EXPLORING A 'SOFT' MODE OF GOVERNANCE:
HOW ADVERTISING RELATES WOMEN TO 'MODEST' POWER

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This thesis explores advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance understood in terms of a form of power which avoids instruments of coercion, involving instead certain practices of freedom and forms of pleasure. The main concern of the thesis is to analyse the mechanisms through which techniques of such 'modest' power interact with techniques of representation in order to define forms of femininity and shape self-fashioning practices of female consumers.

The study is based on a comprehensive survey of a sample of television advertisements broadcast in Britain on three television channels with national coverage in May 2001 as well as on the analysis of a selected body of advertising trade literature. It draws on theoretical and methodological approaches from social anthropology and various strands of cultural studies.

The thesis reveals that the way advertising attempts to influence consumers is in line with some aspects of neo-liberal style of governance. It argues that such a mode of governance seeks to regulate women's ethical sensibilities by outlining the space of desire, power and pleasure, by stimulating the will for self-improvement and by providing advice about how women should think of and shape themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Theme of the study

"What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression."

(Foucault 1980, 119)

This thesis explores advertising as a site of the 'soft' mode of governance in modern Britain. It approaches advertising as political technology, focusing on the way it relates women to a specific form of power which, following Foucault, I describe as 'modest'. The central problematic of the thesis is how techniques of 'modest' power and of signification interact within advertising in order to represent forms of femininity and influence identity-fashioning practices of female viewers/consumers. The research is based on textual material gathered through a comprehensive survey of taped television advertisements that were transmitted on three television channels with national coverage (ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5) in May 2001 as well as on the analysis of advertising trade literature. Although this study is by no means a traditional fieldwork study of either production or reception of television advertisements, it is informed and underpinned by ethnographic work which provides a wider insight into the field of 'modest' power and 'soft' modes of governance.

Several questions inform this study: How does the exercise of 'modest' power within advertising position women as viewers/ consumers, and how does it motivate them to engage in the communication? Through what discourses and representational styles does advertising address, portray, advise and mobilise female viewers/consumers? What are the ethical qualities of forms of femininity that are constructed in advertising? How do advertising practitioners articulate and put in practice their ambition to influence consumers? The study explores these

questions by analysing advertising as a mode of governance that is made possible by the exercise of 'modest' power which is dependent upon and blended with certain practices of freedom and certain forms of pleasure.

I emphasise this understanding of the configuration of power operating through advertising at the very beginning, because advertising, as an object of inquiry and/or criticism in social sciences, has often been treated as false symbolism, a form of manipulation or a secret technique of persuasion that relies on the deployment of institutionally controlled instruments of covert coercion (see, for example, Packard 1957; Ewen 1976; Williamson 1978; Leiss, Klein & Jhally 1997; Jhally 1990; Wernick 1991). In line with this, advertising appears as a practice of ideological subjection by means of exercising power/control in a clever but unscrupulous fashion. My approach is rather different in that it regards advertising in terms of small representational and governmental instances which are predicated upon the interpretive and ethical freedom of subjects, their capacity to produce meaning and pleasure by reading advertisements, and their willingness to make use of that meaning and pleasure in the ongoing process of (re)shaping their self-identity. The aim of the study is to gain an insight into how relations of 'modest' power and representation seek to affect the way women think about and shape themselves.

Where did the inspiration come from?

Several factors worked together to impel my interest in advertising as a site for exploring a 'soft' mode of governance in terms of interdependent relations of power, representation and identity. One source of inspiration came from reading debates in anthropology, cultural studies and related disciplines on some key features of modern power, and techniques and effects of its operation that involve processes of identity construction as vital elements. My own experience as a reader/viewer of advertisements and ethnographic observations, which I have conducted throughout a long period of time since I came to live in Britain in the early 1990s, also played a central role in 'discovering' the relevance of the topic.

I begin this section by following an established textual convention in anthropology, according to which the researcher presents a subjective account of field experiences as a way of introduction to his/her work (see Pratt 1986). But I will not reproduce a sort of classical description of the 'arrival scene', the one in which the researcher talks of his (her) first encounter with the native community (represented in the case of my arrival by immigration officers) as his boat (my aeroplane) approached the shores (landed at the busy airport) of a

small, isolated and remote (big and metropolitan) island. Rather, my intention is to describe briefly some aspects of my personal experience of the life in another society/culture, some impressions which are worth mentioning only because they exerted a strong impact on my "ethnographic imagination" (Willis' term 2000). The aim of this 'entry' narrative is not, however, to authenticate my 'scientific' insight into how 'natives' live their lives but to draw attention to some factors that conditioned my 'discovery' of the research topic and shaped my position as a researcher. I shall describe my research position towards the end of this chapter, but now I wish to explain how my central ideas evolved.

Unlike many classical field researchers, I did not come to a society that was terra incognita to me. I had some previous knowledge about the society that was going to become the site of my fieldwork through my education, travelling and a long-term friendship with a member of the 'native community'. But I did not have the experience of previously living in it for a long period of time, which makes all the difference in the way one develops an interest in and knowledge about the 'other' society/culture. When I started to observe, learn about and live a 'native way of life', I became extremely attentive to and puzzled by something that I had not perceived on many previous occasions when I visited Britain as a pleasure-seeking short-term visitor. I refer here to the many light, inconspicuous instances of 'modest' power expressed in a form of information, friendly suggestion, expert advice, user instruction or consumer recommendation and in a myriad of leaflets, booklets, posters, newsletters, public messages, manuals, brochures and advertisements, which one can find in all sorts of places: streets, buses and trains, shops, local authority institutions, primary schools, libraries, museums, health centres or dental surgeries, etc.

For example, I can still recall my bewilderment as one particular leaflet caught my attention in the waiting room of my GP. It was addressed at mothers, urging them to choose to breastfeed their babies. To those who would want to think of themselves as 'good and responsible' mothers, the leaflet offered a detailed three-page analysis of all the pros and cons, gratifications as well as common problems they might face if they chose to engage in this practice that humans share with other mammals. This was followed by two pages of expert advice (accompanied by occasional instructive illustrations) on how to perform different forms of breastfeeding, some of which include various commercially available gadgets, and how to become a 'good and responsible' mother. I single out this example because I saw it as the most illustrative manifestation of the widespread exercise of a form of power that appeared 'strange', intriguing and, at the same time, fascinating to me. I would like to make clear that it

was not only the pervasiveness with which these little instances of 'modest' power penetrated all domains of life that attracted my attention and surprised me. Equally interesting and astonishing to me were some other features that characterised these techniques of providing advice, such as a friendly and helpful rather than condescending tone, a concern with visual style of presentation and, in many cases, a form of light-hearted playfulness with which readers/viewers were addressed and encouraged to make their own choices along the given guidelines. But the feature that appeared the most intriguing to me was a more or less explicit emphasis on what one is and what one could or should become. There was always a hint of how the reader could shape his/her self-identity or redefine some important experience of the self if he/she chose to follow the guidance of advice.

I remember my reading of the above mentioned leaflet so vividly probably because it made so visible the sharp differences between certain patterns of my own culture and those of the other culture. This almost irresistible urge to interpret one's perceptions of the social world by comparing different, sometimes even contrasting cultural patterns is, I believe, what many foreigners share with ethnographers, as they are both concerned with observing and trying to understand how 'natives' organise, live and experience their lives. It is perhaps not surprising that one of the most striking cultural contrasts, which came to dominate my experience as an East European living in Britain, relates to questions of governance and power. I refer here to my experience not in terms of authentically produced personal knowledge but, rather, as a discursively conditioned and developed sensitivity to questions such as: How do individuals get related to power in the course of performing everyday practices? And how does power operate to shape the conduct of individuals and structure the way they understand and relate to themselves and others? In regard to styles and techniques of operation of power, the contrast between the society I was socialised into and the one in which I live now could hardly be sharper. To put it simply, it is to compare two radically different models of how power is exercised: one model emphasises the visibility and crudeness of the (communist and post-communist) techniques of using threat and fear to secure a rigid compliance with orders, which come from 'above' in a spectacular show of authority, while the other model favours a range of diffused and refined (neo-liberal) strategies of regulating the conduct of ethically free, responsible and co-operative individuals, in an almost invisible fashion, by shaping certain practices of freedom, pleasure and identity.

The perception of this contrast was an important factor that directed my interest to the way advertising deploys 'soft' selling propositions and subtle forms of appeal to put in practice

the ambition to influence the consumer's conduct. Contrary to the critical view of advertising that is widespread among cultural and social scholars and commentators, I do not see the 'work' of advertising in terms of manipulation of passive and gullible consumers, or of ideological subjection that leaves no space for active participation in making sense of what they see in advertisements. My impression is that modern advertising is about regulating choices. As such, advertising presupposes and influences a practice of freedom to choose as well as responsibility to make appropriate choices. So the question that concerns me is: How, through what relations, techniques and mechanisms does advertising attempt to influence viewers/consumers and guide the way they practice their freedom of interpretation and choice?

My interest in advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance has been first inspired by my experience as a viewer of advertisements that are everywhere, meeting our eyes in all sorts of places and practices of everyday life. Advertisements create a spectacle composed of a variety of visual languages and aesthetic styles. The pervasiveness, diversity and stylistical refinement of this spectacle characterise what many writers see as a distinctively modern or, rather, postmodern cultural development that deeply affects everyday practices, means of orientation and identity structures (see, for example, Bauman 1992; Lash 1990; Featherstone 1991, 1995). I chose television advertising as a focus of my study, as television is widely acknowledged as the most productive and pervasive source of such a spectacle (I will explain the focus on television advertising in more detail in Chapter 9). Television advertisements, and especially those characterised by artistic, provoking and/or humorous visual design and/or narrative structure, have acquired a status of an entertaining or intriguing, if not always a respected form of popular culture, regardless of their commercial role. And, if participation in other forms of popular culture is understood as a voluntary activity, one that is based on the learned expectation of some type of pleasure, then watching advertisements can be seen in much the same light. Some empirical evidence supports this view, showing how reading advertisements may invoke a variety of textual pleasures regardless of the way in which the viewer evaluates the advertised object in any particular campaign (Fiske 1987, 262). Creating the possibility for experiencing forms of textual pleasure is, in my view, one of the principal techniques deployed by advertisers to mobilise viewers/consumers to respond to the text.

One of the most intriguing features of that pleasure producing spectacle, through which advertisers try to govern consumer choices, is its focus on different aspects of consumer identities and lifestyles. This feature seems to overshadow the technical information about quality, function, price and availability of the advertised object. It seems that representing what

different categories of consumers like, desire, hope for, fear from, worry or dream about, what they are, could, should or would like to become, constitutes a major concern of the advertising imagery. I see this concern with questions of identity, of how it could be shaped and "worked" upon, as crucially related to the advertising industry's effort to govern consumer choices without violating their freedom. In social and cultural theory too, questions of identity have gained a centrality that is difficult to ignore. When reading discussions on various issues concerned with understanding and exploring these questions, I was particularly influenced by thinking that emphasises instability, positionality, multiplicity, discursive constructedness as well as active self-constitution of identity. Within this perspective it is possible to think of identity both as a project that involves free and active engagement of the individual, and as a process that is conditioned by the operation of a range of historically specific, culturally defined and socially organised discourses, advertising being one of them.

As much as scholars, advertising professionals seem to be well aware of the current, almost obsessive, concern with identity and ways of understanding, evaluating and acting upon others' and one's own sense of the self. A good illustration of this awareness can be found in one of Cartier print advertisements portraying an elegant and confident young woman comfortably sitting in an aeroplane and contemplating "Who will I be in the next 24 hours?" (National Geographic October 2000). As though there is a kind of the ongoing media dialogue, another successful brand offers one possible, though ambiguous, answer: "Become what you are" (Lacoste advertisements in Newsweek 28 May 2001). Apart from the brand name, these words are the only written message accompanying the photograph of an attractive woman's bust without the upper part of her head. Although this intertextual communication can be interpreted in more than one way, it unambiguously expresses the advertising industry's concern with identity and its unstable nature. If one wishes to look for a 'harder' evidence of this trend in contemporary advertising, it could easily be found in the balance of business expenditure that shifted from product research to market research (Davidson 1992, 145).

This also points to the increasing value of expert knowledge about consumers, their identities, behaviour and motivation that underpins the ability of the advertising industry and its clients to communicate with viewers/consumers. The way that knowledge is applied in advertising suggests that the industry does not regard viewers as passive consumers waiting to be told what to consume and how to conduct themselves. Rather, they are addressed as viewers who are free to make their own choices in consumption and other everyday practices, through which they form and express a sense of identity. What the advertising industry seeks to do is to

influence these choices by associating consumer products/brands with certain values, ethical norms, desires, aspirations and forms of conduct, while offering the viewer an opportunity to enjoy various forms of textual pleasure. In this thesis I want to explore how these associative links are made to invite female viewers/consumers to interpret, evaluate and modify the way they perform certain practices and relate to others and themselves.

'Mature' women as a focus of the study

Having described in broad parameters what inspired my interest in the 'soft' mode of governance and advertising as one of its sites, I now wish to explain one final point about the formulation of my research topic, namely the reason for focusing on 'mature' women as subjects of governance. As a viewer of advertisements, I always had the impression that the entertaining imagery of television advertising is also an important site of defining and regulating gender meanings. Advertising images represent gender specific bodies, ethical attributes, capacities, interests and forms of conduct in a manner which leaves the viewer in no doubt that it is only possible to think of individuals as human beings in terms of them occupying one of the two mutually exclusive gender categories. I am not, however, trying to argue that advertising is the most important discourse that directs our understanding of ourselves as subjects of gender. Rather, I see television advertising as one of many social technologies that operate to reproduce the centrality of gender in constructing self-identity and to promote certain gender definitions while marginalising other. This led me to believe that my research topic must entail a focus on questions of defining gender and shaping gender meanings.

While trying to formulate this focus in more specific terms, I came across an issue of 'Marketing Week', a renowned advertising trade magazine, which in March 2000 published a series of articles under the title 'Grown-up Women'. These articles raise a range of issues related to the way advertising agencies, marketers and their clients communicate with female consumers who are in their thirties or older and who have considerable purchasing and decision-making power. The category of 'grown-up' or 'mature' women is used there, by women working in advertising, publishing and market research industries, to mark what they recognise as a distinct though not homogenous segment of consumers

Although the debate examines mainly the situation in print advertising and publishing industries, the questions and categories it brings into consideration apply to the wider field of advertising. The contributors to the debate argue that the advertising industry often fails to

address and motivate 'mature' women adequately. The main reason is, according to their view, the conception of femininity that is well established in advertising and in some women's magazines. They regard this prevailing conception as false, in a sense that it is not 'real' but 'mythical'; it is created by male-dominated advertising agencies, emphasising the beauty and sexual attractiveness of the young and perfect female body and the related obsession with appearance as a major source of femininity. Almost all the women who took part in this debate agree that addressing women who are not in their twenties any more is not an easy task, mainly because of the difficulties which arise in specifying parameters (other than age) that define this consumer category. They claim that, in contrast to this 'mythical' conception, a more adequate or 'real' understanding of women, and in particular of 'mature' women, must involve an emphasis on the diversity of social roles women play and different aspects of femininity that are constructed through different practices, ranging from paid work to child rearing and pleasure time with female friends. Within this conception, 'mature' women are seen as empowered by their life experience and growing spending capacity, and as developing new attitudes, aspirations and new techniques of self-care and self-understanding, which advertising should seek to address. Most of the contributors advise advertising agencies and their clients to take into account this plurality of women's roles, address the complexity of women's positioning and focus on attitudes rather than age, if they wish to produce advertising that succeeds in engaging with mature women.

By problematising the question of understanding modern forms of femininity in such a reputable trade magazine, this debate makes an important contribution to the production of mature women as a consumer category that is being explored, analysed, measured and re-defined so that it could be influenced with greater success. The debate confirmed my view of advertising as a representational space for (re)formulating meanings around which gendered identities are constructed, offering a focal point for my study of how advertising attempts to influence consumers by acting upon their sense of the identity.

Before I describe the disciplinary field and structure of the thesis, a few more words need to be said about my position as a researcher, as it shapes my approach to the research topic, experience of fieldwork, analysis and of course writing.

A note on my position as a researcher

An important methodological demand to become more open in revealing the factors which situate the research process has been put forward by many recent debates in

anthropology, cultural studies and philosophy of social research (see for example: Clifford & Marcus 1986; Okely & Callaway 1992; Okely 1996; Williams & May 1996; Nugent & Shore 1997; Gray 1997; Willis 2000; Pels 2000). The demand comes from the recognition that social research is always carried out from a certain position that channels perceptions, governs insights and shapes the style or writing. In an attempt to describe my own research position and experience, I will focus on two points that are particularly important in defining the nature of the ethnographic practice which informs and underpins my textual analysis of advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance.

The first point comes from Clifford (1997) and refers to the practice of travel and 'displacement', of going away from home to some 'other' place to do fieldwork. Within a range of interpretations of what constitutes (the field of) fieldwork in contemporary anthropology (see for example Appadurai 1991; Wright 1994; Okely 1996; Clifford 1997; Gupta & Ferguson 1997), culturally exotic, geographically remote and relatively isolated small-scale societies are no longer regarded as the only setting worthy of anthropological attention. Anthropologists now explore various relations, processes, institutions or communities that are not located in an exotic setting, at least not in the conventional sense. However, Clifford insists that the experience of displacement is crucial to anthropological fieldwork; it was reported even by the researchers who did their fieldwork in the places that were physically close to their home (see Brown in Clifford 1997, 188).

This suggests that the contrast between the field and home remains central to ethnographic experience in spite of the fact that, in post-'exotic' anthropology, the idea of fieldwork has been 'reworked', to borrow the term from Gupta and Ferguson (1997). The field is essentially defined as a place distinct from home. Home, on the other hand, is regarded as a site of unproblematic familiarity, as a space in which the researcher lives, which he/she leaves in order to do fieldwork, and to which he/she returns after the fieldwork has been done. Before I describe how these two places (the 'field' and 'home') relate to each other in my ethnographic experience and how this affects my research, I wish to mention the second point regarding fieldwork practice. It is derived from Powdermaker's (1966) explanation of the researcher's disposition in the field.

Anthropological participant observation, as Powdermaker so well described using the metaphor of 'stranger and friend' (1966, 9-15), implies both detachment and involvement. Detachment describes the disposition of the 'stranger', of the 'observer' with the ability to see the local social life from a viewpoint of an anthropologist from another culture. He/she

observes from the position of an 'outsider' equipped with a certain theoretical understanding of society (see also Wright 1994, 11). Involvement, on the other hand, points to the disposition of the 'friend' immersing his/herself in a strange society in order to learn "to think, see, feel, and sometimes act as a member of its culture" (Powdermaker 1966, 9). In his/her capacity as a friend, the ethnographer acts as an 'insider' participating in social life of the community. This detachment/involvement of the stranger/friend describes the researcher's disposition that is relevant only for the duration of the fieldwork.

To summarise this brief description it is possible to say that 'normal' ethnographic practice, as defined by experienced fieldworkers and analysts such as Clifford and Powdermaker, involves leaving home, going to the 'other' place, that of the fieldwork performed through both involvement and detachment, and coming back home. According to this model, the double positioning of the researcher ('stranger/friend' or 'outsider/insider') is clearly a temporary state. It is in this particular respect that my research position and experience differ from what could be seen as 'normal' fieldwork practice. While I admit that some sort of physical displacement preceded my ethnographic activity, my fieldwork practice can hardly be described in terms of the opposition between home and the field. The reason is my cultural identity, which is ambiguous or mixed by virtue of education and migration. Perhaps, it can best be described in terms of what Abu-Lughod (1991) calls a 'halfie'. The position of a 'halfie' implies a more complex notion of 'home', one which does not necessarily signify a single place in both physical and cultural terms. To be more specific, I did once leave the only place I, until then, called 'home' and moved to another place, which was not exactly a terra incognita for me. Furthermore, that place did not only become the site of my fieldwork but also my new 'home'. The result of this initial displacement is that both places are now invested with the meaning of 'home' for me (albeit with different connotations).

Not surprisingly, this dual or hybrid definition of 'home' destabilised the original meaning of 'home' as a place of an unproblematic familiarity with its culture. On the one hand, I retained a level of familiarity with the 'old' home and I gained a level of familiarity with the 'new' one; on the other hand, I can never relax completely into any of them, precisely because of this dual and ambiguous involvement. This subjective position and experience are productive of a sort of double 'vision' which constantly unsettles the comfortable intimacy and reassuring knowledge of home. The ambiguity surrounding my notion of 'home' affects deeply of course my positioning in the field. In a sense, the field is the 'other' place, a site of strangeness and of ethnographic observation but, at the same time, it is, to a certain extent, also

a place of ordinariness and familiarity where I feel at home.

I did not come to Britain to do fieldwork for a limited period of time, and I did not go back 'home' to write up my ethnography. Instead, my engagement in the fieldwork is continuous and tightly interwoven with my everyday life at home (that is, my 'new' home). This is to say that my fieldwork is not an experience out of the ordinary. It is an ongoing process of participating (involvement) and observing (detachment) while living a life as both an insider and an outsider. I cannot say that my experience of estrangement marks a temporary stage of my research (and of my self-identity, for that matter); it is not "a preliminary to a more sustained period of mastery", as Coffey (1999, 20) put it. Being a 'halfie' with an ambiguous sense of home and belonging, the experience of estrangement constitutes an important aspect of my self-identity. But I am not a perpetual stranger either. Not only in my fieldwork but also in my life, I am constantly engaged in the process of negotiating an unstable balance between my identity as an outsider and my identity as an insider.

This double positioning and experience of estrangement/familiarity allows me to approach a range of different situations of everyday life from a double perspective. Over a long period of time, I have gained a considerable level of familiarity with the society/culture in which I do my fieldwork, and I might have acted, on many occasions, as an insider. But, I am never quite able to relax a certain level of alertness or attentiveness to things, relations or processes that appear unfamiliar or strange to me. At the same time, the experience of displacement does not loom large in my fieldwork practice. The involvement needed to participate in everyday practices is sometimes interrupted by the urge to observe a phenomenon or relation that almost imposes itself on my attention without my conscious intention to do so. The transition from the position of an insider/friend/participant to that of an outsider/stranger/observer often happens almost automatically whenever I register a phenomenon/relation as unfamiliar or unexpected, as something that needs observing and asking questions. This is not to suggest that I was at times unable to adjust intentionally my ethnographic focus on specific relations in order to explore some aspects of my research topic which, at certain stages of the research process, emerged as puzzling or problematic. But it would be also misleading to minimise the role of accidental insights obtained through participant observation/everyday life fundamentally characterised by the ambiguity and instability of categories of home and field.

Mapping out the disciplinary field of the study

This study takes an eclectic approach, drawing inspiration from a number of areas of social theory and research. From the brief description of my research position, it becomes clear that social anthropology is the point of departure and an important source of disciplinary identity. Research practices developed in anthropology, and in particular those shaped by the discipline's principal methodology of ethnographic fieldwork, influenced some general features of my methodological approach. I wish to emphasise two dimensions to this influence. First, although this is not a traditional fieldwork study, I used ethnographic methods, especially in the early stages of research, to gain an insight into the wider field of 'modest' power and 'soft' modes of governance. Second, anthropology also informed my general methodological strategy and understanding of the research process. Doing anthropological research is an exploratory process which involves an open-ended approach to new experiences, ideas and data (see, for example, Okely 1994). My research did not start with an already delineated problem, precisely formulated focus and preconceived analytic categories, and it did not pursue a pre-formulated research agenda. As priorities and topics were emerging out of the initially 'messy' data, I became able to identify and redefine evolving connections between the observed data and certain theoretical conceptualisations, gaining gradually a more coherent understanding of the most puzzling research questions I need to explore. I shall describe the research process in detail towards the end of Chapter 2, but I would like to emphasise here that the whole process was shaped by a complex interplay between constructing theoretical arguments, (re)organising data, (re)formulating research questions and attempts to operationalise theoretical concepts into categories suitable for the analysis of my textual material.

My understanding of what constitutes the political domain, which plays a crucial role in exploring advertising as a mode of governance, also draws on anthropological traditions. Taking a rather different approach from political science and classical sociology of the modern state, anthropology refuses to equate the political with the autonomous domain of institutionalised politics. This opens up a possibility to examine political effects of various social/cultural practices which are not classified as structures that are 'officially' and exclusively concerned with regulating political life. Based on an anthropological conceptualisation of the political, which I will discuss in the next chapter, my study approaches advertising as political technology that seeks to shape the way consumers practice their freedom of choice. I see this as a fundamentally political concern, though advertising is neither

organised nor regulated within the field of overtly 'political' modes of actions.

One of the crucial problems with which advertising deals is how to motivate consumers to follow the offered advice and make appropriate choices or, in other words, how to stimulate their engagement without violating their interpretive and ethical freedom. In seeking to explore this problem, my research enters the field of government studies. In this field, I was particularly influenced by Foucault's theorisation of power as government of conduct and the way technologies of power which seek to govern others depend upon those for the government of the self. By not reducing power to relations of domination and repression, Foucault's work (1980, 1982a, 1988b, 1991a, 1998, 2000b, 2000c) offers a theoretical framework adequate for analysing processes through which the individual and the self become vital elements of and resources for modern forms of governance. Crucial to the operation of these forms of governance is the interdependent relationship between the exercise of power/knowledge and the field of ethics, according to which subjects of governance think of and shape themselves. In understanding the relationship between modern forms of power and its subjects, my study also draws on a number of analysts of neo-liberal forms of governance inspired by Foucault, such as: Rose (1992a, 1993, 1996q, 1996b), Burchell (1996), Shore and Wright (1997, 1999), Hunt and Wickham (1994). Their work offers an engaging read across the intersection between sociology, anthropology and cultural studies, a read that provides a new conceptual vocabulary for analysing representational practices as instances of governance that require and produce ethically free subjects and encourage their active participation in the process. Drawing on the ideas mentioned here, my study of advertising works towards further understanding of a mode of governance that attempts to regulate rather than repress certain practices of freedom and activate identity-fashioning capacities of the subject.

Another important source of influence on my study is a body of literature concerned with questions of identity, which many regard as one of the main strands of theoretical and research interest in cultural studies. My understanding of how power operates within various cultural/social arrangements to position individuals and affect the production of identity and subjectivity is influenced by poststructuralist critique of the subject as a stable, coherent and unified entity. Above all, it was the work of Foucault and Foucauldian-inspired discourse theory that has been most illuminating in this regard, as they do not start from the theory of the subject but focus on analysing "the relationship that may exist between the constitution of the subject or different forms of the subject and games of truth, practices of power, and so on" (Foucault 2000c, 290). While placing considerable theoretical weight on social technologies

that produce certain forms of subjects, Foucault's theorisation of the subject in its double meaning opens up a possibility to connect the processes of 'subjection' to those of self-constitution and identity formation. The writings of Rose (1989, 1992b, 1996a), Hall (1996, 1997a) and Woodward (1997a) also inform my analysis of how 'modest' power operates in advertising to affect the production of consumers as certain kinds of subjects. In understanding the formation of the subject as a site of multiple identities and potentially contradictory subjectivitites, the main source of influence on my work comes from Henrique, Hollway and other contributors to the volume "Changing the Subject", now a classic critique of traditional psychology (Henrique et al. 1998).

Since questions of identity, and in particular self-identity, cannot be analysed as though they refer to some gender-neutral subject, the field of my study is inevitably linked to certain strands of gender studies. Starting from the premise that discursively constructed gender asymmetry is what forms a dominant framework for representing and defining self-identities, I address the issues of conceptualising gender difference and the construction of forms of femininity following a range of feminist scholars, such as Butler (1990), Moore (1994a, 1994b, 1999b), Simpson (1997), Harding (1998) and Hollway (1998). Drawing on their work, my study seeks to explore how advertising represents and addresses women as subjects of gender and how it attempts to influence identity-shaping practices of female viewers by articulating a repertoire of ethical regimes.

To explore these issues also means to approach advertising as a representational practice that reaches its audiences through a particular form of media texts. The question of how meaning is produced is of enormous significance for the analysis of how advertising (or any other form of media text) seeks to affect its audiences. My approach to the question builds upon the works of a number of scholars who emphasised the interpretive aspect of the meaning production through the complex interaction between the text and its reader. Within the diverse field of media and audience studies, I was particularly influenced by Hall (1997a, 1997b, 1980), Brunsdon (1989), Corner (1991), Morley (1980a, 1980b, 1989, 1992), Moores (1992, 1993, 1997), and Shroder (2000), as they pay attention to the operation of power, which affects the structure of the text and stabilises the textual meaning to a certain extent, as well as to the polysemic potential of the text and its capacity to provide more than one reading position. To conclude, my interest in media studies is mainly to explore key ideas about the (media) text, its polysemic potential and text-audience interaction with the aim to construct an adequate theoretical framework for analysing advertising in terms of the interaction between techniques

of 'modest' power and those of representation. Apart from the already mentioned sources, this framework also draws on the writings of Barthes (1982) and Fiske (1987, 1991) on how the power operating through the textual structure interacts with relations of interpretation to produce not only meaning but also pleasure. The notion of textual pleasure plays an important role in my analysis of how advertising seeks to motivate, entertain and entice the female viewer into considering the relevance of suggested meanings concerning the construction of femininity.

Structure of the thesis

The approach to advertising from the point of view of governance is presented in Chapter 2. Having described how the notion of technology, as proposed by Foucault and N. Rose, shapes my approach, the chapter goes on to explain in what sense advertising is seen as 'political' technology. The chapter concludes by explaining how I gained a wider insight into the field of 'soft' modes of governance through the method of participant observation, and how this ethnographic basis informs my textual analysis of advertising.

The theoretical framework of the study, organised around three sets of related questions – of governance, identity and representation, is detailed in Part II (Chapters 3-5). In Chapter 3, I discuss an understanding of governance influenced by Foucault's work, and in particular his theorisation of power as government of conduct. Building on Foucault, I understand governance in terms of a form of power which I define as 'modest' because it avoids instruments of coercion, preferring instead minor procedures and involving certain practices of freedom and certain forms of pleasure. Crucial to the operation of this form of governance are processes whereby technologies of power interact with practices of the self, capacitating individuals to recognise and relate to themselves as certain kinds of subjects. I also draw on the writings of Burchell (1993), Rose (1992, 1993, 1996a, 1996b) and Shore and Wright (1997) about how this interaction comes to be practiced in neo-liberal forms of government. Informed by a Foucaultian understanding of a close contact between the governmental practice and the field of ethics, the chapter argues that advertising can be seen as a practice that seeks to influence conduct by providing what Rose calls the guidance of selves.

This close relationship between governance and ethics inevitably puts on the agenda questions of the subject and identity, which I discuss in Chapter 4. The conceptualisation of these issues is based on poststructuralist theory of the subject. From a position informed by feminist interpretations of how gender, sex and the body are discursively constructed (Butler

1990; Harding 1998; Hollway 1998; Moore 1994b, 1999b), the second part of the chapter addresses the process of acquiring a complex, non-unitary gender identity. The main concern of the chapter is to formulate an adequate theoretical basis for the analysis of how advertising articulates ethical regimes and definitions of femininity, through which it seeks to affect the conduct of female viewers/consumers.

Chapter 5 focuses on relations of representation, power, meaning and truth. Drawing on Foucault (1980, 2000e) and Rabinow (1986), I explain theoretical reasons for avoiding ideology as a key conceptual tool, using instead the notion of regime of truth as a more adequate concept for exploring textual procedures that regulate how certain images of and statements about femininity are accorded the status of truth within advertising representation. The chapter moves on to discuss how meaning is produced in media (advertising) texts. Part II concludes by highlighting how key theoretical arguments discussed in these chapters informed a set of research questions which I want to explore through textual analysis of advertising.

The analysis is presented in Parts III and IV. Seeking to provide an understanding of the workings of advertising from the advertising industry's perspective, Part III (Chapter 6) is concerned with practitioners' explanations of certain institutional and discursive relations that affect the advertising process. It explores a range of questions related to the intended objectives of advertising and the strategies for differentiating the product/brand and for constructing a persuasive communication. The chapter also examines how the industry develops, evaluates and seeks to improve its specialist body of knowledge about consumers, and 'mature' women in particular, and how it assesses the effectiveness of advertising. The analysis of these topics suggests that practitioners do not think of advertising in terms of governing effects that I seek to analyse. But, although the notion of governance is completely absent from the practitioners' vocabulary, their accounts of the above topics seem to accord with some propositions that I make about advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance that is fuelled by the operation of 'modest' power blended with relations of freedom and pleasure.

In order to explore how techniques of 'modest' power interact with techniques of representation to influence self-shaping practices of female viewers/consumers, Part IV (Chapter 7-8) focuses on the analysis of television advertisements. I introduce the analysis by discussing methodological issues in Chapter 7. The chapter first provides an explanation of why I decided to choose television advertising and how I collected textual data and constructed a sample of advertisements. In the remainder of the chapter, I describe in detail how I generated analytic categories, according to which data were organised, described and analysed.

In Chapter 8, I present the findings of textual analysis in five sections, each of which is concerned with one of the mobilising discourses identified as central to organising and interpreting textual material. The chapter shows that four discourses, those that speak of housework, motherhood, heterosexual couple relationships and the female body, dominate the way adverting represents and addresses women, while the discourse on paid work is significantly marginalised as a site for constructing femininity. Each section aims to describe the ethical regime(s) constructed out of the mobilised discourse and examine how various representational styles shape the tone of the offered advice and the textual potential for invoking pleasure. In the concluding section, I argue that the ethical regimes, through which advertising seeks to influence women's identity-construction practices, can be grouped into two broad clusters: one emphasising the woman's capacity and desire for caring for and pleasing others; the other legitimising certain ways in which the woman should be actively concerned with herself, her body and sexuality. But although advertising projects two contrasting clusters of ethical regimes, it does not seek to represent and guide the woman as the multiply constituted subject with a fractured subjectivity. Rather, it addresses the woman as the unitary individual with a unified gender identity, leaving thus the female viewer with an unresolved problem of how to reconcile the contradiction between the opposing ethical clusters. Drawing together the conclusions from the analysis presented in Parts III and IV, the final chapter continues to work with this argument. It raises the question of whether the above problem and the related conceptualisation of the gendered subject signal the limitations of the current advertising practice. Chapter 9 concludes by summing up the mechanisms of 'modest' power, through which advertising seeks to shape the space of desire, power and pleasure, stimulate the will for self-improvement and excite optimism, with the aim to regulate ethical sensibilities of the female viewer/consumer.

CHAPTER 2
FRAMING THE APPROACH TO ADVERTISING AS A 'SOFT' MODE OF GOVERNANCE

Introduction

The first distinctive feature of the approach to advertising proposed in this thesis is that it is not concerned with the question of growing pervasiveness and persuasiveness of modern advertising, which dominates many socio-cultural accounts of advertising (see, for example, Packard 1957; Ewen 1976; Williamson 1978; Leiss, Klein & Jhally 1997; Jhally 1990; Wernick 1991). My study also differs from these accounts in that it does not attempt to identify the overall effects of advertising (commercial, economic, political, social, cultural or psychological). Neither does it seek to describe, in either positive or negative terms, the complexity of the ways in which advertising affects manifold aspects of modern life. The aim of my approach is to focus on advertising in terms of relations of power, representation and identity, at a rather technical level. The level is technical in that it relates to practical features, techniques and mechanisms through which advertising works as a mode of governance. The central concern here is with the practical question of how 'modest' power operates within the practice of advertising so as to produce a range of ethical regimes which affect the constitution of femininity.

Secondly, to signal a distance from the way in which the advertising-viewers/consumers relationship has been treated in much of the critical literature, it is important to emphasise that the approach I am advocating is not framed by the concepts of manipulation or ideological subjection. Broadly speaking, the most commonly held view among critical theorists and commentators claims that advertising advances by deploying powerful, more or less covert, but in most cases dishonest methods of making consumers feel, think or act in a way that alienates them from whatever is considered to constitute their 'genuine' identity and subjectivity. Here, the emphasis is on the power of advertisers, advertising agencies and the media as contrasted to the powerlessness, passivity, incompetence or inability of viewers/consumers to resist the manipulative intervention. The perception of the effect of this practice on the consumer's identity and subjectivity is frequently described in terms of a suppression of 'truthful' insights into 'real' social relations and conditions of existence, modification of 'genuine' needs and aspirations, restriction of creativity and freedom, and/or the impossibility of self-realisation on the basis of 'real' or 'true' values. There are important conceptual differences between the manipulation-based approach to advertising

(Packard 1957; Ewen 1976; Williamson 1978; Leiss, Klein & Jhally 1997; Jhally 1990; Wernick 1991) and the one that sees advertising in terms of governmental processes. This crucial theoretical point will receive more attention in Part II but, at the moment, I would like to stress one thing. The notion of manipulation usually implies a sort of master-slave model, which I regard as much too simplistic an analytical device for understanding complex relations between the advertisers and viewers/consumers. The term also connotes a rather mechanistic, one-dimensional and coercive model of power operating within the advertising practice. My reading of some of the most elaborated attempts (for example, Williamson 1978, Jhally 1990, Wernick 1991) to explain the process of 'manipulating' consumers/media audiences is that the concept of manipulation, drawn from a Marxist theoretical framework, is largely responsible for the failure to produce a more refined analysis of how relations of power, freedom, meaning, pleasure and identity operate and through what mechanisms they tend to modify the actions of viewers/consumers. In contrast to the concept of manipulation, the notion of governance refers to a mode of managing or guiding the conduct of subjects by influencing their practice of freedom and activating their self-steering capacities. It implies a form of power dynamics that is radically different from the way in which a master dominates the slave. The slave has no options but passively to accept and follow his/her master's orders, whereas the subject of governance has not only a possibility but also a responsibility to practice a form of freedom and get actively engaged in the governing process.

In this chapter I will first explain three basic points that structure a perspective on advertising in terms of a political technology that operates through the language of style. The central claim is that such a problematisation of advertising identifies a number of dimensions along which I will conduct the analysis of how the 'soft' style of governing works through advertising. The concluding section of the chapter describes the way I explored the field of 'soft' modes of governance through a combination of ethnographic observation of various separate instances of 'soft' regulation and an evolving focus on advertising, and in particular television advertising. The aim is to provide the reader with a thick description of activities, problems and procedures that shaped my research process.

The notion of technology

The notion of technology plays an important role in my approach to advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance. My understanding of this concept is derived from the works of Foucault and Rose, where technology is defined in a sense that is very close to its etymological

meaning from the Greek *techne* denoting an art or skill and, particularly, a constructive skill (Kendall & Wickham 1999, 53). Essentially, a Foucaultian notion of technology relates to the processes of 'construction' or 'production'. I speak of human or social technologies in terms of complex organisations of discourses and practices that are concerned with 'producing' human beings as certain types of subjects. As Rose explains in more detail:

> "Technology, here, refers to any assembly structured by a practical rationality governed by a more or less conscious goal. Human technologies are hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, persons, systems of judgement, buildings and spaces, underpinned at the programmatic level by certain presuppositions about, and objectives for, human beings" (Rose 1996, 132).

Foucault (1988b, 18) discerned four major types of these technologies: of production, of signification, of power and of the self. Each of these types of technologies is concerned with the management of a particular domain, but they rarely, if ever, function in isolation from each other. Rather, they depend upon, interact with and affect each other. From Foucault's own work that focuses mainly on the last two types of technologies, we learn about the specific nature of these technologies in terms of their different objectives, strategies and composition of institutional and technical elements. We also learn about how they interact in order to produce certain modifications of individuals. What is particularly important about this conceptualisation of technology, as Rose notes (1996, 132), is that it pays equal attention to two different though mutually dependent processes: that of regulating human conduct and that of capacitating human beings so that certain sorts of persons, certain modes of selfhood and subjectivity are understood as the outcome of social technologies. The notion of technology can thus be used to point to a set of constructive practices of acting upon, shaping and enabling human beings to relate to themselves and others as certain kinds of subjects.

In the light of this understanding of technology, advertising appears as a site of interaction between the technology of power that aims at exercising influence on the conduct of viewers/consumers (technology for the government of others), the technology of representation that governs processes of signification and meaning production, and the technology that regulates the way subjects act upon themselves according to certain definitions, norms and values (technology for the government of the self). In order to be able to explore the mechanisms of this interaction, through which advertising intends to govern women in a 'soft' way, it would not be useful to focus only on the final product of the practice – advertisements.

Rather, it is necessary to bring into consideration a wider set of dimensions that constitute advertising as technology, such as:

- the formulation of the intended objectives of advertising;

- some features of institutional relations that shape advertising practice;

- the construction of forms of professional knowledge, skills and authority, which enable the advertising industry to mediate between businesses that advertise and consumers;

- modes of conceptualising consumers in general, and 'mature' women as a consumer category in particular;

- strategies for motivating the engagement of female viewers/consumers;

- ways of addressing and representing various forms of femininity; and

- techniques of influencing and encouraging the modification of the consumer's conduct.

The next important issue that needs to be discussed at the very beginning relates to the question of the domain within which advertising as technology operates.

Advertising and the 'political' domain

Advertising, most obviously, relates to the domain of commerce as well as to that of consumption. For many analysts of advertising, the focus was and still is on exploring the ways in which different aspects of advertising affect practices of consumption (see, for example, Leiss, Klein & Jhally1997; Wernick 1991; Nixon 1996; Nava et al. 1997). From this perspective, advertising appears as technology of consumption, that is, as a technology concerned with managing complex ways in which people relate to goods and, through relations of consumption, to themselves and others. While recognising the importance and fruitfulness of this approach, I claim that advertising can also be studied as political technology.

This formulation prompts the question of defining the political. My understanding of this question draws largely on anthropological research, which produced a conceptualisation of the political in a rather different way from that in political science or sociology (see Kurtz 2001, 69-81). I am not, however, trying to suggest that there is a generally agreed definition of the political in anthropology or that the development of anthropological thinking about the issue was without any conceptual confusion.

One way of emphasising the specificity of anthropological approach to political phenomena is to take as a point of departure the classical writings of the British school that are seen by many as traditional political anthropology (Gledhill 1994, 1-23). Seeking to develop knowledge about social and political organisation of non-Western, pre-industrial small-scale

societies, classical British anthropologists faced a number of questions that did not trouble those studying political phenomena of Western societies. One of those questions concerned the problem of identifying appropriate objects of inquiry when analysing modes of political organisation of the societies that were not classified as 'primitive states' but seen as lacking any formal institutions of political government. The perceived 'lack' obviously emerged from the comparison with the political condition of the modern West. Hence, these societies came to be defined in negative terms as 'stateless' and/or 'acephalous', that is, those that did not develop an organised system of formal political institutions and/or did not institute a single position of political authority (Gledhill 1994, 1-23). Most anthropologists doing their fieldwork in what was the modern West's colonial other were, thus, faced with a problem formulated as "the absence of explicit forms of government" (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940, 5). Political scientists and sociologists investigating Western societies were in a noticeably different position, as what they were engaged with was clearly marked off as an autonomous sphere of institutions of the modern state, a domain conceived of as distinct from other forms of social life and organisation.

Given the observed absence of institutions whose functions could be perceived as exclusively concerned with political government, anthropologists proposed that the political organisation of those societies was based on kinship structures which, according to the Western conceptions of social ordering, belonged to the realm of the domestic and thus sharply separated from the domain of politics. And, more importantly, anthropologists reported that the field of operation of these kinship groupings and associations also included practices related to economy, law, ritual, magic or religion. As Leach (1982, 133) noted, "the term 'politics' caused great confusion when applied to non-European societies". This was largely, though not entirely, related to the impossibility of marking off social structures and functions that were exclusively focused on regulating political life.

Although the application of the term in anthropology, as well as in other types of social inquiry, is likely to continue causing some confusion, traditional political anthropology made an important move in problematising what was hitherto a self-evident meaning of 'politics'/'political'. By placing the complex social relations grouped under the rubric of kinship at the centre of their analyses of political life, classical anthropologists pointed to political dimensions of social institutions or structures that were not previously recognised to have anything to do with the domain of the political. The argument, which was a novelty at the time, was that the investigation of kinship structures and relations could provide insight into

the intertwined questions of political organisation, modes of exercising coercive power and regulating justice. The emphasis was on analysing the 'functions' of those kinship structures in terms of their role in managing social integration and maintaining social order and stability. 'Kinship' thus became a major topical concern in anthropology and one of the key concepts around which anthropologists used to organise their ethnographic observations and theoretical understanding of social and political life of small-scale native societies.

