simple logocentric assertion.

If Coco Chanel was articulated as a herald of the modern in challenging tradition and convention, then Karl Lagerfeld, her successor as artistic director, would seem to be a herald of the postmodern. It was conjectured that the issue facing Lagerfeld might be construed as a typically postmodern one: what position to take when there are no new spaces, when all has already been said, already fashioned. Where Coco Chanel was represented as rebelling against social mores and the conventions of the fashion industry, Lagerfeld is constrained by maintaining the spirit of a logo-centric Chanel brand. He is consigned to playing with and elaborating on the exclusively focused Chanel signifiers. For Lagerfeld, rebelliousness was now a matter of adding touches of ironic wit and humour, but within the long shadow cast by Chanel.

While the strapline remains the same for the 2006 Chanel case study, the main image and the lead paragraph signal a subtle change of priority, with the focus more firmly on Chanel the individual as opposed to the brand, and with nostalgia becoming an altogether more prominent feature. Rather than beginning with the Chanel brand philosophy, the lead paragraph is from the outset more directly focused on positioning Gabrielle Coco Chanel historically.

The contrasting images of Coco Chanel in the 2005 and 2006 editions of *CoolBrands*, the first with a dynamic representation of Chanel as forward-looking, assertive, modern, and the second, discreet, reflective, measured, were read as signalling the possibility of a subtle shift of emphasis with regard to Chanel's brand values. Whereas the 2005 text ascribes a modernist, 'brave new world' ethos to the brand and Chanel herself, the 2006 text hints at a rethinking of what was regarded as a liberating, modernist project. In so doing a space has been configured for a retro, nostalgic perspective on the enduring, classic values represented

by understated signifiers that secure Coco Chanel's place in history, but which at the same time allowed the brand to move on.

Perhaps the question that is posed by this subtle shift in representations of the Chanel brand is whether 'liberating' discourses that are a consequence of a specific historical moment can sustain their ongoing fashioning in light of historical change and a brand's need for continuity - and sales. I argue that the consequences of this dilemma, whether conscious or not, help account for the 2006 edition opting for a decidedly postmodern, tongue-in-cheek world of continuity, offering an ironic playfulness instead of representations of epoch-changing rebelliousness that threatens to leave the brand stranded. I would argue this typically postmodern play on nostalgia allows for the positioning of a cutting-edge play on convention and fashion, while maintaining an appeal to enduring traditions that are viewed as transcending history. This has the further effect of providing an ongoing brand of cutting-edge exclusivity, while at the same time sustaining an enduring mass market appeal that projects the core brand as transcending time and space.

In the final analysis, what the deconstruction of the above *cool* brands selected by the Superbrands Council attests is that the postmodern taxonomy proposed by Brown (1995) and Firat and Venkatesh (1997) have become part of a discernible discursive regime, caught up, whether directly or indirectly, in the configuration of a *cool* logos. In following through this problematisation of *cool*, I would argue it is in recognising the 'literary' as more heterogeneous than the marketing literati allow, which creates space for deconstructive readings that render *cool* as a discursive construct, dependent on the deployment and materiality of the signifier, rather than as a mark, signifier or logos characteristic of a distinctive brand of individuality.

Contributions

This Dissertation was prompted by a scepticism about the way in which the literary was being used to further the theoretical and practical parameters of postmodern and critical marketing. Through a series of encounters with a diverse range of texts, concerns were raised about the ways in which marketing articulated aspects of the postmodern and modes of representation by resort to the Literary. More specifically, a questioning of subjectivity and its mediation has constituted a key element in putting forward a critique of marketing and consumer studies' turn to the Literary. While ostensibly embracing literary theory, postmodern marketing struggles to deal with the implications of one of later literary theory's pivotal poststructuralist tenets: the decentring of the logocentric, humanist subject. The aim of this Dissertation has been to offer a turn to the Literary that accommodates the decentring of the subject, to assess the implications of this for marketing and consumer studies, and to argue that this poststructuralist approach entails the mapping of a space that provides for a more nuanced and ethical dimension in marketing and consumer studies.