Much of this classical, mostly functionalist, kinship-centred anthropological writing of the first half of the twentieth century received a lot of justified criticism, which led political anthropologists to introduce new theoretical perspectives, focal points and research agendas (see Kurtz 2001). This, however, does not undermine the theoretical significance of classical anthropology's central proposition which, following Kurtz (Ibid. 2), could be called a "maximalist approach" to the study of political phenomena. This is an approach framed by the idea that an insight into political life of many non-western societies could only be gained by analysing a range of social practices and aspects of sociality that were not classified as purely or exclusively 'political' in the sense in which this term has been used by political science and classical sociology of the modern state. This idea still plays a central role in defining the discipline's general approach to studying the political. The emphasis here is on the refusal to reduce the domain of the political to the field of institutionalised politics. I agree with Lewellen's argument that anthropology's refusal, rather than inability, to outline the political as an autonomous domain of societal organisation should not be taken as the discipline's limitation (Lewellen as quoted in Gledhill 1994, 12). This might actually be seen as a major advantage in understanding the complexities of political life, which can hardly be restricted to the practices of agents associated with formal political institutions, structures and processes. I see this conception of the political as not only a credible theoretical point of departure in studying various non-Western forms of government, but also as analytically valuable in exploring various discursive and institutional sites in which relations of governance operate within complex large-scale societies of the West.

This theoretical position does not, however, automatically justify the application of the term 'political' to the practice of modern commercial advertising. In order to justify my argument about advertising as political technology, I will describe the meaning of the political in more specific terms in relation to other contexts in which the term is widely used.

In many discourses (social scientific, official political, journalistic, everyday informal, etc.) the division between 'political' and 'non-political' domains, forms of authority and

apparatuses plays an important role in understanding (and governing) social life. Within this conceptual framework, the term 'political' refers to the functioning of the major institutions of the 'state', political parties etc., and from that point of view, advertising cannot be regarded as a practice that belongs to the 'political' domain. As an integral part of the wider complex of marketing practices, advertising is, most obviously, a business procedure, an economic activity and, as such, firmly located within a wide field of social practices marked as 'non-political'. When described in its relation to the domain of consumption, advertising appears as even less 'political'. If one accepts the above division as a basic discursive rule that governs our way of thinking about the political, then it is impossible not to agree with the view that advertising cannot be understood by referring to the principles of functioning of state institutions. Advertising's instruments of governance are certainly not laws, and its rationale does not depend upon 'political' authorities. Its ambition to act upon consumers is realised through the forms of organisation and knowledge that are linked to market research, consumption, production of media texts, visual design, etc., which all enjoy a high degree of autonomy from the domain of institutional politics.

Furthermore, this self-determination of certain domains of social practice from the overtly 'political' is seen by many social analysts as one of the defining features of a mode of governance described as advanced- or neo-liberalism (Barry, Osborne & Rose 1996; Rose 1993, 1996a, 1996b). The neo-liberal art of government is, according to Rose, characterised by

> "the simultaneous delimitation of the sphere of the political by reference to the right of the other domains – market, civil society and the family being the three most commonly deployed - and the invention of a range of techniques that would try to act on events in these domains without breaching their autonomy" (Rose 1996a, 134).

But the relations between 'political' and 'non-political' domains are not simple and one-dimensional; by giving autonomous agents greater freedom from state control, the neo-liberal formula of rule has become, in certain ways, dependent upon a whole range of little, decentralised regulatory instances at what Rose calls a "molecular" level. At this level, it has encouraged a pluralisation of social technologies with specific programmes and techniques for regulating the relationship between government and the governed and for shaping the subjects of government (Rose 1996b, 54-61). Although these technologies are not 'politically' dominated in any conventional way, Rose (1993, 1996a) notes that their field, principles and objectives of operation need to be known to forces and authorities that are marked as 'political'

so that these technologies would support or encourage rather than undermine or subvert 'political' objectives.

This reconfiguration of 'political' power through the pluralisation of social technologies entails a form of government that is increasingly oriented towards modelling the attitudes and wills of the subjects of government. These subjects are not specified merely as the target of governmental action, but also as its voluntary partners (Burchell 1993, 271). They are defined as autonomous agents who are free and, at the same time, willing to take an active role in their own government, as participants who accept responsibility for the way they conduct themselves. One of the fundamental concerns of the neo-liberal rule is then how to make this 'partnership' possible, what strategies and means to deploy to make individuals and groups co-operative, reliable and active in governmental processes without attacking their autonomy and freedom. It is important to emphasise that this concern is neither neatly defined nor regulated by any kind of centralised authority. Rather, this concern appears to be dispersed across a heterogeneous field of localised organisations and procedures, that is, across a variety of technologies that perform small and subtle regulatory practices.

This understanding of neo-liberal governmentality is crucial to my argument that advertising can be thought of as political technology. Assuming that advertising seeks to influence individuals who are free to make their own decisions regarding the choice of consumer products and modes of their consumption, I suggest that advertising's central concern is with a problem of how to motivate consumers freely to choose to act in accordance with the guidance of advertisers. The problem is how to influence consumers without violating their autonomous decision-making powers. Surely, advertising professionals are not in possession of some kind of magical persuasive power, and their technical capacities exclude law or any other instrument available to the 'political' authorities. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that they are deeply engaged with a problem of how to mobilise and act upon consumers to make an appropriate use of their freedom of choice. And, that is a fundamentally political concern although it is not articulated, organised or regulated within the domain of overtly 'political' mode of action.

This is not to introduce some opposing points in the argument but, rather, to draw attention to and differentiate between different meanings of the term political. It certainly cannot be taken as a term with the self-evident and stable meaning. Anthropologists seeking to understand political life and forms of government of non-Western societies have long realised and discussed the ambiguity of the term political, pointing to the inadequacy of the rigid

'political/non-political' divide. Even the anthropologists who are largely concerned with modern Western political practices tend to criticise the excessive research attention that has been paid to the state and formal institutions of political power in traditional Western political analysis. For instance, the examination of modern political rituals led Abélès to suggest that the assumed autonomy of the 'political' domain is an illusion (see Gledhill 1994, 20-22). For him, it is a (mis)conception that tends to divert the researcher's attention away from a range of relevant everyday practices, through which the relations between the governing and the governed take concrete forms. More recently, some scholars from other disciplinary traditions have also come to question the traditional conceptualisation of the political. Rose, for example, explicitly calls for a more analytical approach to the term 'politics' itself. He, too, maintains that the field of meaning of this term should not be equated with the functioning of institutional politics if it is to be used as a tool for analysing "the way we are governed today" (Rose 1996b, 38).

In this particular regard, the work of Foucault has been most illuminating. He wrote extensively about political technologies as procedures and modes of action that exceed the field of overtly 'political' apparatuses. The key to his conceptualisation of political technologies is provided by his analysis of the forms of operation and acceptability of power in modern societies. Crucial for Foucault here is the question: What are the reasons for our general acceptance of power as repression and restriction, as articulated in terms of its juridical notion? Or, why do we tend to recognise power only as a negative force? He suggests that this is because:

> "…power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms. Would power be acceptable if it were entirely cynical? For it, secrecy is not in the nature of an abuse; it is indispensable to its operation. " (Foucault 1998, 86)

In other words, what is central to political technologies is the operation that works to conceal power. This is being achieved, as Dreyfus and Rabinow note (1982, 196), "by taking what is essentially a political problem, removing it from the realm of political discourse, and recasting it in the neutral language of science". The emphasis on this process of 'masking' of the political, of translating the political into a non-political form, frames much of the discussion in the volume 'Anthropology of Policy', edited by Shore & Wright (1997), on how modern systems of power operate. Briefly, the analyses of various policies conducted by the editors

(see also Shore & Wright 1999) as well as contributors, clearly demonstrates how the exercise of power becomes more effective when it is masked by the references to objective, neutral and rational programmes and procedures which appear to promote efficiency. The languages of reason and common sense seem to be most suitable for these purposes and are, therefore, most frequently deployed as a device for concealing the political. However, they are not the only seemingly neutral means that could be utilised by political technologies to 'hide' their political concerns and objectives. I argue that the language of style could also be used that way.

The language of style

The language of style is essentially related to choice, to freedom of choice as well as to management of choice. It is also commonly thought of as a discourse about aesthetic categories (and their coherence) that seem to lack any political connotations, which is exactly what makes it a convenient means for facilitating the operation of highly refined forms of power while reducing the visibility of their operation. In the domain of advertising consumer goods and the related practices of consumption, style can become an object of serious concern only in the conditions that create a considerable field of possibilities to choose from. These conditions also actualise the need to cultivate and instrumentalise choice.

The intensification of commodity production, increasing competition among producers and saturation of consumer markets as well as a sustained growth of consumer purchasing power are important factors that constitute an economic context, which tends to encourage this style-centered concern and its regulation. The production of advertisements is one among many other marketing practices that attempt to deal with this sort of regulation. One of the desired effects of an advertising campaign is to shape consumer choices, which are understood as no longer based only on the evaluation of technical and functional properties and price of goods/services but are also made in relation to certain stylistic values and aesthetic criteria. According to this perception of the advertising's objective and consumer behaviour, the consumer's attention cannot be attracted by simple technical information about a given product, say, "After Eight". In the words of an experienced advertising professional, "Not just mints, but the elegance and sophistication of the After Eights" (Davidson 1992, 23), is what inspires the consumer's interest in the product/brand.

Here, the emphasis is clearly on the stylistic quality of the product/brand that is constructed by associating its purpose or function with a chosen set of aesthetic attributes, social values and emotional states. In the context of multiple choices in the sphere of

commodified consumption, this rather unstable stylistic quality is what differentiates products and marks their desirability. Observers of the contemporary marketing trends increasingly argue that a successful approach to activating the consumer's interest and addressing their needs must involve a stylistically refined representational form. The advertising text itself needs to stand out as stylistically attractive or intriguing so that it offers the viewer a range of textual, and especially visual, pleasures. It is through these visually pleasing expressive forms and representational styles that the power to shape the manner in which viewers/consumers practice their freedom of choice tends to mask its operation within advertising. The effectiveness of this form of power is heavily dependent upon the ways it comes to be articulated in terms of the language that is capable of cultivating aesthetic values not only of consumer brands but also of textual forms through which the 'personality' of the brand is represented. It is through this discourse which regulates the changing notions of beauty and aesthetic coherence between things, bodies, spaces and their visual representation that the exercise of power tends to be rendered almost invisible.

The emphasis on style, as Ewen notes, is not reduced to women's fashion or artistic expression, but penetrates "...a general sensibility that touched on countless arenas of everyday life, yet was limited to none of them" (Ewen as quoted in Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998, 85). This increasing significance of and interest in style in various domains of life, sometimes described as a tendency to 'aestheticise everyday life', is seen by some commentators as one of the defining features of recent cultural changes that are often given the label of postmodernism (Featherstone 1991, 65-83). The term aestheticisation of everyday life refers to a set of different but related processes of transgressing the boundaries that used to separate the realm of aesthetics from the domain of routine mundane practices (see Lash 1990). Aesthetic values are perceived to have 'leaked out' from what was traditionally considered to be the autonomous sphere (of fine art) and invaded the culture of the everyday in many ways. This is manifested in the blurring of the distinction between fine art and popular culture as well as in the spread of the idea that almost anything can be turned into a work of art, including one's body or lifestyle. Proliferation of images (and in particular advertising images) that saturate all available media and transform spaces of everyday life into a form of spectacle should also be seen as a characteristic process of aestheticisation. It is important to note that these processes do not form any sort of unifying movement. Neither should they be perceived as completely novel developments that mark a radical rupture with the past. But it is also difficult to deny that these tendencies and processes, which work to stimulate, cultivate and intensify a sensibility to style,

are increasingly gaining currency in cultural attitudes and practices many tend to see as typically postmodern.

These tendencies outline a broader cultural context in which the application of knowledge concerning fast changing stylistical trends in different areas of consumption, contemporary visual and peformative art, design, popular music and media production, becomes increasingly important to the advertising industry. The expertise in these trends, as much as knowledge about consumers, clients and their products, is what enables the advertising industry to produce the imagery that would attract attention of and appeal to viewers/consumers with growing competence in interpreting and appropriating issues of style.

For the advertising industry, the language of style is not merely a vital means for formulating a selling proposition (by constructing a stylistically specific brand's identity). It is also a discourse that provides advertising practitioners with images, metaphors and expressive forms, through which standards are set to mark what is appropriate, respectable, desirable and worth of striving for and what is not valued that way. In that way, this language becomes productive of normative ideals and ethical categories, which viewers/consumers are invited to use as guidance for conducting, understanding, judging and modifying their everyday practices, relationships with others and themselves. This makes the discourse concerned with style a suitable technological device for articulating the relationship between power, representation, normalisation and subjectivity. It does not, however, entail a coercive mode of intervention. Rather, it facilitates a series of subtle and 'soft' regulatory instances through which power combines with relations of freedom (of choice) and (textual) pleasure with the aim to influence the way individuals shape their aesthetic and ethical sensibilities and, consequently, self-identities.

To sum up my approach to advertising I want to highlight three key points. First, I see advertising in terms of an arrangement of institutional relations, bodies of technical knowledge and practices, and forms of representation, through which advertising practitioners and their clients influence the way viewers/consumers use their freedom of choice, and capacitate them to relate to themselves and others as certain kinds of subjects. Second, I understand the ambition to act upon and regulate consumers' practice of freedom as a fundamentally political concern. Third, I regard advertising's use of the language of style as a technique for concealing the mechanisms of the operation of power. It is important to stress that the proposed approach is not intended as an exhaustive or universally valid problematisation of such a complex practice as advertising. Rather, it is formulated to serve the purposes of exploring advertising

as a 'soft' mode of governance by looking at how technologies of 'modest' power and those of representation work together to address female consumers as certain kinds of subjects and activate their identity constituting capacities.

Researching the field of 'soft' modes of governance

I now wish to explain how I explored the field of 'soft' modes of governance by combining ethnographic observations of a wider context with a sharp focus on advertising. Although my study is not based entirely on fieldwork research but on a combination of ethnographic observation with an intensive textual analysis, my overall research strategy is profoundly shaped by anthropological research traditions. Compared with types of research which are designed to carry out a social survey or an experiment, to test a hypothesis or exemplify a theory, anthropology takes a more flexible approach. Anthropological research is essentially an exploratory practice, one that is less governed by a pre-planned agenda, by predefined questions and categories, and more sensitive to new experiences and data emerging from the field relationship (Powdermaker 1966; Okely 1994, 1996). Hence, it can rarely follow the structure recommended by most methodology textbooks, which are, in my opinion, expressive of a more positivistic beliefs and conventions about social scientific research.

In much methodology literature, the research process is represented in terms of clearly divided and neatly defined research tasks that succeed each other in an orderly fashion. The researcher is advised to start from the choice of a research topic, select a case and method of inquiry, and then proceed to data collection, classification and, finally, the analysis of data according to predefined categories (see for example Rudestam & Newton 1992; Bernard 1995; Silverman 2000, 2001). Often assuming that there is an unproblematic boundary separating science from 'nonscience' (Bernard 1995, 107), many writers of methodology textbooks claim that the scientific ideal is to follow a pre-defined plan and discipline "clear and organised thinking" (Rudestam & Newton 1992, 4). This rule of order, structure and regularity seems to leave little, if any, space for the researcher to 'discover' a topic and (re)formulate an important analytic category during the course of research, or introduce any significant change in the research structure. If this positivistic logic is taken as a norm of doing social scientific research, then much anthropological research, mine included, can be seen as a rather 'untidy' practice in which different but closely related research tasks overlap with each other, often in a rather 'disorderly' way, both during and after the fieldwork.

My research started with a rather broad ethnographic interest in questions of power and

social/cultural regulation of conduct that rely on instruments other than coercion. Following no pre-ordered research agenda, I felt as though this theme imposed itself on my attention while observing and participating in different practices of everyday life. I cannot overemphasise the importance of the fieldwork, especially in the early stages of my research. However, I am not trying to claim a sort of automatic ethnographic authority that was, in much traditional anthropological research, rooted in a naïve positivist belief in the possibility of an unmediated perception of social reality. I am also aware that theoretical concepts are crucial factors bearing upon observations and descriptions of social/cultural phenomena; hence I am not trying to argue for an empiricist position, which assumes that immersion in the field is in itself productive of meaning. But what the immersion in the field can create is the possibility for discovering puzzling questions while continuously testing linkages between theoretical explanations and what is being observed in the field. Following Wright (1994), I see this interplay between theoretical conceptualisations and empirical observations, out of which analytic categories are created, as a distinctively anthropological process of 'problematising'.

Though there is a strong ethnographic base to my study of 'soft' modes of governance, I do not have a circumscribed piece of fieldwork. In the course of my everyday life/ethnography I was not taking notes on a day-to-day basis. Instead, I used to write what could be called vignettes, notes that capture what I perceived as most important moments or most intriguing aspects of processes and relations of 'modest' power. These vignettes contain mainly my observations of separate instances of governance utilising the power of expert advice or guidelines on *how-to* make sensible, informed, socially approved, ethically appropriate and stylistically refined choices in different social situations and domains of everyday life.

For example, one vignette refers to the domain of managing personal finance, where the customer is provided with numerous suggestions on how to spend sensibly, how to save or borrow money, how to save on childcare, how to teach children to save, how to be smart with one's salary, how to improve time management skills, how to choose a suitable property to buy, how to choose a suitable mortgage in order to buy it, how to think long-term and make adequate retirement plans, etc. My vignettes suggest that this helpful advice on *how to* do things is embedded in the everyday in a relatively inconspicuous way. The advice-providing practices appear to be so woven into the fabric of the everyday that they become almost invisible. Rather than imposed forcefully, the advice is always offered tactfully to any one who wishes to follow it for their own benefit. Most importantly, the advice seems to be implicitly, if

not always explicitly, related to the question of what one is or should be, or how one wishes to perceive, modify and improve oneself.

To give another example, several of my vignettes register the operation of this *how to* technique of 'modest' power as deployed by hairdressers, beauty, health, nutrition, fitness and fashion experts in order to shape the ways in which women relate to their body and soul. I noticed that the tone of the advice (which can be given in person or through various print media) is always friendly, respectful, understanding and full of useful tips on how to enjoy the preparation of healthy and delicious meals, or physical exercise that keeps one's body fit. Suggestions are also provided on how to dye or style hair, how to reduce minor skin blemishes or wrinkles (that awful give-away signs of ageing), how to bring a 'little move-star glamour to your beauty' by choosing a suitable style of make-up or trendy accessories…, how to deal with a lack of energy or confidence, how to relax and devote more time to oneself, etc. Most importantly, the emphasis is not only on how things should be done but also on how one should derive pleasure from doing them. Tailor-made expert help concerning 'real life solutions' is also offered, in various 'contact' radio programmes, to women who find it hard to organise their hectic lives or juggle children and a career. There seems to be an endless array of suggestions and recommendations that are formulated on the basis of specialised expert knowledge with the aim to help women make their own choices among the various micro techniques for improving their looks, their lifestyles and their sense of self-satisfaction.

Reading my vignette notes, I can clearly see how my ethnographic interest, over a period of time, became increasingly directed towards exploring booklets, leaflets and promotional material of various kinds and in various domains of the everyday life. A booklet entitled 'Guidance for Parents' published by a primary school in west London offers another interesting example of governing conduct through professional but friendly and helpful *how to* advice. The booklet contains detailed suggestions to parents who wish to offer support to their children learning to read; there are tips on how to make a sensible choice of the reading material as well as 'points to remember' outlining the adequate form of parental support, which of course needs to be adjusted to the correct reading level of the child. Included are also guidelines on how to shape the emotional commitment of parents and how to increase the child's enthusiasm for reading so that both parents and children can derive pleasure from their reading sessions. Additional clarification and interpretation of all these guidelines are further discussed on parents' evenings, 'open days' and other meetings held in school with the aim to improve parental engagement in their children's progress from the 'early reader' to the

'emerging independent reader' and, finally, to the 'independent reader'. Parents are also offered equally helpful and detailed set of guidelines published by local and national education authorities. But it is up to parents to decide how much and in what way they wish to get engaged in their children's development of literacy skills and certain reading habits ('reading for pleasure', for example). According to my ethnographic vignettes, this style of governance, which avoids any sort of coercive instrument and relies instead on the freedom, responsibility and capacity of the subject to make sensible choices, seems to be widespread. Although these separate regulatory instances are not centrally controlled, they somehow seem to inform each other as they tend to deploy similar methods of motivating and shaping desired forms of conduct.

I was aware that while providing an inspiration and a wider picture of the field of 'soft' governance, this kind of everyday 'vignette' fieldwork did not give me the depth analysis needed to understand the micro processes and relations through which 'soft' modes of governance work. For that reason, I decided to choose one site in which relations of 'modest' power, freedom and pleasure appeared most visible to me. On the basis of my ethnographic observations and some preliminary textual analysis of advertisements I identified television advertising as the most illustrative example of power operating to provide friendly advice, through visually pleasing, intriguing, playful or entertaining images, to any one wishing to follow it.

In the process of 'discovering' emerging priorities and significant connections through fieldwork, watching advertisements and doing literature research, I progressively became able to frame my research focus in more precise terms and translate it into a set of researchable questions. At the same time, I recorded over 500 television advertisements over a period of one week in order to generate a body of material to analyse. A rather long period of viewing and reviewing the taped material and exploring various bodies of literature on advertising resulted in generating a preliminary set of analytic categories. But it also introduced new research concerns.

At a certain stage of the research, bringing the bits of observation into relation with a theoretical understanding of governance proved to be a key problem. Its recognition initiated important theoretical research with the aim to conceptualise notions of power, representation and identity which emerged as major structuring elements of the theoretical basis of my research. This, in turn, invoked a fresh attempt to reformulate the type of questions I wanted to ask from the data that I gathered while viewing recorded advertisements. It also introduced

significant modifications in the organisation of textual data as well as in the way I generated analytic categories out of the data. Here, the central problem was to articulate concepts that would clearly shed light on points of interaction between technologies of power, of representation, and of the self that operate within advertising as a site of 'soft' governance. This led me to revise some theoretical formulations, focusing on the question of how concepts such as 'guidance of selves' and ethical regime (which will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) could be made operational in order to render more visible the elements of advertising I needed to analyse as mechanisms of interaction between the three technologies.

The way I tried to solve this problem can best be compared with standard methods of analysing fieldwork material in anthropology: generating categories out of data (instead of relying on pre-ordered ones), thinking how they relate to some theoretical concepts and how these concepts shape the evolving understanding of data, re-reviewing and re-ordering the data in search for internal sub-categories as well as their wider significance. During this process of mixed research activities, I also made repeated attempts to 'translate' the general research problem into a number of more precisely defined researchable questions. Although this may seem to be an easy task, and in some research designs it marks the beginning of research, I struggled with the problem over a rather long period of time. Each attempt to reformulate a set of research questions introduced some modifications in the way in which a range of different but closely related elements of the research problem were defined as themes that would more adequately structure the analysis of the textual material. I sought to formulate a set of analytic tools that would trace clear directions for forging links between concrete research questions, relevant theoretical conceptualisations and units of textual data. Generating these categories was one of the most demanding research tasks for me, as there were few analytic tools used by other researchers of advertisements that I could appropriate to suit my research concerns.

In other words, the task was to translate research questions into a series of operational categories so that the data derived from bits of the advertising text can be adequately arranged and analysed. The process of 'translation' involved a number of interdependent activities that create links between micro research concerns and observations made during numerous sessions of viewing a selected sample of advertisements. For example, one of my research questions seeks to explore the textual means through which advertisements attempt to mobilise the engagement of female viewers and influence their interpretation of the text. In order to be able to relate this question to relevant bits of an enormous bulk of textual data, I first had to break down the question into several simpler and more specifically formulated questions, such as:

What is the central theme of the text? What relations form the context in which the theme is located? What is the dominant style through which the theme is represented? How is the viewer addressed in the text? What kind of pleasure is most likely to be activated in the interpretation? I then used this set of questions to identify, in each advertisement, the elements of the text that convey analytically significant information. By comparing the identified textual elements throughout my sample and examining their properties, I tried to classify them into groups with labelled properties. Such categorised groups of textual data then served as a basis for generating analytic categories and their structural elements (such as, for example, the mobilising discourse, a range of themes it generates, mode of address, style of representation, the described benefit of the advertised object).

It is important to emphasise that this process was not linear. Rather, it was only through the ongoing revision of these manifold links that I became able to recognise cues in data, which denote their relation to the described research question and emerging analytic categories. The process, in effect, entailed a series of attempts to transform the initially amorphous mass of data into a manageable body of organised textual material, whose relevance to the research questions (and theoretical conceptualisations underpinning them) became, at some point, clearly visible. The act of generating analytic categories, gathering data, selecting a sample and organising textual material was of course inseparable from its analysis and evolving interpretation.

During this process, I also started reading advertising trade and academic literature in order to gain an insight into how advertising practitioners explain the professional practices and relations governing the production of advertisements, and how they understand the type of influence they try to exert on viewers/consumers. My particular interest in this body of literature was driven by three questions I regarded as important for understanding the relations of power and knowledge within the advertising practice. These are: how advertisers and practitioners in the field formulate the objectives of their work, how they develop knowledge about target consumers, and what strategies they use to influence viewers/consumers. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the approach to advertising as a form of political technology involves the investigation of these questions because they shed light on the ways in which techniques of 'modest' power are put into practice. The exploration of advertising trade literature also drew my attention to some debates that take place within certain segments of the advertising community around the issues of addressing women, and in particular 'mature' women, as a specific consumer category. I realised that these debates are relevant to my

research interests as they show how the advertising industry evaluates and modifies its knowledge and practical strategies in its attempt to target, motivate and influence female viewers/consumers. Because the category of 'mature' women emerged from this textual material as an important classificatory device, I decided to use it to further specify my research problem and limit the focus of analysis. In other words, I chose to concentrate only on the way women are governed through advertising.

To conclude, I can best describe my research process in terms of continuous repetition of circular, or perhaps, spiral moves between articulating theoretical conceptualisations, specifying types of puzzling questions, collecting empirical/textual material and generating analytic categories. These research activities were related to each other in such a way so that a change in one immediately activated a series of revisions in all the others. These continuous modifications were occasionally marked by some unexpected 'surprises' and sharp insights, but most of the time it was a slow and mobile exploratory process, gradually leading to a more articulate definition of research questions and evolving understanding of how bits of data relate to each other and to important theoretical issues.

Before I present a set of research questions that shape the design of my research, I need to talk about theoretical ideas and debates which inform my theoretical framework for exploring advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance. The discussion is structured around three sets of questions. The first set relates to questions of power, its configuration, techniques and objectives; the second is connected to the construction and self-constitution of the subject and an understanding of gender; and the final set is linked to issues of power, truth and the production of meaning and pleasure within media (advertising) texts. I begin by discussing how a modern form of power operates in terms of what Foucault calls the government of conduct, and how it combines with certain practices of freedom and forms of (textual) pleasure to make the 'soft' mode of governance possible. Inspired by Foucault's writing (1991b, 170), I will, throughout this work, refer to such a configuration of power as 'modest' power, because it prefers minor procedures, avoids any triumphant display of its mechanisms and is often not experienced as power at all.

PART II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 3
CONCEPTUALISING 'SOFT' MODES OF GOVERNANCE

Government of conduct and relations of power

The proposition to analyse advertising as a form of governance concerned with influencing the conduct of viewers/consumers and cultivating their capacity to act by making informed choices builds primarily on the work of Foucault, and in particular his conceptualisation of government and relationships of power. In numerous essays (1982; 1991; 2000b; 2000c), Foucault proposes an understanding of the term government that significantly modifies its conventional meaning, which was limited to the structure of official political institutions and the management of the state. He talks of government in terms of a 'general problem' as it emerged in Western societies in the sixteenth century to involve questions as to how to govern, who or what to govern, who can govern, by what principles, what is the nature of the practice, etc.. The term government was then used to refer to a range of practices concerned with regulating oneself (personal conduct), children (pedagogy), souls and lives (pastoral doctrine) and, finally, the state (political form of government). It covered a general interest in and concern with methods of acting upon the conduct of groups and individuals. I mention here the meaning of government in terms of its sixteenth century definition purely for analytical reasons because, as Foucault insisted, this particular meaning is not only relevant for conducting historical (genealogical) studies of governmental practices but it also suitable as an important conceptual tool for the analysis of how modern power is exercised.

Taken in its widest sense, the term government denotes all the "techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour" (Foucault 2000b, 81); it involves a range of methodically organised bodies of knowledge and practices that seek to influence, shape and guide the conduct of others and oneself. But this broad definition needs further specification, as government (or governance) is not just an umbrella term for any mode of action that affects human behaviour. Foucault (1982) made it clear that relations of government should not be thought of as similar to either 'warlike' or 'juridical' forms of action. Relations of government do not describe a relationship between two warring actors or adversary parties; neither do they operate through the authority of law or, indeed, any type of direct coercion.

Rather, relations of government designate a mode of intervention that takes place within the 'relationships of power' in which certain actions exert influence on other actions (Ibid.). Unlike a 'relationship of violence' which acts directly on the body and/or forcibly restricts all the possibilities for action, a relationship of power is a mode of action that tends to modify other actions within a field where a certain range of responses is made possible. Although this type of relationship can sometimes instrumentalise or result in violence, it is not synonymous with relationships of violence. Neither does it necessarily operate on the basis of consent. Essential to the articulation of a relationship of power, according to Foucault, are two elements: that "'the other' (one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognised and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with the relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up" (1982, 220).

By specifying the agency of the subject of power and a certain form of freedom as necessary conditions for the exercise of power, Foucault's analytics of power relations marks a radical shift away from the tradition of theorising power in terms of a force possessed by some subjects to repress or restrict the freedom of others. Foucault does not conceive of power in opposition to freedom, and he sees the freedom of being able to choose a way of acting as crucial to the operation of power. In numerous interviews, and throughout his work, he insisted that the exercise of power should not be seen as reducible to practices of repression. Crucially, relationships of power are to be analysed in relation to the problematics of the management of conduct rather than that of states of domination, which is the most commonly accepted conceptual formulation of power. What defines the difference between power as government (management of conduct) and states of domination is that the former can only be exercised upon the actions of subjects who act, who are free to act or are capable of acting. This is to say the operation of power does not merely restrict possibilities to act; it also makes certain options available and certain responses possible, including the possibility to resist the control of conduct. This also implies that power relations can be practised in such a way as to produce an 'extremely limited margin of freedom' within which one is allowed to act. What it suggests is that power relations can only be articulated if there is a certain space for taking a chosen action, no matter how unequal positions within a relationship of power might be.

The above conceptualisation of the operation of power as government lies at the heart of the approach to advertising I am proposing in this work. Central to the analysis of how advertising relates viewers/consumers to power is the argument that they are not passive and

gullible victims of some hidden textual mechanisms of manipulation but subjects who are ethically free and capable of acting by choice. I see this very capacity as a necessary condition that makes it possible for advertisers to compete for viewers' attention, address their aspirations, fantasies, desires and fears, and influence their decision making powers in the field where several forms of action and consumption styles are available. Instead of analysing the choices viewers/consumers make in their everyday practices in terms of inescapable ideological subjection, I treat these choices as related to the viewer/consumer's practice of freedom to develop certain forms of cultural competence and cultivate certain criteria for making judgements. These choices are conditioned by a complex interaction of different factors, one of which is the activity of cultural and market specialists who produce commercial advertisements. Contrary to many Marxist informed accounts of advertising, I argue that companies that advertise and advertising practitioners should not be seen as agents who 'possess' power that aims at, and invariably succeeds in, subjugating consumers to the dictate of advertising messages.

Following Foucault, power is not a prerogative of certain subjects (exemplified in the figure of a prince or master or ruling elite). Rather, power can only be exercised in a series of relations between forces; it is "the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable" (Foucault 1998, 93). This suggests that power does not simply reside in political structures and/or commercial and social institutions but permeates, in different forms, all social relations, producing 'complex strategical situations' that define those relations. Power is, thus, to be analysed in terms of what Foucault calls 'games of strategy', where strategy designates both the means deployed to achieve a certain goal and the way in which the conduct of a partner is shaped by his/her assumptions about the possible actions of others as well as presumptions about what others think of his/her actions (Foucault 2000c, 298; 1982). This opens up a possibility to see the relations within the advertising discourse as involving a practice of calculating diverse strategies; strategies by means of which advertisers try to exert influence over viewers/consumers as well as strategies devised by viewers/consumers as they interpret, accept, negotiate, subvert or oppose that influence (that is, the power exercised over them).

Governance and the field of ethics

The notion of power as an exercise rather than attribute, and the refusal to reduce the operation of power to coercion and the repression of freedom, allowed Foucault to approach

the question of governance and regulation in a way that is considerably different from approaches based on the Marxist notion of centralised and monolithic power which exclusively aims at domination, manipulation and/or subjugation of subjects into some sort of servitude. The fundamental problem with this notion of power as domination (conceptualised on the basis of the political institution) is that it tends to oversimplify the dynamics and effects of power. It implies a master-slave model as the only form of relationship that can be established between those who govern and those who are governed, presuming, thus, that only one partner in the relationship (the master) is capable of acting on the basis on his/her possession of power while the other (the slave) has no options but to be passive. According to this line of reasoning, the exercise of power on the part of the former deprives the latter of any ability and, indeed, freedom to act. Showing a complete disregard for the productive effects of power, this position also fails to account for manifold connections which relate the exercise of power to ethics, if this term, following Foucault (2000c), is understood as a way of being and acting that is predicated upon the practice of freedom.

In comparison with a Marxist conceptualisation of power as domination/repression, Foucault's notion of government as 'the conduct of conduct' suggests a much more complex view of how governing affects the possible field of action of others and the way in which one acts upon and governs oneself. Government, Foucault maintains, should be understood as a 'contact' between the techniques of power (deployed by technologies for the government of others) and those through which one conducts, shapes, experiences and understands oneself (technologies of the self). To emphasise the meaning of government in terms of this interactive relation, Foucault coined the term 'governmentality' (see 1988b; 2000d), though it should be added that he uses the same term in at least three other meanings (see Foucault 1991a; Rose 1993). What he wanted to make clear by pointing to the above connotation of the term is that government/ality involves "the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organise, and instrumentalise the strategies that individuals in their freedom use in dealing with each other", including one's relation with oneself (Foucault 2000c, 300). In order to avoid possible terminological confusion, I will follow authors such as Shore & Wright **(**1997) and Hunt & Wickham (1994), who prefer to use the term governance to refer to this form of social action defined by the intimate relationship between government of others and government of the self.

The emphasis on this interaction between technologies of power that are put in practice to guide the conduct of others and techniques of the self is an important theoretical point that defines the distinctiveness of a Foucaultian perspective in relation to other approaches (and in

particular a Marxist inspired theorisation of ideological domination). These two types of technologies – of power and of the self – through which governing becomes inseparable from the field of ethics, are mutually dependent, although Foucault never suggested that the relation between the two is one of simple determination (Foucault 1992; 1998; Burchell 1993). The operation of one form of technology conditions or affects the performance of the other, though not always in a harmonious way. Authors like Burchell (1993), Rose (1992, 1993, 1996a, 1996b), Shore and Wright (1997), who were particularly interested in exploring the way in which this interaction comes to be practised in neo-liberal forms of government, argue that governing others, here, increasingly depends on the ability and willingness of the governed to shape themselves as subjects who regulate their own lives and selves.

This means that subjects of governance come to be specified in terms of their capacity to make a proper use of their freedom to act, to construct their subjectivity and to lead their lives in a way that enhances their individual powers freely to govern themselves. Far from trying to establish a master-slave relationship, the neo-liberal rationality of government seeks to position the governed as not only the object of governmental action but also as its voluntary partners (Burchell 1993, Rose 1996 b). Subjects become governable only insofar as they are willing freely and actively to participate in instances of governance, which implies that this form of government does not aim at total domination based on unilateral practice of freedom. On the contrary, it seeks to respect, mobilise and utilise rather than ignore or suppress the agency, freedom and rights of the governed. One of the central concerns of neo-liberal rule is to devise a variety of strategies for acting upon the willingness and ability of free subjects to govern themselves through making responsible choices that, in turn, affect the way in which subjects fashion their sense of identity and subjectivity (and, at the same time, render themselves governable).

Guidance of selves - the role of expertise

Though these various neo-liberal strategies of rule may produce similar effects on the way individuals relate to themselves and others, they are not designed and put in practice by any kind of centralised political authority. Rather, liberal strategies of rule seek to operate through a pluralisation of technologies that manage the conduct of individuals and groups without threatening the autonomy of various domains of public and private life. In his analysis of liberalism as a 'rationality of rule', N. Rose (1992b; 1993; 1996b) suggests that this form of rule is structured by an apparent opposition between the need to govern and the need to pose

limits to political government, which creates certain problems regarding the governability of various subjects of governance. Crucial to solving these problems is the role of expertise, a form of authority derived from a claim to knowledge, efficacy and neutrality, which came to be connected to a series of governmental practices by providing the necessary knowledge of the object, method and mechanisms of governing. A range of different areas of expertise (statistics, economics, criminology, medicine, psychiatry, sociology, psychology, etc.) has, thus, been developed to make the liberal art of governance operable, that is, to facilitate and improve governmental practices in a way which avoids any direct political intervention (Ibid.).

From this perspective, advertising can be seen as a governmental practice that is dependent, among other factors, upon bodies of expert knowledge about consumer markets, wider cultural trends and styles of consumption, consumers' behaviour, techniques of communicating with consumers and the production of media texts of a particular genre. This form of expertise is concerned with questions such as: How to differentiate the advertised object from its competitors? How to represent its identity in a way that would mean something to the target consumer? How to construct a text that would stimulate the engagement of the target consumer and encourage her/his positive perception of the advertised product/brand? In an effort to formulate practical answers to these questions, the application of this expert knowledge becomes inevitably engaged in articulating a repertoire of categories that define what is normal, healthy, desirable, comfortable, respectable, beautiful, pleasurable, etc.. It is this capacity to represent ethical ideals and aesthetic standards through the language of style that provides experts in advertising with a suitable technological device for influencing consumer desires and motivation, for managing their decision making powers and their freedom of choice.

As mentioned earlier, the effort to regulate the ways in which freedom is practiced is a fundamentally political concern, which is why advertising can be seen as political technology. Following Rabinow, Shore and Wright (1997, 9) argue that the effectiveness of political technologies relies on integrating external 'subjection' with internal 'subjectification'. That is, by managing the conduct of individuals through norms and values which, if and when accepted, become internal to the practices through which individuals constitute their identity and subjectivity. Although constructed by discourses that are external to (or 'imposed' upon) the individual, these norms and values come to be internalised so that they structure the way individuals organise their perception of their world and their experience of themselves. But to facilitate this process and ensure its effectiveness, individuals are offered some expert help in

interpreting ethical regimes in relation to which they lead their lives and fashion their way of being. This form of expert help can perhaps best be described, following Rose (1992 b, 142), in terms of 'guidance of selves'. Relying on certain bodies of theoretical knowledge, this form of guidance works through naming, classifying and evaluating ethical categories in order to offer practical advice on how to relate to others and the self.

A variety of historically and culturally specific groups of knowledgeable subjects are accorded the authority to provide, professionally or otherwise, the guidance of selves. The political significance of this practice of guidance can hardly be overemphasised since the neo-liberal art of government features the self as an intrinsic element in the networks of power. In modern Western societies, the techniques for guiding the conduct of the private self are intimately linked to positive sciences as this form of knowledge has taken precedence over the regimes of truth produced by religion and traditional morality. Instead of priests, preachers or respected elders, guidance is now increasingly being provided by a whole range of experts from doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists to social workers and counsellors (Rose 1989, 1992b; 1996). These new experts rely on a body of knowledge that is recognised as professional and scientific and characterised as technical, objective and neutral. I argue that experts working in the advertising industry should also be added to the list. Combining forms of professional knowledge about business, market relations and human behaviour with an expertise in image production and aesthetic expression, this group of experts makes an important contribution to guiding the way the individual as viewer/consumer acts upon him/herself in order to be able to lead a life that is personally unique and pleasurable and, at the same time, socially normal and respectable (see Rose 1992a, 15).

It is important to emphasise that the notion of guidance of selves implies social relations which are fuelled by a form of power that is considerably different from the one operating in instances of authoritarian imposition (from top to bottom) of norms and definitions. In other words, the practice of guidance does not rely on any means of coercing or subjugating others to accept the guidance. Rather, it is based upon the authority of knowledgeable (expert) advice, and it can only be provided to subjects who freely choose to accept it on the basis of respect for that knowledge. In contrast to the model of power of a law which commands, orders and prohibits, guidance is predicated upon the exercise of what can be termed 'modest' power. This form of power has a disciplinary dimension in that it operates through norms and normalising judgements. But it is also in some respects similar to what Foucault defined as new pastoral power, which is no longer exercised to achieve individual

salvation in the next world (Foucault 1982). Rather it aims at assisting individuals to shape their self-identities and subjectivities through leading an honourable and enjoyable life. Like its 'traditional' form, this new version of pastoral power addresses the subject in its individuality, and is connected to the production of truth about subjectivity as well as methods of exercising influence upon it. In the case of the advertising discourse, this mode of power operates, through the language of style, to shape the individual's everyday practices and consumption patterns, to fashion their tastes, desires and aspirations, and to encourage certain forms of conduct in relation to oneself and others.

To conclude this brief discussion on expertise in the guidance of selves, I would like to emphasise, once again, that consumer conduct can only be guided in the described way if consumers accept the position of being voluntary 'recipients' of the guidance provided by experts. This guidance can become effective only if it succeeds in activating the **'self-steering mechanisms'** of individuals (Foucault's term, see Foucault 1990) as they watch advertisements and interpret their meanings. To suggest, then, that advertising can be analysed as a form of guidance is, first of all, to recognise that it works through a close interaction between techniques of 'modest' power (of expert advice) and techniques of acting upon the self.

Power-freedom relations

The guidance provided through advertising is a 'soft' form of governance, as it is rendered operable through the exercise of 'modest' power, which presupposes a practice of freedom in terms of the capacity of subjects to actively deal with the field of possibilities. As mentioned earlier, it is this power-freedom relation which establishes necessary conditions for governmental practices that aim at influencing and shaping forms of identity and selfhood. Since the understanding of this power-freedom relation forms the theoretical basis of my central argument about how advertising operates as a 'soft' mode of governance it is worth a further discussion.

The notion of freedom has a long history which has made its meanings remarkably unstable and, therefore, suitable for capturing different theoretical views and political dreams. I do not intend, here, to invoke the notions of freedom that refer to some kind of unrestricted field of action or a utopian state of not being bound by rules, the notions that often imply strategies of struggle against the domination of power. In contrast to this tradition of conceptualising freedom, I follow Rose (1992a) to propose an understanding of freedom as a resource for and a mode of organising modern forms of governance. From this perspective,

freedom is obviously not conceived of as an antidote to power but as a formula of power. Freedom as it is systematically practised in close interaction with power (defined in Foucaultian terms as government) is, according to Rose, a fundamental principle of the neo-liberal style of governance aimed at individuals who are actively concerned with their self-constitution. In the context of consumption and advertising, it is the freedom of choice among consumer products/brands and the freedom of interpretation of advertisements that create conditions for advertisers to act upon consumers' conduct in a way that does not suppress but only regulates their freedom. At the same time, these very practices of consumer freedom also allow and stimulate consumers to govern themselves through the choices they make.

There are thus two complementary practices through which freedom here comes to be exercised: freedom as a mode of regulation and freedom as identity (see Rose 1992a). The practice of freedom as regulation depends upon the operation of power to formulate definitions (of consumer products, modes of their consumption, their benefits and identities of their consumers). It is a form of freedom intrinsically connected to the expert knowledge that advertising practitioners develop and deploy in order to provide advice on how to construct, perform, interpret and evaluate manifold links between the sphere of consumption and the self. This form of freedom is closely associated with the authority to articulate norms and structure ethical sensibilities of the governed. This first practice of freedom as regulation presupposes, depends upon and stimulates the second kind of practice of freedom as identity. Freedom as identity conditions the ability of the subject to express individuality through 'work' on the (re)construction of one's self-identity. In advertisements, this 'work' is represented as crucially related to the way in which choices among consumer goods/services and styles of consumption affect the performance of certain everyday practices and management of certain interpersonal relations. The interdependent practice of these two forms of freedom – as regulation and as identity – creates a field of social action where the viewer/consumer can negotiate, appropriate and accept as well as question, oppose and subvert the meaning of the proposed definitions, ethical norms and the related advice. By presupposing the viewer/consumer's active engagement in the process of reading/interpretation, this approach to understanding regulation in terms of a complex blend of power and freedom, marks a radical move away from the notion of (total) domination and subjugation, which underpins so many critical accounts of advertising as ideology.

Since the authority of norms plays a crucial role in these practices of freedom, it is important to clarify the difference between ethical norms and orders imposed from above. The

former are not sustained by and do not reproduce the type of power that operates through prohibition and punishment. The authority of norms is expressed through recommendations, suggestions and guidelines, which are not just discourses governed by divisions between the permissible and the punishable or those between truth and falsity. Rather, norms outline notions of normality and desirability, and their authority presupposes the willingness of subjects to cultivate their self-reflexive and self-steering capacities. My suggestion is that advertising can be approached as a practice that is productive of the norms and guidelines which fashion aspirations, desires, notions of beauty and criteria of ethical judgement. These guidelines make references to how chosen ideals could be connected to everyday practices, describing, thus, standards of conduct that are regarded as socially approved, normal and respectable and, at the same time, personally desirable. But, most importantly, viewers/consumers are not coerced into conformity but encouraged to strive to achieve the represented normative ideals.

The expressive form in which these ethical guidelines are presented is of great importance too. Since advertising imagery is often produced with the ambition to achieve effects similar to those of light (visual media) entertainment, the type of guidance expressed through the imagery seems to be more reliant on a light-hearted form of pleasure than on the rigour, sternness or austerity that is associated with the rule of a norm. Reading advertisements and negotiating the guidance of advertisers are processes that are to be understood as voluntary acts and not some sort of hypnotically induced addiction or 'alienating' activity as writers such as Jhally (1990) and Wernick (1991) argue. The adjective voluntary is deployed here to emphasise audiences' capacity to act by choice on the basis of their cultural competence and experience of consuming certain forms of media texts. It is the learned anticipation of some form of pleasure that might be produced in the reading process which motivates the audience's decision to watch and interpret advertisements and get engaged in a power relationship with advertisers.

Pleasure as a constitutive element of governance

If the above argument is plausible, then pleasure should be treated as another element in the interplay of relations of power and freedom. The idea to explore the role of pleasure in relation to the exercise of non-coercive forms of power was inspired by Pringle's research (1994) on gender and work. Analysing different meanings of the term 'secretary' and the boss-secretary relation, she showed how the operation of power as an incitement to act and to

construct certain identities can, in some cases, actually be experienced as pleasurable. The key point here, as Pringle (1994, 118) notes, is that

> "Power operates a lot more effectively when it operates around patterns of desire and pleasure, when it is not experienced as power at all, or where its exercise is enjoyed by both parties".

Drawing on this observation, I see the exercise of 'modest' power within advertising as a process that tends both to instrumentalise and produce certain forms of pleasure. The language of style, which serves as a suitable device for concealing political concerns and objectives, also provides the mechanisms through which relations of power-freedom come to be closely intertwined with those of pleasure.

Pleasurable experiences, just like other types of affective responses, are not considered, here, as individual and private phenomena. Rather, they are approached as cultural, discursively constructed responses, as articulations that are incited and shaped through the operation of a specific blend of power-freedom relations. My focus is mainly on the forms of pleasure that are related to textual practices (advertisements) or, more specifically, to the question of the role of (textual) pleasure in the configuration of relations through which advertising operates. In other words, the central question is: How advertising as political technology incorporates, instrumentalises and stimulates pleasure?

The issue of pleasure has long been recognised as intimately linked to the exercise of power and social/political regulation. Within many European intellectual and social/political practices that are responsible for drafting the modern discourse on pleasure, pleasure comes to be regarded as highly desirable but also as a potentially dangerous or even destructive experience. For that reason, pleasure becomes inseparable from efforts to impose social as well as psychological control over its practices. For example, Freud (1986a) writes about how the work of the 'pleasure principle' is never left unchallenged by opposing forces and tendencies that he describes as the 'reality principle'. Though Freud is mainly concerned with the role of pleasure in the context of the internal dynamics of mental processes, he makes a short note about the institution of education which functions as "an incitement to the conquest of pleasure principle" (Freud 1986b, 514).

The idea that pleasure needs to be 'conquered' in some way appears to be quite widespread throughout European modernity. That seems to be particularly true in the case of popular pleasures (see, for example, Mercer 1983; Fisk 1987, 227-230). In his essay on pleasure and popular politics, Mercer (1983) notes that pleasure can hardly be thought of

without invoking its chosen antonym, such as order or work. In the effort to trace the historical development of attempts to define, locate, justify and regulate forms of pleasure back to the second half of the eighteenth century, Mercer talks about how pleasure became an object of the serious attention of thinkers, politicians and legislators concerned with ways to manage forms of pleasure, especially those associated with public spaces and events. The aim of these disparate but related political technologies seemed to be to police pleasure - to govern through disciplining pleasure. This suggests that various governmental processes deployed techniques of power that would manage and control pleasure in order to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of some sort of social order. Here, pleasure appears as an object of regulation. Undoubtedly, the issue of *governing pleasure* is enormously relevant to the understanding of how political technologies act upon subjects. While acknowledging this, I also want to argue that the issue of *governing through pleasure,* that is, through using and inciting certain forms of pleasure, is equally, if not more, important for analysing modern governmental practices that I describe as 'soft' forms of governance.

Thinking about the ongoing economic and social changes in the late twentieth century and transformations often labelled as postmodernisation (Crook, Pakulski & Waters 1992), one is tempted to argue that there has been a change in the style of governance in terms of the configuration of power and power-pleasure relations. Following Bauman's thesis (1998, 22-27; 2001, 8-29) about the partial, if not complete, collapse of the 'panoptic' paradigm of power (see also Martin 1997), it could be said that pleasure is no longer exclusively regarded as a target of policing practices or as an object to be disciplined. The constantly increasing growth of the consumer market together with some major industrial and organisational realignments in the economic sphere (see Harvey as quoted in Martin 1997) played an important role in redrafting the modern discourse on pleasure and reshaping patterns of governance. One of the effects of the economic rationality concerned with governing consumption (which is characterised by a rapidly growing degree of choice) is an increased importance of knowing and influencing consumer conduct. Clearly, consumers, positioned as self-regulating subjects practising their freedom of choice, can hardly be governed through policing or indoctrination techniques. Rather, they are to be informed, advised, guided or 'seduced', as Bauman would put it (1998, 23), by experts in consumption and advertising, whose strategic position implies an investigative approach to consumer desires and pleasures. These are now to be explored with special attention, addressed and re-classified as important in economic as well as social and political terms.

It makes little sense to police (as well as to despise and mistrust) popular pleasures by emphasising the consequences of their abuse, when they could be instrumentalised to stimulate and shape consumer motivation. In order to do that, experts in consumption, consumer behaviour and the production of advertising imagery construct short pieces of spectacle with the explicit intention to incite various forms of pleasure. Rather than acting as a prohibitive force, the definitional and normative power that is here put in practice comes to utilise its potential for activating the viewer/consumer's capacity to 'play' with meanings and produce (textual) pleasure. This is a strategy of power that creates a much more favourable emotional setting for exercising influence. The contribution of advertising to 'de-pathologising' and normalising popular pleasures, especially in their commodified forms, can hardly be overemphasised. One of the consequences is that this form of experience is now registered as socially approved, respected and desirable. The search for pleasure within the wide field of consumption (of goods, texts, places, experiences, etc.) has become a legitimate drive, which has significant implications for the way consumers perform practices of the self along the guidelines suggested by advertising imagery.

Towards the end of this section, I wish to make clear that my interest in pleasure in this work is limited to the notion of pleasure as it comes to be incited through media representation and instrumentalised by the operation of a form of power which avoids triumphant display of its mechanisms. The focus is on textual pleasure that is used as a tool of power and devised by the technologies for the government of others. But it should be also emphasised that pleasure appears as a form of experience produced in the process of exchange of meanings between producers of the (advertising) text and its readers. Seen from this perspective, the experiences of pleasure, though brief and fragmented, are integral to reading practices. These practices involve interpreting textual meanings as well as constructing manifold links between the text and the wider sphere of personal knowledge and experience. Textual pleasure comes to shape the process of making, evaluating, testing and appropriating meaningful associations that connect elements of the text to conceptual categories, social values, ethical norms and action frames that govern the manner in which subjects organise their understanding of and ways of acting upon themselves. In this way textual pleasure is also incorporated into techniques of the self.

Concluding remarks

To conclude this chapter, I would like to draw together the threads of the discussion on

techniques of power and the way power combines with freedom and pleasure to structure a 'soft' form of governance through advertising. Foucault's conceptualisation of government in terms of management of conduct and relations of power forms a theoretical basis for understanding the governmental practice that seeks to affect and modify the action of subjects rather than forcibly restrict their field of possibilities for action. Crucially, the agency and freedom of the subject is a sine qua non of the exercise of 'modest' power. This theoretical perspective informs my perception of advertising in terms of a mode of governance that respects, encourages and instrumentalises viewers/consumers' ability and responsibility to act by choice.

Following Foucault and other authors concerned with analysing the neo-liberal art of governing, I argue that the key feature of governance through advertising is the interactive operation of techniques for governing others and techniques which the governed deploy to fashion themselves as subjects capable of regulating their own lives and selves. This suggests that advertising seeks to govern by using strategies for influencing ethical ideals, norms, methods and practices through which viewers/consumers act upon themselves. Within such a governmental practice (tightly connected to the field of ethics), advertising professionals are positioned as experts in the guidance of selves, and viewers/consumers as free to choose how to respond.

The way in which 'modest' power blends with practices of freedom (both as mode of regulation and as identity) is what renders viewers/consumers governable as well as able to govern themselves through the choices they make. Another important dimension of this 'soft' style of governance is its association with pleasure. By this I mean two things: pleasure is used in technologies for the government of others as an instrument of power; and pleasure is also a form of subjective experience produced in the text-reader interaction that can be used in technologies for the government of the self. The main argument of the chapter is that the complex dependencies and interlocking relations of 'modest' power, freedom and pleasure might serve as a useful analytical model for exploring advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance. This is a perspective that is significantly different from the approaches centred around the concept of ideological domination achieved through the operation of coercive and restrictive power.

CHAPTER 4
CONCEPTUALISING IDENTITY AND GENDER

Identity and the construction of the subject

The conceptualisation of 'soft' governance in terms of its dependence upon 'games of identity', which was discussed in the previous chapter, inevitably puts on the agenda the conceptualisation of identity and processes of its formation. The aim of this chapter is to outline a theoretical understanding of self- and gender identity. This theoretical groundwork is necessary to articulating an approach for analysing the ways in which advertising governs the conduct of female viewers/consumers through techniques concerned with the guidance of selves.

My position is informed by theories which challenge the essentialist conception of identity as formed around some intrinsic content, some 'true' and unitary inner core that is essential to structuring a whole set of fixed characteristics. More specifically, I draw on theoretical insights from post-structuralist analyses of the foundations of the discourses of modernity as well as from feminist efforts to question the established 'gender system'. Both of these forms of analysis contributed to opening doors to new ways of looking at questions of identity and its politics; identity came to be seen as something that is historically specific, culturally defined and socially constructed rather than something that is authentic and stable but hidden behind layers of superficially imposed roles and masks. One of the fundamental moves that characterise these endeavours to examine critically the established discourse on identity (especially in its relation to power and representation) was to deconstruct the essentialist theorising of the subject. Its main concern, as Hall (1996) noted, was to render the constructed nature of the subject more visible rather than to create yet another body of positive knowledge that is based on 'truer' ideas and entirely new concepts.

I begin with the basic premise of poststructuralist thinking that the subject is constructed by and through discourses that provide specific subject positions. A Foucaultian explanation of this process focuses on the operation of power, which makes certain subject positions available and prescribes a certain set of values, goals, norms and forms of conduct in relation to a given subject position. Different discourses create different subject definitions and formulate different ethical categories that affect the production of different forms of the subject. The view that the individual takes up a variety of subject positions within different discourses means that it can no longer be considered as synonymous with a single subject. Such a conceptualisation of the discursively constructed subject also decentralises the 'I' that

was formerly regarded as the supreme author of experience and the essential expression of identity. From this perspective, the notion of the subject/identity as firmly rooted in whatever can be defined as 'human nature' or some unique, stable and monolithic structure is entirely untenable. So is the search for essential qualities located in the individual or any form of social grouping. Instead, the focus is on the ways individuals come to be historically produced by their positioning within a range of coexisting discourses.

The notion of the subject as multiply constructed across different discourses does not, however, involve the idea that the subject is to be thought of in terms of mere effects of discourses. That is because the operation of power constitutes subjects in a certain way and, at the same time, makes them capable of negotiating their relationship with the various discourses they are drawn into. As Foucault (1982a, 1988a, 1988b, 1992) made it clear, technologies of power, which position subjects and structure the conduct of individuals, rarely function separately from the technologies that fashion the ways in which the subject acts upon him/herself. However, the notion of agency which technologies of the self imply should not be understood in classical modern terms as 'the freedom of the will' but as involving a certain field of possibility for active participation and self-constitution, which varies with each discourse (see, for example, Grossberg 1996).

Rather than advocating a form of discourse determinism, as some authors suggest (see, for example, McNay 1994; Hall 1996), Foucault insists on the interdependent operation of the two types of technologies, drawing attention to both the discursive construction of the subject and the question of how individuals constitute and recognise themselves as certain forms of subject. This position is reflected in the way he uses the noun subject and the verb *'asujettir'* (Foucault 1992). In his analysis of struggles against the techniques of power that position and categorise the individual, that impose certain regimes of truth, and that relate the individual to his/her identity, Foucault explicitly defines two interconnected meanings of the term subject: **"**subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge**"** (Foucault 1982, 212). According to Henriques and co-authors (1998, 2-3) of the volume Changing the Subject, the English translation of the French verb *'asujettir'* should involve 'to make subject' as well as 'to produce subjectivity'. Such a translation suggests an intrinsic link between the notion of the subject as discursively constituted within the differentiated social domain and the notion of subjectivity as individuality and self-awareness. Brown (1996, 57) offers a similar understanding of

Foucault's account of the process of subjectification as including the self being constituted as well as self-constitution.

The displacement of the notion of the discrete and unified subject composed of fixed characteristics, and the double meaning of Foucault's conception of the subject suggest that analytic attention should be paid to discursive practices and relations of power, which produce certain subject positions and regulate their availability, as well as to processes of identity formation. A form of identity is understood here as a product of acting upon oneself, through which the individual constitutes subjective experience of the self. It is an individual task, a project with which the individual is actively concerned through performing various practices with the greater or lesser help from experts in the 'guidance of selves'.

This theoretical position informs three interconnected arguments that structure my approach to analysing advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance. The first is that advertising can be seen as one of the discourses which affect the construction of self-identity without resort to claims about totalising effects of (advertising) ideology upon individuals whose 'real', 'true' or 'authentic' identity comes to be deformed in the process. The second argument is that one of the major mechanisms through which power relations between advertising practitioners and viewers/consumers are established is the choice of main discourses (and the related subject positions) which are mobilised to address and represent certain identities in advertising imagery. And, finally, the third argument proposes that the effects of power operating through advertising should be analysed not only in terms of providing subject definitions but also in terms of suggesting ways in which the subject relates to itself in the continuous process of defining an identity and constructing a form of selfhood.

The field of ethics: self-constitution of the subject through practices of the self

Foucault's inquiry concerning the models of self-understanding, self-fashioning and self-regulation by means of which the subject relates to itself and comes to be historically constituted as experience, revolves around his notion of technologies or practices of the self. These practices involve various operations which individuals perform on their "bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault 1988,18). Although the individual is both the subject and object of practices of the self, these procedures are not invented by the individual subject. Rather, they are formulated, prescribed and suggested to individuals by various discourses that are concerned with ethical questions, such

as: "What should one do with oneself? What work should be carried out on the self? How should one 'govern oneself'?" (Foucault 2000d, 87), or "How can one practice freedom?"(Foucault 2000c, 284).

A certain form of freedom is a fundamental condition for any form of ethical practice through which an identity is defined, maintained or transformed in relation to some ethical ideals and goals. At the same time, Foucault also warns against the view that these forms of acting upon or governing oneself may lead to some sort of liberation, if liberation is conceived of as a state in which individuals can rediscover their 'true' nature. Instead, he insists that the ethical problem of the practice of freedom should be thought of as linked to 'games of truth'. A game of truth involves a set of rules and procedures that affects the production of truth as well as the evaluation of practical results which the individual achieves (or fails to achieve) in the process of self-constitution (Foucault 2000c, 297). Foucault also adds that these rules are not firmly codified so that it is possible to modify a certain rule and, in some instances, even to change the entire game. But, crucially, the subject of ethics is always related to one or other game of truth, as games of truth are also practices of 'modest' power which define what ethical norms and practical methods of acting upon the self are regarded as true, permitted, reputable, respectable, desirable or pleasurable in contrast to those that are not valued this way. Involving no coercive instruments, these games and practices formulate guidelines about how discursively positioned subjects should exercise their freedom and take an active role in producing themselves as particular forms of identity and subjectivity.

This theoretical position informs my view that advertising can be analysed in terms of the guidelines that are offered to female viewers to suggest how they should relate to and fashion themselves in accordance with represented ethical norms and ideals. Since advertising does not promote a single, coherent and totalising set of norms and means of achieving them, I propose the term 'ethical regimes' to refer to ethical categories that are organised in clusters and mobilised to affect the formation of a particular form of identity. To be more precise, an ethical regime articulates a certain cluster of normative ideals and categories which seek to normalise and encourage particular thoughts, feelings, dispositions, desires, forms of conduct, practices and fantasies. Drawing on a certain game of truth, an ethical regime describes a goal that is worth striving for, suggests practical techniques for achieving it, provides criteria for evaluating results, and legitimises certain meanings, pleasures and forms of selfhood. In short, it specifies a particular way of understanding and relating to oneself. From this perspective, advertising is to be seen as a form of representation which offers its viewers a certain range of

ethical regimes.

By proposing this approach, I do not suggest that these ethical regimes are sets of practical advice that subject the viewer into conformity. Quite the contrary, the advice can become effective only if it succeeds in motivating the viewer's active engagement in interpreting the text and the relevance of the offered advice. It is only in this sense that advertising can affect the way in which the viewer acts upon herself. This proposition implies that reading or watching advertisements is understood not as a consumption of ready-made messages with fixed semantic contents but, following Barthes (1982) and Fiske (1987), as an interaction between the text and the reader. This view holds that the interplay between constraints imposed by textual structure (definitional power) and the freedom to construct meaningful associations enables the reader/viewer to produce meaning and pleasure which convey some personal relevance for the viewer. Such an interpretive process involves forging meaningful links between various elements of the text as well as creating links between the text (or a group of texts) and some broader structures of meaning. This is to emphasise that meanings created through reading practices do not circulate within some autonomous domain of memory but penetrate the wider sphere of knowledge, personal experience, fantasy and desire. And however weak or transient the instances of textual pleasure might be (as is the case of watching television advertising), they create emotional states which affect the reading process and influence its connections with ways of understanding, evaluating and relating to the self.

The argument I am trying to put forward can be summed up by saying that interpreting advertisements is an activity that may influence the viewer's self-constituting practices. This is because advertisements use a range of techniques for representing certain ethical regimes. One is to offer implicit suggestions about how the viewer should relate to herself while performing a range of everyday duties that define a certain subject position. The other is to provide guidelines on how the viewer should understand her emotional experience of or modify her conduct towards some close interpersonal relationships (with, for instance, her children, husband or lover). Or, some advertisements may well provide explicit (and often detailed) advice to the viewer about various techniques for acting upon her body and desire in order to maintain and improve her health, beauty, erotic attractiveness and self-esteem. In one way or another, advertisements refer to some practices of the self by means of which the viewer is to achieve whatever is represented as an ethical ideal.

But advertisements can also affect the viewer's sense of identity by shaping what could be called, following Mackenzie (2000), the 'imaginative repertoire' on which the subject draws when imagining the self or fantasising what he/she should or would like to become. This point needs some clarification. According to Mackenzie, 'imagistic' or 'representational' thinking plays a crucial though often neglected role in the processes through which subjects try to organise and evaluate their self-perceptions and figure out what sort of ethical ideals, goals and commitments shape their identity. As Mackenzie shows, imagistic thinking may take many forms, from experiential memory and 'counterfactual speculation' of past events to 'centrally imagining' oneself and future-directed fantasy (Ibid. 127-133). Central to all these forms is the premise that the representation of the self need not be confined to what the imagining subject perceives as his/her 'real' self. The importance of all these imaginative projects lies in their cognitive power and affective and motivational force, which come to affect the processes of self-reflection and practical deliberation about the self.

These imaginative mental activities may have an involuntary or associational character, which implies that the imagining subject can hardly control the succession of or connections between images, ideas or metaphors that appear in his/her imagination. But the subject can also engage voluntarily in various forms of imagistic thinking in order to understand, evaluate and re-interpret the significance of certain events, encounters, beliefs, ideals, personal capacities, mental and bodily characteristics, forms of conduct, emotions, desires or commitments. This form of imagining is one of the processes through which the subject gains insight into how these aspects constitute his/her sense of the self. The engagement in this imaginative mental activity can also be inspired by the subject's desire to re-live some pleasurable experiences or anticipate future pleasures. Whether the motivation is to gain knowledge about the self or invoke pleasure, 'imagining ourselves otherwise' and 'distancing [ourselves] from our habitual modes of self-understanding' are, for Mackenzie, crucial to processes of self-formation. Although she analyses these forms of imagination as introspective projects, she acknowledges that a personal imaginative repertoire draws on raw material that comes from culturally available images and representations.

Drawing on Mackenzie's account, it is possible to argue that advertising provides the imagery that informs the imaginative repertoire from which the subject works when recalling past experiences or imagining the self on the basis of certain desires, aspirations, ideals and self-evaluations. By suggesting this, I do not mean that ideas, images or metaphors that are represented in advertisements bear any simple relation to the workings of subjective fantasy.

Rather, I want to argue that the influence of these ideas, images or metaphors is mediated by the way in which viewers practice their freedom of interpretation and of identity. As mentioned earlier, this practice involves the reader's active engagement in interpreting textual meanings and creating associations between these meanings and a wider sphere of knowledge, personal experience and imagination. It is through articulating these associations that some elements of ethical regimes promoted in advertising gain admittance to the viewer's imaginative repertoire and thus influence the technique of the self based on fantasising and imaginative playing around with self-identities.

The question of subjective motivation

I wish to address briefly one more issue concerning post-structuralist theorisation of the subject/identity which emphasises its fractured and fragmented nature. As subjects move across different discourses, they become susceptible to different strategies of subjectification so that subjectivities are to be conceived of, according to Rose (1996), in terms of a 'discontinuous surface' (see Rose 1996). Other authors also stress the absence of some unified interiority, claiming that a sense of biographical coherence is just an illusion, as there is no unifying entity or principle that would relate disparate social roles and conflicting experiences (see, for example, Rorty in Featherstone 1995, 45; Jameson 1993). This position shapes my theoretical perspective so that one of the aims of my study is to explore whether and how advertising contributes to the production of the fragmented subject.

But there is one problem which this theoretical position seems to ignore, namely that of subjective motivation. While the issue of motivation cannot be solved by reference to some (modernist) notion of a stable, unified and coherent 'psychological system' (see, for example, Henrique et al. 1998), it is equally clear that without any notion of motivation it becomes extremely difficult to explore why individuals come to occupy subject positions in some discourses rather than others (Hall 1996; Hollway 1998). If subjects are not being mechanically positioned in discourses, how can we understand the historical continuity of the subject?

In her analysis of individuals' histories of their positioning within discourses concerned with gender identity and difference, Hollway tries to solve this problem by appropriating and reinterpreting the Freudian concept of 'investment'. This concept is very useful as it involves the notion of subjective motivation that is based neither on biologically determined drives nor on some system of individual needs or processes of rational decision-making (Hollway 1998,

238). Instead, it refers to the dynamics of identification with certain discursively produced subject definitions. Or, more specifically, to the emotional commitment individuals make in the expectation of some kind of reward or satisfaction in taking up certain subject positions. Hollway argues that although the individuals may have multiple and even conflicting stakes, the investment they make is always related to "power and the way it is historically inserted into individuals' subjectivity" (Ibid., 238). Past investments into certain subject positions influence present ones, though not in a simple way. Crucially, the investment is connected to the way in which individuals manage interpersonal or other social relations. An important operation which this management of social relations involves is to estimate the relative power that is likely to be exercised through these relations. In other words, individuals tend to 'invest' their commitment in practices and meanings which can grant them relative power. This investment and the acquired power play an important role in shaping a sense of biographical continuity that links different positionings. In this way, the investment that has been made produces some sort of pay-off or satisfaction, although the satisfaction may not necessarily be in harmony with other resultant feelings.

By introducing the concept of investment, Hollway makes an important move in enriching the analysis of the production of the subject/identity to include the motivational dynamics at work in taking up and linking different and conflicting positionings, through which the subjective experience of identity is shaped. In order to specify the relevance of this concept to the theoretical basis for my analysis of advertising, I need to explain its connection with what might be called 'benefit analysis'. Advertisements always represent the product/brand in terms of some benefit that it offers the consumer; this benefit is regularly formulated in relation to some sort of advice about how the viewer/consumer should perform certain practices, manage her relationships with others and understand or modify her own conduct. I use the term benefit analysis to refer to an aspect of reading advertisements that is concerned with interpreting the potential benefit of consuming the advertised product/brand. The operation of power within the text tends to encourage rather than discourage the viewer to recognise the advantages of consuming the given product and to follow the suggested advice.

To put it simply, benefit analysis is a procedure which enables the viewer to define some possible connections between the proposed style of consumption and self-identity. I also want to argue that the calculation of the potential benefit provided by the advertised object is conducted in relation to the commitment the reader is prepared to invest in accepting certain ethical categories and performing self-fashioning practices that are suggested by advertising.

The fact that a certain investment may be empowering in one context but disempowering in another, offers a clue about how complex these evaluations and calculations might be. This does not imply that such a benefit analysis is controlled by disinterested thinking as it is not a matter of purely rational calculation of costs and benefits (as rational choice theory would suggest). Rather, it is an analytical procedure that is performed while simultaneously experiencing different types of pleasure derived from watching advertisements. Drawing some form of pleasure from the text and analysing the product's benefit are intertwined processes; they combine to shape the viewer's interpretation of the text and its connections to the investments the viewer is prepared to make. The complex dynamics of the reading process affect - but are also affected - by the subjective motivation for the commitments individuals make in the ongoing interplay between discursive positioning and the practice of freedom as identity.

Theoretical ideas discussed so far emphasise the importance of looking at how relations of ('modest') power and freedom combine to construct the subject across different discourses and, at the same time, condition and facilitate its self-constitution according to certain ethical regimes. The main concern of the chapter has been to outline a theoretical perspective for the analysis of advertising as a mode of 'soft' governance that operates by influencing the way subjects relate to themselves and produce their self-identities. But the discussion has not so far paid attention to one important issue concerning the constitution of the subject, namely that of gender. The remainder of the chapter explores the ideas that inform my understanding of the subject as a gendered identity.

Discursive construction of gender, sex and the body

In keeping with the theory of the subject and identity discussed here, the basic premise of my understanding of gender identity is that it is socially constructed and culturally defined and not a given essence of human beings shaped by natural forces. This premise draws on the feminist critique of the theory of gender based on naturalistic conceptions of sex and the sexually differentiated human body. The effort to examine critically the supposedly direct causal link between human biology and social identities and behaviour produced a range of conceptualisations within feminist theory. Some strains accorded the distinction between sex and gender a central place in the explanation of these relations. But as the debates around the conceptualisation of gender were gaining momentum and attracting ever more attention from a range of feminist writers, anthropologists and gender studies scholars, the distinction between

sex and gender itself became an object of questioning (see, for example, Butler 1990; Moore 1994a, 1994b)

While the conceptualisation of a sex-gender division played an enormously important theoretical role in pointing to the inadequacy of naturalistic explanations of gender, it also reflected a fundamental conceptual dualism in thinking about relations between 'biology' and 'culture', and between the (naturally sexed) body and mind/social meaning (Ivanovic 2003, 397-401). Although the aim of this move to separate gender from sex was to emphasise the social construction of gender meanings, it worked, in effect, as Yanagisako and Collier (see Moore 1994a, 38) point out, to reinforce the idea of gender being located in the body. The naturally sexed body, thus, continued to be treated unproblematically as an essential entity, which is a point that became a main cause of concern within some other strains of feminist theory and anthropology (see Moore 1994a, 38-41). The subject matter clearly demanded a change of approach.

Parallel to the efforts to decentre the subject and de-essentialise identity, there has been a tendency, over the last two or three decades, to de-naturalise the body, sex and sexuality. One of the major objections to theories based on the sex-gender distinction is that they could not allow for a possibility to explore the ways in which the body itself is being 'produced' in culture (Harding 1998, 45). The problem is that cultural categories and social practices do not only interpret bodily attributes and give new meanings to bodies; they also produce the body in a way that cannot be accounted for with reference to its biological constitution and processes. In this respect, Foucault's 'History of Sexuality' had an enormous influence on all the writers who thought that the essentialist view of 'sex' as a sign of the pre-given nature of the body should be problematised rather than taken as an axiom.

Although the idea of the body being not just 'natural' but shaped by cultural and social forces can be traced back to 1930s when M. Mauss (1973/1934) wrote his famous essay on techniques of the body, it was Foucault's work that opened the doors to a significantly different way of looking at the physical body. Here, the body itself is to be understood as discursively produced and, thus, as historically specific; it is to be treated as a site of intervention and regulation within the context of a certain ethical and political field. This conception of the body, as something that is being produced through the performance of certain practices upon it, undermines the very foundation of the theories generated from the paradigm of the autonomous agency of binary categorised sex.

The radical move that Foucault made was exactly to avoid taking 'sex' as a pre-given object of analysis. Instead, his focus was on the analysis of the ways of referring to 'sex' in order to define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that supported discourses on sex in 'the modern Occident'. Crucial for Foucault was the question of how sex was produced within certain discourses, which "endowed sex with an inexhaustible and polymorphous causal power" (Foucault 1998, 65). Instead of treating 'sex' as a 'hard' biological fact that causes ahistorical sexuality, Foucault's analysis of the ways in which sex has been treated in discourses reveals that sex itself is a historical construct. Sex appeared as an outcome of the historically specific mode of unfolding sexuality (which is associated with modernity) and not as some kind of human constant that *caused* sexuality as well as a range of various psychological, bio-medical and behavioural phenomena. The deconstruction of the discourses of biologising the body and the view of 'sex' as a cluster of different elements which is constructed discursively to structure and regulate forms of conduct and experience (see Foucault 1998, 154) have a significant impact on the understanding of gender. The recognition of the historical constructedness of sex led to the reinterpretation of the sex-gender relation, which allowed for the possibility to theorise gender outside the conceptual framework that places sex in a seemingly natural binary system based on genital morphology as a definite sign of being male or female (Harding 1998, 44). This idea had an enormous impact on subsequent feminist writing that further undermined the notion of 'natural' sources of sexuality, gender identities and inequality.

Some recent anthropological research, too, has produced evidence that relations of gender are not universally (and, therefore, not inevitably) grounded in binary categorised sex difference. A considerable range of ethnographic material shows that in some non-Western societies gender identities are interpreted as being established through social practices rather than through exaggerated biological differences (Moore 1994, 38-41; Ivanovic 2003, 403). To avoid any possible misunderstanding, it is important to stress that this ethnographic evidence does not suggest that certain biological constraints coming from the body itself should be ignored in the discussion on gender. What it does suggest is that the body becomes visible only through a particular gaze and comprehensible only through a particular discourse. In short, it is only through particular ways of looking at the body that some of its aspects come to be recognised as features relevant for defining gender identity. The analysis of forms of representation is thus intrinsic to understanding these issues.

In an effort to reframe the issue in terms of how biological differences between sexed bodies are being interpreted in discourses, J. Butler asks "under what discursive and institutional conditions, do certain biological differences… become the salient characteristics of sex" (Butler as quoted in Osborne & Segal 1997)? She argues that the explicatory power of 'sex' in biologically based theories is constructed around the (social) institution of reproduction. Accorded the status of the most fundamental institution for thinking about gender, reproduction is understood as the ultimate expression of sexuality. It is the reproductive capacity, interpreted as being "inscribed on that body as the law of its natural necessity" (Butler as quoted in Harding 1998, 46) that is regarded as a determinant characteristic of bodies and gender meanings. This 'law', which is discursively formulated by forging links between 'natural' sex, reproduction and gender, also works to enforce the imperative of heterosexuality. In other words, the economy of heterosexual relations plays the crucial role in the discursive production of categories 'women' and 'men' as discrete and asymmetrical gender positions (Butler 1990, 23; Wittig in Harding 1998, 46-7).

The discourses on heterosexuality and reproduction are held by many feminist writers as most relevant for the production of gender meanings and power asymmetry between women and men. But other coexisting discourses (such as those on housework, the body beautiful, paid work, etc.) also operate to produce and reproduce gender inequality through normalising the idea of a causal relationship between naturally differentiated sexes and differentially valued gender identities. The politics of the production and normalisation of biological truth about gender have important implications for gender power relations, as male and female gender definitions are being systematically recreated through the exercise of power in the dominant discourses which, in our societies, work to maintain the privileged status of gender typical roles, attributes and qualities classified as masculine.

The techniques employed to normalise gender inequality have been, for the last four decades or so, at the very focus of the feminist critique. One of the ways in which some feminist writers came to problematise the arrangement of gender relations was to examine how the principle of 'otherness' is applied to structure the difference between categories of women and men (which is the legacy of de Beauvoir's work). The argument is that within the structure of the dual categorisation of gender, femininity is defined as the 'other', as significantly different from or in the opposition to the norm, which is masculinity. This is by no means to suggest that femininity or masculinity should be regarded as a single and internally homogenous category, but only to draw attention to some mechanisms operating within the

discourses that are productive of gender differences. Hollway (1998, 252-260), for example, identifies one of such mechanisms as 'splitting the differences', whereby discourses create a range of gender-differentiated pairs of attributes or qualities that describe 'proper' ways of engendering the subject. This relational dynamics gives content and value to gender differences and, consequently, gender relations.

Hollway argues that the content of the 'split' can be predicted from discourses allocating different characteristics to female and male gender positions. For example, discourses on heterosexual couple relations produce pairs of characteristics such as: being looked at and looking, or expressing feelings and offering support, or the commitment to the emotional bonding and the desire for sexual excitement. However, the value of the opposed characteristics, which is what crucially affects gender positions in terms of their relative power, is not derived from the opposition itself but from the judgement attached to it. She emphasises the distinction between the content and the value of the split only to render relations of power-value more visible, but she insists that in practice the content presents itself as inseparable from the value attached to it. The operation of power within dominant discourses seeks to naturalise the production of value attached to gender meanings, although it does not close all the possibilities for questioning the value judgement. As power difference creates the inequality between female and male positions so the subjects engendered in this way come to reproduce hierarchical power relations between genders (Hollway 1998, 228). Power difference is, thus, both the cause and effect of the system of gender differences.

The feminist appropriation of the Foucaultian thesis that the body and the binary system of sex are socially constructed and, therefore, historically specific, forms an important part of my theoretical framework for analysing advertising representations of forms of femininity. It draws attention to the ways in which advertising conceals the exercise of power that seeks to normalise supposedly natural gender asymmetry. It also points to the relevance of analysing forms of representation through which female gender definitions are articulated and used to influence the way individuals (re)define their identities. The question I want to explore in my analysis of advertising is how, out of which discourses, and through what signifying mechanisms do advertisements define, legitimise and prioritise certain meanings of femininity while marginalising others.

'Engendering' of the subject

Attention now turns to the question of how discourses that operate to sustain the regime of gender as defined in terms of its duality, position the subject so as to occupy one of the mutually exclusive gender categories. It is important to note that the notion of positioning does not suggest that gender identities are acquired by occupying a single female or a single male subject position that provides a unified and rigidly defined set of gender specific meanings. Rather, gender identities are formed through multiple positioning, each of which may work in a different way and direction within the diversified social domain. Different discourses (for example, those of housework, motherhood, wifehood, the body beautiful, paid work, etc.) produce a range of positions associated with differing definitions of gender identity. As subjects move across these discourses in the course of their everyday practices, they relate to a variety of gender meanings which they interpret, negotiate and interiorise. It might, therefore, make more sense to use the verb to 'engender', as Ang and & Hermes (1991, 316) suggest, instead of the noun form in order to avoid possible connotations of gender as a stable and unitary formation.

In that sense, it is possible to talk of multiple ways of engendering the subject through the process of occupying diverse socially constructed positions that require the development of different dispositions and skills and the performance of different practices in different times, social contexts and circumstances. As Eckert noted, acquiring gender identity is "less about inhabiting some abstract and unitary category of 'women' or 'men' than it is about living one's other social identities … in a particular and gendered way" (Eckert as quoted in Cameron 1997, 33). This clearly suggests that theorising gender should never be separated from consideration of the complexity of the interaction between gender definitions and other relevant categories. In other words, a set of meanings that come to define a particular version of femininity or masculinity at any particular time and place always relates to a whole range of other positionings.

To illustrate this point, I will take an example of a form of femininity that features in various media representations and was also visible in advertising throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Following Entwistle (1997), I will call this identity the 'career woman'. It can be described briefly as a mature, well-educated, self-confident, busy and, in most cases, white woman who occupies one of the high professional positions in a corporate hierarchy. To produce, perform and communicate her version of a powerful femininity, she has to develop a certain body of knowledge, demonstrate certain professional skills and follow a particular style

of conduct and self-presentation as well as a code of dress designed to leave an impression of a smart, stylish and well-off lady. It is easy to observe how the construction of this form of gender identity is inseparable from the operation of other discourses that position the subject in terms of education, age, race, consumption and lifestyle. This example emphasises that it is only through a complex set of positionings and subjective experiences that the individual articulates a certain form of living one's life as a particularly gendered subject.

The argument is that the subject always refers to a number of coexisting discourses that address and position individuals in different ways, which is what accounts for the production of different, often conflicting and, sometimes, even contradictory definitions of gender identities. A 'career woman' may, at some stage in her life, become a wife and mother. She would then come to occupy a range of subject positions that imply specific sets of gender meanings which may stand in contradiction to her 'career' femininity. And, the practices, knowledges, skills and dispositions that made her confident and powerful as a professional woman are not likely to be easily used to help her perform successfully new identities as a devoted wife, caring mother or kind daughter-in-law.

Though crudely described, the above example clearly shows that gender definitions constructed by different discourses "are never innocent; nor are they equally powerful, coexisting in a happy plurality", as Ang and Hermes noted (1991, 316). These discourses have complex mutual effects as they operate in such a way as to produce a varying degree of contradiction between differently empowering positions occupied by the same individual. It is in this sense that the subject becomes fragmented to a certain extent. In the course of performing different practices in different social contexts and situations, the subject, however, learns to 'manage' this condition by continuously negotiating and appropriating the meanings of and relations between the scattered gender definitions.

As discourses do not operate to construct a unitary and stable gender position, forms of femininity or masculinity, which do not exist prior to or outside technologies of power, are always dynamic formations. Such technologies can never stop producing the effects of power, implying that gender identities are continuously constituted in time through practices within and movements between different positionings and 'games of truth'. Gender is, then, more something that we 'do' than what we simply are (Butler 1990; Simpson 1997). As Butler (1990, 33) writes, "gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed". In other words, the act of 'doing' is what constitutes the gendered subject; the term 'doing' refers to the practices governed by various regulatory techniques as

well as those of interpreting and negotiating the diverse definitions of how to live one's life in a gendered way.

The proposed understanding of gender does not, however, imply the idea of the gendered subject as a simple sum of positions, definitions and performances. Rather, the gendered subject is seen in terms of a complex history of all its positionings and 'doings', a history that generates a sense of relative subjective continuity and subjective experience of gendered identity. The notion of investment discussed earlier plays an important role in understanding subjective commitment that affects the way this history is continually being constructed and reconstructed. On the one hand, the performance of various practices, through which gendered subjectivity is constituted, is regulated by discursively constructed gender definitions. On the other hand, it is also shaped by the acts of calculating different investments and potential benefits derived from them, though these acts are not always and, perhaps, never entirely controlled by conscious processes. According to Hollway's account (1998, 251-252), the calculation of investment is not so much governed by the contemporary positions that are made available to the subject as it is dependent upon a complex cluster of factors emerging from the individual's history of positioning. In this way, the production of gender subjectivities is not seen as over-determined by discursive positions in spite of the fact that these positions do articulate gender definitions and attach value judgements to them.

This brings me onto the last point I wish to make in this section. As mentioned earlier, one of my central research tasks is to explore how women as viewers of advertisements get related to the power which seeks to influence their self-constituting practices. It is the use of the term 'women' that requires a brief clarification here. Although I make frequent use of the term, I do not want to suggest that it designates some kind of internally homogenous category. Rather, the presented theoretical understanding of the production of gender identities emphasises the idea of diversity and internal instability of all gender identities. The conception of gender as a process regulated by a range of historically specific discourses rather than universal (biological or social) conditions, leaves no space to assume that there is some transcultural or transhistoric structure of femininity (Butler 1990, 18-22). The term 'women' is thus used not to signify some fixed and coherent set of positionings and characteristics but multiple (and changeable) modes of constructing femininity.

Concluding remarks

In order to signal the way in which theoretical ideas discussed in this chapter shape my analysis of how modern strategies of governance through advertising work to affect the conduct and subjectivity of the viewer, I need to emphasise four key points. The first one is concerned with the conceptualisation of the subject and identity in terms of a complex interplay between the operation of power, which defines a limited range of gender specific subject positions, and the practice of freedom to choose a way of responding to the possibilities that are made available by these positions. From such a theoretical perspective, advertising cannot be analysed as a political technology that works through techniques of alienating viewers from their 'real' or 'genuine' identities. Rather, advertising is to be approached as a site of interdependent processes of positioning viewers and of cultivating their agency and capacity to select ways of acting upon one's body, thoughts, feelings and aspirations.

The second point, which refers to the fragmented nature of the subject and the fractured character of identity, directs attention to the question of how advertising seeks to influence the multiple construction of the subject (as a viewer). In other words, how it affects the articulation of various norms, definitions and goals that combine to shape unstable and contradictory rather than unified and coherent identity formations. The third point emphasises the analytical importance of the notion of practices of the self, through which the subject actively shapes its identity and subjectivity in relation to a cluster of normative ideals, ethical goals and practical methods of achieving them. This concept enables me to propose that interpreting advertisements may contribute to the way in which the viewer understands, evaluates and acts upon her body, desires, aspirations, emotional experiences and relations to others. The key argument is that the investigation of discursive relations that condition these forms of self-understanding and self-shaping is crucial to analysing how advertising seeks to influence (female) viewers by acting upon their sense of identity. The final point concerns the explanation of engendering of the subject. It puts on the agenda the question of how advertising represents and regulates a range of ethical regimes and practices through which women refer to various coexisting definitions of gender and other discourses of difference in the continuous process of acquiring and (re)defining their gender identities.

To broaden a theoretical perspective on advertising as a mode of governance, which does not suppress the agency of female viewers but tries to cultivate it in accordance with certain ethical regimes, it is important now to problematise the question of representation.