To this end, it has been argued that the stratagems of Cultural History and Cultural Criticism, particularly with regard to their resistance to viewing texts through the emollient prescriptions of seeking origins, trends, orders and *zeitgeists* that smooth over the heterogeneity and discontinuities of both the past and the present, offer a means for maintaining an uneasy, disruptive questioning and undecidability. Thus the textual encounters that formed the basis of this thesis were based on a strategy of *deconstructive engagement with the marketing literati*. The concern was not with challenging the integrity of their work or to offer alternative counter-rational, logocentric prescriptions, but to explore gaps and otherwise possibilities, to maintain an open questioning that brings what might be taken as virtuous axioms and aspirations up against their own limits. It is a major contention of this work that a deconstruction of consumer texts – widely configured – provides a more nuanced understanding with regard to how the designs of marketing texts impact on consumers.

Although it would be beyond the ethos of this work to offer any simplistic, reductive conclusions, this Dissertation does argue that while marketing's engagement with the Literary and the postmodern is worthy, its turn to the Literary is somewhat partial. While appearing to embrace Barthes' (1977) 'Death of the Author' and the decentring of the subject, it is unable to reconcile such a project with what ultimately turns out to be a commitment to the sovereignty of the consumer.

Arguably, a key issue for this dissertation in marketing's turn to the Literary is a certain refusal to question what is entailed in subscribing to particular Literary canons. In many

respects, it is difficult to argue against the merits of establishing a canon of works – the best that has been thought and written – but a deconstructive reading that takes account of the play of cultural history, raises questions as to what is at stake in the founding of such canons. What has been of particular interest is to deconstruct what are offered as axiomatic, self-evident truths in the construction of such canons, and in so doing question the often implicit priorities and value sets on offer. For example, it is difficult to argue against the merits of a progressive enlightenment as mapped out by Frye (see Chapter 6). However, whether the establishment of rigorous, scientific, all-inclusive, taxonomic framework necessarily constitutes evidence of such progressive enlightenment or whether it constitutes a rhetorical affirmation of the unchanging nature of the human condition is a moot point.

Further issues emerged when closely examining the ways in which postmodern marketing claims to offer a radical challenge to positivist modes of enquiry derived from empirical observation and measurement. What they propose instead, or as a supplement, is a turn to more 'complex knowledges' constituted by strategies contingent on social and cultural dynamics for a more sophisticated articulation of the diversity and heterogeneity of individual consumer desires and needs. Crucially, it is argued that while consumer voices might now be plural, might have become more progressive and nuanced in the articulation of their desires, nothing substantially changes, meaning still tends to be seen as originating from the *humanist subject*, marginalizing its operation at the level of the signifier and the impact of the linguistic and the cultural. The changes, such as they are, are little more than window-dressing.

My readings suggested that the interpretivist claims of the marketing literati, in privileging the individual, knowing subject/consumer, simply reverse the binary with regard to how the invisible hand of the market might best be determined: the producers with their panoply of scientific (and/or interpretivist) researchers give way to the idiosyncratic and fragmented assertions of individual consumers who are taken as determined by a desire to maintain a sense of authentic identity, and in so doing, resisting any injunction to conformity, rational or otherwise. But what neither approach challenges is the assumption of a founding logos on which such claims from either side of the binary are made, be they conformist or non-conformist. As a consequence what is neglected, downplayed, marginalised, is the dynamic of the discursive construction of subjectivity and knowingness.

The contradictions underling postmodern marketing are particularly manifest in the use of *irony* to signify a certain knowingness as a defining characteristic of the increasingly enlightened consumer. The various deconstructions of *cool* found in Chapters Seven and

Eight suggest the ongoing privileging of an ontology and epistemology that inscribes and takes for granted an articulation of the true nature of the individual as ultimately focused on the pursuit of distinctive, exclusive, authentic, unmediated forms of identity. In addition there is the assumption that the pursuit of an authentic identity is constantly subject to ideological, social, political and cultural constraints and appropriation. It is a version of the classic Enlightenment binary opposition of the individual striving for emancipation set against the constraining forces of society. And it would seem that according to an emerging postmodern marketing rationale it is a *knowing, cool* vanguard that are being ascribed with the task of staking out the claims of self-enlightened subjects, individuals, as a law unto themselves. In striking independent, idiosyncratic, rebellious, mercurial, camp, ironic dispositions the virtuous *cool* are inscribed as guarding against any compromise or appropriation of individuals' realisation of authentic forms of identity.