CHAPTER 5
CONCEPTUALISING REPRESENTATION

Relations of representation, power and truth

This chapter develops a theoretical position towards representation, and one that links representation to the question of meaning, 'modest' power, truth, (interpretive) freedom, pleasure, and the subject discussed above. To do this, I emphasise a constructive as opposed to mimetic character of representation (Hall 1997b). By rejecting the concept of representation as a 'mirror' reflecting meanings which originate in some independent domain of reality, a constructivist approach starts from the premise that meaning is generated only through the work of representation.

One important implication of this premise is that words, images, people, events or material objects convey no meaning per se, which, most obviously, discredits the search for 'real' or 'true' meanings as a valid objective of analysis. Instead, a constructivist approach focuses on the practices and procedures which regulate the way signifying systems are deployed to produce, circulate and interpret structures of meaning. This implies that meaning making processes are fundamentally interpretative, and that, as Hall (1997, 42) noted, following Derrida, "interpretations never produce a final moment of absolute truth". Crucially, interpretations are always produced within specific contexts and always related to other interpretations and other contexts. From this perspective, questions of representation/interpretation are closely intertwined with those of how truth is articulated and sustained within certain discourses, and of how formulations of truth come to structure the way people think, feel and relate to themselves and the world they live in. The production of meaning, thus, appears as inextricably linked to relations of power and of the subject.

One approach to analysing and understanding the complex ways in which relations of meaning and power affect the constitution of the subject is to deploy the concept of ideology. In a great deal of literature on advertising, as in many other fields of social research, this concept is used as a central analytic tool. Since I avoid using 'ideology' in looking at how advertising works as a 'soft' mode of governance, I need to explain theoretical reasons for doing so.

In many socio-cultural accounts of advertising that are largely informed by a Marxist conceptualisation of ideology (see, for example, Williamson 1978; Leiss et al. 1997; Jhally 1997; Wernick 1991), advertising is regarded as a more or less unified and coherent system of

representation with a significant role in sustaining what is seen as dominant ('consumerist') ideology. Regardless of how specific ideological functions of advertising are formulated in different accounts, advertising representation is usually analysed as a technique for manipulating the meanings and interpretative capacities of the viewer with the aim to conceal the true nature of material objects, social relations and identities. Thinking along these lines, Williamson (1978, 169) writes that ideology in general, and advertising in particular, is a system "whereby society gives itself a 'meaning' other than what it really is". In a more or less similar vein, other authors see advertising representation as 'management of consciousness' (Ewen 1976); or as a practice of "systematically misleading communication" (Leiss et al. 1997, 326); or as a technique of representing imaginary social relations through commodity fetishism (Jhally 1990); or as constructive of cultural meanings devoid of any "genuinely expressive intention" (Wernick 1991, 192).

In all these formulations, the understanding of representation as framed by the concept of ideology is, by definition, equated with the production of deformed, unauthentic meanings. This distinction between real and ideological meanings, between the true and the false, forms a fundamental premise structuring this type of Marxists theorisation of ideology (Foucault 1980; Rabinow 1986, 240). Related to this is a conception of society as a more or less coherent totality in which power operates as a unitary and repressive force possessed by certain groups and/or institutions (advertisers and advertising agencies) and exercised upon those (viewers/consumers) who have no access to power and no capacity to resist or challenge it. The underpinning argument is that those who have official political or economic power also have power over meaning of the forms of representation (advertisements) they produce. The effect of this power to fix meaning leaves viewers/consumers locked in ideological practices, alienating them from their genuine mode of being.

The idea that meaning is rooted in material reality rather than produced through representation is one of the major problems characterising this kind of conceptualising ideology. In effect, many critics of advertising (Williamson 1078; Leiss, Kline & Jhally 1997; Jhally 1990; Wernick 1991) accept the idea that meaning is produced through social practices of representation, but they classify the meaning thus produced as ideological, that is, as *a priori* imaginary and false. They claim that, in contrast to the meanings manufactured by 'image-manipulating' industries, true meanings are generated in a domain of reality which operates without the interference of representational practices. This notion of reality, framed in terms of historical materialism, is then taken to explain how the truth becomes accessible to knowledge

outside representation. Hence, this chain of reasoning, based on the assumption that it is possible to draw a neat dividing line between the true and the false, also comes to assert another fundamental opposition, namely that between reality and representation. Such a theorisation of ideology can thus be seen as structured by a circular relation between a whole set of dualisms: the real / the imaginary (representation), material production / superstructural domain, knowledge / ideology, freedom / power, and genuine (authentic) / alienated (ideologically constituted) identities.

Implying a number of theoretical and epistemological problems, this dualistic structure of the notion of ideology undermines the adequacy of this concept as a key analytical tool for exploring relations of representation. Rather than attempting to reframe this concept, I find Foucault's work as offering a much more adequate perspective on the problematic of knowledge/representation/truth. Foucault does not accept the supposedly evident distinction between knowledge and ideology (Hall 1997) and between the real and representation. Drawing on Nietzsche's idea about the absence of an original signified or a definite referent behind signs (Foucault 2000e), Foucault insists that things-in-themselves (or what is considered as 'reality' in many critical accounts of advertising) cannot be said to have any inherent or authentic meaning that exists independently of social processes through which it is created. Hence, the meaning of any object does not become available to the knowing subject outside practices of representation and interpretation. In other words, all that is available to us are interpretations, as "[t]here is nothing absolutely primary to interpret" (Foucault 2000e, 275). Interpretations can only refer to other interpretations. This rejection of the independent existence of some hidden layer of signifieds, most obviously, disqualifies the claim that 'reality' can somehow make the 'truth' available to the subject occupying the 'right' epistemological position (that of a scientific analyst). Rather, any insight into whatever is defined as reality can only be gained through practices of representation and interpretation, which are themselves governed by discursively established rules and procedures.

Foucault's refusal to think of the question of truth in terms of a true/false dualism suggests that the aim of analysing systems of representation is not to provide another, better attempt to redraw the line which would classify some representations or discourses (science) as productive of truth and some other as deviating from truth (ideology, advertising) (Foucault 1980, 118). Instead of formulating a criterion against which it is possible, with utmost certainty, to differentiate between correct and false representations/knowledge, a Foucaultian account regards representations as neither true nor false in themselves. Crucially, attention

must be drawn to the analysis of how formulations of truth are produced within certain discourses and with what effects.

I now wish to discuss another problematic point associated with the use of the term ideology. It refers to the assumption that ideological representations are produced by a subject (individual or collective) deliberately deploying methods of manufacturing false meanings (Foucault 1980, 118; Rabinow 1986, 240). Here, attention shifts to the understanding of ideology in terms of 'conspiracy thinking', a conception which is a logical consequence of defining power as domination and as force some subjects own and deploy in order to manipulate the agency and restrict the freedom of others. From this position, advertising, or any other form of ideological misrepresentation appears as originating largely in the subjective will and ability of the powerful ('image-manipulating' professionals and their clients) to govern the powerless. This view implies that the 'true' meaning of objects, identities and social relations, which producers of misrepresentation seek to conceal, is, in fact, known to them. But they choose not to make it visible because they believe that viewers/consumers can only be successfully governed through techniques of deception. That is why, according to such theories of ideology, power operates to deform genuine capacities of subjects to grasp social realities and recognise their true identities; it deprives them of access to knowledge, the possibility of which is predicated upon the notion of freedom as liberation from any ideological regulation. The oppositions between the false and the true, between power and knowledge, and between power and freedom are inextricably intertwined to form the basis of such a notion of ideology. What lurks behind this notion of ideology (and makes it theoretically inadequate) is, as Foucault notes, "the nostalgia for a quasi-transparent form of knowledge, free from all error and illusion" (Foucault 1980, 117). And, one may also add, a nostalgic theorisation of the authentic subject, free from all effects of power.

The concept of 'regime of truth'

Foucault's deconstruction of the monolithic character of power with only repressive effects opens up a possibility of a different approach to the question of representation and the production of knowledge (as well as of the subject). He rejects the argument that "the renunciation of power is one of the conditions of knowledge" (Foucault 1991b, 27), suggesting, instead, that relations of power and knowledge directly imply one another. The formation of knowledge is both predicated upon and constitutive of power relations, so that no insight into any domain of social reality is possible outside the exercise of power. This suggests that the

analysis of forms of representation, through which knowledge and the subject are produced, should abandon the search for the way power deforms or conceals the true meaning of social realities and identities. Rather, the analysis should focus on examining what Foucault terms the 'regime of truth'. This concept differs from that of ideology in three crucial points. Firstly, it is not defined in relation to true/false representation. Secondly, it is not regarded as being produced by a subject. And, finally, it is not conceptualised as operating in a domain which is secondary to one considered more real and material (Foucault 1980, 118-133; Rabinow 1986, 240).

To be more precise, the notion of regime of truth refers to a set of historically specific and socially constructed rules that govern the formation and distribution of statements through which definitions of truth are produced (Foucault 1980, 132-133). The term truth does not here designate an "ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted" (Ibid.132). On the contrary, Foucault proposes, in a form of hypothesis, a notion of truth in terms of procedures that regulate what is to be accorded the status of truth and thus separated from what is regarded as false. These procedures are not merely theoretical (superstructural) issues, as the formulation of truth is fundamentally linked to the operation of power and is shaped by, as much as supportive of, its effects. The regime of truth is, thus, seen as an important constituent of social practices and identities. Being historically produced within social practices and not given or discovered, these procedures do not refer to some authentic or objective reality but to discursive interpretations of what is perceived and interpreted as reality. Crucially, this conceptualisation allows for a plurality of different regimes of truth. Hence the importance of disputes over meaning and of struggles which question the status of 'true' definitions, or, as Foucault (Ibid. 132) put it, battles 'for truth', or at least 'around truth'.

The adoption of the concept of regime of truth has important implications for the articulation of my research topic. Since this concept allows for a plurality of procedures governing the production of truth, its use does not imply the assumption that advertising is necessarily productive of or contributing to some unified, ethically and aesthetically coherent, system of representation with unitary effects on viewers/consumers. Neither does its use postulate the powerlessness and passivity of subjects implicated in interpreting the 'games' of truth. Most importantly, its use opens up a possibility to explore the historical conditioning of various discursive regulations of statements regarded as true, without attempting to formulate an absolute criterion which separates truth, authenticity or reality from all false, alienated or imaginary forms of knowing and being.

To conclude, the concept of regime of truth shifts the terms of analysis of advertising representation away from the question of how ideology works to produce illusory meanings, the consumption of which deprives subjects of truthful insight into reality and disables them to be what they genuinely are. Instead, it brings into consideration the question of how diverse representations of identities (or, in the case of my study, definitions of femininity) are constructed as a result of certain truths being current rather than others. The focus is not on identifying the mechanisms of the ideological construction of femininity as alienated from whatever might be regarded as real/true/authentic/genuine form of feminine identity. Rather, it is on examining what procedures of truth are at work and how they are put into practice, that is, how signifying mechanisms interact with techniques of 'modest' power (governance) to formulate gender specific definitions, and how represented definitions activate and influence self-shaping techniques in the process of production of various, historically localised forms of femininity.

Media representation and the production of meaning

It has been widely asserted that media texts in general, and advertising in particular, play an increasingly influential role in the way we understand, experience and relate to ourselves, others and the world we live in. But, apart from this general observation, there is not much agreement among critics and scholars on how that 'influence' comes to be exercised. The diversity of theoretical positions, focal concerns and modes of investigating of this question in media and cultural studies have resulted in proposing a range of different, and sometimes even conflicting, understandings of "what the media do to people" as opposed to "what people do with the media" (Moores 1992, 137). The research history indicates that there have been several moves between the positions which have taken the media text as its primary site of analysis (emphasising its dominating power over the audience) and the perspectives that have focused on the way audiences consume media texts (emphasising the autonomy and creative reading abilities of audiences). I do not intend to provide here a systematic review of all the paradigms that structured the research of the complex text-audience relationship as this has been covered in great detail elsewhere (see for example: Morley 1980b, 1992; the volume ed. by Seiter et al. 1989; Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998; Moores 1992, 1997). Rather, I wish to examine critically a number of important theoretical ideas and analytical categories which enable me to construct a conceptual framework for exploring advertising in terms of processes

and mechanisms through which techniques of 'modest' power interconnect with practices of signification and interpretation.

The question of how meaning is produced is of enormous significance for the analysis of how advertising affects its audiences through the process of reading. For example, Williamson (1978), unlike many other critics of advertising, acknowledges that both the encoding and decoding of media/advertising texts involve symbolic processes, that is, interpretive activity. She does not assume that advertising influences its audience through a mechanistic reception of ready made meanings. On the contrary, she claims that it is being achieved through 'decoding', the process she approaches in terms of a complex exchange of meaning between various components of the semantic structure of the text and the reader. This is an important move because it involves the conception of readers as participants in meaning production. But, at the same time, Williamson sees the reader's participation as severely restricted by the operation of rigid structural mechanisms in the text, which determine the reading so that the only meaning produced (or rather passively 'consumed') by the decoder is the one intended by the encoder. (And, this meaning is imbued with definitions that are classified as 'false'.)

There are at least two interrelated problems here. The first is that Williamson's position does not allow for any notion of textual polysemy or differential readings produced by 'ordinary' readers. The only exception from monosemic reading is that produced by the analyst whose extraordinary reading abilities make it possible to escape the ideological closure of the text. This failure to account for a degree of inherent instability of meaning has important implications for Williamson's analysis of the workings of ideological domination through media (advertising) representations. Another problem with her overemphasis on the text as the only source of meaning is that she does not take into consideration non-textual factors that come to condition the reading process. Related to this is a way of conceptualising readers as members of a 'mass' audience, the notion which, as Livingstone (1998) noted, appears as an invisible assumption rather than an explicitly discussed analytical tool in much of media and cultural theory and research. This concept expresses a way of seeing readers as figures deprived of their social and cultural identity and subjectivity and, hence, of any interpretive competencies. It captures a centuries old meaning of the term 'mass' in a sense of "something amorphous and undistinguishable", which also connotes "low and ignorant" (see Williams, 1976, 194). The use of such a concept shapes the analyst's perception of the reading process in

terms of linear and homogenising effects of the fixed textual meaning on gullible audiences, who are, then, regarded as victims of ideological manipulation.

Although Williamson's study is illuminating in that it draws attention to complicated symbolic processes of signification, her understanding of meaning production through adoption or consumption of what is unambiguously inscribed in the text is questionable. This particular conception appears as increasingly problematic in the light of the evidence provided by audience reception studies that came as a reaction to the textualism developed under the influence of structuralism and semiotics. Focused on the ethnographic research of consumption of various media genres, reception studies (see for example: Brunsdon & Morley 1978; Morley 1980a; Hobson 1982; Radway 1984; Seiter et al. 1989; Brunsdon 1997; Gray 1992) offered detailed accounts of how meaning is being actively produced by actual audiences. This revealed that reading practices are conditioned by a dynamic interaction between a whole range of factors, textual as well as those related to social positioning of readers, their media literacy and wider cultural competence, and contexts and regimes of reading. These findings seriously challenged the view that textual structure should be taken as the only determining factor of meaning.

Text-audience interaction as a site of meaning and pleasure production

Two particularly important theoretical points emerged from the empirical material provided by reception studies. The first one recognises the relative instability of textual meaning by showing that the textual structure does not provide a single reading position from which it is possible to construct meanings. The second point demonstrates that reading is influenced by participation as well as the social situations of readers. With the onset of audience research, it no longer seemed adequate to analyse reading as a process of deciphering the hidden inscribed meaning of the text contained in a single message. Rather, reading practices should be approached in terms of interpretation that is conditioned by a complex text-audience relationship. This relationship is best understood as an interaction between the text, which invites the reader to activate certain meanings rather than others, and the multiply positioned and internally differentiated reader, who approaches the text from a number of discourses that affect the interpretation. Just as any specific configuration of these discourses directs and shapes the reading to a certain extent, so does its social situatedness, the space/time setting within which it takes place. This position is in many respects consistent with Peirce's

social semiotics, in which the definition of the sign involves its socio-culturally situated user (see Pierce in Schroder 2000).

The perspective I am advocating here is informed by theories that see meaning production in terms of interaction between the semantic potential framed by the structure of the text and the socially situated reader, whose interpretive skills and competences select and activate certain meanings rather than others. The central issue here is to provide a theoretical articulation of how the exercise of power, which affects the structure of textual signification, interacts with relations of interpretation to produce meaning and pleasure. In redrafting the model of meaning construction that dominated the analysis of advertising, I argue, borrowing from Fiske (1987, 82-83), that the production of meaning in the text-reader interaction is a process which is not different from that of identity and subjectivity constitution, in that both processes are conditioned by discursive definitions and regulations but also contingent upon factors of interpretive action.

Such a theoretical position obviously requires a conceptual modification of the notion of text as a fixed semantic structure capable of conveying a single message. This can be done by introducing the concept of polysemy understood as a textual property of 'openness' (Fiske 1987, 239) that makes it possible for differentiated audiences to activate or negotiate different meanings. It should be made clear though that the concept does not suggest that the text is equally open to any interpretation. Researchers such as Hall (1980), Morley (1980b; 1992), Brunsdon (1980), Fiske (1987), Corner (1991; 1999), and Schroder (2000) convincingly argue that the polysemic nature of the text (and signification in general) is not without its structure and does not imply randomness. Before looking in some detail at the concept of polysemy, it might be useful to shift attention to another aspect of text-audience relationship known as intertextuality.

Just as interpretation entails creating multiple associative links between meanings derived from different social practices, texts and experiences, so does the production of the text. Drawn from semiology, the concept of intertextuality sheds light on the way in which signs/texts generate meaning by relating to each other. In other words, signs and texts are seen as inherently relational. For Barthes, this intertextual linking is such an important and pervasive aspect of processes of signification and interpretation that he proposes a view of culture as consisting of manifold webs of intertextuality (see Barthes in Fiske 1987, 115). Following the same line of argument, many poststructuralist and postmodern analysts of media

and culture assert that it is through suggesting and activating various intertextual references that a text, in effect, becomes capable of communicating meaning (see Casey et al. 2002).

Although this idea that texts do not exist in isolation led some authors to question the adequacy of the very notion of the text as a separate entity (see Grossberg in Morley 1992, 27), it is possible to argue that the conception of the interdiscursive nature of textual meaning can co-exist with the notion of the specificity of the text as a category of consumption and analysis. While the concepts of polysemy and intertextuality certainly destabilise, to a certain extent, the notion of textual determinacy, it would be misleading to see the construction of textual meaning as predominantly dependent upon the individual competence and creative capacity of the reader. My understanding of these two concepts is that they bring into consideration the plurality of articulations and all the "meaning potential that exists in the spaces between texts", as Fiske put it (1989, 65). These spaces do not minimise the effects of definitional power operating within textual structure to make some meanings more easily activated than others and to offer legitimacy to some pleasures while marginalising others.

It is the consideration of textual pleasure to which I now wish to turn. Although this question received considerable attention from a number of authors who focused on the ethnography of reception of some popular television genres (for example, Hobson 1982), I find Barthes' famous work "The Pleasure of the Text"(1982) most inspiring in this respect. Here, he does not explore the topic in any direct structural connection to some unified and ordered ideology, much less to any sort of fixed psychological predispositions. To see textual pleasure as either confirmatory of or oppositional to dominant ideological definitions (as suggested by some Marxist informed analysts) would be, for Barthes, to simplify the experience of pleasure incited by the text. The same could be said for Mulvey's (1999) psychoanalytic approach to visual pleasures (scopophilic and narcissistic), which are understood as rooted in recreating the experience of positioning that is regulated by primary and universal psychic mechanisms and processes.

Barthes approaches the question of '*plaisir*' (as well as meaning) as not located in the textual structure but produced in the reading process; the text is only a source of potential pleasure or, rather, diverse pleasures, the source that needs to be activated in the actual text-reader interaction. What creates the possibility for the reader to derive pleasure(s) from reading is the play with the polysemic potential of the text and its capacity to inspire and facilitate diverse meaningful links with other texts, practices and experiences. Since textual pleasure, according to Barthes, is not an experience that refers to some singular ideological message of

the text, the very same text, if consumed more than once, can be the source of quite different types of pleasure even for the same reader.

Apart from this notion of *plaisir*, Barthes also talks of *juissance* or 'bliss', which signals a strong sensual undertone and the intense materiality of experienced emotions provoked by the text (Barthes 1982, 143-414; Fiske 1987, 228-230; Mercer 1983, 85-86). But the lack of strong cultural and political tones renders the notion of *juissance* less suitable for my present analytical purposes. *Plaisir*, on the other hand, is seen as constituted in relation to cultural values, social rules and ethical norms, making it possible to look at the way in which textual devices of inciting forms of pleasure might serve as a convenient means of acting upon the conduct of readers. Another notion that is useful for exploring the production of textual pleasure comes from Fiske. He draws on the way Barthes uses the polysemy of the verb 'play' to propose an understanding of the text-audience interaction in terms of play in two different but related senses (Fiske 1987, 230). First, the reader can be seen to 'play' the text in a way that is similar to the musician playing a score. This connotes activity and creativity rather than passive reception or reproduction of the text. The emphasis is on the possibility of exploring the relationship between textual structure and a considerable degree of interpretive freedom, which is what incites pleasure. In another sense, the text–audience interaction can also be thought of as an instance of 'playing a game', where textual rules construct a space which allows for the production of pleasures of both control and freedom in making meaning (and constituting a subjectivity).

According to Fiske (1987, 236), this pleasure producing play is regulated by rules that may replicate but also invert those that govern social conduct outside the world of the text. Players are free, within certain limits outlined by textual rules, to assume a role according to their own choice and to perform it as long as they wish to. The pleasures of play are derived from the reader's ability to recognise and respect the rules of the game and, at the same time, make use of the freedom to choose ways of participating in the game. It is this interplay between the textual power to impose conventions that structure the meaning potential, and interpretive freedom linked to the inherent ambiguity of language or any other system of signification, that is productive of pleasure. This play/pleasure does not only create a favourable emotional context for the production of meaning of the single text; it also inspires and activates manifold intertextual linking as well as connections between different elements of personal knowledge, experience and fantasy. As a constitutive aspect of the text-audience

relationship, pleasure affects these processes of making, organising, modifying and rearranging semantic links, through which meaning and subjectivity are produced.

Television advertisements can indeed be regarded as a very illustrative example of the text inviting audiences to 'play'. Many advertisements which are seen as outstanding achievements by either audiences or professionals (see for example Robinson 2000), are those with a rather 'loose' semantic structure, offering a wider potential for differential interpretation. The knowledge of a specific body of textual conventions used in advertisements (as well as in other forms of media texts) opens up a possibility to 'play' with meanings. Instead of classifying potential pleasures as either confirmatory or subversive of dominant ideology, I find it more productive to look at advertising as offering a range of different and not necessarily antagonistic pleasures: from satisfying curiosity in watching things happen to the excitement of engaging with uncertainty, from predicting a dramatic resolution of a plot to experiencing it, from recognising situations and identities we know from lived experience to the pleasure of participating in fictional events or identities, from the pleasure of seeing one's values acknowledged to that of admiring a respected upscale taste, from watching scenes that offer pleasurable erotic associations to the pleasure invoked by cataclismatic scenes, etc. There are also thrills and insights brought by attractive visual design, humour, irony, caricature, parody or satire. However short and seemingly insignificant, all these instances of pleasure affect the interpretation of the advertising text and the evaluation of its generalised significance for the reader. At the same time, it is through the plurality of meanings and pleasures that the producers of the text attempt to provide guidance to readers in interpreting the categories which shape the way they understand and relate to themselves and others.

Polysemy, 'preferred meaning' and its politics

The concept of polysemy was introduced to draw attention to the plurality of interpretations of any one text, and this move put a number of new issues on the agenda. For example, are some textual meanings prioritised over others? In his famous paper 'Encoding/Decoding', Hall (1980) offers a conceptualisation of the media text as semantically multi-layered so that processes of encoding and decoding could be asymmetrical. Without attempting to evaluate any meaning derived from the text in terms of true/false or right/wrong reading, he claims that the textual structure tends to direct readers towards what he calls 'preferred meaning'. But, this rather suggestive concept implies, as Schroder (2000) notes, one serious problem. It refers to the impossibility of knowing what meaning is preferred by the

signifying mechanisms of the text. Is it the meaning intended by the encoder or the one produced by the majority of decoders? For Schroder, the choice between these two options should be made on purely pragmatic basis, depending on the aim of the analysis. In either case, the important thing is that the so-called 'preferred meaning' should be understood as an outcome of the interaction between the text and the reader rather than as a property of the text itself (see Wren-Lewis in Schroder 2000, 241).

Furthermore, Schroder challenges the assumption that media texts (and especially those categorised as fictional) promote only one meaning. In this respect, his conceptualisation of polysemy is close to that of Fiske (1987, 84) who avoids suggesting the likelihood of producing one privileged meaning. Fiske proposes an understanding of the text as "a state of tension" between forces of 'closure', which aim at narrowing its potential of meaning in certain directions, and forces of 'openness', which enrich the possibilities of differential readings. Focusing mainly on the television text, he points to textual mechanisms for stabilising its meaning (such as mode of address and generic conventions) as well as to devices that create the polysemic potential (such as irony, metaphor, joke, hyperbole, etc.). The dynamics of these opposite forces are not universal for all texts. Different texts, constructed within different communicative forms and generic specificities, are characterised by differing relations between textual determinacy and the potential for activating diverse meanings. The notion of genre or representational style as a set of rules structuring the text and as a way of situating audiences, plays a principal role in understanding the above unstable relation as well as readers' expectations, involvement and response. Therefore, such a focus is a much more productive approach to analysing specific forms of the text-audience relationship in terms of tension between definitional power and interpretive freedom than the fairly widespread tendency to make all-encompassing theoretical explanations of how signifying rules in general frame the possibilities of audience response.

The approach to exploring different, socially situated readings through the use of the concept of polysemy poses an important question of the connection between readings of popular media texts and ideological positions. In contrast to many critical analysts of advertising, Hall (1980) did not focus on the ideological aspect of the media in terms of fixed content of the text. Rather, his concern was with the way media products are 'framed' through the deployment of categories which are expressive and constitutive of the dominant ideology favouring the existing model of social order. According to Hall, ideology works mainly on the connotational level of meaning, where three decoding positions are possible: dominant,

negotiated and oppositional, depending on the extent to which socially differentiated readers share or feel comfortable with the code structuring the 'preferred meaning' of the text. While Hall's model overemphasised the role of class position in shaping the practice of reading, a number of other studies overcame this limitation by involving other positioning factors, such as gender, age and the social context of reading (see Moores 1992). However, the important premise they all shared was that polysemic readings (those that differ from what is believed to be the 'preferred' meaning) are expressive of the critical faculties of readers, which, consequently, leads them to interpretative 'resistance' to dominant ideology. Formulated this way, this argument raises several problems.

The first is related to the underlying notion of ideology as an overarching, unified and coherent system of ideas, values and sentiments that expresses and legitimises the hegemonic interests of the ruling classes. Since I have already discussed the theoretical inadequacies of such a concept of ideology in one of the previous sections of this chapter, there is no need to rehearse the topic here. I do, however, wish to draw attention to another widespread but problematic view, according to which media texts produced outside the realm of so-called 'high' culture are invariably regarded as a vehicle of dominant ideology. The 'preferred', or dominant, or most easily activated meaning of the popular media text is, thus, automatically defined as hegemonically encoded. In some respects, this position echoes the conception of popular media texts as 'mass' culture, which is seen as characterised by a standardised and monotonous content, simple codes, more or less vulgar style and, above all, strong ideological function. In contrast to this view, which implies an idea of cultural homogenisation as a principal technique of governance, I find Mercer's (1983) position much more acceptable. Borrowing from Mercer, it is possible to assume that it is "the pluralism of play and styles, codes and languages which can now be seen to constitute the realm of the popular… in terms of a critical repertoire which could asses the significance of 'pleasure' and 'popular' as at once democratic and socially managed, as contested and controlled. . ." (Mercer 1983, 88).

Finally, the problem with automatically linking polysemic readings with 'resistance' (to the power of the text), as Schroder suggests (2000), points to a failure to perceive fine conceptual differences between various semiotic aspects and the ideological dimension of reading. In order to address some hitherto missing or misrepresented aspects of reading, Schroder offers a complex 'multidimensional' model that takes into consideration four 'interior' reading processes: the reader's motivation; comprehension; discrimination (awareness of the textual constructedness); and 'position', which describes only the reader's

subjective attitude towards the perceived (political) position proposed by the text. The researcher's evaluation of how the given reading relates to the 'political-ideological landscape' is treated as a separate dimension that is exterior to reading. Schroder, thus, rightly claims that the 'acceptance' of the textual position does not necessarily involve the adoption of the hegemonic 'preferred meaning' but, rather, the reader's acceptance of what he/she perceives as textual message. For that reason, polysemic readings cannot readily be taken as resistance to hegemonic discourses. The dimension Schroder calls 'position' other analysts, such as Corner (1991), also see as a distinct level of signification/interpretation at which readers link the meaning derived from the text to a wider sphere of knowledge.

For the analysis of how the power of the text interacts with processes of interpretation and identity construction, this dimension of meaning production is particularly important. I understand this dimension in terms of a complex interplay between the discourses out of which the text is constructed (and which aim at governing readers' conduct) and the discourses and other factors which channel the reader's interpretation of the text and the political aspect of what he/she considers to be the regime of truth proposed by the text. The meanings produced through the reading of any particular text (or some of its elements, or a group of texts) do not stay in some separate domain of the reader's memory but circulate within his/her wider network of ideas, values, experiences, fantasies and desires. In a way, the process of interpreting and playing with the textual meanings may continue long after the actual reading of the text. Certain textual meanings, especially those which the reader perceives as important and/or associates with some form of textual pleasure, can be referred to many times to re-evaluate and modify his/her understanding of and relation to others and the self. The crucial point I wish to make is that relations of signification and interpretation create a space in which the exercise of definitional power interacts with the regulated practice of interpretive freedom to produce meanings, pleasures and, consequently, subjects.

Concluding remarks

Two points summarise the way theoretical ideas discussed in this chapter affect my study of advertising. The first point relates to the concept of ideology as it was used in many influential accounts of advertising. The critical examination of this concept and the underpinning understanding of relations of power, representation and truth, led me to argue that the notion of regime of truth is a more adequate analytical tool for exploring advertising as a form of 'soft' governance. The main theoretical advantage of using this notion instead of the

concept of ideology is that it does not encourage the analyst to look at the governmental process in terms of the oppositions between the true and the false, between reality and representation, or between freedom and power. More specifically, this means that advertising representation is not to be treated as a system of illusory or misleading ideas that are deliberately produced by certain subjects to make others governable by deceiving them and suppressing their freedom. Rather, advertising (or any form of representation) should be approached as neither true nor false, focusing attention on the work of socially constructed rules and procedures that regulate what statements and images are accorded the status of truth. Such an approach does not imply that advertising reflects, seeks to create or supports some unitary and coherent system of ideas, norms and values. Instead, it opens a possibility to identify and explore a plurality of regimes of truth, which may affect the production of knowledge and the subject in different ways.

The second point outlines an understanding of the media text - reader relationship, a question that plays an important role in analysing how the regimes of truth governing the representation of women in advertising may affect female viewers. I do not see meaning as a stable property of the text (which is more or less passively consumed by the audience) but as an outcome of the dynamic relation between the text and the active engagement of the socially situated reader. Meaning and pleasure production is, in other words, perceived (just like the constitution of the subject/identity) as an interplay between discursive regulation and interpretive freedom. If the concept of the media text is redrafted to allow for a degree of polysemy and differential intertextual linkings, then it is no longer possible to assert that the meanings intended by the producers of advertisements necessarily match those produced by audiences. But, to accept that audiences have interpretive freedom and creative abilities does not, however, mean to diminish the importance of analysing the operation of the definitial power of the text. In my study of advertising, the focus is more on the text, that is, on the semantic potentials created by various structural mechanisms of the text to formulate, interpret and emphasise some ethical categories while marginalising others. From this perspective, the central question is to explore how techniques of definitional power interact with practices of signification, and how this interaction may motivate and activate self-fashioning practices of the viewer.

CONCLUSION: KEY THEORETICAL IDEAS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Starting from the premise that 'soft' modes of governance depend upon and affect games of identity, I have argued that the interplay between the relations of 'modest' power, freedom and pleasure is what facilitates such a style of governing. To propose that advertising can be approached as a 'soft' mode of governance is to suggest that advertising is a mode of social action which establishes relations of power, understood in terms of the management of conduct rather than states of domination. This approach involves an understanding that advertising counts on, respects and seeks to encourage, rather than subjugate, the capacity of viewers/consumers to fashion their conduct and subjectivities in a way which would enable them to make a proper and responsible use of their freedom. The role of advertisers is here similar to what Rose called 'guidance of selves'. The repertoire of images, metaphors and ideas that they create formulate ethical ideals and contain guidelines on how viewers should perform appropriate practices on their body, soul, thoughts and environment in order to achieve desired results. The crucial aspect of such a form of guidance is that it relies on the authority of advice, and not on the power of hidden persuasion or dishonest manipulation. This implies that it can become effective only if it manages to motivate and shape the viewer's self-regulating capacities.

While allowing the viewer/consumer a possibility to choose how to respond to the offered advice, 'modest' power operates by stimulating certain forms of pleasure. Because techniques of inciting pleasure through advertisements seek to influence aesthetic and ethical sensibilities of viewers/consumers, they serve as an instrument of governance. At the same time, pleasure is produced as a form of subjective experience, which may affect the viewer's understanding of the advice, and influence the way he/she perceives, evaluates and relates to the self. It is therefore necessary to involve the notion of (textual) pleasure as an integral component of both technologies for the government of others and those of identity construction.

Instead of focusing on how advertising deforms 'genuine' identities, the proposed view places an emphasis on questions such as how advertising works to affect the construction of the multiply positioned and internally differentiated subject, and how it formulates gender definitions which the viewer can relate to in the continuous process of (re)defining self-identities. The notion of ethical regime is suggested as a useful concept in exploring these questions. The concept signifies a set of ethical ideals and aspirations, articulations of

respected forms of conduct and legitimate forms of pleasure, as well as practical advice on how to relate to oneself and others in order to achieve desired objectives. Although subjects are free to constitute themselves in relation to certain ethical regimes rather than some others, they do not invent these regimes themselves. Rather, their meaning and availability are regulated by the interdependent operation of technologies of power and of signification. I see advertising as one of the discourses that provide and promote a certain range of ethical regimes that shape viewers' self-constituting practices.

The notion of ethical regime, unlike the concept of ideological manipulation that is traditionally used to explain the effects of advertising, does not suggest any direct or repressive influence of a single advertisement (or advertising taken as a media genre) on the formation of identity and subjectivity of viewers. Rather, it points to the complex dynamics between the operation of power within signifying practices, which shapes the content and style of representing ethical norms and qualities, and the freedom of interpretation, which is, in turn, related to modes of understanding, organising and evaluating the subjective experience of the reader. This formulation, most obviously, takes a critical stance towards the model of reception of what is usually called the message of an advertisement and is usually understood as a vehicle of ideological manipulation of viewers/consumers.

To challenge the widespread thesis about the almost magical effectiveness or persuasiveness of advertising, and to redraft the terms of analysis of advertising's effects on viewers, I propose the Foucaultian notion of regime of truth instead of that of ideology. In this way, a focus on techniques of deforming 'true' meanings of objects, identities and social relations comes to be replaced by a concern with procedures governing the production of truth within representations, which are regarded as neither true nor false. This means that the crucial question is no longer how advertising produces systematically misleading meanings/representations, but how formulations of truth are articulated to affect the way viewers think, feel and relate to the advertised object, themselves and others. Allowing for a plurality of formulations of truth, this position does not regard advertising as (re)productive of some unitary, aesthetically and ethically coherent system of representations that fixes and homogenises the terms of games of truth and identity. Neither does it aim at evaluating these games in either positive terms of authenticity or negative terms of falsity and alienation. Rather, it draws attention to discursive mechanisms of formulating certain truths, which come to define and promote the construction of a repertoire of different forms of gendered identities (femininities in the case of my study). Most importantly, this position does not see viewers as

passive, gullible and incompetent victims of regimes of truth imposed upon them by advertisers; instead, it presupposes the ethically free viewer whose active engagement is stimulated by the anticipation and/or experience of some form of textual pleasure.

To acknowledge that the text, or its producer, is not capable of imposing total control over its meaning, implies a rejection of the conceptualisation of advertising's influence over viewers in terms of the simple and direct effects of the meanings intended by the encoder. Rather than being a matter of decoding a single fixed meaning encoded in the text (as implied in most critical accounts of advertising), reading is here understood as a fundamentally interpretive activity. It is an activity that is performed in a space where structural elements and stylistic features of the text activate the reader's capacity to 'play' with the semantic potential according to certain discursive rules as well as subjective criteria of relevance. Watching advertisements is neither a tightly controlled activity nor an unregulated association of meanings. It is best described in terms of an interplay between the definitional power of the text and the viewer's freedom to produce meanings and pleasures, between the discourses that structure the represented regime of truth and the discourses that regulate its interpretation. This suggests that advertising's effort to influence consumer conduct by representing ethical regimes, through the language of style, is contingent upon the ways in which the reader connects textual meanings and pleasures with some broader body of knowledge, beliefs, values, desires and subjective experiences, which shape the terms of the ongoing games of identity. Advertisers cannot control how these connections are made by the actual reader; but they can produce images designed to entice the viewer into considering the benefits and pleasures of following whatever is presented as a desired and respectable way of being.

Theoretical ideas discussed in this part shaped the way I problematised an approach to advertising as a form of governance that fashions games of truth and identity and capacitates consumers to relate to themselves as certain forms of subjects. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the process of constructing the conceptual framework for my study of advertising was inseparable from organising and understanding the textual data that I gathered from my sample of television advertisements and advertising literature. Through the continuous dialogue between the theoretical conceptualisation of governance, representation and identity and issues emerging from textual data, I gradually came to formulate my analytic concerns in more precise and operational terms. Central to this process was the question: How can I translate the understanding that governance establishes relations of power and works through the guidance of selves and articulation of ethical regimes, into a series of researchable questions, which

would direct my analytic focus on the issues of relevance in the gathered textual material? As my study progressed through the ongoing spiral moves between theoretical conceptualisations and the evolving interpretation of data, I formulated and refined research questions many times until I eventually stabilised the process. The following questions shape the design of my study of advertising.

Foucault's (1982a) suggestions about how to analyse relations of power and Rose's (1996) conceptualisation of social technologies (discussed in Chapter 2) inform my view that the study of governance should start by looking at some most important aspects of institutional relations which shape the governmental practice. The fact that the exercise of power which provides the guidance of selves through advertisements is conditioned by a certain institutional framework - the advertising industry - and forms of specialised expert knowledge developed within it, raises the question: How do these institutional and discursive relations affect the production of advertisements? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to focus on: a) the industry's definitions of intended objectives of advertising; b) the institutional construction of knowledge about consumers (and in particular female consumers); and c) the industry's account of the strategies which are regarded as effective ways of communicating with and influencing viewers/consumers.

The examination of these questions, which will be presented in Chapter 6, sheds some light on relations of power and knowledge within the advertising industry and the way they operate to conceptualise the governability of the female consumer. But it does not provide a deeper insight into how techniques of 'modest' power interact with those of signification to offer female consumers guidance regarding they way they should think of and shape themselves. In order to identify mechanisms of this interaction, in Chapter 8 I explore the following set of questions.

What are the discourses and themes that structure the way advertising guides and capacitates consumers to act upon themselves in relation to certain norms? Or, to rephrase the question: What are the dominant discourses out of which the advertisements aimed at women or featuring female characters are constructed? I regard the choice of the discourse as the most fundamental technique of 'modest' power for framing the representation: it outlines the domain of action; it creates available subject positions; and it specifies appropriate practices, ideas, images, criteria of evaluation and vocabularies through which definitions of femininity are produced. The exploration of this question is inextricably connected to the next question: What forms of femininity are constructed out of these discourses and represented as socially

respectable and personally enjoyable modes of being? What ethical regimes govern their construction? The aim is to specify how 'modest' power operates to articulate key elements that constitute definitions of truth about femininity in terms of responsibilities, duties, forms of authority, expression of emotions, pleasures, desires and ways of relating to oneself and others.

What practices and modes of conduct are implicitly, if not always explicitly, suggested by advertising texts as methods of achieving whatever is defined as an ideal or goal worth striving for? This question draws on the idea that the guidance of selves is based on the power and authority of (expert) advice. It aims at identifying the type of advice that is offered to the female viewer in relation to the defined set of ethical norms and goals. The advice, which is usually associated with the represented benefit of the advertised object, contains guidelines about how to perform certain practices, manage certain personal relationships, act upon one's body, modify certain forms of conduct and acquire certain forms of self-understanding. Therefore, to analyse types of advice means to explore the way techniques of 'modest' power work to structure and recommend certain practices of the self, through which the viewer organises her subjective experience and constructs her identity.

What are the main characteristics of the most frequently deployed representational styles through which advertisements attempt to communicate with, advise and entertain female viewers/consumers? This question seeks to explore textual means for constructing an expressive form through which advice is offered to female viewers. The focus is here on the techniques of signification (operating in close relation with those of 'modest' power) that shape a mode of address, styles of narrative and visual communication and the use of music in advertisements. The underpinning idea is that the representational style fashions the tone of advice, which is as important as its content. Since the games of truth and identity structured by advertising do not involve any instrument of coercion, the tone or style of advice serves as a method of motivating the engagement of the female viewer and of influencing her interpretive and ethical freedom. Tightly connected to the question of representational styles is the one related to exploring the potential of the advertising text to shape the production and evaluation of meaning by eliciting certain emotional responses and by invoking certain types of pleasure. It is important to emphasise that this question examines only the textual potential for pleasure, without making claims about the forms of textual pleasure that are derived by actual audiences.

Summing up all the previous questions I want to ask: What are the most important features that characterise advertising as a 'soft' form of governance? The concluding chapter attempts to offer an answer to this question by drawing together insights derived from the

analysis presented in Chapters 6 and 8.

Attention now turns to the first question listed above. The next chapter introduces the analysis of a 'soft' mode of governance through advertising by focusing on the advertising industry's perspective. It sets out to examine how certain institutional relations, forms of professional knowledge and explanations of objectives and strategies of advertising affect the production of advertisements, through which practitioners seek to influence consumers.

PART III

<u>FROM THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY'S PERSPECTIVE</u>

Introduction

This part looks at the way certain aspects of the advertising process are understood and described by advertising practitioners and marketing theorists. The aim is to gain an insight into the advertising industry's account of a number of issues that I described in Chapter 2 as constitutive components of advertising as political technology. There are many questions and issues which I will not touch upon, as my concern here is only with some institutionally conditioned relations of power and knowledge that operate to shape the industry's conceptualisation of consumers and its understanding of how advertising works to attain whatever is defined as its achievable goal. Five points of analysis highlight my interest in exploring advertising literature:

- the industry's formulation of the intended or expected objectives of advertising;
- some basic features of the industry's institutional context that shape the advertising process;
- the industry's construction and use of expert knowledge about consumers in general and 'mature' women in particular;
- the description of textual techniques for producing a piece of 'persuasive' communication;
- and the account of methods of assessing the effectiveness of advertising.

I explored these topics in a range of texts, which include advertising textbooks for students of advertising and businesses and an advertising trade magazine. As an additional source of data I also visited a number of internet websites, mainly those specialising in advertising and marketing to women. Among the advertising textbooks I read, I will first mention "Advertising: What it is and how to do it" written by a R. White (1993), an author and practitioner with over thirty years' experience in the advertising business. The book is structured as an introduction and practical guide to business people who wish to get involved in advertising for the first time as well as to students hoping for a career in this field. As such, this book covers issues that are considered crucial to understanding why companies advertise and what sort of effects they can achieve by advertising, how agencies are organised, and how advertising strategies and objectives are discussed, planned and translated into the creative brief according to which the advertisement is finally produced. The book also examines the

problem of how advertising 'works' from a number of different theoretical positions that dominated the industry in the last forty or so years, providing no definite solution to this question or indeed the one of assessing the results of advertising campaigns.

Other valuable sources of information include 'The Advertising Handbook' by Brierly (1995), who has taught and written about advertising and is currently Deputy Editor of 'Marketing Week', and 'Principles of Marketing' by Palmer (2000), a professor in marketing. Though these two volumes are not 'how-to' guides, they provide detailed accounts of the role of advertising in business, the economic rationale for advertising, its organisational structure, methods of 'discovering' (that is classifying and conceptualising) consumers as well as a range of persuasive principles and techniques. In addition, I also draw on the volume entitled 'Excellence in Advertising' edited by Butterfield (1997), which is composed of a number of articles exploring various questions and suggesting what the authors consider as best practice in many areas of advertising.

'Marketing Week', a London based magazine published for marketing, advertising and media professionals, with a circulation of 40,000, deserves a special mention. I collected issues of 'Marketing Week' for two years and occasionally visited their website in search of texts that discussed the industry's process of developing professional knowledge about consumers and communication. The issue of 9 March 2000 was of particular relevance to my research, as its supplement, entitled "Grown-up women", was entirely dedicated to the debate about how to communicate with and influence 'women who are not in their twenties any more'. All the participants in this debate are women who work in the advertising, marketing and various media industries, and who see themselves as belonging to the category of 'grown-up' or 'mature' women. In several articles of this supplement, they seek to identify and discuss the strategies advertisers deploy and the type of problems they face in trying to understand, address and mobilise 'mature' women. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (in the section on how 'mature' women became the focus of my study), 'mature' women are categorised as a specific market segment with significant purchasing power but also as a segment that was until recently, according to the view expressed by the participants in the Marketing Week debate, largely ignored by advertisers.

My interest in this debate, which offers a rich source of information about the industry's process of developing categories and (re)defining their characteristics, focused on:
- the identification of main problems in classifying, addressing and motivating female consumers;

- the importance of age in defining female identities (as expressed by the consistent use of adjectives 'young/younger' and 'grown-up/older/mature' to construct two main models of femininity);
- the specification of categories other than age that are taken as relevant to understanding this consumer segment (such as interests, attitudes, consumption patterns, lifestyles, needs and aspirations);
- the description of conceptions of femininity that compete within the industry;
- and the advice on how advertisers should address and represent 'mature' women.

The analysis that will be presented in this chapter draws attention to the intensions, forms of professional knowledge, practical strategies and evaluations which affect the advertising process and, consequently, its product – the advertisement. The issues with which the chapter deals provide an understanding of how relations of power/knowledge/representation are put into practice to act upon the willingness of viewers/consumers to interpret and evaluate what advertisements have to say while enjoying short instances of textual pleasure.

CHAPTER 6
THE INDUSTRY'S ACCOUNT OF THE ADVERTISING PROCESS

Objectives of advertising

There is a pervasive belief, among the general public, many journalists and even many critics of advertising, that advertising increases sales. This view holds that advertising is a major means of promoting sales by directly influencing the way consumers think and feel about a product and that they make purchasing decisions accordingly. The perception of advertising as having a direct effect on sales is commonly associated with (and dependent upon) the assumption that advertising has the persuasive power to make the consumer accept the advertised message which leads her/him to buy the product. To put it very simply, this view is predicated upon belief in a direct and linear causal link between the advertising message (containing a single, fixed and unambiguous meaning), the consumer's consumption of the message (which cannot deviate from the intended meaning) and their purchase of the product. One of my concerns in this section is to examine whether the advertising industry shares this view.

The idea that advertising alone has the power to increase sales has been seriously challenged by many professionals and analysts working in the industry (see, for example, White 1993, Brierly 1995, Bartle 1999, Palmer 2000) as well as by some sociologists, such as Schudson (1984) whose research is based on extended interviews with advertising executives. Their position is that advertising is merely one part of the marketing process which includes a range of activities related to selling the product/service. These commentators admit that advertising can contribute to sales and long-term profits but, at the same time, they insist that it is not realistic to expect that advertising can have a direct and discernable effect on sales. Brierly's brief account of some historic changes affecting the advertising industry suggests that since the 1960s, when what he sees as the first crisis in advertising occurred, the belief in advertising's ability to increase sales in saturated markets has been largely abandoned by advertising practitioners (Brierly 1995, 226-252). Abandoning this belief precipitated a rather strong criticism of the thesis that advertising directly influences consumer buying behaviour. The only exception is what is known as 'direct response advertising', which can be described as "pure selling by advertisement" (White 1993, 12), but this form of advertising is outside the scope of my research.

Even if professionals quite openly admit that advertising does not increase sales, there

are several factors which uphold the popular view that advertising's objectives and its effects are to be expressed in terms of sales. For Brierly (1995, 191), one of the main factors is the need for advertisers to "sell the advertising to their board", the finance director and chief executive. He argues that hard sales figures are much easier to sell than, for instance, improved brand reputation and, therefore, the former are more likely to be used to convince the sceptics. Media organisations, too, have an interest in encouraging this view; in order to attract potential advertisers (on which they are financially dependent) they generate data that suggest advertising has powerful commercial effects. White (1993, 65-66) draws attention to another factor. He thinks that people in marketing often tend to use "confused language" when specifying certain marketing objectives and roles of advertising. He sees this terminological confusion as having important implications for setting up objectives for advertising, such as increased sales or an increase in a company's share of the market, which, in effect, cannot be met by advertising alone. Therefore, White insists, a clear distinction should be made between marketing as a whole and advertising, and between different types of statement of intent. While marketing objectives could be specified in terms of sales, profit, share, or distribution, advertising objectives are to be formulated "in terms of (for example) increased awareness, or improved scores on certain attitude scales" (White 1993, 66), because these aims *are* achievable by advertising. In a similar vein, Brierly (1995, 227) argues that advertisements can be expected to create the "environment" that can potentially, and very often indirectly, improve sales. This primarily means that advertising can be used, usually in combination with some other marketing tools, to construct the character and reputation of a brand. For Bartle (1999, 26) too, advertising aims at "helping to build and sustain brands", which is how it is expected to make its contribution to "positive business performance". This is regarded as one of the major roles of advertising within what is, in marketing jargon, called 'marketing mix'(for definitions see Palmer 2000, 20-24; White 1993, 3-5).

This view stresses the concept of brand as essential to understanding what advertising can or is expected to achieve. In a volume concerned with the question of how to achieve excellence in advertising, Doyle (1999) offers a useful definition of brand by highlighting the difference between a product and a brand. Fast-moving consumer goods and various services (financial, retail, management, etc.) are, most obviously, regarded as products. But Doyle insists that places, people and ideas should also be thought of as products. To illustrate what the notion of a product involves, he quotes the chairman of Revlon Cosmetics saying, "In the factory we make cosmetics, but in the store we sell hope" (Doyle 1999, 4). This leads Doyle to

define a product as "anything that meets the needs of customers" (Ibid.). A brand, on the other hand, points to "a name, symbol, design, or some combination, which identifies the 'product' of a particular organisation as having a sustainable differential advantage" (Ibid.). While the adjective 'sustainable' simply means that the advantage cannot be easily copied by competitors, the term 'differential advantage' refers not so much to the product itself but to the consumer's perception of a reason for preferring that brand to competitors' brands. What seems to be important in both of these definitions is the emphasis on the orientation towards consumer needs and their perceptions of how the brand might relate to their needs, preferences and desires.

When consumers are to make choices between more or less equivalent products, that is, between those whose technical details, function and price are virtually identical, the value of a successful brand's reputation is thought to be of utmost importance (White 1993, 15). It is in the domain of creating the brand's identity, which provides the consumer with reasons why a brand should be preferred to its competitors, that advertising is seen, by many professionals, to play a significant role. This suggests that advertising can be seen as a practice of building, maintaining, and/or improving a brand's identity, as a practice that is concerned mainly with shaping how people understand, evaluate and relate to the brand. As such, advertising can have a variety of objectives, depending on the specification of a group at which advertising communication is directed. For example, advertising can be used to promote the image of a firm or brand to its rivals and clients, or to support and stimulate distributive trade, or to motivate stakeholders, or to instil pride and confidence in a workforce, or to facilitate the consumer choice. This is a rather large and diverse range of target audiences, which I do not seek to explore in its entirety. For the purposes of my study, it is important to focus only on those objectives of advertising that are intended to affect consumers. The key question that concerns me involves the industry's account of some practical processes and procedures, bodies of knowledge and expert skills that are mobilised to influence the way consumers understand, evaluate and relate to an advertised brand.

Planning the advertising strategy

The process of planning an advertising strategy takes place within advertising agencies, which have become major professional organisations specialising in communication on behalf of their clients, brand advertisers (Brierly 1995, 54; White 1993, 12-31). Agencies operate to mediate the communication between consumer goods industries and consumers, and between

communications media and their audiences. This 'bridging' function, to borrow from Leiss et al. (1997, 176-193), is essential to the way agencies work and derive income for selling their expertise in various forms of communication. Agencies also act as a sort of clearing house that facilitates commercial transactions of various kinds, but what they are most proud of is the creative work that they invest in the actual planning and production of advertisements (White 1993, 26). The task of deciding what ideas and strategies should be followed in the process of making an advertisement is not, however, left entirely to the agency's creative genius. Rather, it is more adequate to see the advertisement as an outcome of a process of negotiation both between the agency and its client and within the agency.

Due to the complexity of the advertising process, agencies organise and coordinate their work through a number of specialised departments and a function-based management structure. This important topic has been covered systematically and in great detail in many volumes on advertising (see, for example, Schudson 1984, White 1993, Brierly 1995, Leiss, Kline & Jhally 1997, McFall 2004, etc.). It is only important here to sketch a broad outline of the process of planning advertisements, focusing on how an advertising strategy is developed within certain institutional relations. According to White (1993, 48-55), most agencies operate by using the 'account group' system that is designed to draw experts from relevant departments of the agency to look after every client's account, that is, to plan, create and place the client's advertising. Within this system, the account executive is the person responsible for planning the advertisement and ensuring that the agency delivers it. His/her primary role is to negotiate between the client's interests within the agency and the agency's interests in dealing with the client. In some agencies, the account executive also makes the decision about the advertising strategy, but in most large agencies today this role is now performed by another specialist function called the account planner.

The account planner draws knowledge from some academic disciplines, usually psychology (Brierly 1995, 58), though more recently their knowledge base also includes various social sciences (Lury & Warde 1997, 92). As most agencies in the last three decades or so have lost control over expensive quantitative research, which the clients have farmed out to market research companies, the introduction of the account planner was an important move to bring some control over the production of knowledge about consumer behaviour back to the agency (Brierly 1995, 57-59). The move played a significant role in re-establishing power relations between advertisers (companies with the product/brand to advertise) and advertising agencies, the former usually being much more powerful organisations than the agencies

looking for a contract (see Lury & Ward 1997, 91-92). In order to strengthen their position, agencies seek to present their expertise about consumers and communication as rooted in specialised scientific knowledge, thus 'reassuring' advertisers that "the advertising side of the business [is] working" (Brierly 1995, 58). In short, it is in the agencies' interest to emphasise the scientific status of their expert knowledge as a sort of guarantee of the effectiveness of their work in developing an advertising campaign.

The responsibility of the account planner is first to compile and examine all the relevant information that is made available through various published sources (see White 1993, 70-72; Brierly 1995, 58) and from market research commissioned by the client, or in some cases, by the agency. The account planner needs to understand the dynamics of the client's business, the market in which the brand competes, the brand's present position in the marketplace as well as the client's projected objective for the brand. On the basis of that analysis, the account planner (in consultation with the client) identifies specific objectives of advertising. These can consist of any combination of the following aims: to transmit some vital information about the product/brand, to increase the awareness of the brand, to keep a high level of awareness, to modify certain characteristic of the brand identity or to create new ones, to develop the belief that the brand is superior to its competitors, to maintain the loyalty of existing brand consumers and reassure them, to try to attract non-users of the brand, to stimulate consumers to find out more information about the product/brand, to generate media chatter about the advertisement, to encourage consumers to change long-term purchasing habits, etc. (Brierly 1995, 45-51; White 1993, 13, 69).

In effect, advertisements do not necessarily seek to achieve single objectives, but they do seek to attract the consumer's attention and induce some form of response. The account planner's knowledge about consumer motivation and behaviour as well as about wider social trends (see www.ipa.co.uk), is regarded as crucial to achieving such an objective. Towards the same aim, the account planner also conducts qualitative research on some specific consumer attitudes, habits or aspirations that are identified as particularly relevant for developing the advertising strategy. On the basis of all these analyses, the account planner then translates the most important research findings into a clear advertising strategy that is concerned with building the product/brand-consumer relationship rather than with developing a product/brand-centred representation. The strategy explains how the agreed objectives are to be achieved, and it provides the basis for writing a creative brief which is passed on to the creative department. The creative team, consisting of the copy-writer and the art director, then start developing

creative ideas by drawing on the agreed advertising strategy as a form of guidance. Though this team enjoys certain autonomy, it also works in close cooperation with the account planner, who is responsible for testing the emerging creative ideas as well as the final product, i.e. the advertisement.

Some advertising practitioners (for example, Duckworth 1997) argue that writing a creative brief marks a pivotal stage in the advertising process, where the strategic understanding of the client's objectives for the product/brand is translated into a clear description of what advertising is required to achieve. This brief is regarded as a central document which influences the effectiveness and creativity of the advertising. According to the model analysed by White (1993, 78-80), the creative brief involves several guidelines which summarise 1) a target audience (in terms of their relationship to the product as well as in terms of their age, gender, lifestyle and/or some specific attributes that are particularly relevant to the advertising task); 2) the advertising task (specifying the intended objective in terms of influencing certain consumer perceptions of the product/brand); 3) the benefits of the product for the consumer (practical advantages of the product as well as more subtle benefits of its consumption that are closely related to the projected image of the brand's personality); 4) brand personality (expressed through adjectives such as bright, modern, friendly, caring, etc.) and its positioning within its competitive market. A strategy that is thus formalised into the creative brief provides the essential starting point for developing and evaluating advertising.

To facilitate and shape the creative process in a desired direction, it is important that the creative brief also contains stimulating ideas which would enable the creative team to turn the thinking expressed in the brief into a piece of communication. Apart from the brief, creative people rely only on their inspiration, intuition and aesthetic sensibility, and there are very few, if any, rules which can ensure a successful outcome of the creative process (White 1993, 82-93). According to some practitioners and commentators (Brierly 1995, 142; Leiss, Kline & Jhally 1997, 183; Nava 1997), creative people often tend to oppose the rational and scientific authority of planners and the pressures coming from research. From the perspective of their work, research findings are seen as imposing restrictions upon the creative process without providing reliable information about how the actual consumer will perceive and interpret the advertisement. In general, most practitioners believe that a good advertisement is the one that contains original and imaginative ideas. While it is obvious that 'original' in this context usually means different from competitors' advertising, the meaning of 'imaginative' is much less clear and much more dependent upon subjective evaluation and, hence, much more

contestable (White 1993, 81).

In order to maximise the chances of a successful outcome of the advertising process, a creative strategy, according to White (1993, 66-77), must contain as precise as possible answers to two fundamental questions: "Who do we want to talk to?", and "What do we want them to get out of our advertising?" Both questions entail a sharp focus on the consumer, suggesting that effective advertising should be concerned more with the creative application of appropriate knowledge about targeted consumers than with the development of a product-centred argumentation. In the following sections, I will first explore the question of how the advertising industry develops its knowledge about consumers in general, and mature women in particular, and then examine some technical guidelines that shape the production of the 'persuasive' advertising text. I will conclude by presenting the industry's understanding of how advertising works.

"Who do we want to talk to?" - Consumer classifications

From the point of view of advertisers and agencies, potential consumers to whom they want to talk are thought of as individuals who "must have something in common to make them buy" (White 1993, 69) or desire the advertised brand. White (Ibid.) explains that to "think about people in very large numbers" means to "divide them into groups in a variety of ways". This suggests that one of the key problems is to define adequate principles of segmentation, by means of which individual consumers who have something in common are grouped together (as well as divided from others), described in terms of specified characteristics and then addressed accordingly with the aim to invoke a desired response. Based on a certain set of assumptions about consumer motivation and behaviour, this procedure seeks to identify, observe and measure how the applied criteria of segmentation relate to some behavioural predispositions, tendencies and patterns. As one of the prominent advertising analysts noted:

> "Classifications of one kind or another are fundamental to understanding the market and taking action to change them. It is only by putting similar people together in groups, labelling the groups and then observing how the behaviour that interests us varies between them that we can work out the reasons why people behave the way that they do." (Cornish as quoted in Brierly 1995, 25)

In order to acquire knowledge about individuals as consumers, they need to be made measurable and classifiable in relation to some relevant criteria. Labels and classifications of

various sorts that have been introduced by the industry, are widely recognised by practitioners as critical trade instruments for enabling advertisers to target their advertising more accurately. The most widely deployed of such systems in Britain come from media research (Brierly 1995, 28). Since it is important to relate consumer markets to media markets, a range of techniques for audience measurement and qualitative research have been developed within the institutional framework that links together media companies, market research and advertising agencies. One of the oldest classifying systems, developed in the 1950s and still in use today, is demographics (White 1993, 70; Brierly 1995, 29-30). It is available from a number of published sources (see White 1993, 70) and used as a basis for categorising the population in terms of age, gender, region and 'social grade' or occupational class. The latter is measured as an indicator of the occupational identity (usually of the chief income-earner), dividing individuals into six social class categories (see White 1993, 70; Brierly 1995, 29; Palmer 2000, 70-71).

The aim of demographics is to provide a sort of guide to identifying the consumer's social position and their likely spending behaviour. It is used to read-off some likely values, preferences, media interests and purchasing patterns around which it becomes possible to construct the demographic profile of, for instance, C1 (lower middle-class - supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional position) women aged 40 or over. These predictions are then used as guidelines for developing an appropriate advertising strategy for a campaign targeting this consumer category. Although widely acknowledged as useful to a certain degree, demographics came to be seen by many practitioners as rather static, productive of fixed measurements and inadequate to account for some finer differences in consumption patterns within the existing demographic profiles. Therefore attempts were made to refine the insights acquired through demographics by adding marital status and 'life-cycle' stages as new parameters, which produced categories such as, 'having a baby', 'buying a house' or 'about to retire' (see Brierly 1995, 30). Although this move facilitated a more precise differentiation of potential consumers, demographics is still regarded by some as a method that cannot register how consumers discriminate between different brands within the same product category.

This problem prompted advertising agencies to enrich their understanding of how consumers are likely to behave by drawing on psychological theories of individual motivation (Brierly 1995, 30-31). According to the assumption underpinning this move, the willingness of consumers to identify with the constructed brand image is vital to the advertising's effectiveness. In post-war advertising, behavioural and psychoanalytic approaches have been

most commonly deployed. Hence it was believed that the process of planning and creating advertisements should involve a calculated intention to encourage such identification by appealing to some of the consumers' biological, psychological or social needs that were, following Maslow's theory of human motivation, regarded as dominant motivating forces. Or, advertisements should address certain desires, anxieties, fears and frustrations that were, according to psychoanalytic theory, assumed to be repressed but strong motivators nonetheless. Although motivation research opened new doors to understanding consumer behaviour, the changing market conditions in the 1970s, and especially 1980s, made agencies and advertisers realise that personality and cultural distinctions should also be taken into consideration.

In response to pressures to achieve more precise and more effective targeting, advertisers devised new techniques for understanding and classifying consumers by combining psychographics (psychological studies of personality types) and what became known as 'lifestyle' research (White 1993, 71; Brierly 1995, 32-34,). Central to this type of classification was the idea that distinct personality traits and the related 'styles' of life work in combination to shape consumer preferences and buying behaviour. Extensive surveys (such as the study known as 'Values and Life Styles' or VALS) were carried out in order to identify clusters of lifestyle habits, values, beliefs, tastes and tendencies towards consuming certain media texts and consumer products/brands that are shared by various groups of consumers. A new unit of classification, based in psychographics and involving the interpretation of the consumer's 'self-image', was called 'lifestyle type'. These types categorised consumers as, for instance, pleasure seekers, security and stability seekers, anti-authority rebels, achievers, experimentalists, working-class puritans, innovators, followers etc. (see Brierly 1995, 33). This classification was an attempt to render consumer self-identities and personalities measurable and neatly categorisable, so that they could be addressed and mobilised in order to encourage the consumer's identification with the brand's projected values. Some practitioners are, however, critical of what they see as rather simplistic and static portraits of consumers that are produced by lifestyle types (Ibid.).

Another criterion for segmenting consumers was introduced by what is known as geodemographics. Its main principle is the idea that people with a similar way of life and similar buying habits tend to live close to each other (White 1993, 73; Brierly 1995, 34). Over twenty different geodemographic systems that are currently in use in Britain classify consumers into a number of 'neighbourhood types', which are in turn defined by lifestyle, demographic and life-stage criteria. The realisation that all the above mentioned classification

systems have their advantages as well as disadvantages led some research companies to produce what is called 'sagasity' (Ibid.), a classification that combines the main categories of demographics, lifestyle, media usage, income and life-stage. Most agencies today tend to use this or any other combination of methods drawn from various classifying systems in an attempt to construct a more adequate ('realistic') and detailed picture of how their target consumers are positioned and motivated.

Constructing this sort of picture is regarded as essential to developing an advertising strategy that will stimulate the desired response. But, as White (1993) and Clemmow (1997) remind us, an advertising strategy is merely a statement about the target group and desired results; it cannot guarantee that the advertisement will achieve these results. They believe that one of the major factors contributing to this uncertainty is the nature of their knowledge about the target group. This knowledge which is based on market research practices can, in their view, provide a lot of conjecture about consumers and their predispositions towards the brand and its values, but it cannot yield information which will enable agencies and their clients to be absolutely confident in the effectiveness of their advertising. Obviously, these practitioners and many of their colleagues (see, for example, Nava 1997; Helgesen 2000) do not share a belief - held by so many critics of advertising - in the enormous predictive value of the industry's knowledge about consumers. It is important to stress that while it is certainly in the professional and commercial interest of advertising agencies to proclaim and assert the objectivity, scientific validity and effectiveness of consumer classifications as methods of knowing the actual consumer, a number of practitioners do express a much more sceptical view. They warn that the research which underpins consumer classifications is, in effect, an attempt to "narrow the range of possibilities, rather than eliminate uncertainty altogether" (Brierly 1995, 39). They are well aware of the fact that the 'target' consumer might not match the actual consumer, and that the reception of an advertisement does not depend only on how good planners and creative people are at identifying, classifying and understanding consumers. But although not all practitioners are firm believers in the proclaimed enormous effectiveness of advertising (see Nava 1997; Helgesen 2000), most of them tend to agree that the expertise in recognising and categorising 'target' consumers plays an important part in maximising the chances of the campaign's success.

Inventing categories and differentiating and grouping individuals who are perceived as sharing certain characteristics and tendencies, form the basis for developing specialised knowledge about consumers, which is operationalised and used creatively in the advertising

process. It is possible to see this procedure in terms of what Foucault (1982, 208) calls 'dividing practices' by means of which the subject is "either divided inside himself or divided from others". The latter form is particularly relevant here. Although Foucault focused on the discourses and institutions of the hospital and the prison, his insight into dividing practices sheds light on how a certain form of power operates, in other domains too, to render subjects governable. The important point about dividing practices is that they work by exercising the power which seeks to objectivise subjects by categorising them and attaching them to specified identities. In the domain of advertising, various types of consumer classificatory systems are deployed to observe, measure, categorise, label and divide a certain category (mature women, for instance) from others. Within this process, the positioning, defining properties, motivation and behaviour of the individual become the object of the analytical practice, which is not just a cognitive exercise for its own sake. Rather, this practice involves a series of attempts to gain a better, more adequate and more detailed knowledge about consumers which enables the industry to achieve better targeting. And targeting is another term for selecting subjects whose conduct is to be influenced in a certain way. Classificatory systems are then instruments by means of which the industry contributes to the production of the individual as a certain type of consumer of media texts and consumer brands, the consumer who thus becomes an object of governance. This does not, however, suggest that the ambition to govern others necessarily produces the results that are intended and desired, as many advertising practitioners explicitly acknowledge.

This account points to a widespread belief within the advertising industry as a whole, that these dividing practices are valid approaches to understanding, addressing and influencing consumers. But this does not mean that practitioners are unanimous in evaluating the adequacy, predictive value and effectiveness of these classifying systems. There are disagreements and competing views, expressed in a continual concern with questions that seek to analyse, critically examine and challenge current market research practices, methods of classification and the related definitions of consumer categories as well as the ways in which this body of expert knowledge is creatively deployed in the advertising process. This concern seems to be particularly visible in the domain of understanding and acting upon mature women as a distinct consumer category. Attention now shifts to this topic.

Mature women as a consumer category

Separating consumers by gender is a long established practice, which is premised on the

assumption about gender as a powerful force shaping consumer needs, aspirations, motivation and patterns of behaviour. Women and men are thus regarded by many advertisers and agencies as two broad consumer groups which differ in many respects and are, therefore, often analysed separately. My focus is on women as consumers and questions of representing and addressing them. The fact that there are advertising agencies which specialise in marketing to women (such as, for example, Pretty Little Head and Syren) and that there is an enormous amount of the online advertising trade material discussing issues related to targeting women, demonstrate the industry's view of how important the female consumer market is. These sources also suggest that acting upon this market draws upon an area of the industry's expert knowledge about consumers which is increasingly questioned and contested. The contest is partly over identifying and understanding features that characterise women's positioning and subjectivities as well as over the question of how to mobilise and address them through advertising. The contest is also over the importance of age as a criterion for differentiating within this market.

The term mature women which appears in the subheading is used here to refer to female consumers who are not in their twenties any more. I adopted the term from an issue of Marketing Week (March 9 2000) which published a supplement under the title "Grown-up Women", consisting of four articles in which a number of women practitioners in the advertising and publishing industries discusses their views on how 'grown-up' or 'mature' women are treated in advertising. This is my main source of information for exploring the construction of this category. Additional sources include internet websites of several organisations, such as: Syren, a Richmond-based agency specialising in marketing to women (www.syren-strategy.com), Rethink Pink! Marketing to Women Portal (www.rethinkpink.com), Aurora, a niche marketing company based in London (www.auroravoice.com), and the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, a trade body for 269 leading agencies in the UK's advertising, media and marketing communications industry (www.ipa.co.uk). Although these sources do not insist on using adjectives such as grown-up, mature or older, it is clear, from the content of their statements, reports and/or discussions, that they refer to female consumers who are neither teenagers nor in their twenties (sometimes described as 'girls').

By adopting the category of mature women as an object of analysis, I do not assume its homogeneity. Neither do the advertising practitioners who problematise the way this category is treated in advertising. The contributors to the discussion organised by Marketing Week

recognise the category's internal diversity, but they argue that it is useful to retain it in order to raise some important issues about the industry's treatment of women as consumers. They draw mainly on their own professional experience as well as on the findings provided by The National Magazine Company, one of the largest luxury consumer magazine publishers in the UK, which compiled research from various sources and conducted their own "Good Housekeeping Grown Up Beauty research". The latter discussion is mainly related to advertising of beauty and cosmetic products. Other sources discuss issues that are not confined to advertising of any particular product category.

Questions of conceptualising and addressing mature women

The first question that the Marketing Week discussion asks is: Why do advertisers largely ignore, that is, avoid addressing directly, this consumer grouping which, as market research shows, has a significant decision-making and purchasing power? In order to answer the question, participants examine what they see as the long established and still dominant approach to mature women in advertising. In their view, this approach operates by relying and reproducing a set of 'myths' which they regard as opposed to 'facts' that reflect lived realities (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 50). One of these 'myths', they argue, is the assumption that women of a certain age generally tend to develop a set of traits, which fundamentally and more or less uniformly shape their consumer behaviour. These traits include tendencies towards brand loyalty (rather than brand promiscuity) and spending less money than younger women on a variety of cosmetic and beauty products. Another widely believed 'myth', in their opinion, describes the consumption patterns of mature women as less affected by stylistic trends, and their choices as less influenced by marketing and advertising. Taken together, these 'myths', they maintain, form the basis of the industry's view of mature women as not 'impressionable', that is, not susceptible to advertising due to their already established and rather fixed patterns of living and consumption.

One participant, the editor of 'Good Housekeeping', thinks that it is of utmost importance for advertisers to re-evaluate this dominant attitude towards advertising to older audience segments. She claims that such understanding of mature female consumers is completely flawed, and that it expresses the inability of so many advertisers and agencies to realise that there has been a profound change in the way mature women relate to themselves and behave as consumers. Her view, shared by many other participants in the discussion, is that women's increased financial independence and purchasing power have played an important

role in encouraging that change. It is necessary, she argues, to recognise the change and realise that not only young, but mature women too, are highly 'impressionable'. Some other practitioners, such as those who took part in the 2004 'Rethink Pink! – Marketing to Women' seminar, do not agree with the view that advertisers avoid mature women. Their discussion is not focused on cosmetic advertising but on a much wider range of product categories, which is probably the reason why they stress that over a fifth more advertising is aimed at women rather than men (see 2004 conference report 'Consumer Focus; The Power of Pink' at www.auroravoice.com/press). But another important question that is raised in the Marketing Week discussion resonates powerfully with concerns of many practitioners. The question is: Why are advertisers, when they target this powerful market segment, incapable of addressing it adequately?

A communication strategist specialising in gender issues, who produced a report called 'The Sexual Renaissance: Making Sense of Our Sex in a New Era', offers an answer, with which many women working in the advertising industry seem to agree (see also www.ipa.co.uk/news). She claims that the key obstacle to addressing mature women adequately is the advertisers' and agencies' conception of 'what it is to be female'. The main problem with this conception, she argues, is that it is "not based on reality but on the mythical female borne out of advertising and now resident chiefly in women's magazines" (Tribballs as quoted in Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 51). Mythical here means not reflecting any 'real' form of femininity. This widespread image of the "mythical female" is described as "[a]ll fashion, make-up, cellulite-free, looking good in the office and being bad in bed" (Ibid.). Another contributor agrees that advertisers and agencies simply fail to realise that mature women have grown out of the interest focused exclusively on "sex, fashion and beauty" (Ibid.), implying that such narrowly defined interests connect only with some younger women. She maintains that more successful advertising to mature women can only be produced by practitioners who are able to think outside the confines of the established understanding of these women. To summarise, all the participants in the discussion unanimously support the view expressed in bold print on the cover page of this supplement, which reads: "There is more to life than fashion and sex". Although some agree that younger women may be focused mainly on "sex, fashion and beauty", a general view is that mature women develop a wider variety of interests and aspirations which need to be addressed in advertising, if it is to appeal and motivate this consumer segment.

They also seem to agree that this fixation on "sex, fashion and beauty" as key

categories in conceptualising and appealing to women, is conditioned by the fact that advertising agencies, and especially their creative departments, are dominated by men; and the majority of this male-dominated agency staff is composed of men under the age of 40 (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 60-61). According to some reports produced for the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, women make up around 15 to 16 per cent of copy writers and art directors (see, for example, www.ipa.co.uk/news/news_archive; Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 60-61). The argument put forward by many contributors to the Marketing Week discussion is that the way in which men in creative departments think of, represent and address women in advertising is strongly influenced by their sexual desire for young, beautiful and sexually alluring women, and this influence works to exclude the focus on mature women. That most male-dominated agencies "don't want to talk to someone they don't want sex with" is, according to a former Cosmopolitan editor (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 51), a fact known to everyone in the industry. A co-founder of an agency specialising in marketing to women is another professional who blames the predominance of men in agencies' creative departments for producing clichéd and stereotyped advertisements that often fail to motivate women (see www.ipa.co.uk/news/news_archive). Her view gains strong support among many of her colleagues, but it is not left completely unchallenged. It is confronted by a woman working as head of account planning in a reputable advertising agency, who stresses the fact that at least a half of all account planners and managers in agencies that are members of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, are women. (It is worth remembering that account planning is a growing field of research in advertising.) She also draws attention to an important finding (produced by TGI, a standard trade source) that only 13 per cent of women see advertising as annoying, suggesting that advertising campaigns do not alienate female viewers.

In a slightly different vein, another participant in the Marketing Week discussion points out that it is very difficult for male advertising practitioners to develop a new approach to addressing mature women even if they are aware of some changes affecting female identities. In her opinion, that is because these men are rather confused about what women "are about now". What is so confusing, she explains, is that women can now marry later, have children later, and enjoy more independence, freedom and income. Due to this rather recent development, so the argument goes, it is very difficult to "pigeonhole" mature women (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 58), that is, to specify, describe and categorise their identities. This expert represents the voice of many women working in advertising and media industries who, for the same reasons, see women over 30 or 40 as "the most challenging

segment in modern-day communication" (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 61). What makes mature women particularly hard to categorise, they argue, is the variety of roles women play, which turns their life into a "juggling act between home, family, friends and work" (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 58). Successful advertising, they maintain, should appeal to "different sides of a women's character", ranging from "being efficient at work to playing with children, to going out with the girls and being a bit frivolous and silly" (Ibid.). Their suggestion is that if agencies (and their clients) wish to improve targeting, they should involve more women over 40 in campaigns designed to reach them. Some female-oriented and female-led agencies (see, for instance, www.syren-strategy.com) indeed claim to have a 'deeper' knowledge about women's 'unique' attitudes, values, needs and desires. Implied in this claim is an assumption that the adequacy of knowledge about female consumers depends essentially on gender identity of the advertising practitioner. Or, in other words, only women (as opposed to men) can understand women.

Another reporter in the Marketing Week discussion takes issue with the belief, widespread among advertisers and agencies, that advertising should avoid addressing mature women directly or portraying them because they do not like "to be reminded that they are older" (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 55). Advertisers of financial services and cars are particularly criticised for enhancing such a belief. Practical implications of this belief are indeed visible in many advertisements for a range of different types of products, and especially in those for anti-ageing facial creams, which regularly target 'older' women by representing images of much younger women. The above reporter insists that a better understanding of this consumer category must involve a realisation that many mature women today do not perceive themselves as old and frumpy, and that they do not spend their time lamenting the ageing of their skin. Rather, she points out, women feel empowered by their rich experience of life and increased spending capacity. When they start noticing the effects of ageing, they tend to be active in looking for and experimenting with new cosmetic products. Many mature women, this reporter notes, look after their body in such a way that they manage to preserve their attractive looks and charm even at an older age. Her central argument is that advertisers should realise that a whole generation of women is now being inspired by women such as Tina Turner and Jane Fonda, believing that "sex-appeal and energy are no longer the preserve of youth alone" (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 53).

Another participant reminds the advertising industry that mature women have attitudes too, and that they need to identify with something other than age. So her advice is to produce

advertising that is more concerned with certain attitudes and aspirations and less focused on the idea that age acts as a dominant factor in representing identities of mature women. This view is shared by many contributors. They are all eager to emphasise that advertising which would appeal to mature women must be "subtle and sophisticated", involving representations of women who appear aspirational not in terms of their looks and sexuality but in terms of their personality and achievement (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 57). Madonna and Cherie Blair are referred to as examples of how 'older' women today adopt an energetic and confident attitude and become empowered by what they have achieved.

A radically different view on whether advertisers should regard mature women as a distinct category is voiced by two women practitioners taking part in the Marketing Week discussion. They think that advertisers and agencies simply waste their time worrying about appealing to women of different ages. Drawing on their professional expertise and subjective experience, they claim that they do not think of themselves as "older and different, and needing special treatment" (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 59). They also argue that women do not respond only to 'women's issues', as they have much wider interests. Therefore, they insist that the "best brand messages are those with a proposition that travels across gender and age" (Marketing Week, 9 March 2000, 61). This resonates with many participants in the Rethink Pink! – Marketing to Women seminar (www.auroravoice.com/press) whose central argument is that women should not be treated as "special-needs customers". They stress that female viewers tend to regard specially targeted advertisements as patronising and irrelevant, suggesting that a tighter focus on attitudes, instead of gender and age, is always far more appealing. Expressing the same view, the practitioners invited to discuss the figure of the 'ad lady' in a radio programme (BBC Radio 4, Woman's Hour, 14 May 2004), emphasise that successful advertisements are usually those whose entertaining quality appeals to consumers of any gender and age.

Summary: three points about the industry's knowledge of mature women

To sum up the previous section I emphasise three points. The first provides an insight into the industry's internal evaluation and revision of knowledge about this category of consumers. The discussion I analysed gives some indication that there are at least two different discourses that compete to define what constitutes the identity (or identities) of mature women. One is what participants in the discussion describe as the established position, which emphasises the interest in sex and the 'cult' of appearance as main sources of femininity. The

other discourse is constructed through the criticism of the first one in an effort to propose a more 'realistic' definition of femininity, which celebrates women's self-confidence, energetic attitude and achievements rather than just their attractive looks. The tension between the two discourses demonstrates that a considerable number of advertising practitioners (male as well as female) are very critical of the industry's established practice of targeting mature women. Their view of the industry as often failing to understand, represent and address mature women adequately, reveals that the industry does not rely on a body of expert knowledge about this consumer category which is unified, unanimously regarded as valid and 'objectively' proved to produce effective results. Rather, this body of knowledge appears as an area in which established conceptions of and strategies for addressing the female consumer are re-examined and questioned as they are no longer universally regarded as appropriate and effective. The emergence of the critical discourse, which is becoming increasingly vociferous, points to the industry's analytical scrutiny of its own knowledge base and of the crucial question of whether the desired results of advertising are being produced.

The second point refers to the view, held by a number of women practitioners, that misunderstanding and misrepresenting mature women in advertising is largely due to the fact that most agencies, and in particular their creative sectors, are male-dominated. This points to the important role which asymmetrical gendered power relations within agencies plays to shape the industry's process of developing and applying knowledge about female consumers. The suggestion that a deeper understanding and better targeting of women will inevitably result from the move to engage more female practitioners in the agency's creative sector is, however, debatable. Although these practitioners rightly criticise these power relations and their effects on the production of knowledge, their solution to the perceived problem is somewhat simplistic and problematic. It is simplistic because it puts all the blame on the creative department, ignoring the role of other institutional subjects and relations in negotiating the strategy and content of advertising. The proposed solution is also problematic because it suggests that only women practitioners can represent and address female consumers adequately. This implies an essentialist assumption about the existence of some unique and universal female identity. The personal experience of such female (fundamentally non-male) identity is what, supposedly, provides women practitioners with an unmediated and privileged access to 'truth' about femininity, and that enables them to establish some sort of 'natural' relationship with the female consumer. This essentialist logic may also lead one to think that consumers can be described and addressed only from a perspective that can be either male or female (see

Strathern 1981).

The third point is about one of the major issues that are raised by the practitioners who question and call for a revision of the industry's established knowledge and representational practice. It concerns their recognition of an important socio-cultural shift that has occurred, considerably affecting the modern construction of femininity. One practitioner described it succinctly as the changes brought about by feminism and the way women have become empowered by their education and wealth and by technology such as the internet, (see 2004 conference report 'Consumer Focus; The Power of Pink' at www.auroravoice.com/press). It is due to these changes, so the argument goes, that today's women enjoy a great influence over purchasing power and feel more independent and confident with who they are. Advertising, many practitioners argue, must respond to these changes in a more creative way and avoid addressing mature women through crude and ludicrous representations based on clichés such as, for instance, the 'sex, fashion and beauty'-obsessed seductress with glossy hair. Some argue that advertisers should address more adequately the changing complexity of specifically female positions, experiences and aspirations. Others, however, claim that tightly defined attitudinal targeting is much more meaningful than appealing to gender/age specific issues.

Techniques of formulating a persuasive proposition - methods of differentiating the product/brand

Given my objective of exploring how the advertising industry describes its practice, its account of communicational techniques is another necessary part of the analysis. Ever since the early decades of the twentieth century, advertising practitioners and agencies have tried to develop and maintain control of a body of expert knowledge about the communication that aims at influencing the way consumers evaluate and feel about an advertised product/brand. This section seeks to look at how the industry formulates and explains the rationale behind various techniques for representing the product/brand in such a way as to attract attention and appeal to the consumer. In other words, my concern here is with techniques for constructing the product/brand-consumer relationship which are expected to have a persuasive effect.

My main source for exploring this topic is Brierly's account (1995, 139-152) of what he calls 'principles of persuasion', which provides an insight into how particular 'persuasive' techniques emerged and gained importance in twentieth century advertising. An important aspect of Brierly's account is his approach to 'principles of persuasion' as practical responses to some historically specific economic conditions (mainly those related to the increasing

saturation of many consumer markets), institutional pressures (the need to demonstrate the effectiveness of the agency's professional knowledge and skills) as well as to the industry's changing perceptions of how consumers tend to respond to advertising. His historical perspective does not propose a rigid linear historic evolution in which one advertising technique is being substituted for a new, more efficient one. Rather, by discussing different, and sometimes opposing, evaluations of these techniques, Brierly's account sheds light on factors that conditioned the development of certain techniques and fuelled the emergence of contemporary ways of thinking about the question of persuasion in advertising.

The early debate among practitioners, as Brierly notes, was mainly about the effectiveness of two techniques of persuasion: the first one emphasised the "reason-why" principle, which was premised on the perception of the rational consumer; the other focused on creating the "atmosphere" of the text in an effort to evoke emotional, non-rational responses from the consumer. Pressures coming from advertisers seeking new methods for differentiating their products/brands from the growing competition, soon prompted a further development of these two basic approaches to stimulating the consumer's interest in the text and desire for the product. Thus, what is known as the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) was developed in the 1950s as guidelines for practitioners to identify and represent a 'unique', rational and easily recognisable benefit of the product for the consumer. The USP approach was seen by many agencies as an effective way to respond to the imperative to differentiate the product from its competitive market, but some practitioners criticised it as limiting the opportunity for creating the brand's personality (White 1993, 83). Advertisers too began to question its adequacy, largely because its application tended to overemphasise the rational appeal.

This criticism was not, however, the only factor that led the industry to focus more on constructing an emotional appeal which would signify the product/brand's difference. Equally, if not more important was, in Brierly's opinion, the vast shift to the medium of television. The perceived ability of television as a medium to communicate through visual means of signification encouraged the thinking that favoured the creation of the 'brand's image' by representing attributes and values with emotional meanings. This approach became known as 'Emotional Selling Proposition'. It is based on an understanding of consumers' buying decisions as motivated by the perception of the brand's personality composed by forging associations which engage with fantasies, desires and aspirations of the target consumer.

Brierly describes the rise of the so-called 'lifestyle' advertising (which I referred to in the section on consumer classifications) as a more recent development that has been initiated

and supported by research carried out within the account planning discipline. This approach seeks to differentiate the brand on the basis of consumer lifestyles, attitudes and psychographics. The focus has clearly moved from the product/brand to the consumer, to their everyday activities, tastes, experiences and/or fantasies that are represented as characteristic of the kind of people who use the brand. In many contemporary lifestyle advertisements, the product/brand appears as something that is mentioned at the end of the story. This move too is, in Brierly's view, the industry's response to the ever increasing saturation of markets. In such markets, some agencies argue, there is so little product difference that advertisers can only create the much needed difference through advertising. In short, it is the advertising text rather than the product/brand itself that needs to be constructed as an object which attracts attention, creates some unique qualities and stimulates the consumer's interest. The underlying idea is that these qualities of the advertisement's text will be transferred (by the consumer) to the brand.

The agencies that produce such advertising argue that it is essential for advertising to be stylish, aesthetically pleasing, intriguing, humorous and/or entertaining. And, above all, such advertising needs to stand out. That has become the crucial requirement, as many practitioners and commentators maintain, since the consumer, according to some research, tends to notice only 7 to 10 advertisements out of 1500 opportunities to see advertising each day (Brierly 1995, 142). As one distinguished advertising consultant pointed out:

"In order for advertising to be registered and for it to evoke a response it must be provocative – it must be unusual and challenge the standard advertising methods. It must stimulate and not reflect the consumer." (Lury as quoted in Brierly 1995, 235)

Some practitioners and brand advertisers criticise this approach for overemphasising the artistic and stylistic aspect of advertising at the expense of actually promoting the brand. Writing in 'Campaign', a trade magazine, one industry analyst noted that:

"Advertising used to be about persuading people to want your product. Now the task seems to be [to] make people admire your advertising." (Wilkins as quoted in Brierly 1995, 233)

There are, however, very successful brand advertisers who do consider imaginative and artistic advertising as more important than constructing a persuasive selling proposition by explicitly emphasising the brand's personality. For example, Guinness is a brand with a truly impressive history of turning its advertising into an art form, and its 1999 television advertisement ('Surfer') was voted by Channel 4 viewers as first among the 100 greatest

television advertisements (see Robinson 2000, 137). Explaining where their inspiration came from, the makers of this advertisement mentioned Melville's Moby Dick and paintings by Delacroix and Crane rather than any insight provided by psychological or market research practices. Central to this highly artistic and entertaining piece of advertising is the representation of feelings of excitement and suspense which the Polynesian surfer, waiting for the most amazing wave of his life, experiences in the anticipation of the ultimate pleasure. The brand's name appeared only towards the very end of the text.