However, it was with the articulation of irony as knowingness, as opposed to irony as a reminder of the discursive and linguistic play of difference, with which this Dissertation raised questions about the implications of *cool's* denial of enlightenment reasoning. It is argued that while *cool* might constitute a refusal to succumb to totalising forms of enlightenment rationality, in manifesting one's needs, aspirations and desires, *cool's* counter-cultural stance nevertheless masks and evades questions with regard to the logocentric trajectories of its own particular project. While it might be argued that *cool* constitutes a form of *knowingness* that refuses articulation because of the dangers of becoming compromised by enlightenment forms of rationality, this has the effect of simply denying the impact of the social, cultural, historical and discursive forces in the constitution of our subjectivity, in the formation of our identity, in our patterns of consumption. It is to claim a space 'beyond the text' as a source of *knowingness*, and by way of maintaining a discrete silence, suspends rather than acknowledges the play of undecidability, deeming it a function of its own subjective truth. And in constituting its own timeless truth about the nature of the individual, *cool* refuses to address its implications for the reconfiguration of consumerism, particularly of the postmodern variety, other than it simply being the manifestation and progressive unfolding of a narcissistic individual desire and striving for identity.

It is important to note that the undecidability that might be said to constitute *cool* is based not so much on an acknowledgement of our entry into language, but is more a refusal to reflect on and question the basis of [in]decisions as to *what constitutes cool*, to question what is at issue or to question the implications of taking at face value exhortations to be *cool*, especially with regard to its mediation of patterns of consumption. Nevertheless, the unsettling ramifications of *cool* as a mode of unthinking consumption cannot evade being

haunted by intractable contradictions and the intrusion of an undecidability in and between the discourses in which we are engaged. A sense of contradiction and angst between the 'I' who is knowing and the 'I' who is 'programmed' to mirror the all-consuming priorities of the times is perhaps captured in the lyrics of the song, 'The Fear' by Lily Allen (2009).

The Fear

I want to be rich and I want lots of money
I don't care about clever I don't care about funny
I want loads of clothes and fuckloads of diamonds
I heard people die while they are trying to find them

And I'll take my clothes off and it will be shameless
Cause everyone knows that's how you get famous
I'll look at The Sun and I'll look in The Mirror
I'm on the right track yeah I'm onto a winner

Chorus

I don't know what's right and what's real anymore
And I don't know how I'm meant to feel anymore
When do you think it will all become clear
Cause I'm being taken over by the fear

Life's about film stars and less about mothers
It's all about fast cars and cussing each other
But it doesn't matter cause I'm packing plastic
And that's what makes my life so fucking fantastic

And I am a weapon of massive consumption
And it's not my fault it's how I'm programmed to function
I'll look at The Sun and I'll look in The Mirror
I'm on the right track yeah we're onto a winner

Chorus

Forget about guns and forget ammunition
Cause I'm killing them all on my own little mission
Now I'm not a saint but I'm not a sinner
Now everything's cool as long as I'm getting thinner

Chorus

The hedonistic, rebellious, shameless individualism stridently asserted is subsequently configured as little more than a proxy, a weapon of 'massive consumption'. And with no

little irony perhaps, constituting as insubstantial a pretext for a code of ethics as the fear over the WMD (weapons of mass destruction) that resulted in the Iraqi conflict.

Implications

Taking a broad view, the postmodern and *cool* share a scepticism towards modes of Enlightenment reasoning and authority, and in so doing, lay claim to: a certain openness and tolerance; a questioning of reality, particularly by means of paradoxical and ironic juxtapositions; an acknowledgement of fragmentation and a rejection of commitment; a recycling of history to effect a sense of a perpetual present and unchanging human needs and desires; a decentering of the subject; effecting a reversal of the priorities of consumption and production; an emphasis on the play and priority of form and style; an acceptance of disorder and chaos. Each in their respective ways are represented as signifiers of resistance to what are perceived as anti-emancipatory forces in the Enlightenment project that have come to be seen as acting against the individual.