This example is also illustrative of what seems to be another growing trend – the emphasis on the experiential aspect of the consumer-brand relationship (see Falk 1997; Malefyt 2000). This trend seeks to create persuasive links between brands and consumer action by marketing 'experiences' rather than brands. The aim is to represent the experiential value of the brand, that is, distinctive and pleasurable sensations and emotions which the consumption of the brand activates in the consumer. Explaining this new paradigm of marketing 'experiences', one practitioner working as the Director of Cultural Insight notes that contemporary advertising tries to "engage customers more deeply and in more memorable ways", offering them, at the same time, a means of differentiating themselves through personal styles of consumption (Malefyt 2000). This paradigm, in his view, involves the assumption that consumers essentially seek fun, entertainment, fantasy and sensory stimulation. In defence of this tendency to produce artistic, entertaining and 'vibrant' advertisements which intend to evoke a specific experiential value of consumption, many agency planners argue that such advertising is more effective and appealing to consumers, and especially to new generations characterised by increasing competence in reading various media texts (Brierly 1995, 234).

Textual techniques for constructing a persuasive communication

White (1993, 81-93) begins his chapter about creating advertisements by expressing a rather sceptical attitude towards the usefulness of formulating any rules that are to be taken as guides to making advertisements. Though he stresses that there is no formula for success in creating advertisements, he allows that some fundamental rules of design, language and sound can be proposed, if only to be ignored. For example, one of the general rules he puts forward is 'Give the consumer credit for some intelligence'. The rule is based on his opinion that many consumers are likely to have "a great deal more sharp down-to-earth commonsense" than practitioners assume to have themselves (White 1993, 84). He also draws on some research which warns practitioners that consumers are able to recognise an advertisement that addresses

them in a condescending and offensively patronising tone, and that their most likely response would be the resentment against the text and, most probably, against the product/brand. The tone, he insists, must not insult the consumer, and this rule is particularly important when addressing women. Contemporary advertising should, in his opinion, be especially careful not to suggest to female viewers/consumers that women need to be told how to run their house or feed their families properly, or that their main role is to slave over the cooker and kitchen sink, since most viewers would find such an approach irritating and insulting. He suggests that a much better and more effective approach is to flatter, congratulate or encourage the viewer.

In a similar vein, Henry (1997, 170) explains the importance of avoiding "ghastly, patronising jargon", such as "a C2 housewife, living at home, with two children", when writing a creative brief. Instead, he suggests, the consumer (or customer, as he prefers) should be described as a person with their likes and dislikes, which would inspire the creative team to produce the advertising that would treat the people they want to talk to with respect. Brierly (1995, 145-146) too emphasises the importance of the mode of address as a principle of persuasion. His concern is with how the deployment of direct and indirect modes of address enables advertisers "to talk to people individually" by referring to the beliefs or anxieties of the group to which the target consumer is supposed to belong. Though he acknowledges some advantages of an indirect address (mainly the possibility to create a dialogue situation that imitates a "real life" conversation), he seems to favour a direct mode as it openly demands the viewer's attention, seeking to involve her/him by saying, "Hey you!". Hailing the viewer, Brierly claims, must involve the knowledge about the language, metaphors, values and jokes which the target consumer would instantly recognise and, hopefully, respond to by paying attention to the text.

Because of the highly competitive environment in which each advertisement struggles to be noticed, many advertising practitioners and commentators insist that attracting the viewer's attention is one of the most, if not the most important requirement. It is widely believed that once the attention is raised, viewers tend to be more susceptible to the text. As White (1993, 85) writes, "To succeed, advertising has to attract attention", and, if possible, it should use attention-getting devices that are original. Originality is generally regarded as highly desirable but not easy to achieve, though some marketers warn (see, for example, Palmer 2000, 458-461) that the insistence on originality should not lead the creative department to lose sight of the 'true' nature of the product.

Stressing the increasing difficulty of achieving originality in fighting against all the

information and advertising clutter, Brierly (1995, 152-158) lists some of the most frequently deployed attention-attracting techniques. They range from those that aim at shocking viewers by representing unusual objects, images and/or sounds, or by using the medium in an unusual way, to morphing and other techniques of computer animation. He also points to co-opting from other advertising texts, usually celebrated campaigns, as well as from other media genres, such as news programmes, quiz shows, pop music videos and feature films. Other techniques for stimulating viewers' engagement involve arousing curiosity by posing a question to the viewer and representing magical qualities of animals or inanimate objects. To stand out amid such an image-saturated environment, agencies need to experiment with new styles, and when there is not much to say about the advertised product some practitioners advise to use showmanship (Crompton as quoted in Brierly 1995, 157).

Many believe that techniques for attracting viewers' attention and overcoming their resistance to advertising need to be particularly sensitive to gender differences. For example, some practitioners stress that women respond better to images that express empathy rather than those that represent competition, which is assumed to attract the attention of men (BBC Radio 4, Woman's Hour, 14 May 2004). Brierly (1995, 152-153) notes that women's attention is likely to be raised by representing animals, babies, weddings, royalty, fashion and astrology as opposed to the images of sport, sex, cars, politics and wars, which are perceived as more appealing to men. This is not, however, a universal view. Some sections of the advertising community, such as a number of participants to the Marketing Week discussion and the Rethink Pink! – Marketing to Women seminar that I mentioned in the previous section, argue that overemphasising a gender specific appeal might be counterproductive as many female viewers find it patronising and offensive.

Brierly's systematic account of techniques for constructing persuasive content (1995, 152-172) emphasises that sustaining interest and winning consent of the target viewer is as important as attracting attention. He examines various methods that can be used in combination with each other to stimulate and maintain the viewer's engagement with the text. These range from narrative techniques that offer the reconciliation of conflict, the solution to mysteries or problems, or the resolution of contradictions, to those which play on feelings, such as fear, embarrassment, guilt and insecurity. He recommends the use of the latter as a means of creating a possibility to provide viewers with a piece of advice or creative solution. The purpose of the techniques which focus on representing fantasy or some nostalgic feelings, is, for Brierly, to motivate viewers to associate the widely shared notions of paradise, for instance,

with the brand's personality, and to stimulate them to bring their own fantasies to the text. Techniques for encouraging the viewer to identify with the text, should, in his view, seek to describe situations and allude to values which the target audience is likely to recognise as familiar. Infusing the imagery with a certain mood and erotic meanings is also discussed as a stimulating method. One of very few rules that White (1993, 88-91) proposes for cinema and television advertising, stresses the use of music as critical for creating a desired atmosphere or mood, building familiarity and making associations for a brand.

Humour is another technique of sustaining interest, though one on which there is not much agreement among practitioners. While some reputable practitioners, such as David Ogilvy, strongly argue against the use of humour as a selling instrument, others such as White (1993, 84) and Brierly (1995, 158-161), maintain that humour has been and can be used effectively to sell. However, White warns that creatives should be careful to avoid some offensive forms of humour. Discussing the increasing use of 'alternative' humour, cynicism and parody in advertising, Brierly (1995, 160) draws attention to the emergence of 'media-wise' consumers, who are perceived by advertisers as the "biggest problem for getting sales messages across". His argument is that their growing competence in reading advertisements and other media texts is also productive of resistance to advertising. In order to overcome this resistance, advertisers should seek to distance themselves from what he sees as traditional advertising formats (such as the demonstration format) and incorporate a form of self-criticism or self-parody. Crucial to this, Brierly argues, is to produce advertising that does not appear to be selling at all. Rather, it needs to encourage consumers to think that they are not being persuaded, that they are free to make their own interpretations and decisions. White also agrees that the so-called demonstration format (which dominates traditional television advertising) today needs to be used rather obliquely and with humour, if it is to work at all.

What Brierly suggests is that being less persuasive is more likely to produce a more persuasive effect. For that reason, he warns advertisers that the use of overly emotive language and over-exaggeration is bound to undermine rather than enhance the credibility of the constructed brand's personality or the text as a whole. For him, less persuasive advertising is that which is less explicit in representing a selling proposal, more entertaining and more likely to stimulate the viewer's active involvement. He suggests that one of the methods for achieving such qualities in television advertising and preventing the viewer from switching off is to leave the slogan and product to the end. White agrees that this has become an increasingly deployed technique, though he sees this building of suspense before revealing the brand's name as a

technique that entails some risk of losing viewers. He is also more sceptical about the imperative to entertain as it may lead to the entertainment overshadowing a selling message. For Brierly, however, persuasion needs to be more subtle, and achieved through sophisticated use of techniques for visual signification (editing, colour, framing) as well as rhetorical devices, all of which seek to evoke emotional responses and suggest meanings on a connotational level.

Assessing the effectiveness of advertising: theories of how advertising works

The question of how advertising works may seem to be a purely theoretical one. It is the question, as many advertising practitioners note, for which advertisers show little interest. Their concern is with advertising results rather than theory. But, from the point of view of the advertising industry, this theoretical question is fundamental as it has serious practical implications for the process of assessing the effectiveness of advertising, upon which commercial future and professional reputation of agencies depend. While acknowledging the enormous practical importance of this theoretical question, many practitioners and analysts admit that there is no valid and commonly accepted theory of how exactly advertising works (White 1993, 55). This lack of positive knowledge has also been recognised by Lord Rothermere, a prominent figure in the journalistic world (Palmer 2000, 459), as well as by a retailing tycoon John Wanamaker (www.ad-mad.co.uk/node/414) ,who both once said that half of all advertising was wasted, but the trouble was they could not tell which half. Clemmow (1997, 63) too confesses that a century of formal study of this question has not provided practitioners with satisfactory answers. In his opinion, "asking how advertising works isn't like asking how a bicycle works – it's more like asking 'How does literature work?' (Ibid.).

Though there is a general agreement about the great complexity of the question, White (1993, 63) emphasises that practitioners "find it easy not merely to disagree but to disagree about what questions to ask". Furthermore, he is quite sceptical about any prospect of developing an effective theory of how advertising works. Despite the fact that many practitioners and researchers acknowledge the virtual impossibility of knowing how exactly advertising affects consumers and companies' positive business performance, in practice they draw on a range of conjectures, assumptions and theories in order to evaluate some measurable effects of advertising.

Many claim that assessing the effectiveness of advertising and discerning its effects from those of other marketing activities is not an easy task (see, for example, White 1993, 55-

64, 94-104; 459-461; Broadbent 1997; Palmer 2000). For some (Broadbent 1997), measuring sales effects is particularly difficult, though the most desirable way of evaluating the advertising's success. For those who do not regard advertising alone as having the power to increase sales directly (see the first section of this chapter), this sort of measurement is not possible at all. The view that advertising produces an unknown contribution to selling goods has been gaining a growing support in the advertising community since the early 1970s. White, for example, claims that it is often very difficult, almost impossible, to measure sales effects as an indication of the commercial success of an advertising campaign. More importantly perhaps, he argues, that this sort of measurement is not even informative, as it fails to provide clues as to how the advertising is actually achieving its success. This is an important issue for him because it offers an insight into how advertising can be used properly, that is, effectively. Palmer too thinks that measuring increase in sales (especially in the short-term) is often not only difficult but also misleading, since advertising campaigns may have different objectives (creating awareness of a brand being of them), the effectiveness of which cannot always be read off from sales figures. Some practitioners, such as Broadbent (1997) strongly oppose this view. He points to the damage it causes by encouraging the spread of the 'myth of advertising's ineffectiveness' which, in turn, leads many clients to loose confidence in advertising. In order to restore advertising's reputation (and ensure the commercial future of many agencies), he argues that it is indeed possible to measure the manifold ways in which advertising contributes not only to the short-term volume return but also to brand-building that can be seriously profitable.

One of the accepted methods of judging advertisements in terms of commercial criteria is econometrics, a statistical analysis, the application of which, according to some practitioners, can separate out, from a product's sale, the effects of various marketing activities (White 1993, 101-103; Brierly 1995, 198-199). Despite the efforts, on the part of some trade bodies such as the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, to demonstrate the usefulness of econometrics in evaluating advertising, some practitioners, such as White, remain unimpressed. White's main criticism emphasises that econometrics, if not meaningfully linked to other information about responses to advertising, cannot provide clues as to why and how some advertising works and some does not. According to many practitioners, sales are rarely today taken as the only measure of advertising's effectiveness, primarily because of the growing criticism levelled against simple linear theoretical models of how advertising works and how consumers respond to advertising.

One 'classic' such model that has been widely deployed for decades is known as AIDA (an acronym for awareness, interest, desire and action). The model describes a direct impact of advertising on consumers as beginning with raising awareness, which is necessary for stimulating interest and desire, finally leading to purchase of the advertised product. This and similar models developed later in the 1960s attracted criticism for their over-simplistic premises, i.e. for assuming that consumers act rationally, their decision making process being directly triggered and shaped by their exposure to advertising, and for failing to account for other factors influencing advertising effectiveness (White 1993, 56; Brierly 1995, 191-192). These models were also seen as reductionist for suggesting that advertising can work in only one way (Clemmow 1997, 63-64).

The perceived inadequacies of such models of advertising as directly affecting consumers' purchasing behaviour prompted practitioners and researchers to develop other theories and types of measurement, such as the 'recall' of advertisements. The focus has here shifted to exploring models of communication. Early theories, which put forward the so-called hypodermic model of media effects (see Morley 1989; Tudor 1995; Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998), conceptualised the consumer in terms of a passive receiver of the advertising message. Though such a simplistic sender-receiver model was later modified, the central assumption remained unchanged - the consumer's ability to remember the advertisement is regarded as the key to its effectiveness. This means that if an advertisement achieved the first two stages of the AIDA model, i.e. awareness and interest, the viewer would be able to recall the text, and the advertising's effectiveness could be measured by testing how well viewers recall the content of the advertisement.

Discussing some widely perceived advantages and weaknesses of this practice, White and Brierly remain sceptical about the text's high memorability as an indicator of the much desired persuasiveness. Brierly also criticises recall tests for ignoring the role of the context of viewing as well as wider social and cultural relations affecting the consumer's interpretation and memory (Brierly 1995, 192). In White's opinion, advertisers and agencies overestimate the importance of recall well beyond what can be learned from such a test. Drawing on some recent psychological research of memory, he argues that the effectiveness of advertising does not necessarily seem to be related to the consumer's memory of an advertisement. More specifically, he suggests that the 'explicit' memory of an advertisement may be less relevant for stimulating the purchase of the advertised product/brand than some vague general impression derived from the advertising (see White 1995 57-58 and 96-98). However, high

memorability still figures as a very important quality. One of the reasons for this, according to Brierly, is the argument, well established in the industry, that by producing advertisements with a high recall quality (which is measurable and expressed in figures), agencies acquire an instrument for impressing the client.

The assumption about the high recall quality of an advertisement as a main factor that stimulates the consumer to make a purchasing decision remains open to question. The industry's response to some of the problems associated with simple recall tests was to introduce the practice of assessing the consumer's 'total awareness' of messages generated by a campaign as opposed to their memory of a single advertisement (Brierly 1995, 192-194). Brierly explains that this move was encouraged by a growing recognition that advertising works by raising awareness, setting agendas and outlining relevant information and the terms of debate for consumers. Drawing on social-psychological research that developed more complex models of communication, the industry began to see consumers as more active receivers of messages and the crucial relationship between awareness and sales as an indirect one. The problem, as Brierly reports, is that this relationship is also the one that is difficult to measure.

The concern with measuring, i.e. producing figures that unambiguously demonstrate some ways in which advertising is effective, have prompted attempts to focus on consumer attitudes towards the brand, as these were regarded as measurable. In White's opinion, these attempts sought to solve the question of why consumers prefer or, in other words, have a favourable attitude towards some brands rather than others. The practice of measuring attitudes and monitoring attitude change generated the view that advertising works by changing, or at least, modifying consumer attitudes. While generally accepting that advertising works that way, some practitioners still have reservations about the question of whether attitude change in fact influences purchase (see White 1993, 60; Brierly 1995, 195-196). Research has shown that attitude change can occur after as well as before the purchase of a brand, which, in Brierly's view, seriously undermines the validity of linear behavioural models that are still influential in the industry. For him, one of the main problems with these models is their basic premise about the consumer who uses his/her perception of advertising in order to learn and act rationally.

The more recent tendency that is outlined by White and Brierly is to move away from the concern with measuring media effects and towards the basic marketing premise about the centrality of the consumer. They emphasise a noticeable shift in the focus from the question of how advertisers and agencies hope to persuade people to the question of how people use

advertising. This development involves the rejection of the assumption about consumers as rational agents and passive receivers of advertising messages as well as the adoption of the premise that consumers read advertisement selectively and interpret their meaning actively (Brierly 1995, 199-201; Clemmow 1997, 64-65). Brierly writes that these active audiences

> "use advertising messages to satisfy their needs, wants and desires; to resolve insecurities, fears and frustrations; to provide companionship; to learn lessons and gain knowledge; to support and reinforce their identity and their belonging to a social group…; and as a form of escape and fantasy" (Brierly 1995, 199).

New models of how advertising works that emerged recently stressed the need to 'involve' consumers (rather than persuade them) by using seductive techniques which aim to amuse, entertain, encourage identification and invoke emotion. Though Brierly generally supports this orientation, he warns against the danger of overstating the active role of the consumer, as this deprives the media of its power to influence the communication.

While this development has not brought any radical change in the way advertisements are tested before (so-called 'pre-testing') and after ('post-testing') they have been run in the media, it did encourage more qualitative research (see Lury & Ward 1997) and discussions within focus groups composed of consumers selected from the target group. According to White (1993, 94-99), such procedures focus mainly on judging whether the advertisement is in line with its agreed strategy and whether and in what way an advertisement is noticed by consumers. But, he stresses that the results of such testing are not to be accepted without any reservations, because none of the available testing methods can reproduce the ordinary everyday circumstances in which people watch advertisements – with diffused attention and selective perception, and while doing other things and interacting with other people in certain, usually familiar social spaces. Obviously, the spatial and social context of reading in a testing situation is radically different as is the attention with which consumers selected from the target group read and take notes about the advertisements that are being tested. What is also missing in this situation is the repeated exposure to the advertising over a certain period of time. These differences should be taken into account when drawing conclusions from the testing because, as White (1993, 95) suggests, "[one] of the main ways in which ads work is through this almost insidious process of being partially noticed many times".

To conclude, this section suggests that there is no single, coherent theory which is widely accepted by the advertising community as a valid explanation of the workings of advertising. Because of this, various testing methods and forms of research are deployed in

order to predict the advertisement's effect on consumers and the company's business performance. The choice of methods depends mainly on what advertisers believe that the advertisement can achieve. Regardless of what their beliefs are, there seems to be an increasing recognition that these methods are, in effect, only techniques for reducing uncertainty by offering partial answers to the fundamental question of how advertising works, when it works. As a way of improving the industry's (and the client's) understanding of advertising, White (1993, 103) suggests that more research should focus on how consumers use and respond to advertising.

CONCLUSION

The main concern of this chapter was to explore the practitioners' account of a number of topics in order to gain an insight into certain discursive and institutional relations that condition the production of advertisements. I wanted to look at the workings of advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance in terms of how relations of power/knowledge are put into practice, the type of objectives and the strategies by means of which they are pursued in practice, and modes of conceptualising the governability of consumers.

The industry's ability to develop and use creatively a body of specialised knowledge about subjects whose conduct they seek to govern represents its most valued asset in the business. But, as the analysis in this chapter showed, this knowledge is not organised as a unified and coherent system that provides definitions and instruments which are universally recognised as adequate, valid and effective. As many advertising practitioners and analysts admit, their professional knowledge, experience and skills are constantly examined and evaluated in an effort to achieve a better understanding of who their target consumers are, how they behave and how it is possible to influence their motivation, perceptions and desires in the most effective way. A high-ranking professional in a big advertising agency notes that "the planning and execution of an advertising strategy can only be a process of continuous learning and adaptation, in a competitive environment, where the norm is uncertainty and change" (Clemmow 1997, 65). I wish to emphasise here that an ethos of a perpetual critical examination of the industry's knowledge and strategies is crucial to this process of 'continuous learning and adaptation', which enables advertisers and agencies to cope with problems of competition and uncertainty and exert influence on consumers.

This ethos manifests itself both in the way various systems of classification have been

constructed as major trade instruments for acquiring knowledge about and dividing consumers, and in the domain of understanding mature women as a distinct consumer category. The advertising industry keeps problematising questions such as: What aspects of individuals' identity, social positioning and purchasing behaviour should be taken as crucial factors for defining a consumer category, whose members share some similar traits in relation to the consumption of certain products/brands? How can these traits be made measurable? What can we learn from these measurements? As many advertising practitioners and analysts acknowledge, the picture they construct provides them only with partial understanding of the target consumer's values, preferences, desires, motivation and behaviour. It enables them to produce conjectures and make informed predictions but it cannot eliminate completely the uncertainty which characterises the actual consumer's conduct and response to advertising. The main point is that, in the context of institutional pressures to demonstrate the effectiveness of advertising, the industry's ambition to reduce uncertainty fuels sustained efforts to keep problematising the nature and limitations of its knowledge and its effects.

This is not to suggest that advertising is going through some crisis of confidence, of which it is fully aware. My argument is quite the reverse: the advertising industry is concerned with questioning its knowledge and practical strategies in the hope of becoming more effective in influencing consumers. According to Foucault (2000f) and Rose (1993), this questioning of knowledge and its effects is one of the defining features of liberalism as a formula of rule, which incorporates a critical reflection on governmental practice. In that particular sense, advertising deploys a typically liberal method of rationalising the exercise of government. Whether the industry, generally speaking, is becoming increasingly effective in managing consumer conduct is another question. I am not trying to argue here that the industry's overall body of knowledge progresses steadily towards a more profound, more accurate or more detailed understanding of consumers, which inevitably leads to an increase in its effectiveness. Many practitioners also refrain from making such a claim. Their account of various techniques for testing, measuring and exploring different aspects of consumer response is often characterised by a degree of suspicion regarding the possibility of assessing, in exact terms, the effectiveness of advertising. They openly admit: that advertising does not always achieve its intended objectives; that its potential effects on consumers and the company's long-term business performance are more often than not very difficult to predict; and that the validity of the adopted methods of predicting and assessing these effects is continuously scrutinised and modified. What I am putting forward is the proposition that the advertising industry is driven

by a (liberal) ethos of recurrent critique of its knowledge and instruments, and that it acknowledges the uncertainty of the effects of advertising.

Advertising practitioners and analysts do not consider that advertising has the governing ambitions and effects which I am analysing. They certainly use a different vocabulary to express their concerns and intentions. Their vocabulary revolves around notions of brand, selling proposition, persuasive communication and influence. Brierly (1995, 46), for example, says that advertising aims "to influence people's behaviour". But what does this mean in more specific terms? I will sum up practitioners' answers to this question in order to emphasise: first, the sort of influence that is regarded as practically achievable by advertising and, second, the ways in which consumers are seen as governable.

This influence is no longer understood in terms of a causal link between the unambiguously encoded advertising message, its reception by consumers and their decision to purchase the advertised product/brand. The advertising literature I explored strongly suggest that to influence consumers means to encourage them to prefer the advertised brand to its rivals by emphasising rational reasons (for example, the product's quality, availability or convenience of its use) and/or some specific emotional appeal that denotes the brand's unique personality. The construction of the much needed difference is expected to stimulate the consumer to identify the projected brand's qualities and benefits and recognise the more subtle emotional and aesthetic undertones with which the brand is associated. This suggests that consumers are perceived as governable in terms of their ability to register, compare and evaluate some quite delicate differences between often virtually identical products competing in the same market category.

But in the context of highly saturated and increasingly competitive consumer markets, the representation of a brand's unique qualities or attributes came to be seen as a problem, which forced advertising practitioners to think of new methods of creating the brand's difference. The solution was found by readjusting the focus of attention more towards the target consumer's lifestyle than the brand itself. Thus the effort to identify consumers' tastes, values and habitual ways of doing things and relating to themselves and others came to be regarded as crucial to building a successful brand's identity. To put it simply, the lifestyle strategy seeks to represent the brand's identity as reflective of the consumer, while the consumer is encouraged to recognise the brand as stylistically compatible with, and constitutive and expressive of her/his lifestyle. This points to the underpinning assumption about consumers as governable not only in terms of their capacity to discern fine meanings of

the brand's identity, but also as subjects who are actively concerned with shaping a lifestyle and a form of self-identity. To influence consumers here means to act upon their capacity to make choices which are explicitly connected to the practice of freedom as identity.

The thinking behind some more recent trends in advertising seeks to modify slightly this strategy by suggesting that the prospect of influencing consumer's perceptions and choices is greater if the advertising text is imaginative, stylish, entertaining and capable of exciting the consumer's sensibilities. The text needs to be constructed in such a way as to engage with viewers at a 'deeper' emotional level, provide some experiential meanings and encourage them to bring their own fantasies. According to this strategy, the brand's attributes should not be explicitly pointed out and the advertising text should not appear to be selling anything. Furthermore, an advertising campaign is to be evaluated as effective not if it reflects target viewers, but if it succeeds in provoking them. Crucially, the 'persuasive' tone of the text should be concealed. In regard to the conceptualisation of how consumers are rendered governable, this strategy is not radically different from the one focused on lifestyle; it only involves a much stronger emphasis on the conception of consumers as media-wise viewers in search for various spectatorial pleasures, fun, sensory stimulations and entertainment.

To sum up, an increasing scepticism regarding the effectiveness of conventional persuasive methods of formulating the selling proposition, differentiating the brand and modelling its 'unique' identity, seems to be coupled with a growing belief in the efficacy of the strategy that aims at emphasising the entertaining and experiential aspects of the advertising text in a way which avoids making any sort of selling proposition visible. I see this current emphasis on the view, which holds that in order to 'persuade' consumers, advertisers ought to produce less persuasive textual forms, as an expression of a typically (neo-)liberal mentality of government. Drawing on the writings of Foucault (1991a), Rose (1993, 1996b), Barry, Osborne and Rose (1996), one of the defining characteristics of liberalism (as well as its more advanced form) as an ethos of government is the discovery that "by governing over-much, rulers thwarted the very ends of government" (Barry, Osborne and Rose 1996, 8). This is exactly the sort of discovery the advertising industry and their clients are arriving at – being too persuasive may produce results contrary to those intended. A more effective form of acting upon consumers' perceptions, evaluations, preferences and choices, as many advertising practitioners argue, can be achieved by deploying a strategy which works to stimulate consumers' more active participation in the advertising text, which is enticing and entertaining rather than persuasive.

This is an important conclusion for the purposes of my study, as it expresses the practitioners' intention to influence (govern) consumers in a 'soft' way, that is, by respecting and utilising their lifestyle/identity-fashioning capacities, their interpretive freedom and competencies, and their desire for spectatorial pleasures. The concern to improve the techniques for differentiating the brand leads practitioners to assume that the effectiveness of the power to influence consumers depends upon the ability of this power to motivate the engagement of consumers in interpreting advertisements and to offer them forms of textual pleasure. Although advertising practitioners do not explain their practice through the vocabulary I use in analysing advertising, the above understanding of the advertising's effectiveness bears a striking resemblance to my proposition about advertising as a 'soft' form of governance fuelled by the operation of 'modest' power blended with relations of freedom and pleasure.

However, to understand how this 'modest' power works in advertising, it is not enough to analyse only practitioners' intentions and assumptions. Attention must also be paid to actual means through which relations of power between advertisers and consumers are put into practice. To this end, I will now focus on advertisements themselves and examine how 'modest' power operates to shape the content and style of representation, by means of which it seeks to address, govern and entertain female viewers/consumers.

PART IV
<u>ANALYSING TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS</u>

Introduction

Part IV focuses entirely on analysing one aspect of advertising – the advertising text, with the aim to explore how the interaction between techniques of 'modest' power and those of representation works to affect the construction of femininity and provide the guidance of selves. As explained in the conclusion to Part II, where I discussed how theoretical ideas shaped the design of my study of advertising, this aim requires an analysis of several research questions. These may be summed up as focusing on: first, main mobilising discourses out of which advertisements representing and addressing women are constructed, and the way these discourses articulate a range of ethical regimes; second, the type of advice advertisements offer to female viewers in order to recommend certain practices of the self; and third, the representational style which shapes the tone of the offered advice as well as a possibility to derive pleasure from watching advertisements.

The part consists of two chapters. The first (Chapter 7) deals with methodological issues, providing a description of why I chose to focus on television advertising, how I gathered data and constructed a sample of advertisements. Most importantly, the chapter contains a detailed explanation of analytic categories and how I used them to organise textual material, compare important bits of data and analyse their relevance to my research concerns. Analytic categories were generated in a continuous interplay between theoretical ideas, research questions and textual data. They involve: the name and type of the advertised product, mobilising discourse, representational styles and the represented benefit of the product. Together they direct attention to how television advertisements seek to: outline a range of subject positions that are considered as central to constructing female identities; define ethical qualities of the appropriate form of the subject; articulate ethical goals and provide advice on how to achieve them; and entice the female viewer, through various forms of textual pleasure, into considering the significance of the offered advice.

Chapter 8 presents the analysis of how advertisements represent, address and attempt to influence the conduct of women. The analysis unfolds in five sections, each focusing on one of the mobilising discourses which I discerned as crucial to organising textual data. The first two sections explore advertisements which address women as housewives and mothers. The third section examines the representation of heterosexual couple relations as a major site for

speaking about female sexuality. The represented ideal of female beauty and the woman's relationship to her body are discussed in the fourth section. The last section is devoted to the analysis of how women are portrayed in relation to paid work. These five themes (housework, motherhood, heterosexual couple relations, the body and paid work) emerged from the textual material as most relevant discursive frameworks through which advertising represents various forms of positioning women in its attempt to regulate their conduct. One of the crucial themes running through this chapter concerns the way relations of power, pleasure and desire are represented as constitutive of various forms of femininity.

In presenting the analysis, I tried to follow the same format in each of the five sections and consider in each case the combined effects of all analytic categories. It is important to note that although these categories point to different textual elements of an advertisement, they operate in such a close interaction with each other that it was often hardly possible to analyse one category without describing the properties or effects of another one. Hence, I chose the format that stresses the interdependent nature of relations linking the content of the mobilised discourse, suggested benefits of the advertised object and the style through which they are represented.

CHAPTER 7
HOW I ANALYSED TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS

Why the focus on television advertising

I chose to limit my focus to television advertising because television is traditionally seen, by many advertising practitioners and marketing experts as a brand advertising medium par excellence (see, for example, www.cardellmedia.co.uk/televisionadvertising). Though television is not the only such medium, it is regarded as a rather 'powerful' one (Davis 1988; White 1993; Palmer 2000; BBC series 'Washes Whiter'). This is an important point because my approach to advertising as political technology was developed mainly on the basis of looking at brand advertising (a form of advertising that aims at creating, confirming or redefining a brand's identity). This type of advertising is more relevant to my research concerns than other forms of the practice (such as, for example, price advertising) as it implies the use of various techniques for forging associative links between the constructed identity of an advertised brand and that of its potential consumer. I also focused only on advertising to consumers as opposed to advertising to industrial customers because my research concern is with techniques for governing (female) consumers rather than influencing industrial customers.

One of the advantages of television, compared to other advertising media, is that it is a medium capable of combining various means of representing the message. It provides moving images (with an enormous possibility for their technical manipulation), music, forms of verbalisation and sound effects, through which the advertising text can be related in both narrative and visual ways. Television can thus be regarded as an advertising medium which offers the richest range of technical means of expression, rivalled only by cinema commercials.

Another important aspect of television advertising, at least in Britain, is its very high standard of technical and artistic production which often compares with some of the best pieces of television programming (Bernstein 1986, 271). This quality is certainly one of the reasons why television advertisements have become a constitutive element of popular culture and entertainment. The relationship between the two is one in which many intertextual references and stylistic borrowings are often made. This probably explains why so many successful television campaigns are viewed and remembered as popular media texts in themselves regardless of whether or not they achieved some short- or long-term effects on sales of the given brand. The viewing figures of a Channel Four programme '100 greatest TV Ads', as voted by the public, can well illustrate this point. The programme was watched by four million

viewers, and at some point in the evening it even managed to attract more viewers than any other channel (Robinson 2000). These figures demonstrate how close television advertising comes to forms of popular entertainment. This point is of considerable relevance to my interest in the way ('modest') power combines with practices of (viewing, interpretive) freedom and forms of (textual) pleasure.

The approach to sampling and the question of generalisability

I began collecting data by viewing advertisements at the very start of my research. This preliminary sample consisted of sporadically selected advertisements, print as well as television ones. At that early stage, the aim was to test how my early, hunch-driven formulations about television advertising as a site of 'soft' governance could be translated into researchable questions that I found most relevant to explore. After a period of intensive theoretical research, I returned to the problem of data collection in order to identify a set of parameters according to which I could construct a workable sample of advertisements.

In selecting a sample of advertisements I followed Silverman's and Mason's guidelines on purposive or theoretical sampling as a qualitative research method for constructing a sample that is not based on any statistical logic, but which allows for some notion of generalisability (see Silverman 2000, 102-111). This approach to sampling implies a procedure which seeks out cases that are most relevant to the formulated research questions and underpinning theoretical conceptualisations. Key criteria of sampling are derived from the theoretically defined research focus with the aim to select texts which are capable of providing a "close-up, detailed and meticulous view", as Mason put it, on the aspects or processes the researcher seeks to analyse (Mason as quoted in Silverman 2000, 107).

This sort of sampling inevitably raises the question of generalisability. Most obviously, purposive/theoretical sampling does not seek to achieve any sort of statistical representativeness, through which generalisability is achieved in quantitative research. But, as many qualitative researchers agree, this particular notion of generalisability is neither achievable nor required in qualitative work. Qualitative work, which is heavily influenced by the researcher's theoretical position, specific research preferences and personal capacities, does not aim to produce any kind of broadly (let alone universally) applicable laws. The rejection of this requirement as a definition of generalisability does not, however, imply that the issue of generalisability is unimportant in this type of research (see for example: Schofield 2000; Maxwell 2002). Rather, it means that we need to reconceptualise the notion so that it could be

appropriately applied to qualitative work.

One way of redefining the notion of generalisability is, as Goetz and LeCompte suggest, to understand it in terms of 'comparability' that creates a possibility to use the insights drawn from a qualitative study of a specific phenomenon, setting, process or situation to understand or form a judgement about other comparable phenomena, settings, processes or situations (see Goetz and LeCompte as quoted in Schofield 1992, 206-207). In order to achieve a level of 'comparability', it is essential to provide thick descriptions about all the important factors which combine to affect the findings of a qualitative study, such as theoretical concepts, methodological strategies, research methods, analytic categories, units of analysis, etc. If sufficient and coherent information is provided, these descriptions can then be used by other researchers, not to reproduce the results of a given study, but to specify the extent to which it seems appropriate to generalise from the findings of the given study to other cases. The remainder of the chapter represents an attempt to provide an account in as much detail as possible to show how I collected data, constructed a sample of television advertisements, and generated analytic categories according to which data were organised and analysed.

Description of the sample and data collection

In order to collect relevant data and construct a sample for textual analysis, I recorded television advertisements in a period from 13th to 19th of May 2001. Because I wanted to analyse advertising texts that appear in the programming available to the widest television audiences, I chose ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5. These three major commercial terrestrial channels had national coverage before the era of digital television transmission that resulted in the increasing multiplication of television channels. Unlike cable and satellite channels, the three selected channels required no subscription fee and no additional technical equipment, which is what ensured their widest availability.

I recorded the advertisements broadcast on these three channels during one whole week. On the basis of my viewing experience and information drawn from advertising textbooks, this period seemed to me to be long enough to capture a sort of regular advertising diversity and, at the same time, short enough to provide a sample size that is manageable for qualitative analysis. During that week, I taped most of the advertisements broadcast from 9 o'clock in the morning until around midnight. While it is certainly true that advertisements targeted at certain consumer categories appear in programmes which are expected to attract adequate audience segments, it is equally true that a considerable number of campaigns are

spread out, more or less evenly, over the daily programming schedule, becoming perhaps more frequent in some particular programmes or in the peak time. I did not focus on recording advertising inserted in or between any particular types of programmes because I wanted to look at a wide variety of advertisements out of which I would be able to shape a sample composition that suits my analytic purposes.

My initial plan was to view the taped material, gain some insight into its composition and size, select relevant units for the sample, and then decide whether I would need to extend the period of taping. But after a preliminary analysis, I realised that any enlargement of the sample size would preclude the kind of qualitative analysis that I intended to carry out. In effect, with each subsequent viewing of the recorded material the sample size got smaller. To be more precise, at first the total number of taped advertisements exceeded 500. Out of this sample I immediately excluded advertisements that illustrate what is known as 'direct response advertising'. This type of advertising seemed to be almost irrelevant to my analytic interests, since its marketing strategy is much less concerned with the process of branding and directed exclusively to encourage the potential consumer to call a telephone number, visit a web site address, or respond to a mailing address, and thus receive more information about or purchase the product. Many campaigns that exemplify so-called 'price advertising' were excluded from the sample too. Although this type of advertising does sometimes entail bits of data I am interested in, the narrative and visual structure of such advertising texts is, most frequently, designed to communicate the information about the price reduction of the product/service rather than its qualities, style of consumption or beneficial effects. For that reason, it could be said that, on the whole, these cases have little relevance to my research questions.

Another equally important criterion for shaping the content and size of the sample was determined by my particular research interest in the techniques of governing women through acting upon their sense of identity. Hence, I needed to select both the advertisements featuring female characters and those aimed at women. Although my more specifically defined focus is on the category of 'mature' women, the sample involves a wider range of consumer identities. There is a theoretical reason behind this choice. Drawing on the conceptualisation of identity (discussed in Part II, Chapter 6) as a relational category, that is, as constructed and represented in relation to and by marking difference from other identity categories, it seemed necessary to include advertisements that feature or target other highly relevant consumer identities. These advertisements provided me with an opportunity for comparing the representation of mature women with images of young women. I also decided to retain in my sample a number of

campaigns that represent or target young women because it is often very difficult to specify the age of represented female characters. This is especially the case with cosmetic advertisements, which more often than not represent young looking women to promote anti-ageing facial creams. Included were also advertisements aimed at men, and especially those emphasising what is represented as typically male attributes and values, since forms of femininity are often constructed as significantly different from, as other to what defines masculine identities.

By applying the above criteria of selection (type of advertising, targeted consumer category, represented characters) I began to reduce my initial sample of 500 taped advertisements. I did not, however, shape the composition and size of the sample in just one viewing session. Quite the contrary, I viewed and revised the sample at least seven times in order to assess the relevance of each unit included according to the mentioned criteria of selection. At the same time, I was trying to specify units of analysis as well as describe and organise the textual data derived from each advertisement. Each viewing session and an accompanying attempt to refine the classification of data, resulted in further reduction of the sample size. At some point in this iterative process of revising the sample and classifying the relevant data identified in each advertisement according to the analytic categories I generated in the process, I arrived at the conclusion that a body of 135 selected advertisements would be an adequate sample to work with.

Analytic categories

I have already mentioned that generating a set of analytic categories was a long process, one that was inextricably intertwined with viewing recorded advertisements, redefining research questions and revisiting some theoretical problems, especially those related to the understanding of television advertising as a political technology and as a media text. In the course of every viewing session I would modify the previously formulated set of analytic categories and rearrange the data accordingly. In the process, I would often encounter an unexpected problem that would then initiate another circular move between analytic categories, theoretical conceptualisations, central research questions and issues derived from textual data. In some cases, the revision was caused by certain theoretical insights that I derived from the literature, but in others, it was the textual material itself that made the rephrasing of research questions and analytic categories necessary. It would perhaps be more suitable to use the metaphor of spiral rather than circular moves to describe the process of revising, as it finally led to the point (of stabilisation) at which the definition of analytic categories seemed

adequately to capture the links between theoretical conceptions, my research concerns, and issues in textual data.

It is important to emphasise that these categories are neither intended to be mutually exclusive nor all-embracing. Rather, they tend to overlap each other to a certain extent, as they are generated to cast light on different though very closely related elements of the advertisement as a form of television text. I now move on to describe in detail each analytic category.

1. Name and type of the advertised object

This category does not need much explanation; it registers basic information needed to see what types of products or services are advertised to different categories of consumers. My particular concern is to identify: a) the types of products/services that are regarded as typically female, that is, advertised to different categories of women (such as cosmetics and beauty products, food and cooking ingredients, children's food, cleaning and washing products, some financial services, luxury products, etc.); b) the types of products that are rarely, if ever, advertised to women (such as business software applications, certain insurance and financial services); c) the types of products that target men but feature images of women.

2. Mobilising discourse

This category draws on a Foucaultian definition of discourse as a cluster of systematically ordered rules, concepts and practices which produce topics/phenomena that speak of and govern what is sayable and knowable about them (Foucault 1982b). Applied to my analysis of television advertisements, this category refers to the discourse selected by advertising practitioners to contextualise the advertised object in such a way as to make it meaningful and appealing to certain categories of consumers. I regard the choice of mobilising discourse as the most fundamental representational technique; it formulates a repertoire of attributes, concepts, metaphors and images that shape the production of possible statements not merely about the advertised product/brand but also about the style of its consumption and the identity of its consumer. My particular focus is on how these statements formulate and interpret ethical regimes that govern the construction of different forms of femininity.

Each mobilising discourse (for example, housework or motherhood discourses, or those on heterosexual couple relations) structures the advertisement by regulating the appropriate subject position of the represented female character and by outlining the choice of possible

textual themes through which the character is defined. For example, the discourse on heterosexual couple relations can be mobilised to treat a wide variety of possible themes, such as: the brief erotic encounter, idyllic marital relations, some specific responsibilities of a wife, gender specific expectations and forms of emotional conduct within a sexual relationship, gender division of domestic work, etc. The choice of a theme shapes the focus of the text in terms of concrete activities and social situations, personal relationships, responsibilities and desires, forms of conduct, ethical goals and methods, to which the advertised object is related. In effect, represented themes specify how certain subject positions should be occupied; they sketch normative images of female identities, describe ideals and goals that are worth striving for, and provide advice on how to achieve them.

Because of the relative standardisation in the production of advertisements, it is possible to identify certain tendencies in portraying female characters as models of femininity. The format of television advertising is perhaps the most important factor which determines the tendency to over-emphasise an identity aspect that has been selected as the most appropriate one to attract attention and engage the target audience. Since advertisements usually have 30 seconds or less to communicate their content, visual economy is paramount. This is to say that advertising practitioners have to resort to what Goffman (1979) terms 'ritual' or 'ceremonial' modes of communication. They have to 'condense' the portrayal of a given character into a simplified and easily recognisable representation that resembles a rough pencil drawing; it is a sketch of the portrait rather than an elaborate oil painting, to use an analogy with art genres. But this is not to suggest that forms of femininity represented in advertising imagery are more 'stereotypical', or less 'real', and therefore 'false' in comparison with some more psychologically rounded portrayals of feminine characters produced in other broadcast genres, film or literature. The reference to the 'sketch' as a form of representation is only meant to point to the specific signifying strategy employed in advertisements.

The very format of television advertising also seems to privilege the visual rather than elaborate narrative mechanisms of characterisation. In that context, a physical location, in which the represented character performs certain practices, is never neutral. It is always invested with a range of meanings which position the subject who occupies it. This focus on the visual makes the construction of location and setting immensely important in making statements about social positioning, tastes, forms of expected conduct and responsibilities of the represented character, as well as in portraying some of their psychological and ethical qualities.

The choice of discourse and theme is both a technique for constructing a fundamental representational framework for the advertising text and a method of motivating the engagement of consumers by connecting with aspects of their everyday responsibilities, needs, desires, fantasies, anxieties and aspirations. It profoundly shapes the representation by outlining the available possibilities of what is representable in a given campaign. By introducing this analytic category it becomes possible to identify: a) the types of discourses that are most frequently deployed in representing and addressing women; and b) the content and regularity with which certain themes emerge out of certain discourses. The analysis of these factors provides an insight into the mechanisms through which 'modest' power operates in close interaction with techniques of signification to address female viewers and offer them advice about how to perform certain everyday practices, manage certain relationships, understand and relate to themselves.

3. Representational styles

The subject positions and themes that are constructed out of mobilising discourses and the types of advice that are offered to viewers can only be represented in advertising through a certain textual form. Hence, stylistic features of this form play an important part in the production of meaning and pleasure, which is the actual process of bringing power relations between advertisers and consumers/viewers into being. The category of representational styles involves the description of flexible rather than fixed textual conventions that work towards shaping an expressive form in terms of modes of address, styles of narration and visual design and the use of music. In generating this category I relied on my own analysis of advertisements as well as on the literature that discusses questions of the relative standardisation of television texts (Fiske 1987; Corner 1999; Creeber 2001; Casey et al. 2002), and on what Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1997, 265-266), in their analysis of stylistic trends in advertising, call communication style.

Although I do not attempt to propose any sort of rigid classification of representational styles in advertising, I argue that there is a certain degree of regularity and repeatability of stylistic conventions that serve as a means of standardising textual production and stabilising audience reception. Representational style is, most obviously, a complex category. I discern the following structural elements, each of which plays a role in representing aspects of femininity, often at a connotational level, in shaping the tone of the offered advice, and in motivating the engagement of the female viewer.

Modes of address

Even a casual glance at television advertising would not fail to register the difference in textual structure and style of communication between advertisements featuring the role of a narrator/presenter who acknowledges explicitly and addresses the viewer directly throughout the text, and those which lack or minimise such direct mode of address. The way in which the assumed viewer is addressed by the text is an important issue in analysing the interactive operation between techniques of representation (textual devices for constructing a viewing position and fashioning the text-viewer relationship), techniques of power (shaping interpretative freedom and power relations between the advice-providing authority and the viewer), and techniques of the self (modes of meaning and pleasure production in the reading process).

In assessing the importance of mode of address as a rhetorical device, I relied on my own observations as well as on the explanations provided by the practitioners in the advertising industry who took part in the BBC 2 series about television advertising in Britain, entitled 'Washes Whiter' and transmitted in 1990. My understanding of the category also draws on Corner's (1999) analysis of direct and indirect address in television talk and his distinction between spoken and enacted forms of narrative that imply different ways of constructing the text-viewer relationship. Through a combination of these sources, I defined mode of address as a textual technique for providing two basic viewing positions.

The first one is created through the use of a direct mode of address. Here, the presence of the viewer is openly recognised by the advertising text as the narrator/presenter or the voice-over commentator speaks directly to the viewer throughout the text. In effect, the whole text is structured around the central role of the narrator/presenter, whose aim is to inform the viewer, to provide him/her with an important piece of information regarding the product/brand, its availability, price, benefit, or appropriate form/style of consumption. The viewer is positioned less as a spectator and more as an interlocutor, a (silent) participant in the communication, as a person to be spoken to and informed. This mode of address creates the illusion of face-to-face relationship, establishing a type of sociality that is in some sense akin to an unmediated everyday interaction (Corner 1999, 38-42). Thus, the relations between the character(s) represented in the text and the viewer could be understood, following Corner, as 'para-social' encounters modelled on an interpersonal rather than a mass-public mode of communication. These relations tend to produce a more relaxed communicative context between whoever is accorded the authority to provide information and advice on the given subject and the

represented female character and/or female viewer.

The role of the narrator/presenter can be performed by different characters such as, for example, the expert, the celebrity, or the experienced and satisfied consumer. There are also different forms in which direct address can be deployed. For example, the narrator/presenter can appear as a lead character in the text who talks to the viewer with a direct eye gaze in order to enhance the para-social contact, engage the viewers interest more directly and inspire trust. The direct address can also be performed in voice-over whose speech relates, with a varying degree of directness, to the flow of images. Another form of constructing direct address is a dialogue between the narrator/presenter and another represented character. These are not of course mutually exclusive textual devices and, hence, can be used in combination with each other.

The second viewing position is constructed through the means of indirect address, as the presence of the viewer is not overtly acknowledged by the text. The viewer is not directly spoken to but, rather, positioned as a spectator, as a voyeur enticed to witness the event or as an onlooker attracted by pleasing, intriguing or entertaining visual images. Advertisements that deploy this mode of address are usually constructed as enacted mini-narratives and/or as visually powerful imagery. Hence they tend to be more productive of imaginative pleasures. They also rarely seek to offer advice in an explicit form. Due to their reliance on enacted performance and/or means of visual signification rather than explicit verbal guidance in the process of meaning production, the advertisements with an indirect address also tend to provide the spectator with a wider field of interpretive freedom.

The distinction between the two basic modes of address expresses a separation which does not indicate mutually exclusive textual techniques for positioning the viewer, since many advertisements in which the narrator/presenter is not given the central role in the construction of the text, still use voiced-over speech, usually towards the end of the text. This speech does not, however, dominate the text but serves to highlight some brief noteworthy points (such as, for example, a memorable slogan, or the name of the product/brand, or its specific quality/reputation, or its special benefit for the consumer). The defining difference is that the voice-over speech in advertisements with an indirect mode of address does not provide a detailed commentary upon images.

Styles of narrative communication

Similar to literary and other forms of media texts, a good deal of television advertising

relates stories that are structured by a certain developmental logic. From the point of view of my research interests, it is important to analyse this logic as it sheds light on the micro mechanisms through which techniques of narration interact with those of guidance of selves with the aim to mobilise the viewer. In order to analyse the narrative structure of the advertising text, I draw on Barthes' conceptualisation of 'hermeneutic code', which examines the unfolding of narratives through three stages: enigma, delay and resolution (see Narrative in Casey et al. 2002, 139-141). For example, if the enigma is structured around a conflict between two protagonists, or around some sort of tormenting contradiction or puzzling question, then the resolution will bring a reconciliation, right answer or solution to the problem. If the enigma is created through the identification of a need or desire, the resolution will provide the means of satisfaction, gratification or approval. Or, if the enigma is constructed around a feeling of frustration, anxiety or embarrassment, then the resolution will point to the ways of coping with these feelings.

Working in combination with other means of signification (visual and music), styles of narration may involve a range of appeals, understood as rhetorical forms of attracting attention, conveying information, eliciting emotion and invoking pleasure. My analysis emphasise three types of appeal that are most frequently used in television advertising. It is important to emphasise that the following classification, like most distinctions proposed in this section, indicates prevailing rather than clear-cut, opposing or contradictory principles. This is to say that even if one representational style is dominant, it is often used in combination with any other.

The first is marked by the dominance of humour. Humour can be expressed through a narrative that is structured like a mini-situation or mini-romantic comedy, to borrow the terminology from genres of film and television production, which are major sources of influence on advertising. But the humour appeal can also be applied in such a way as to produce a single witty remark, funny gesture or jokey punch-line that nonetheless dominates the stylistic tone of representation.

The second appeal works with mood, aiming to infuse the text with a specific emotive quality. While I do not claim that the emotional response of the actual reader necessarily matches the intentions of advertisers, I argue that advertising practitioners rely on certain culturally constructed and shared patterns of responding to certain textual stimuli. Meaning and pleasure production in media texts is only possible because words, images, music and sounds produce cues that are commonly associated with certain cognitive and emotional responses

within a cultural landscape. In that landscape, there are conventions drawn from everyday social interaction as well as from art, literature, photography, film and television, which tend to stabilise, to a certain extent, the way images are perceived, classified, interpreted and emotionally responded to.

Finally, some styles of narration use a rational appeal with the aim to provide important information or some sort of explanation. Rational appeal is produced through two slightly differing stylistical approaches. One is similar to the style in which leaflets and manuals present technical information about the product/service and practical instructions on how to obtain, consume or look after it. The other technique is orientated more towards offering an explanation of the purpose and exceptional quality of the product/service or its specific benefit for the consumer. It uses the form of a 'mini-lecture' to associate the product with a specific need, aspiration or goal, explaining why the product is the only adequate, satisfactory or time/cost-effective way of fulfilling the need or achieving the desired goal.

These stylistic techniques operate to define what is to be regarded as a problem, as an issue of concern or importance, as pleasurable, funny, beautiful or well designed, articulating thus standards of judgment, ethical norms, aesthetic values, aspirations and desires. They also motivate the viewer's engagement by stimulating their interest in how the narrative is going to unfold and by providing potential forms of textual pleasure.

Styles of visual signification

Because television advertising is a visual as much as a narrative medium, the style of visual signification considerably affects the production of meaning, especially on very fine connotational levels. Stylistic features of visual representation achieved through the composition of a shot, depiction of individual visual forms, usage of colour and lighting, point of view, nature and pace of editing, etc., are productive of visual clues about aesthetic values, ethical norms, gender definitions, lifestyle patterns, or aspects of social or (sub)cultural identity, which all contribute to the construction of a regime of truth about femininity.

I will mention only a few examples (for a more exhaustive and systematic analysis see Messaris 1997, 53-90). Round shapes, subtle curves, soft colours and textures usually serve to connote tenderness, or gentleness, or some related aspects of femininity, while sharp edges and angular shapes are conventionally seen to express the strength, or decisiveness associated with masculinity. Speed of editing and the nature of editing transitions could be taken as a means of suggesting gender and age differences, where gradual transitions and slower pace of editing are

regarded as more suitable for representing and addressing women and segments of older audiences, while straight cuts and faster editing are believed to be more appealing to male and young audiences. The overall style of visual signification may also sketch power relations between characters, or it can indicate taste and social identity of the lead character or the target viewers.

In analysing visual signifying mechanisms, I draw on Messaris' argument about the lack of fixed propositional syntax as an important aspect of visual communication (Messaris 1997). This is to say that the use of visual images lacks the sort of precision in expressing relations of causality, contrast, conflict, analogy, or generalisation, which is in verbal communication achieved through a more explicit and less flexible grammatical structure. One of the consequences of this relative imprecision of visual signification is that it produces a wider field of possibilities for articulating and interpreting ideas, relations, arguments and/or value statements in a coded rather than explicit manner. Conventions that are adopted to stabilise the meaning potential of images, to a certain extent, are more visual 'resources' than firmly established codes of interpretation (see Jewitt and Oyama 2001). For example, the juxtaposition of different images within the same frame or sequence is often used to signal analogy between characters, objects and/or settings. But compared to the explicit use of adjectives and/or adverbs in verbal communication, the relations of analogy suggested by visual juxtaposition are much more open to interpretation (Messaris 1997, 193). Because of this relative imprecision, visual images can be used to allude to some sensitive issues, minimising potential problems caused by explicitness.

4. The represented benefit of the advertised object

The formulation of this category is based on one of the fundamental premises of marketing theory which assumes that consumers buy products on the basis of their perception of the benefits provided (see Palmer 2000, 217). This suggests that advertising can be seen as one of the practices through which certain product/brand attributes are translated into benefits for consumers. These benefits may be presented as an immediately visible material effect produced by the consumption of an advertised product, such as for example: a brilliantly cleaned toilet, an easily prepared family meal, or a well moisturised skin. But more often than not, the representation of benefit goes well beyond this level, describing some of the more subtle effects of consumption, like more free time for oneself, a relieved feeling of anxiety, more satisfying marital or family relationships, an increased feeling of well-being, trendier

looks, or improved self-esteem. In other words, the formulation of benefit describes the effects of consumption not only on material objects or processes but also on the way in which the consumer relates to herself and others.

Regarding my research interest, the significance of the category of benefit is in that it points to a site of interaction between techniques of definitional power, of signification and of the self. From this perspective, the representation of the benefit of a given brand is a method of influencing the capacity of the viewer/consumer to analyse all the explicitly and implicitly defined advantages of consuming the product against the disadvantages of not consuming it. Such an operation of 'modest' power deploys no other instrument but the expert advice on how to achieve objectives that are marked as appropriate or desirable. The benefit analysis, that is, the interpretation of the relative contribution of the advertised brand to shaping one's style of consumption and one's relation to the self is also an integral part of reading practices, which, as I have discussed in Part II (Chapter 4), may affect the continuous process of self-evaluation and self-reconstruction.

I am not suggesting, however, that benefit analysis is necessarily carried out through a conscious and purely rational process of calculation. Rather, I see this calculating procedure as intertwined with different types of textual pleasure and related to the type of 'investment' the viewer/consumer is prepared to make in taking up certain subject positions and performing certain techniques of the self suggested by the text. I also do not claim that it is possible to read off the outcome of the benefit analysis that is carried out by any actual reader just by analysing the advertisement's representation of the product/brand's benefit. The aim of introducing this category is merely to identify what goals and methods of achieving them are suggested to female viewers through the representation of the benefit of a certain product/service.

Concluding remarks about analytic categories and how I used them

The four categories (name and type of the advertised object, the mobilising discourse, representational styles and the represented benefit of the advertised object) described in the previous section were constructed to facilitate the analysis of three main topics I am interested in: the dominant mobilising discourses and themes through which television advertisements represent women and promote certain ethical regimes; the types of advice they offer to female viewers about how they should perform certain practices and relate to themselves; and the representational styles through which advice is offered, providing the viewer with a possibility to take pleasure from the text. I used the generated categories as an analytic framework for

transforming recorded advertisements into an organised body of textual material and for identifying issues of relevance in the data.

At first, the unit of analysis was the whole text of each advertisement from my sample, which needed to be broken down into elements according to the analytic criteria presented in this chapter. This was a very slow process not only because of the enormous amount of textual data, but also because it was often difficult to categorise what seemed to me as ambiguous bits of data. After examining, sorting and describing constitutive elements of each advertisement, I tried to focus on connections that could be made between these elements, and then compare the emerging connections throughout the sample. This led me to single out the category of the mobilising discourse as the most important organising principle for classifying clusters of advertisements which share similar information relevant to my research questions. I discerned five such clusters organised around discourses representing housework, motherhood, heterosexual couple relationships, the body and paid work. These clusters then became the focus of analysis.

I am not arguing that the analytic categories (and sub-categories) I generated in the research process are clearly demarcated. Properties of some of them overlap to a certain extent, and certain divisions and sub-divisions are sometimes difficult to sustain due to a lot of ambiguities that arise from the textual material itself. In spite of that, I believe that the categories and distinctions introduced in this chapter point usefully to the important issues of my research concern. I also do not claim that these analytic tools are applicable to any study of television advertising. Because they are generated for the purpose of exploring advertising as a site of a 'soft' mode of governance, they cast light on some aspects, processes and mechanisms while neglecting others. Such a formulation of analytic categories is the outcome of the interplay between the type of questions I wanted to ask and the textual data I gathered in order to examine the mechanisms through which technologies of 'modest' power and of representation work to affect the construction of female identities. The above explanation of how I used analytic categories to conduct the analysis of my sample is only an attempt to summarise analytic procedures and not an accurate description of the course of the analytic process. As I mentioned earlier in this section and explained in much more detail towards the end of Chapter 2, the analytic process did not develop through a succession of separate and neatly defined stages as this summary might suggest. Rather, the process involved a series of interrelated attempts to refine the formulation of research questions, generate and modify analytic categories and organise textual data in a way that would facilitate their analysis.

I decided to present the textual analysis of television advertisements by describing the combined effects of all analytic categories. The next chapter, which provides this analysis, is organised around the above mentioned mobilising discourses. I begin by exploring how advertising attempts to position, address, advise and entertain female viewers by representing housework. This is followed by discussions on representing motherhood, various forms and positions within heterosexual couple relationships, and the discourse concerning bodily aesthetics and the care of the body. These are four types of discourses that dominate the way in which advertising tries to govern the construction of femininity. The fifth section focuses on the representation of women in relation to paid work, the discourse which is mobilised much rarely in comparison to other four discourses.

CHAPTER 8
TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS

REPRESENTING HOUSEWORK

Most advertising for (essential) food, supermarket chains, cleaning and washing products and household appliances place the advertised object within a limited range of contexts that speak of housework and address the mature woman as a subject concerned primarily with her duties and responsibilities within the domestic sphere. My textual material suggests that there are two coexisting discourses that define housework and the position of the housewife in rather different ways. One discourse focuses mainly on cooking which is seen as the most important housework duty; it stresses the hard work and unreserved commitment of the busy housewife to feed, serve and please her husband and children. Contrary to what might be expected, other housework activities, such as cleaning and washing, are rarely represented in advertising in terms of hard work. Rather, the prevailing tendency in advertisements talking about the maintenance of domestic hygiene is to deploy the discourse of effortless housekeeping that celebrates revolutionary advancements in modern technology and its liberating effects for the housewife. The housewife, the central figure in both discourses about housework, is always represented as a married woman with children, which is why these discourses make frequent references to other discourses concerning marriage and motherhood.

Housework as hard work

Key terms in understanding the position of the housewife constructed within this discourse are hard work, a sense of duty and commitment to serve and please her family. The hardworking housewife is represented as entirely devoted to her domestic duties and, above all, to cooking and preparing food for her children and husband. The unreserved commitment to caring for her family is what describes her subjectivity in a way which considerably diminishes the importance of her other interests, concerns and aspirations. The focus of her activities is never on herself but on others, that is, on her family, and cooking is represented as an important practice through which she relates to her family. For the housewife, cooking is not just an activity of preparing a meal but also, and more importantly, an opportunity to please the family. For that reason, pre-cooked food in many advertisements aiming at housewives is praised for its nutritious value and delicious taste rather than its time and effort-saving

qualities. If, however, an advertisement for frozen/ready-made meals stresses the convenience of such products, the lead female character is not the mature housewife but the young single woman who has a busy professional and social life. Unlike the housewife, she is motivated by her own interests and wishes: to invest as little time and effort as possible in cooking and to enjoy a good meal in the company of her friend(s). For the housewife, however, cooking for and feeding the family necessarily involve hard work and determination in order to fulfil the needs, wishes and expectations of her children and husband, even if they are not always appreciative.

An advertisement for 'Bird's Eye Potatoes' is a good example of how the preparation for the family mealtime is treated as the central subject-matter in a number of advertisements composed out of this discourse. It is represented as the most hectic time for the housewife as she strives to finish cooking, lay the table and get everything ready so that her family can enjoy the meal. While she is busy, her husband and children go about their own leisurely activities (watching television, listening to music, or playing outdoors), paying no attention to her and showing no intention to help her. Furthermore, the housewife does not even expect them to offer any help. Although she is exhausted from the work she had done before the evening meal and is still busy in the kitchen while others are enjoying themselves, she does not complain. Neither does she express any sign of resentment against such a division of domestic work. She accepts the situation as it is, believing that it is her natural duty to serve her family without moaning. In an advertisement for 'Pork Simple Meals', the housewife is allowed to express a mild dissatisfaction by throwing a tea towel at her husband and sons who, completely absorbed in watching a television programme, disregard her calls for dinner. Although she wishes they would show more appreciation for her effort, she does not make a serious attempt to influence their conduct or introduce some sort of change.

Unlike many advertisements for pre-cooked frozen food or cake mix products in the late 1950s and during the 1960s (see BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter'), contemporary advertising suggests that the hectic housewife needs no creative skills. When cooking is represented as a creative or even playful activity (as in advertisements for the supermarket chain Sainsbury's, for instance), the central role is played by a male celebrity chef whose skill, motivation and authority have nothing in common with those of the housewife. The male chef cooks because he wishes to demonstrate his expert skills. For him, cooking is a creative job, which is appreciated and admired by others, and his passion, which he pursues with fervour of an artist. For the housewife, however, cooking is a domestic duty, which attracts considerably less

admiration. Crucial to the way she performs her duty is not so much knowledge of cooking as knowledge of how to please the members of her family. The housewife is also never given the principal role in choosing and serving luxuries, such as ice-cream or wine. Those choices are always made by men.

In the advertisements that celebrate sensual satisfaction of food and wine and/or the social pleasure of rich dinner parties, the busy housewife is conspicuously absent because the hard work needed for preparing food is not shown. It seems that the usual locations and settings in these advertisements, such as a stylishly set dinner table with fine crockery and candlelight (as in one advertisement for 'Carte D'Or' ice-cream), or a nice romantic countryside landscape (as in the 'Lindemans' Wine' advertisement), are considered as inadequate for representing the hardworking housewife who struggles to please everyone. She can only be adequately portrayed in the location where her everyday, 'real' life, characterised by duty and drudgery, takes place, and that is her kitchen or dining room. It is the ordinariness of her kitchen and family and the hectic pace of her routine activities that is considered most suitable for emphasising ethical qualities of the housewife: hard work, responsibility, self-reliance and devotion to caring for others.

The style of representing the world of the busy, hardworking housewife is always that of realism. In all advertisements that were mentioned in this section, the viewer is invited to interpret the imagery as a realistically depicted slice of everyday domestic life. As a representational style, realism seeks to create an illusion of an objective and unmediated view of reality. Its essential characteristic is that it conceals the constructedness of representation by presenting a constructed and selective perception of reality as its immediate reflection. In that way the realism of these advertisements can be understood as an important factor that governs the production of truth about the hardworking housewife, creating a seemingly objective viewing position for the reader to comprehend and evaluate what is being represented. In other words, the style of realism encourages the viewer to believe that the text offers a neutral and unmediated version of how things are. It serves to naturalise the represented conduct of both the housewife and her family by giving it an air of the self-evident. This applies even to advertisements that deploy a direct mode of address, as in an advertisement for 'Pork Simple Meals'. At some point in this text, the housewife in the role of a satisfied consumer of the advertised product speaks to the viewer directly, explaining how to prepare and serve the meal and offering advice on how to deal with the mild frustration caused by unappreciative conduct of children and husband. She addresses the viewer in a way that simulates a friendly and

compassionate face-to-face relationship, which tends to produce a more relaxed communicative context and enhance the credibility of the advice.

A rather simple narrative line, always structured around the way the housewife performs her duty, is an equally important representational strategy deployed in advertisements constructed out of this discourse. There are no accidental or ambiguous developments in the narrative. Just as the housewife is represented simply in terms of her caring virtues, so are the relationships she has with her family depicted as simple rather than complex. To put it briefly, the hardworking housewife cooks food and serves it to her family because it is her primary domestic duty to do so. All members of her family wait to be served. They might not always appreciate her effort but she hardly ever complains and is always keen to please them. Her position within family relations is crucially dependent on the excellence and self-restraint with which she succeeds in providing tasty meals and a happy domestic atmosphere. And her selfless devotion to her family also means that she is not concerned much with herself.

The simplicity of the narrative structure and characterisation of these advertisements contributes to the clarity with which the benefit of the advertised product (for example, frozen food) for the housewife is represented. The possibility of producing a delicious family meal is of course the most immediate benefit. But the consumption of the product offers more benefits; it enables the housewife to satisfy not just the needs but also the wishes of her family. Crucially, the housewife is advised to interpret the satisfaction of their wishes as a sign that she performed her duty well and that she succeeded in fulfilling her deeply felt wish to please them. For the housewife, the success in pleasing others is the path to self-realisation; it is a major source of her self-esteem and a necessary condition for her own sense of satisfaction. Although the analysed advertisements do not point out to the housewife how she should be directly concerned with her own self, they forge implicit causal links between the consumption of the product, cooking, pleasing the husband and children with quiet efficiency and self-constraint, being a dutiful wife and mother, and self-fulfilment. It is through these links that cooking is represented as central to the way in which the mature woman relates to herself.

The representation of the product's benefit thus goes far beyond the satisfaction of the need to feed the family. It suggests an idea that the hardworking housewife shapes her identity not so much by being concerned with her own interests, desires, aspirations or pleasures but through her commitment to serve and care for others. Constituting such an identity is represented as naturally stemming from the housewife's subjectivity, and is positively valued. Thus, these advertisements offer female viewers a possibility to derive some form of pleasure

from the text; some viewers can draw pleasure from participating in scenes that bear a resemblance to their own practices and experiences in running everyday family life. Watching events, situations and modes of behaviour that seem familiar may provide an opportunity for the viewer to feel gratified to see her experiences being shared by the represented housewife and presumably other women. Since these advertisements celebrate hard work, dutiful conduct and selfless devotion of the housewife, they also offer the viewer a pleasure of recognition, the pleasure of seeing one's practices, emotional commitments, beliefs and values acknowledged, approved of and respected. The texts constructed out of this discourse do not propose any form of change in the way the housewife performs her duty and relates to her family and herself. Instead, they tend to normalise her position and emphasise the pleasure she is capacitated to derive from working hard in order to please her family.

The art of effortless housekeeping

It might seem paradoxical at first that the discourse celebrating hard work is not mobilised in advertisements that talk about the importance and methods of maintaining domestic hygiene. Although these advertisements promote high standards of hygiene as central to the housewife's effort to create a healthy domestic space, they never suggest that good housekeeping involves hard and time-consuming labour. The advancement in modern technology is offered as a key to understanding this paradox; it is the invention of labour-saving appliances and other household products that is shown to transform hard and tedious domestic work into a series of simple activities that are performed with ease and even elegance. In order to achieve brilliant results, modern housewives are led to believe that they no longer need to invest a lot of time and energy as domestic technology enables them to do all the dusting, cleaning, washing and ironing both more quickly and more effectively than the older generation of housewives. Three themes that are central to representing aspects and implications of effortless housekeeping speak of the recommended style of dealing with household dirt, occasional involvement of the husband and an increased amount of leisure time for the housewife.

The transformed style of 'fighting' dirt

An advertisement for a floor cleaning product called 'Pledge Dust 'n' Go' offers a good illustration of how the discourse of effortless housekeeping reinterprets the nature of housework and reconstructs the figure of the housewife. There we see a modern, stylishly

dressed housewife/mother clearing up the mess on the kitchen floor made by her toddler. The task takes no time and effort at all, and it does not ruin the cheerful mood in which she performs her domestic duties. In the following scene, the housewife's mother comes to visit her daughter and grandchild and she immediately starts inspecting the level of hygiene in the house. Although she is at first sceptical about the results her daughter is able to achieve by using all these new time and effort saving products, she finally (and reluctantly) expresses her satisfaction with the level of cleanliness. It is implied that for the mother, who represents an older generation of housewives, good housekeeping means investing much more time and effort, which inevitably makes the housewife less cheerful and energetic. Leaving the mother slightly confused, the cheerful female voice-over highlights the modern pace and style of doing housework with the words: "Why be slow, Pledge dust 'n' go". The advice given to the viewer clearly emphasises the efficiency, speed and ease with which the housewife should perform her domestic tasks.

But it would be misleading to present the discourse of effortless housekeeping as an invention of contemporary advertising. Its construction can be traced back to the mid 1960s, when advertising abandoned the ethics of hard work to promote new powerful cleaning chemicals and household machines, stressing the liberating effects of these products for the housewife. Advertisements for 'Puritan' multipurpose household soap provide a good illustration of this trend. The 1950's advertisement features a woman in a worn-out dress with a scarf tied around her head, kneeling on the kitchen floor and painstakingly cleaning the dirt with a stiff brush. The focus is on the act of cleaning the floor, which is clearly depicted as one of the housewife's primary duties, requiring physical effort, persistence and diligence. In sharp contrast to this representation of the hard-working housewife concerned only with her domestic duties, the late 1960s advertisement for the same product constructs an image of the housewife with a completely different demeanour. She is beautiful, stylishly dressed, cheerful and charming. Most importantly, she is not represented as scrubbing the floor but as dancing coquettishly in her brilliantly clean kitchen, holding in her arms a comically enlarged model of the product. Her advice to women is "clean your home the modern way, and the modern way is bright 'n' gay…".

Central to the promotion of this "bright 'n' gay" style of housekeeping is a suggestion that the consumption of the advertised product affects, almost directly, the demeanour and subjectivity and of the housewife. The represented benefit is not so much the spotlessly cleaned floor as it is the time and effort saved on cleaning it. And because the housewife is not tired

from the work, she has more energy, which makes her feel cheerful, more relaxed and satisfied, and enables her to look nicer. The narrative structure that is most commonly used in texts constructed out of the discourse of effortless housekeeping is not the one organised around the housewife's duty. Rather, it is shaped by the relation between the identification of a task/problem and the manner of dealing with it which is most beneficial for the housewife herself. Another important characteristic of these advertisements is their presentational style which involves elements of a light-hearted entertainment, such as dancing, humour or music, with an intention to infuse the narrative with a more cheerful mood.

In addition to the claim that the new products with an ever increasing effectiveness save time and significantly reduce physical effort, advertisers also assert that these products bring some special ingredients and additional benefits. The promotion of these ingredients stresses the importance of raising the standards of domestic hygiene and making this increased cleanliness more visible. Hence the house should not only look clean but it should also smell fresh; the toilet should not only be cleaned but it should sparkle; clothes should not only be washed but a notion of intense whiteness describes the right standard of its cleanliness. The latest cleaning and washing products and household appliances are represented to be so effective and easy to use that 'fighting' dirt becomes even enjoyable. The act of cleaning the floor ('Pledge Dust 'n' Go'), or the toilet ('Harpic', 'Domestos'), or the bath tub ('Flash Bathroom Cleaner') is represented as inseparable from the act of watching the achieved result with great admiration. The suggestion is that spotless and shiny surfaces in the kitchen and bathroom do not just signal cleanliness, that is, a healthy domestic environment. They are also nice to look at, as they infuse the cleaner with a sense of purifying pleasure. In the 'Flash' advertisement, the cleaner even chooses to stay in the bathroom and read in order to indulge in its fresh smell and brilliant cleanliness.

Although it is performed with ease and cheerfulness, cleaning is not understood as an insignificant activity of just physically removing the dirt. Continuing a long established tradition, much contemporary advertising for cleaning products refers to domestic dirt as some sort of threat that should be dealt with seriously. It speaks of 'fighting' dirt in a way that is similar to fighting crime or war or disease. In order to help housewives understand the importance and methods of 'fighting' dirt properly, many advertisements offer a 'theory' of dirt which distinguishes between furniture dust and dirt that cannot be seen. While the former is a type of dirt that is displeasing but relatively innocent, the latter is something that poses an unspeakable danger for family health. The invisible dirt containing germs is the most

threatening of all. Because the toilet is marked as the most dangerous site within the domestic space where the evil germs live and reproduce to cause harm to the family, cleaning the toilet is a particularly important domestic task, and not only in hygienic terms.

M. Douglas argued that dirt offends against order, and that efforts to remove dirt are often understood, in a range of different socio-cultural contexts, as practices of "positively re-ordering our environment" (Douglas 1966, 2). Though this argument is drawn from Douglas' analysis of rules of purity and pollution constructed by religious discourses in different societies, it is relevant for understanding the advertising 'theory' of dirt too. It helps explain why advertising attaches moral significance to cleaning, scrubbing, or wiping. To be more precise, when cleaning the toilet, the housewife is not just removing the dirt in it; she is also re-establishing the order within the domestic space, ensuring thus the safety for her family. The benefit of modern cleaning products is that they provide the housewife with a range of formidable germicide chemicals so that she no longer needs to worry about her ability to protect her family's health. New products with an "amazing cleaning system" ('Harpic') or an "active mousse that expands to clean and protect" ('Domestos') work to make the housewife a certain winner in the war against germs. And, most importantly, this victory, which is central to providing a healthy domestic environment, can now be achieved almost effortlessly, just by spraying the product.

The representational style of advertisements for cleaning and washing products is another important aspect that needs to be analysed. In this respect, contemporary advertising is significantly different from some former styles of promoting these products. For instance, the prevailing tendency in interwar print advertisements (see Macdonald 1995, 83) and much early television advertising (see BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter') was to use a male presenter who addressed the represented housewife and the audience directly, and in a rather serious tone. Drawing on the authority of his expertise in matters of hygiene, expressed through the language of science, he sought to explain the composition and nature of dirt and advise women on how they should deal with it. In sharp contrast, today's advertising avoids representing male experts. Instead, it deploys styles of representation with an indirect mode of address that position viewers as spectators of a much more entertaining, and sometimes even humorous, imagery.

An advertisement for 'Harpic' lavatory cleaner is a good example. A number of representational techniques used in this text to depict the danger of toilet dirt and the method of 'fighting' it draw mainly on action film genre: the bluish light focused on the toilet, the

mysterious 'dirt-fighter' dressed in a tight black costume resembling a wetsuit, the camera moves that prevent the viewer from seeing the face of the 'dirt-fighter', the music that creates a sense of suspense, rapid editing and zooming in for a tighter close-up on the expanding foam in the toilet, etc. Working together, all these elements have a potential to intensify the viewer's excitement to see the resolution of the event – the brilliant effect of the 'new Harpic power foam'. Such a dramatisation of the act of cleaning the lavatory offers a possibility of enjoying the scenes of high intensity in which suspense and anxiety are finally resolved, bringing a sense of relief as the villain (toilet germs) gets defeated. It is not even necessary for the female viewer to identify with the mysterious person cleaning the toilet in order to experience the pleasure of being entertained. This mini action narrative can also invoke another form of textual pleasure as some viewers may perhaps find the contrast between the style of representation and the subject-matter ludicrous and funny. Thus it is also possible to read this text like a mini-burlesque, in which humour is produced by applying a serious, dramatic style to such a mundane action as cleaning the toilet.

The helping husband

Apart from helping housewives realise how easy it has become to maintain high standards of domestic hygiene, advertising also tries to tell them that they can occasionally count on their husbands as helpers in housework. Two campaigns (for 'Flash Bathroom Cleaner' and 'Ariel Liquid Tabs') seem paradigmatic of the way in which the housewife's husband appears in housework advertisements. Both of these mini-narratives are represented in the style of realism in which humour plays an important role. Most importantly, the focus of the narratives is on the relationship between the housewife and her husband who is assigned the task of doing some cleaning/washing work.

An advertisement for 'Flash Bathroom Cleaner' features the husband who is cleaning the bath tub only because he has been delegated to the job by his wife. The voice-over explains that "New Flash Bathroom Cleaner keeps on doing the hard work, so you don't have to", clearly suggesting that the husband is not performing some laborious domestic task but merely applying the cleaning liquid. (It is possible to presume that if cleaning the bath tub was considered to be a laborious task, he would not be asked to do it.) Despite that, it should be acknowledged that he does obey his wife's order to do what has for long been regarded as exclusively her duty. This is an important development because ever since the 1970s, when some early attempts were made in television advertising to involve husbands in housework

activities, it was always necessary to present a good reason why the husband should help his wife in what is regarded as essentially and exclusively her responsibility (see BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter'). Thus the wife had to be represented as temporarily physically disabled (by breaking a leg or having a baby) so that her husband could do some cooking, washing or cleaning without violating the established gender division of labour or injuring his masculine identity. Some advertisements of the time even experimented with a complete role reversal which, through a sort of parodic humour, only stressed the impossibility of such an arrangement.

The fact that in the above mentioned 'Flash Bathroom' advertisement the husband is shown to be cleaning the bathroom only because his wife told him to do so adds to the importance of this representation. The text, in effect, offers the wife a set of guidelines on how to stimulate her husband's sporadic engagement in domestic work. She is accorded the authority to delegate a little, occasional, domestic job to her husband as long as she does not intend to introduce or impose some form of regular sharing of housework duties. It is clear that housework is by definition the wife's responsibility. It is equally obvious that the husband is not 'naturally' too enthusiastic about cleaning or doing any other domestic job, so the advertiser advises the wife to provide an incentive for him. In this advertisement, it is the wife's promise to her husband that she would let him read in peace his favourite golf magazine that motivates him to clean the bathroom. The viewer is bound to get the impression that he, in effect, decides to give in a little to his wife's demands because he knows that the established regime of domestic duties would not be disturbed. But to the husband's surprise, he finds the smell and look of the brilliantly cleaned bathroom so pleasing that he decides to sit down and make himself comfortable in the bathtub in order to read his magazine. He soon dozes off. When the wife comes in to inspect the bathroom, she showers him with cold water. The practical joke makes her laugh.

The joke is not, of course, an instance of daring, rebellious humour that would challenge the status quo and force the husband to see things from the housewife's position. The husband is neither rendered vulnerable nor humiliated in any serious sense. Nevertheless, as an effect of this practical joke, he appears clumsy and slightly foolish, which invites the female viewer to join the wife as she laughs at him, indulging in the feeling of being in control of the situation and of being able to ridicule him mildly. By identifying with the wife, the viewer is offered a possibility to draw pleasure from this act of mocking her husband's masculinity, even if the joke does little to propose a change in the way regular domestic duties are distributed.

The joke, in fact, does not attempt at all to disrupt seriously the established regime of gender participation in domestic duties. Although the important topic of whether, in what way, and to what extent men take part in housework is beyond the scope of my present work, it is worth mentioning here that a number of sociological studies on housework (see Pilcher 1999, 54-61) point to the unchanging domestic division of labour. Even men who are unemployed and at home all day, as Morris' research (1985) shows, do not tend to participate regularly in daily housework duties. In the context of these findings, the pleasure derived from the above mentioned joke could be seen as a sort of compensation offered for not proposing any substantial change in this domain.

While the discourse of effortless housekeeping is never mobilised to suggest a radical change in the division of domestic labour, in an advertisement for 'Ariel Liquid Tabs' it becomes instrumental in confirming the supreme authority of the housewife to govern the conduct of her husband within the domestic space. Here we see a man coming from the garden into the kitchen, his clothes dirty from gardening. His wife is sitting in the kitchen, having coffee and chatting with her woman friend. As he enters, his wife tells him to take his dirty clothes off in the kitchen immediately in order to avoid spreading dirt from his shoes and clothes throughout the house. Furthermore, he is told to do so in front of his wife's friend. Visibly embarrassed and with a great reluctance, he follows the order without a complaint. His wife and her friend enjoy a little laugh at him as he stands in his underwear, waiting for further instructions. He feels unprotected without his clothes, and he also feels uncomfortable because he has been humiliated, deprived of the freedom to act in accordance with what he himself regards as suitable in the situation.

But his wife and her friend find his embarrassment funny. The way they laugh and exchange glances reveals their tacit understanding of men as often acting childishly and clumsily. Their laughter only increases his embarrassment which, in turn, encourages their pleasure in exercising power over him. Nevertheless, he keeps acting like an obedient husband. His wife then instructs him to put his dirty clothes and Ariel liquid tabs into the washing machine and turn the machine on. Although it is clear that washing clothes is not his regular domestic duty, his willingness to bear the embarrassment and do what he is told to plays a significant role in defining power relations between him and his wife. Like in other advertisements, here too, the wife takes all the responsibility for maintaining the highest level of domestic hygiene, but this and similar advertisements allow her to draw power from that position, the power which her husband is not allowed to oppose.

The husband's embarrassment gives his wife pleasure while exerting a disciplining effect on him. Laughing at someone's embarrassment, as Billig (2005) noted, always involves some self-interest. Here, it is the wife's interest to enhance her confidence in acting upon her husband's conduct, which is a major source of pleasure for her, as well as for the female viewer willing to identify with her. By advising housewives how to achieve and maintain high standards of domestic hygiene, the representation of product benefits in the above two advertisements also provides them with a piece of advice on how to shape their husbands' behaviour at home in order to increase their domestic authority and self-confidence. The advice encourages wives to mock mildly their husbands' masculinity but, at the same time, the boundaries of this empowering freedom and pleasure are clearly drawn. In other words, disciplining the husband to show respect for the housewife's effort in keeping the house clean and to obey her orders to perform occasionally some simple domestic task is permitable and acceptable. But expecting or demanding anything that comes close to equal sharing of the burden of housework is not acceptable; it is simply out of the question. The traditional division of domestic labour can be modified only in minor ways.

More time for herself

The liberating effects of labour-saving domestic technology, which forms the basis of the discourse of effortless housework as constructed in advertising, not only releases women from the drudgery of housework, but also enables them to have more free time and develop interests other than housekeeping and looking after others. In this context, caring for oneself is frequently promoted as a legitimate concern of the housewife. A recent campaign for 'Tefal Iron' focuses exclusively on acknowledging the housewife's need to devote more time to herself without any sense of guilt. The advice to housewives on how to make use of the benefits of modern technology is here presented through a representational style that works with mood. The slow rhythm of the easy-listening melody, soft blue colours, very slow editing transitions and the mellow voice-over all work to incite a feeling of calm happiness. This relaxing mood pervades a succession of images of a beautiful woman as she dives into the swimming pool, swims for a while and comes out it. These images are interrupted several times with a representation of an elegantly designed steaming iron. This is "Tefal's revolutionary steam generator", which makes it possible for the housewife to achieve both very high standards of housekeeping (impeccably ironed sheets and clothes) and devote more time to herself. Words on the screen remind women that they can now stop dreaming about such a

luxury, and swimming is represented not merely as a leisure activity but also as a technique for relaxation and for caring for oneself. A close-up that is locked for few seconds on the tranquil features of the housewife and her movements, which are shown in slow motion as she emerges out of water, depict the sense of relief and calm satisfaction that the housewife derives from swimming.

Because the discourse of effortless housekeeping seeks to motivate the viewer's engagement by emphasising the benefits of modern technology and offering various forms of textual pleasure, it is not surprising that some aspects of housework are intentionally omitted from the imagery. For instance, the texts analysed in this chapter fail to make visible an important outcome of the continuous increase in standards of domestic hygiene, one that disrupts significantly the liberating effects of labour-saving domestic technology. If advertising's representation of brilliant cleanliness has any definitional power, it is the power to formulate criteria for evaluating the excellence in housekeeping. The effects of this normative power for promoting dramatically raised standards of domestic hygiene were recognised and explored in some early feminist sociological research on housework. Oakley (1974, 6-7), for example, argues that since domestic technology became widely available in the 1950s, women spent not less but more time on housework. In effect, the appliances and powerful cleaning products did lighten the burden and save time in some tasks while, at the same time, the increased standards of hygiene meant that the time saved was spent on doing the same job again, more often or better. More recent sociological studies discussed by Pilcher (1999, 66-70) confirm these findings which suggest that, for the housewife, the home continues to be a place of hard work, a workplace which is not recognised as such. Because the discourse of effortless housekeeping fails to appreciate housework in terms of the time and energy it involves, its operation reproduces the perception of housework as 'non-work', to borrow the term from Oakley (1974, 1). The long-established 'non-work' status of housework is further enhanced in advertising by representing it as even pleasurable.

To conclude, the discourse of effortless housekeeping defines domestic labour in terms of an enjoyable 'non-work' that is performed almost exclusively by the housewife. It reforms the style of performing this 'non-work' to emphasise speed, ease and greater efficiency. This is represented as having important implications for the housewife's identity and subjectivity. She appears to look nicer and feel more cheerful and satisfied than the hardworking housewife. She also has the authority to delegate a piece of domestic work to her husband occasionally, which the hardworking housewife is deprived of. And she enjoys the freedom to laugh at her

husband's embarrassment, to mock mildly his masculinity as well as the pleasure of devoting any little free time that she has to care for herself. These are empowering rewards. By offering a wider range of possibilities to be entertained by more complex narrative structures which offer solutions to certain housework problems and incorporate humour and suspense, the operation of 'modest' power within this discourse entices the female viewer into accepting the traditional gender division of labour.

REPRESENTING MOTHERHOOD

Motherhood as an identity is frequently mobilised in advertisements that promote various products for children (mostly, cosmetics for women and children, food and fruit drink) and some washing and cleaning products for general use. This section begins with a brief analysis of how the mother's identity is constructed within advertising imagery in relation to what is understood as a 'natural' female predisposition towards nurturing as well as responsibilities assigned to her within the context of her nuclear family. The second section seeks to describe a notion of motherhood represented through images that stress the joys and pleasures that women derive from childrearing, advising them how to relate to their children and to their own experience of mothering in order to gain a sense of self-fulfilment. Relations between maternal identity and sexuality are the topic of the final section, where I describe the dominant conception of maternal identity as dissociated from sexuality, and then discuss two advertisements which exemplify an attempt to acknowledge the sexuality of the mother and encourage its expression.