However, what I have argued for in this dissertation is for a mediation of these signifying taxonomies of the postmodern and *cool* as somehow constituting profound truths about deep-seated human instincts that characterise the nature of the human condition, and which have been so readily engaged by a marketing academy focused on elaborating interpretive paradigms that are taken to provide a more comprehensive perspective on consumer behaviour and the operation of markets. Crucially, it is argued that what needs to be maintained is an ongoing questioning of any simplistic *psychologism* that views postmodern and *cool* as simply a progressive determination of consumers' innermost needs and desires without any reference to the discursive stratagems, cultural and historical forces that at the same constitute an ongoing undecidability with regard to the configuration of desire. While there may or may not be a deep-seated longing for emancipation that characterises the postmodern consumer, how this is configured cannot ultimately be articulated outside the language and culture into which we enter.

As Lacan (2001) argues in 'The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud':

As my title suggests . . . what the psychoanalytic experience discovers in the unconscious is the whole structure of language. Thus from the outset I have alerted informed minds to the extent to which the notion that the unconscious is merely the seat of the instincts will have to be rethought. . . .

This simple definition assumes that language is not to be confused with the various psychical and somatic functions that serve it in the speaking subject – primarily because language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it. . . .

And these very structures reveal an ordering of possible exchanges which, even if unconscious, is inconceivable outside the permutations authorized by language. (2001, p. 163)

Going on to make his argument more forcefully about what is perceived as a misunderstanding of Freud, Lacan argues, 'From the beginning there was a general *méconnaissance* of the constitutive role of the signifier in the status that Freud from the first assigned to the unconscious' (p. 178), and that:

By persisting in describing the nature of resistance as a permanent emotional state, thus making it alien to the discourse, today's psychoanalysts have simply shown that they have fallen under the blow of one of the fundamental truths that Freud rediscovered through psychoanalysis. One is never happy making way for a new truth, for it always means making our way into it: the truth is always disturbing. We cannot even manage to get used to it. We are used to the real. The truth we repress.

Now it is quite specially necessary to the scientist, to the seer, even to the quack, that he should be the only one to know. The idea that deep in the simplest (and even sickest) of souls there is something ready to blossom is bad enough! But if someone seems to know as much as they about what we ought to make of it . . . then the categories of primitive, prelogical, archaic, or even magical thought, so easy to impute to others, rush to our aid! It is not right that these nonentities keep us breathless with enigmas that prove to be only too unreliable.

To interpret the unconscious as Freud did, one would have to be as he was an encyclopaedia of the arts and muses, as well as an assiduous reader . . . And the task is made no easier by the fact that we are at the mercy of a thread woven with allusions, quotations, puns, and equivocations. And is that our profession, to be antidotes to trifles?

Yet that is what we must resign ourselves to. The unconscious is neither primordial nor instinctual; what it knows about the elementary is no more than the elements of the signifier.

Lacan (p. 187)

Lengthy citations from Lacan are offered because, given the allusiveness of his texts as a deliberate stratagem, they resist any simplistic summary and attest to a 'woven' intertextuality. Consequently, the decision was made to provide 'full' citations rather than compromise Lacan's all too thoughtful style.

In Chapter Eight, 'The Branding of *Cool*' deconstructive readings were offered by way of recognizing the elements of the signifier and their ultimate undecidability, of how 'we are at the mercy of a thread woven with allusions, quotations, puns, and equivocations,' and in so doing resisting any simple affirmation of a founding logos, whether conscious or unconscious, with regard to the subject of consumption and marketing.

The concern of this Dissertation has not been with discovering the real truth about consumers or the nature of consumption, but with recognizing, acknowledging and exploring the effects and implications of the linguistic and cultural structures in which we are engaged and how they are shaped by discourse. For Lacan, Freud is a key figure in this process. But equally, Lacan argues a number of psychoanalytical discourses in which Freud has been deployed, ignore or downplay this working of language as constituting the self's ex-centricity. What also seems to have exercised Lacan is how the ways in which Freud contributed to a decentring of the subject have been overlooked.

As Lacan observes:

If we ignore the self's radical ex-centricity to itself with which man is confronted, in other words, the truth discovered by Freud, we shall falsify both the order and methods of psychoanalytic mediations; we shall make of it nothing more than the compromise operation that it has, in effect, become, namely, just what the letter as well as the spirit of Freud's work most repudiates. For since he constantly invoked the notion of compromise as supporting all the miseries that his analysis is supposed to assuage, we can say that any recourse to compromise, explicit or implicit, will necessarily disorient psychoanalytic action and plunge it into darkness.

But neither does it suffice to associate oneself with the moralistic tartufferies of our time or to be forever spouting something about the 'total personality' in order to have said anything articulate about the possibility of mediations.

The radical heteronomy that Freud's discovery shows gaping within man can never again be covered over without whatever is used to hide it being profoundly dishonest. (p. 189)

But however Freud is read, what is clear that the changes that have been wrought by his writings are irrevocable and far-reaching. The issue, more generally perhaps, and for this dissertation in particular, is how Freud's questioning of the self, the place of the subject, in both language and culture in general, and for marketing in particular, can be sustained.

Giving the final word to Lacan:

Freudianism, however misunderstood it has been, and however confused its consequences have been, to anyone capable of perceiving the changes we have lived through in our own lives, is seen to have founded an intangible but radical revolution. There is no point in collecting witnesses to the fact: everything involving not just the human sciences, but the destiny of man, politics, metaphysics, literature, the arts, advertising, propaganda, and through these even economics, everything has been affected.

Is all this anything more than the discordant effects of an immense truth in which Freud traced for us a clear path? What must be said, however, is that any technique that bases its claim on the mere psychological categorization of its object is not following this path, and this is the case of psychoanalysis today except in so far as we return to the Freudian discovery. (p. 192)

Directions

As a consequence of this study, there is a need for further research that undertakes a rigorous questioning and deconstruction of the theoretical basis of *subjective introspection and reader response theory* and its effects for the reconfiguration of aspects of marketing theory. This line of research should further explore the implications and effects of humanist inscriptions that takes as an axiomatic truth the sovereignty of the individual and, by extension, assess how this impacts on articulations of the sovereign consumer in relation to marketing and the particular formations of interests and values being served. It is also proposed that more research should be carried out on the Lacanian implications of what Eagleton calls an 'arbitrary prejudice' with organic unity and Gestalt psychology, particularly in how it has related, and continues to relate, to the configuration of marketing discourse.

As part of this process, I would argue there is a need to develop a better understanding of 'cultural gatekeepers' and the effect of their activities with regard to the discursive modes and processes involved in establishing exclusive 'canons', whether with regard to literary and aesthetic works or with regard to *cool* in its manifold forms, by which the ins and outs, what counts as *cool* and not-*cool* are determined. What is of particular interest is to understand better how the pull of the logocentric, the continued inscription of a founding logos in constituting the centrality of the individual subject and the power of discourse might be made more apparent. Any structural similarities and consequent implications with regard to the role of cultural gatekeepers and intermediaries in establishing canons of the aesthetic and taste, whether with regard to the literary or consumer culture, merit further investigation as to what is deemed worthy of exclusivity, why and the particular play of power in this process. In addition, research into how and why the discourse of marketing, not least with regard to the evangelising of *cool*, is attaining the same kind of authority as more traditional forms of 'remedial' discourse - sermons, political oratory, proverbs, wise sayings. To this end, the tangible effects of invoking and propagating allegiances to particular communities of interest should be explored, as opposed to circumscribing marketing discourse and articulations of *cool* as simply offering perspectives on the deeper workings of human nature in the guise of the consumer.

By way of offering a reminder, I include again the citation from Foucault (1979, p 7) on the subtle play of discourse with regard to repression and sermonising cited in Chapter Four above - and in this regard the links between the pleasures of consummation and consumption might again be noted:

What sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation, and manifold pleasures. . . This is perhaps

what also explains the market value attributed not only to what is said about sexual repression, but also to the mere fact of lending an ear to those who would eliminate the effects of repression... But it appears to me that the essential thing is not this economic factor, but rather the existence in our era of a discourse in which sex... serves as a support for the ancient form - so familiar and important in the West - of preaching. A great sexual sermon - which has had its subtle theologians and its popular voices - has swept through our societies over the last decades; it has chastised the old order, denounced hypocrisy, and praised the rights of the immediate and the real . . .

The marketing industry's contribution to this great sexual sermon can be seen to epitomise how this process operates. At one time it was deemed acceptable for the marketing industry to use scantily clad female forms draping the bonnets of performance automobiles to signify the potential liberation of a hidden sexuality and desire. For some time such a stratagem has been deemed no longer acceptable and in its turn configured as a form of anti-feminist sexual repression. Regardless of the rights and wrongs, the ethics of that debate, and they are not inconsiderable, the overall effect has been to configure sexuality, its liberation and/or repression, as a signifier for the realisation of individual identity, as the all-consuming, driving force behind the consummation and consumption of one's sense of self. Ultimately, the debate, whether focused on liberation or repression, whether directly or in sublimated form, is perhaps testimony to that ubiquitous marketing sermon: 'Sex sells'.

It is further argued that the insinuation of *undecidability*, in placing an emphasis on change, raises significant issues for the [re]configuration of marketing. Future research should explore the proposition that deconstructive approaches, in foregrounding undecidability, the instability and play of the text, provide a means for coming to an understanding of the interplay between both the continuities and discontinuities that drive, and are driven by, the constant unsettling of market offerings. It is also argued that undecidability, as a function of our entry into language, far from being something marketing needs to overcome, is integral to its ongoing dynamic in perpetuating a certain lack, in destabilising the promise of future satisfaction to our needs and desires. In many respects, marketers would find it difficult to argue with this proposition concerning undecidability, as their activities are predicated on continuous market change and constant unsettling and superceding of prevailing market offerings. There is thus scope to pursue further the implications of undecidability as both part of what marketing strives to overcome, and from what might be described as its unconscious other, a dynamic, unsettling, disruptive project constantly driving and reconfiguring the market.

In many postmodern marketing texts the use of irony as the manifestation of an ironic disposition is taken as a marker of increasingly enlightened, knowing, *cool* consumers, able to assert their independence and resistance to the wiles of marketing. This thesis argued that the intervention of irony might function as more than simply the manifestation of a worldly-

weary consumer knowingness but, rather attest to the possibility of otherwise perspectives. In this respect, irony functions as an interrogative, sceptical mode of questioning which has significant potential in determining otherwise trajectories for how the consumer is represented and in the charting of consumers' changing priorities. What also became apparent in charting a cultural history of irony is that *cool* dispositions have a provenance that on first reading would appear to be coincident with the emergence and intensification of consumer culture and individualism. Future research might explore in their specificity such links and co-incidences.

With regard to 'methodology' it is argued that the stratagems of *Cultural History* offer a means for maintaining an uneasy, disruptive questioning and undecidability. It is also important to acknowledge that our academic practices and conventions both help determine and are determined by the configuration of particular cultural histories and priorities, a deconstructive questioning of which needs to be maintained in order to cultivate a susceptibility to the discontinuities, inconsistencies and possibilities of otherwise perspectives.

It has been a major contention of this Dissertation that attention should be focused on deconstructing the discursive stratagems by which *cool* is manifested as a form of pseudo-subversiveness, an impulse towards rule-breaking, a refusal to engage any rationale that denies the sanctity of the sovereign individual subject. A start has been made on this in both the academic and non-academic commentaries or 'remedial' discourses – academic monographs, papers, commentaries, reviews, interviews, guides, - that constitute the focus of this Dissertation and the implications of the ways in which they map and promote the 'truth' of the sovereign, *cool* consumer. This has been further supplemented by the deconstruction of a number of marketing communications stratagems, and more specifically a selection of brands designated as *cool* – which from a slightly different perspective might again be seen to constitute a form of 'remedial' commentary, insight, initiative - and which further constitute part of a discursive and cultural formation caught up in the mapping of spaces promoting and privileging the construction of the sovereign consumer.

By way of marking a return to the 'opening' of this Dissertation, the main concern has been to articulate the significant coincidence between the configuration of the postmodern by the marketing literati in a form of literary theory that focuses on subjective introspection, and discursive configurations of *cool*. It is suggested that the extent of this coincidence may be explained by an undiminished, shared commitment to a logocentric sovereign subject, the challenge to which constitutes the ongoing project of a deconstructive cultural history and poststructuralist research more generally.

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