The caring mother

A dominant tendency in advertising to mothers is to represent motherhood as a major form of self-realisation and a perpetual source of satisfaction for women. Central to the construction of maternal identity in advertising, like in so many contemporary public discourses (see Woodward 1997), is the idea that motherhood is essentially linked to the 'natural' predisposition of women towards childrearing and caring for others. The mother is portrayed as an epitome of caring and as an identity that is tacitly understood as firmly rooted in biology. But the assumed biological foundations of motherhood are not regarded as sufficient for being a good mother; the amounts of advice mothers receive from advertisers (and other types of experts) strongly suggest that women have to acquire certain knowledge

and skills needed for proper childrearing. It is only by following the expert guidelines on how to relate to and look after her child that the mother becomes fully capable of ensuring a healthy physical, emotional and social development of the child.

In many advertisements for children's drinks, frozen meals, cosmetic and cleaning products, motherhood is represented as the most important and fulfilling but also most responsible subject position that is made available to the mature woman. To paraphrase an advertisement for 'Carex' liquid soap, it is her responsibility to 'give [her] family the care and protection they need'. In order to help the mother deal with such enormous responsibility, advertisers advise mothers on how to provide nutritious food and healthy drinks, how to look after domestic cleanliness as well as the child's personal hygiene and, equally importantly, how to create a cheerful and relaxed atmosphere at home. It would be misleading though to suggest that advertisements refer to the mother only in terms of her responsibility to provide and protect; they also frequently address her deeply felt, 'natural' desire to bond with her child and satisfy the child's every need and wish.

Crucial to the way in which advertising mobilises the discourse on motherhood is the idea that the 'normal' practice of mothering occurs within the private space of a nuclear family consisting of mother, father and child(ren). The links that are constructed between masculinity/fatherhood and childrearing are thus constitutive of the represented conception of motherhood. Two forms of representing the father seem to be dominant. The first could be called the 'passive' father. In advertisements which feature the 'passive' father, he is mainly portrayed as a family member who moves about the living room or who is present at the breakfast/dining table but has no other role. His participation in family life is largely limited to having meals or watching television with children (as in advertisements for 'Bird's Eye potatoes', 'Pork Simple Meals'), or to his role as a caring mother's husband (as, for example, in an advertisement for 'Cheerios'). The implied assumption is that he need not be actively engaged in domestic activities centred around children because all the providing, protecting, caring for and playing with children, is done by the mother. The other form of representing the father can be called the 'absent' father. He is, in fact, not made visible in the scenes of domestic family life but his existence is vaguely implied through hints that he is not at home because he goes out to work while his wife devotes all her time to looking after children at home (as in advertisements for 'Fairy', 'Carex', 'Pledge Dust 'n' Go', etc.).

This conservative approach to representing fatherhood and motherhood, which works to normalise a traditional gender division of roles and responsibilities, has a long and stable

history in television advertising. There were some attempts in the 1970s though to interrupt its stability, when the father appeared in the role of a carer overburdened with domestic duties while his wife pursued a professional career (see BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter'). But the parodic style of representing the househusband/caring father only mocked any possibility of being serious about introducing a different regime of gender responsibilities. By avoiding any attempt to challenge traditionally constructed parental identities, advertising tends to reproduce a widespread conception of the ever-present and ever-giving mother (see for example, Oakley 1974; Basin et al. 1994; Woodward 1997) who is held exclusively responsible for the wellbeing and upbringing of children. Because such a conception of motherhood has the power of a norm which articulates an identity that is worthy, socially respectable and personally desirable, it works to shape ethical sensibilities. The key question now is: how does this power operate to formulate a set of guidelines on how women should relate to their children and their experience of mothering, which is widely represented as their main source of self-fulfilment? To explore this question, I will examine one of the fundamental assumptions underpinning much contemporary advertising to mothers, namely the one asserting that modern mothers/housewives can now enjoy motherhood much more than previous generations of women.

Pleasures of motherhood

The increased possibility for the mother to experience pleasure is represented as partly due to the liberating effects of modern domestic technology. The technology, which offers food that needs less time to be prepared, better disposable nappies, more efficient cleaning, washing and cosmetic products and household appliances, is shown to be an important factor in relieving women as much from worries about the wellbeing of their family as from the burden of tedious housework. Just as housework is represented as no longer entailing hard and time-consuming domestic work, so is motherhood described without any reference to physically exhausting and emotionally draining childcare work.

At the same time, the capacity for experiencing the fulfilling pleasures of motherhood is also represented as depending on how the mother relates to her child. In order to help mothers maximise the possibility of enjoying motherhood, advertisers encourage them to adopt a more relaxed and playful rather than disciplinarian style of childrearing. An advertisement for 'Carex' liquid soap is a good example. This realistically enacted mini-narrative focuses on a caring mother helping her toddler to wash his hands in the kitchen. Close-ups on the mother's

cheerful face and then on the responding child, together with the images of animated soap bubbles hopping around the kitchen sink, work to infuse the text with a cheerful mood. So does the bright light shining in the kitchen and the vivid colours that dominate the imagery. As the mother and child start washing their hands with 'Carex' soap, the camera moves on to focus on their hands playing with water and soap bubbles. This short instance of childish play makes both the son and mother happy. For a moment, they are both completely absorbed in this amusing and relaxing play as though it is the only thing that matters to them. The mother then takes a glance at her happy child with cute features and innocent eyes, which fills her with a sense of deep satisfaction.

As the 'Carex' advertisement demonstrates, this new style of mothering stimulates and is predicated upon the mother's ability to make any mundane childcare activity amusing, and to take it as an opportunity to engage with the child in a sort of play which R. Caillois (2001, 11-37) calls 'paidia'. The term describes an instance of spontaneous, more or less anarchic play that relies on the use of fantasy and freedom to improvise and presupposes a state of carefree cheerfulness. Caillois sees this form of play as typical for young children but which does not exclude adults if they are willing to invest some effort to achieve the same mental state. Recognising the valuable role of 'paidia' in parenting, advertisers encourage the mother to make this effort and engage playfully even in the most banal activities with her child in order to satisfy the child's desire for diversion and, at the same time, teach him/her certain skills. Most importantly, the willingness to indulge in this simple childish form of play is represented as rewarding for her too.

In a similar vein, an advertisement for **'**Robinson's Fruit & Barley' drink demonstrates how intimate bonding and playfulness benefit the development of the child while producing enormous pleasure for the mother. The imaginative style of visual signification and accompanying music are the most important techniques for inciting pleasure from this text. Both work to communicate the mood of a relaxed and carefree cheerfulness, offering mothers an opportunity to watch charming images that imitate the naivety of children's drawing while emphasising the importance of stimulating children's imagination through play. Here, we first see the mother and her young son in the idyllic setting of a fictional sun-lit garden with green grass and brightly coloured flowers, and then a succession of images illustrate the son's poetic description of his loving mother. In a gentle childish voice he recites: "She smells of soap and stuff in her hair, I think she is a mermaid, she spends ages in the bath, she's got nice tickly fingers that make me giggle and laugh, she stops things from hurting because she's my mum,

when she eats biscuits, they stick to her hips and bum." Describing the mother as both playful and protective (alongside his imaginative take on her obsession with cleanliness and weight-watching), the son's little poem proves that his mother has been successful in 'feeding' his imagination. The closing shot leaves the mother in a state of blissful happiness as a friendly female voice-over whispers "Feed their imagination".

In most advertisements that speak of motherhood, the mother is by definition the subject of caring, loving and protecting while the child is the object of that care, love and protection. However, one of 'BT One 2 One' advertisements suggests that in a good mother-child relationship these roles can be reversed in certain situations. Represented are two separate scenes in which the mother becomes vulnerable and hence unable to play the role of a carer and protector: in the first, the mother's vulnerability is caused by the lack of energy that comes with old age, whereas in the second, the young mother appears to be overwhelmed by some emotionally distressing event. In both scenes the vulnerable mother is in the position to receive care, consolation and emotional support from her loving child, no matter whether the child is grown-up or very young. According to the ethics of close emotional relationships ('your one 2 ones') represented in this advertisement, a good mother-child relationship must involve the capacity of both subjects to express tenderness and provide care for each other. In a more explicit way than other advertisements, this BT campaign assures mothers that their commitment and affective investment in the relationship with their child inevitably pays off in the sense that it brings emotional reward.

Alongside the strong emphasis on pleasures drawn from a playful style of mothering and emotional bonding with the child, contemporary advertising consistently avoids any reference to childcare in terms of the work it entails. As the conception of caring is being redrafted to overemphasise pleasure and to make it compatible with the supreme ethical ideal of self-fulfilment, so is the notion of childcare work reinterpreted through its close relation to play. The physical and mental effort needed for looking after children is completely overshadowed by highlighting the dimension of play.

Tensions between motherly, housewifely and/or some other responsibilities and interests of the mature woman are usually absent from the imagery too. In the advertisements constructed out of the discourse of housework as hard work, the housewife with children may appear exhausted as she strives to fulfil all her duties, but no tension between her multiple duties is ever addressed as something that troubles her. Complexities and strains that arise (on the emotional level as much as on the organisational one) from managing everyday domestic

life are rarely, if ever, the topic of contemporary advertising. The busy housewife is represented as never failing to harmonise childcare with her other domestic tasks, while the working mother, who constantly strives to balance paid work and looking after children, does not deserve any mention in advertising. The caring and playful mother's identity simply excludes any experience of the stress created in the effort to manage often conflicting responsibilities, duties and desires associated with the multiple positioning of the mature woman.

Just as tensions are conspicuously absent from the representation of the caring mother, so are the anxieties related to childrearing. An advertisement for Cheerios (a brand of breakfast cereals) is the only one in my sample to address this topic. It portrays the mother being mildly concerned about how her primary school daughter is going to 'face the big wide world' without motherly protection as she leaves for a school trip. Although at first this advertisement seems to acknowledge an aspect of motherhood other than pleasure, it does not offer an approval of the mother's concern. Instead, her feelings of worry and anxiety are treated as an unrealistic and exaggerated but understandable expression of motherly care. It is implied that the caring and protective maternal subjectivity also involves a disposition to become too emotional occasionally, which is an affective response that needs to be corrected. In contrast to the over-emotional mother, the father is depicted as more calm, rational and self-assured. By offering his wife the emotional support she needs, he tries to help her realise the irrationality of her feelings. Owing to a much greater capacity to give his emotions a sensible expression, the father/husband is able to understand the intensity of his wife's feelings and reassure her. The relation between the identification of the problem/worry and its solution forms the simple narrative structure of this text, eliciting emotions, first of worry and then of relief and reassurance, which is potentially a source of good feelings for the viewer. This form of textual pleasure and a tone of understanding in which the mother's feelings are represented, encourage mothers/female viewers to consider the offered advice on how to evaluate and control their feelings, and particularly the feelings that deviate from what is represented as the normal practice of motherhood in which only pleasure figures as a legitimate experience.

The comparison of contemporary advertising representations of motherhood with some earlier ones (see Macdonald 1995, 81-82; BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter') makes the change in understanding the ethos of mothering immediately visible: the emphasis that had been previously placed on anxiety surrounding childrearing and the related guilt-accepting capacity of the mother has now been moved to stress pleasures derived from maternity: the pleasure of

building a close emotional relationship with the child and the delight of being at the centre of the child's universe. Whether the mother is represented as helping her son wash his hands ('Carex'), or doing the washing-up with her daughter ('Fairy'), or cleaning the kitchen floor ('Pledge Dust 'n' Go'), or applying a sun-protection cream to her child's skin ('Garnier Ambre Soleil', 'Nivea Children Sun Spray'), she is always cheerful, playful and satisfied.

The advertising's conception of motherhood inevitably implies evaluating and ranking. Through encouraging the affective investments described in this section, advertising celebrates maternal pleasures and, at the same time, works to de-naturalise and devalue feelings of concern, anxiety and dissatisfaction, which loom large in descriptions of lived experiences of motherhood (see, for example, Ferri & Smith 1996). In an effort to reinterpret and conceal any potentially conflicting aspects of maternal identity, advertising imagery avoids any hint about the complex emotional dynamics that are associated with mothering (see First 1994; Hollway & Featherstone 1997 on maternal ambivalence). Instead, it cherishes a unified, harmonious maternal subjectivity, constructed around motherly virtues of (effortless) caring and pleasures of mothering. This is to say that advertising's definition of a good mother also works to denigrate all aspects of motherhood other than being able to establish and enjoy a playful and relaxed relationship with the child that brings a sense of self-realisation. Emotions invoked by tiring and repetitive childcare work, concerns and fears related to the upbringing of children, occasional feelings of frustration, irritability, guilt and/or dissatisfaction in life, are thus implicitly interpreted as signs of failure and bad mothering. A good mother, as represented in advertising, is not the one who experiences any sort of difficulties, troubling emotions and ambivalence.

Motherhood and sexuality

The relation between motherhood and sexuality is another important topic that needs to be discussed in relation to the construction of maternal identity. The dominant tendency in representing the mother in advertising, as in so many discourses within western culture (see, for example, Segal 1997; Woodward 1997), is to avoid any reference to maternal erotic desires. In most advertisements constructed out of the motherhood discourse, the nurturing role of the mother is represented as a defining feature of her identity and subjectivity in a way which opposes any notion of sexuality. It is tacitly understood that any hint about some form of maternal sexuality would spoil the purity of the mother's intimate world and moral integrity based on her devotion to caring for her young child. The good mother, that is, the caring and

playful mother is allowed to be passionate only about her children, and for her, the only approved pleasure and fulfilment are those obtained through the raising of her children.

Although dominant, the representation that tends to dissociate the mother's body and subjectivity from sexuality is not left completely unchallenged. Two advertisements from my sample deserve mention here. The first one is a campaign for 'Johnson's Baby Oil' which makes a move towards representing the sexuality of the maternal body. It seeks to advise mothers on how to integrate caring for the baby with caring for their own body. Here, the mother is portrayed with her baby in the bathroom as she starts applying the oil after their bath. As we see her first lovingly focused on her baby's skin and then indulgently massaging her own naked body, a friendly female voice-over explains how to use the product in order to enhance its moisturising effect. The mother is visibly enjoying the practice. The close-ups on the fine silky texture of her skin and soft, round shapes of her figure contain hints about the sexual attractiveness of her body. In keeping with the tradition established in many advertisements for cosmetic products for women, this text focuses on the smooth skin and nice, elongated but rounded figure as aspects of the female body that deserve special care because they are invested with the erotic meanings central to the construction of female attractiveness. By offering the pleasure of identification with the represented mother, this advertisement tries to normalise the need of the caring mother to care for herself too. Not only is the mother advised to care for her body without feeling guilty; she is also encouraged to derive pleasure from the act of looking after her skin. Maintaining her physical attractiveness is here, as in so many cosmetic advertisements, regarded as an important bodily practice related to female sexuality. What is so extraordinary in the 'Johnson's Baby Oil' advertisement is that it incorporates this aspect of female sexuality into the representation of maternal identity, challenging thus the dominant image of the maternal body as asexual.

A recent 'Peugeot 307' advertisement is the second exceptional text which needs to be discussed as it goes a step further in representing the sexuality of the mother. It suggests how she could practice her sexuality without causing any damage to her maternal identity. Most interestingly, this campaign explicitly invites the viewer to take into consideration the multiple nature of one's own as well as others' identity in order to be able to lead a more fulfilling and emotionally enriched life. Among different characters featuring in this advertisement (the prisoner, the teacher, etc.), there is an attractive mature woman who is also a mother of two young children. The mother is represented as leaning on the car in an amorous embrace with a handsome man while her children are running around in the background. As they passionately

kiss each other, a male voice-over reminds the female viewer that "a husband is not just a father" (in a similar way to which "a prisoner is not just a criminal").

In contrast to a great deal of advertising, this advertisement introduces an erotic dimension to the marital relationship; it recognises the mother as the subject of sexuality and approves of her desire to enjoy a more fulfilling sexual life. The overall tone is both encouraging and slightly reproachful. By offering mothers an opportunity to derive pleasure from watching the scene that bursts with sensuality and erotic satisfaction, it encourages them to relate to their husbands as lovers, not just as fathers of their children. In order to enable mothers/wives to engage with their husbands with the passion characteristic for young lovers whose romance has only just begun, the advertiser invites them to question an unspoken but widely held view of the marital relationship as lacking in erotic excitement. But the responsibility to do so, as well as blame for failing to see that "a husband is not just a father", is, most obviously, put on the wife (and not on the husband or some other social subject). She is the one who tends to overlook the possibility to regard her husband as a lover too, mainly due to her inclination to reduce both her own identity and his to the overwhelming role of parenthood. As in other social and fictional discourses, in advertising too, women are commonly regarded as more responsible and skilful than men for managing the sexual/marital relationship and, hence, more susceptible to guilt when something goes wrong.

To conclude, advertisements addressing women as mothers are constructed out of a rather unified discourse, containing no contradictions or ambiguities, and suggesting that there is just one ethical regime which regulates the position and conduct of the mother. Understood as rooted in a 'natural', exclusively female capacity for caring, motherhood is represented as the most important source of personal fulfilment for the woman. The discourse combines a very strong emphasis on the pleasures of motherhood with an equally strong tendency to marginalise the complexities of this subject position and exhausting childcare work. In a representational style that is always designed to create a cheerful and relaxed mood and inspire a feeling of deep satisfaction, images of motherhood offer the female viewer guidance on how to be(come) a good mother and derive maximum pleasure from mothering. In order to achieve the ideal, women are advised to relate to their children in a manner that is caring and protective but not disciplinarian. This style of childrearing implies that the mother should invest a considerable effort in managing her emotional experiences so that she can always be cheerful, patient and eager to engage playfully with the child while performing even the most mundane activities. She should constantly evaluate her own feelings and conduct according to the norm

which signifies feelings of frustration, exhaustion, irritability of dissatisfaction as forms of failure.

REPRESENTING HETEROSEXUAL COUPLE RELATIONS

Images of heterosexual couple relations form another major context for promoting a wide range of different types of products, such as: frozen food, coffee, alcoholic drinks, ice-cream, cosmetics as well as cleaning and washing products, financial and communication services, cars, etc. The analysis of how advertisements use this complex topic to influence the female viewer is organised around five themes. These emerged from the textual material as main frameworks for representing relations of power, desire and pleasure that are central to constructing female sexuality within various forms of heterosexual relationships.

I begin by looking at the representation of romantic relationships, within which female sexuality appears to be dominated by the desire for intimacy, commitment and stability. The next section focuses on images of marriage constructed to emphasise the female desire to have and hold a man and to naturalise the wife's emotional dependency. This is followed by an exploration of representations of marriage in terms of how different patterns of power and authority affect the wife's position vis-à-vis her husband. The fourth section offers a brief discussion on how the wife is addressed in relation to sexual passion or, rather, the lack of it, within marriage. The final section examines the notion of female attractiveness and ways in which women make use of this quality in pursuit of sexual pleasure within representations of casual sex relationships and brief erotic encounters.

Romantic relationships: female desire for intimacy and commitment and male sexual drive

Although the representation of romantic relationships in advertising features mostly young women, it is important to analyse it here as it has implications for the understanding of how the aspirations, desire and sexuality of the mature woman are represented. As a topic, romance is, most obviously, regarded as much more appealing to younger than to mature women. But even in targeting younger women, romance is not considered as motivating as it used to be in some previous decades, and especially in the 1950s and 1960s when the dream of an ideal lover (and prospective husband) used to dominate advertising representation of female fantasies (see BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter'). In rare cases when romance is now taken as a

mobilising theme, the narrative is hardly ever composed around the young woman absorbed in some romantic fantasy. Rather, as an advertisement for the 'Ralf' perfume shows, the focus is on representing the experience of young lovers: their tender feelings and the admiring glances they exchange while walking hand in hand along the sunlit sandy beach. This text represents both female and male sexualities in terms of affection and bonding rather than irresistible sexual passion.

This paradigm of 'pure' love that marginalises the fulfilment of strong sexual desire is not, however, seen as adequate for representing the romantic relationship between women and men of a more mature age. Their relationship is regularly depicted as one in which sex plays an important part, albeit with significantly different gender meanings. A campaign for male deodorant 'Physio' best exemplifies such relations. This mini-narrative represents a scene from the everyday life of a couple, focusing on their differing experiences of and expectations from an act of love-making. The couple is portrayed in the bedroom, just after having sex: the woman is still lying in bed, her shoulders naked and her hair untidy; the man is in his underwear, getting dressed and preparing to leave the room. While the woman appears to be concerned with the relationship, trying to ask her lover an important question, the man wishes to move on in pursuit of some other interests of his. His thoughts are already elsewhere and he appears surprised and slightly confused when she asks him whether he loves football more than her. Haunted by her feeling of insecurity, she repeats the question, eagerly expecting an answer which would satisfy her desire for a tender, intimate and secure relationship. After a short hesitation, he replies with a question "Watching or playing?". At that point, the realistic style of storytelling is interrupted by a short sequence of images that visualise the man's fantasies of himself as a skilled footballer. Completely carried away by the pleasure he draws from imagining an ecstatic crowd applauding his dazzling performance, he ignores her question without even realising how significant it is for her. The representation of the man's fantasy, accompanied by a pop song with a refrain "Love, exciting and new", makes it clear that he, having satisfied his sexual desire, now longs for other forms of excitement, such as playing football and clubbing with his friends. The camera then turns to the woman's face expressing her disappointment for not receiving any confirmation of her lover's devotion to their intimate relationship. The question, which was crucial to the fulfilment of her need to be loved and, ideally, preferred to football, is left unanswered.

An important aspect of this mini-narrative is the humorous style in which the man is represented as indulging in fantasies about who he would like to be. He is portrayed as a

comic, infantile caricature of a football-centred masculinity: his passion for football is represented as so central to his subjectivity that it affects his ability to understand his girlfriend's question and respond adequately to her need for love and loyalty. By depicting the man as childish, the text offers female viewers a possibility to laugh at this form of masculinity, taking pleasure from the implied assumption that men lack the refinement needed for understanding more subtle aspects of the relationship. But at the same time, the humour of this representation also works to encourage women to interpret male passion for football and a certain lack of sensitivity as a 'normal', 'natural' form of male conduct for which women should show understanding. In other words, the humour is here deployed both to mock mildly the football-obsessed male identity and to advise women to recognise and accept as a 'fact' the difference between female and male sexuality: while for women, sex may not be so much a source of ultimate bodily pleasure as it is a means of developing and/or confirming a stable loving relationship, for men, the satisfaction of sexual urges is the most exciting aspect of the couple relationship.

Though widespread in today's advertising and forms of popular entertainment, as well as in discourses that are regarded as more 'serious', such articulation of female and male desires and aspirations is not a product of contemporary culture. In his historical study of 'making sex', Laquer (1990) convincingly argues that this representation is deeply rooted in western culture ever since the end of the Enlightenment. This, now commonplace, belief that women want relationships while men want sex can be read as an effect of the operation of two coexisting discourses on sexuality, which I will, following Hollway (1998, 227-263), call the 'male sexual drive' discourse and the 'have/hold' discourse. These discourses regulate the gender difference that characterises the double positioning of women and men within heterosexual couple relations.

On the one hand, women are positioned as objects of the 'male sexual drive' discourse, which is constructed around the idea of masculine sexuality as 'natural', biologically determined and goal-oriented. On the other hand, women also occupy the subject position of the 'have/hold' discourse, which emphasises women's need for tenderness, intimacy and commitment. Exactly the opposite positions within these discourses are made available to men, which is what accounts for the contrasting gender difference in sexual desire, expectations and emotional engagement in the relationship. As the 'Physio' advertisement illustrates, the power operating in these gender-differentiated discourses encourages the development and normalisation of female emotional dependency as well as male independency and goal-oriented

conduct.

Although the above positioning of women and men within romantic relationships is most commonly represented in advertising, there are a few cases in which men appear to occupy the subject position of the 'have/hold' discourse. A 'Jaguar X-Type' advertisement is an interesting example of this. This text represents a personal narrative of a middle-aged man reminiscing about the beautiful woman he loves. He is portrayed in a nice, pale green countryside landscape, staring into the distance while memories of this beautiful woman bathing in the sea, then walking towards him, laughing and gesturing to him to come closer, fill him with nostalgic feelings. The lyrics of a slow romantic song that accompanies these images, suggest that he cannot stop dreaming about her and wanting to be with her. Their relationship has ended but he still longs for her. What is striking about these images is that his nostalgic desire for the emotionally fulfilling relationship he once had with the woman whom he still loves, is not represented as injuring his masculinity.

The representation of masculinity through such an unusual positioning of the man within the romantic relationship draws attention to the role of taste and its class connotations in the construction of his gender identity. Unlike the man in the 'Physio' advertisement or many other advertisements for cars, fizzy drinks or computer software, the form of masculinity depicted in this 'Jaguar' campaign is not constructed around what is commonly represented as a more popular set of male attributes emphasising physical strength, sporting skills, competitive attitude or professional competence. Instead, the identity of the 'Jaguar' man is described through signs denoting his exquisite upper middle-class taste. These signs involve the elegant rather than flashy design of his car, his demeanour and the way he is dressed that avoid any sign of ostentatious showiness, the picturesque landscape that looks 'natural' rather than designed to offer tourist attractions, etc.. Equally important in representing his distinction is the style of visual means of signification: carefully designed diffused light, slow pace of editing and change of camera angle, classically balanced composition, almost black and white imagery with a conspicuous absence of lustrous tones of images that are regarded as appealing to more common taste. It is the sophistication of his taste, together with the associated status and power, which makes it possible for this man to express longing for love and intimacy without appearing feminine.

Although the Jaguar advertisement targets primarily men, it also offers female viewers some potentially pleasurable forms of reading: from the pleasure of participating in (and/or fantasising about) the elegance, refinement and power of the upmarket taste to the pleasure of

watching a mini romantic story centred around a female character who is beautiful, stylish, sophisticated and much loved. The text also tries to tell female viewers that some men express their sexuality, love and commitment to the relationship in a similar way as women do. But, it is important to emphasise, this text is exceptional. According to the dominant regime of representing sexualities, the desire for an intimate and secure relationship, ideally leading to marriage, is signified as typically feminine. Perceived as deeply rooted in the female psyche, this desire is also classified as opposed to what constitutes 'natural' male desire.

There is a noticeable tendency in a number of advertisements to advise women to accept as a 'fact' that men are largely unable to be fully content with the emotional and sexual pleasures derived from the relationship based on love, stability and commitment because such a relationship is lacking the excitement of a fresh, one-off sexual encounter. As a technique of motivating women to realise the proposed truth about male sexuality, these advertisements provide them with an opportunity to draw some sort of pleasure from the images that recognise and praise women's ability to be more focused on an emotional rather than a sexual aspect of the relationship.

Implying the idea that the burning male sexual desire and curiosity cannot be satisfied only within the confines of the long-term monogamous relationship, one of advertisements for 'Smirnoff' vodka suggests that men should occasionally try to make space for those moments of particularly exciting (sexual) pleasure. At the same time, it also warns them to be careful not to cause pain to his long-term partner and thus endanger their relationship. The text openly encourages men to make use of a little white lie while advising women to understand that male sexual conduct is conditioned by a hardly controllable 'natural' drive. The lie is here regarded as beneficial to both men and women; it is instrumental in satisfying both male sexual urges and the female need for love, loyalty and commitment. For my purposes, it is important to note that such understanding of the nature of male sexuality plays a central role in the ethical regime promoted by this and other similar advertisements. It is put forward to justify the man's involvement in extra-relationship affairs and to legitimise the lie as a permissible means of achieving the goal. Most importantly, such a conception of male sexuality is represented as a truth women should be aware of because it also affects their own sexual identity and experience.

Marriage: female desire to have/hold a man and the wife's emotional dependency

I now wish to focus on how advertisements mobilising the theme of marriage interpret

relations of love and power that affect the differential positioning and subjective experience of the wife and husband. It might be useful to start from the representation of weddings. The tendency in advertisements to naturalise supposedly contrasting differences between female and male sexuality is especially visible in depicting and emphasising the disparate gender-specific meanings of a wedding. Women are consistently invited to think of their wedding as the most important event in their life, one that opens a main avenue to satisfaction of the 'typically' female need for love, intimacy and stable relationship. At the same time, women are also reminded that men are apparently less enthusiastic about the event because they perceive marriage as a form of restriction imposed on their (sexual) freedom. As men are encouraged to cherish their freedom, women are represented as eager to restrict it with the aim to fulfil their own desire to 'have' and 'hold' their men. For that reason, smart men, as suggested by one of the campaigns for 'Tetley's', a brand of beer, do their best to use their charm and sense of humour in order to postpone marriage as long as possible. As mentioned earlier, such for differential gender positioning within discourses concerning sexuality is productive of a sense of insecurity the woman, who then appears to yearn for the proof of her husband's love and devotion on a regular basis.

An advertisement for diamond rings ('Diamond Trilogy Ring') suggests how such a proof might be offered to the wife and how she should accept it. The act of gift-giving on a wedding anniversary is central to this narrative that attempts to incorporate romantic love within the context of marriage. In a style that resembles that of popular mid-twentieth century romance films with a happy sentimental ending, we see the husband presenting his beautiful wife with a gift - a diamond ring. Several mechanisms of audio-visual signification combine to create an intense romantic mood and influence the way in which the viewer might understand the importance and complex meaning of the gift. The lighting and the camera's sudden focus on the husband's hands holding the ring are designed to make the glittering diamonds dominate the almost completely black and white, classically composed, imagery. A warm male voice-over informs us that the ring is "for then, for now, for ever". It is a "celebration of [their] past, present and future". This is followed by a close-up on the wife's face expressing excitement, blissful happiness and deep satisfaction that are underlined by a sweet romantic tune reaching its climax. The wife, overwhelmed by the elegant beauty and symbolism of the gift, shifts her admiring gaze away from the ring and towards her husband to give him a kiss. The camera then moves on to show the proud expression of the husband's face.

The text addresses both husbands and wives. Men, who wish to see themselves as

husbands caring for their wives in a gentlemanly manner, are advised to show occasionally to their wives how much they love them and how much they cherish the relationship. They are invited to take pleasure from the text's recognition of their manly caring and composed conduct and generosity. On the other hand, the romantic scenes of marital bliss are commonly regarded as appealing to women, offering them an opportunity to derive pleasure from identifying with the emotional experience of the heroine as well as a model of how to interpret and respond to the gift. They are guided to see such a gift not merely as a beautiful piece of jewellery, highly valued in financial terms, but also as a symbol of eternal love and as a confirmation of marital commitment. The emphasis is clearly placed on this symbolic value of the gift, on its capacity to link the couple's past, present and future, conveying thus the husband's enduring love and devotion. The wife responds to such symbolism with gratefulness and satisfaction.

Equally important in interpreting the meanings of this gift-giving act is the fact that the advertisement does not, in any way, advise the wife to give her husband a present which would convey a similar symbolic and emotional message. The text only makes a suggestion about how the wife should respond to the gift, taking for granted the idea that the husband's gift is not to be reciprocated. Gift giving and reciprocity have long been core concepts of anthropology, from Malinowski and Mauss onwards. Leach's account (1982, 149-176) of the gift-exchange behaviour is very useful to interpret the meaning of the proposition, in this advertisement, that the gift should not be reciprocated. Very briefly, Leach argues that acts of giving and receiving a gift are to be seen as inevitably involving relations of indebtedness. This feeling of indebtedness, associated with a "moral obligation to balance things out over a period of time" (Ibid. 154), provides a way of producing and reproducing social relationships of various kinds. Crucially, the nature of the gift-exchanging performance constructs and reflects the nature of the relationship concerned.

To use Leach's terms, the act of gift-giving/receiving represented in this advertisement makes the wife a debtor and her husband a creditor. The wife's state of indebtedness ensures the continuation of the relationship in the future, which is of huge emotional importance to her. By giving the gift, the husband/creditor does not only confirm his commitment to the harmonious marriage; he also expresses his generosity, (re)asserting thus his higher status in the relationship. This also means that by accepting the gift of generosity, the wife/debtor accepts a less powerful position, in addition to receiving a proof of her husband's love and devotion which needs to ease her feeling of insecurity. The fact that the wedding anniversary,

defined as a celebration of continuity of marital love, is not marked by the wife's act of reciprocating the husband's gift thus makes clearly visible the emotional dynamics and unequal power relations between the wife and husband. The tacit assumption is that the husband feels no need for any proof of his wife's love whereas the wife needs the token of his love. Furthermore, she receives it with a burst of hardly controllable feelings of happiness, excitement and gratefulness. In contrast to her emotional response, the husband appears composed and proud rather than emotionally moved by the romantic meaning of the event. His much more controlled comportment permits only a dignified expression of satisfaction or, rather, self-respect for being able to give away a generous gift that makes his wife so happy.

Arguably, it is possible to interpret the wife's kiss as a symbolic counter-gift, in which case such an asymmetrical gift (or payment of debt), as Leach noted, only expresses and emphasises the inequality of status between the parties concerned. The wife's state of indebtedness will probably prompt her to reciprocate, over a period of time, in kind by providing certain wifely 'services' or by relating to her husband in a certain way. The inequality of their positions is further emphasised (and reproduced) through the visible difference in their emotional conduct. Therefore, this gift of the husband's generosity promising the continuation of marital love also implies a clear confirmation of the wife's subordination and emotional dependency.

Marriage: relations of power and authority

With regard to representing the position of the woman within complex relations of marriage, advertising offers a range of patterns that suggest considerably different arrangements of relations of authority and power between wife and husband. In order to make a reading of how these relations are represented in many advertisements which depict marital relations in various everyday practices but do not speak explicitly of marital happiness, love or sexuality, I delineated three discourses.

The first discourse is based on a rather traditional gender division of responsibility and authority within marriage, which positions the wife as a homemaker and the husband as a breadwinner. The formative identity characteristic of the devoted wife/busy housewife as constructed by this discourse is her focus on domestic duties and the related lack of knowledge, authority and skills needed for making decisions in other domains. In short, outside the domestic sphere, she is represented as completely dependent on her husband. This discourse, which no longer dominates advertising, is now deployed to regulate relations mainly between

older couples. It is important to note that in my sample there is not a single text which is entirely constructed out of this discourse. There are, however, a number of texts which represent such a form of wifehood amongst a range of other female identities. The structure of these advertisements (promoting usually some financial and communication services) can be described as a series of short interviews with different categories of consumers who address the viewer directly in order to express their opinion about and satisfaction with the product/service. Their representational style, which seeks to motivate the viewer's engagement only through the testimonial appeal rather than any form of entertainment, humour or visual pleasure, works to restrict as much as possible the polysemic potential of the text.

One of the advertisements for 'BT Talk Together' is a good example of how the docile wife/housewife is represented through this style that can hardly be described as productive of imaginative pleasures. The wife's dependence on her husband is here represented by not offering her a chance to voice her opinion. She is silent during the interview, looking at and listening to her husband and nodding, occasionally, in agreement. She seems to accept, with no resentment, that it is he and not she who is accorded the authority and knowledge to evaluate the offered service, make a decision and take an action accordingly. In sharp contrast to the way in which older married women are addressed as docile housewives, single women, young as well as mature, are approached, in the same advertisement, in a completely different manner; in effect, in the same manner in which men are approached. In other words, they are treated as subjects capable of forming their own opinion about the quality or suitability of the offered services, as subjects whose opinion is worth listening to.

In a great deal of advertising, relations between younger or middle-age couples are represented as shaped by significantly different discourses. One of these discourses allows for more egalitarian relations within marriage, which are crucially related to the construction of more self-confident and/or independent forms of wifehood. Such relations are frequently represented through two fairly similar scenarios, depicting some sort of confrontation between wife and husband. The first scenario represents a row between wife and husband, where the wife is allowed to confront openly her husband's opinion or remark which she, for some reason, finds inadequate. This scenario does not, however, mark a new representational strategy. It has been used sporadically ever since the 1980s as a technique for providing female viewers with an opportunity to draw pleasure and power from identifying with the woman resolute in her fight for equality. In a recent advertisement for Fiat 'Punto', for example, the wife is encouraged to express the anger caused by her husband's evaluation of her driving

skills and rebel against his offensive remarks. Her forceful expression of anger is here represented not only as a permissible but also as understandable means of protesting against his patronising tone and overbearing pride. This scenario does not involve ways of humorously mocking masculinity. Neither does it suggest any acts or fantasies of revenge. Rather, it seeks to assert and emphasise the woman's independence and self-determination. Most importantly, and in contrast to some 1980s advertisements (such as the famous 'Golf VW' campaign) featuring the heroine who is not willing to accept the role of a submissive wife, the 'Fiat' advertisement does not attempt to make women believe that they cannot be determined and independent and happily married at the same time.

The other scenario represents a more emotionally controlled expression of disagreement rather than a heated argument; it describes some sort of lively discussion between wife and husband on a topic that is of special concern to them. A campaign for 'Norton Finance' best exemplifies the discussion scenario as a technique for signifying more egalitarian relations that give licence to women to express their opinion, argue their case and make important decisions. In this advertisement, the wife is allowed to analyse the couple's current financial situation and their possibilities of getting a loan for a holiday while her husband tries to put forward some counter-arguments. She insists on taking an active approach to solving the problem in spite of not being too familiar with various financial packages on offer. Her husband's knowledge of the topic is also limited. She proposes to call the company that has been recommended to her by a friend, discuss the terms of their offer and try to negotiate a loan. Although her husband is neither patronising nor judgmental about her capacities, he is still doubtful about the success of her plan and tries to discourage her. However, his somewhat pessimistic remarks do not prevent her from attempting to solve the problem in her own way. And with the help of friendly experts from 'Norton Finance', she manages to get a good loan. To add to her feeling of satisfaction, her husband admits gratefully that she has been quite right to make such a move. The text explicitly supports the wife (and the viewer is invited to identify with her) in her effort to become more inquisitive and eager to find a solution. And it is quite clear that the benefit she derives from such an attitude goes well beyond getting a loan or achieving some similar practical objective; more importantly, such an attitude enables the wife to improve her self-confidence and (re)assert her right to independent thinking.

The third discourse marks a rather recent trend. It models power relations between wife and husband according to some features of the mother-son relationship. Here the wife assumes the responsibility to look after her husband together with the authority to teach him a lesson,

boss him around, or punish and reward him when necessary. She enjoys the power to discipline her husband occasionally when, according to her judgement, he acts inappropriately. Interestingly, this model of the wife(mother)-husband(son) relationship is not represented as an exception or deviation from what is regarded as normal practice. Many advertisements representing such a relationship imply that the viewer is well aware of a change in the way men behave as they move from the public (male-dominated) to domestic (female-dominated) space, the change that reveals a completely different form of male identity lurking beneath the surface of the firm, self-assured masculinity displayed in the public space. Within the domestic space, governed by the woman, primarily in her role of a mother, the man tends to assume a different position and, hence, a different identity, namely that of the disciplined husband. This position is, in some respects, represented as similar to that of the young boy whose conduct is constantly being monitored and corrected by the observing mother.

There are many examples illustrating this arrangement of power relations within marriage. When discussing the discourse of effortless housekeeping, I already mentioned one such example represented in the campaign for 'Ariel Liquid Tabs'. This advertisement shows how the wife draws power and pleasure from an act of disciplining her husband by giving him overly detailed instructions on what to do in order to avoid spreading dirt throughout the house. She treats him as though he is a child who needs to learn rules of proper domestic behaviour, and she confirms her authority in a way that makes him feel fairly embarrassed. But her commanding manner is combined with an attitude that is more similar to that of a caring and understanding mother than angry wife. Causing embarrassment as a method of disciplining the husband is also exemplified in one of many 'BT Talk Together' advertisements. In a style displaying some qualities of a television situation comedy, this advertisement speaks explicitly, in a rather mocking manner, about the man's need to present himself to the male audience as a man of authority. The man is represented as talking on the phone and, at some point in the conversation, he tells his friend, with an expression of exaggerated self-importance, "When I talk, people listen". His wife, busy in the adjacent kitchen, overhears his words. She immediately comes into the room and, visibly irritated by his acting, gives him a short reproachful look. That was enough for him to change his tone and manner of speaking, immediately adopting a significantly less authoritative mode of self-presentation which he knows is more acceptable to his wife. He appears embarrassed just like a boy who is being caught doing something his mother would not approve of.

The emphasis of this 'BT' advertisement is on its humorous treatment of a little drama

developing simultaneously on two levels: the husband's personal struggle with his sense of masculinity, and the relationship between the wife/mother and husband/son. The humour is here based on a sharp discordance between the husband's clumsy attempt to fake a macho identity, characterised by a bold sense of pride and self-importance, and his sudden transformation into an obedient boy/ apologetic husband. The text favours the wife's rather than husband's point of view, suggesting that his comportment deserves to be laughed at. By representing his behaviour as silly, funny and immature, the text provides women with an opportunity to indulge in mocking laughter, which has a potentially empowering effect. It also confirms the wife's right to feel annoyed by her husband's (rather inept) playing about with two opposing models of masculinity, giving her licence to exercise her disciplining authority, to shame him into 'reform'. Also, by addressing the wife as more mature, or more sensible, the advertisement advises her to be patient and show a sort of motherly understanding for her husband. Although the wife draws a form of quiet pleasure from the act of disciplining him, whether she enjoys her role as understanding wife/mother is open to question.

To conclude, advertisements analysed in this section demonstrate how different discourses regulating emotional and power relations within marriage coexist and compete, through different representational styles, to motivate the engagement of the female viewer. They promote models of wifehood that range from the emotionally dependent wife, yearning for the proof of her husband's devotion, to the silent and docile wife nodding in agreement with her husband's opinion; from the wife confirming her independence and/or enterprising attitude to the wife disciplining her husband's immature identity struggles. By doing so, advertising allows the viewer a freedom of choice and interpretation, encouraging her capacity to decide which, if any, of the proposed ethical regimes she should consider as a useful guidance in relating to herself and her husband. The choice may not be simple or (entirely) conscious, as meanings are inevitably implicated in relations of power, desire and pleasure.

Marriage and (the absence of) sexual passion

Advertisements regularly suggest that marriage is a relationship based on mutual affection, commitment, duty and responsibility needed for setting up home together and bringing up children. Just as attempts to encourage women to cherish such values have a long and stable history in television advertising, so does a conspicuous avoidance of any attempt to signify links between the loving marital relationship and sexual passion. Except in the case of the 'Peugeot 307' advertisement, which I already described as an exceptional representation of

the mother/wife as the subject of passionate sexuality, advertising does not treat marriage as an appropriate context for speaking about irresistible erotic passion. Rather, marriage is commonly represented in relation to childrearing and domestic duties, or buying a property, or dealing with financial problems. These are all topics regarded as hardly compatible with a notion of sexual passion that is in advertising (and a wide range of other cultural discourses) associated with excitement, erotic thrill and intense pleasures of the flesh as opposed to sobriety, moral responsibility of childrearing and pragmatic, rational approach to problem solving.

In a tacit recognition of the assumed lack of passion within marriage, an advertisement for the travel agency 'Expedia.co.uk' hints at the possibility of finding sexual excitement and pleasure within an extramarital affair. It speaks to both men and women, putting forward a view of adultery as a legitimate search for erotic pleasure. Its legitimacy is linked to an underpinning conception of male and female sexualities as essentially the same in that they are both regulated by the natural drive to experience exciting erotic pleasure as well as the desire for intimacy and stable relationship. The text can be read as an encouragement to married women, as much as men, to let their sexual passion find a way to be satisfied occasionally within a relationship outside marriage when the marriage comes to be experienced in terms of a lack of excitement and erotic inspiration. In effect, the text gives licence to commit adultery without feeling guilty about it.

But in their search for pleasure and excitement in new erotic relationships, married men and women are also advised to abide by some rules. If they wish to have an enjoyable affair and yet perceive their act of adultery as morally acceptable, they should try their best not to hurt any one. Above all, this means that they should make sure that the affair is kept secret. Ideally, the affair should take place in a nice but remote holiday resort so that the erotic pleasure can be combined with other forms of pleasure and leisure pursuits while the secrecy of the affair is easily preserved. The beauty of sun-lit sea-side tropical places is tempting as much as the prospect of sexual pleasure. While suggesting that these temptations should not be resisted, the advertiser makes it clear that pleasure-seeking activities always contain an element of danger if not adequately controlled. Women, in the same way as men, should therefore pay great attention to the smallest details that could become potentially revealing of their extramarital attempts to satisfy their erotic and other desires. Though the whole advertisement promotes a feel-good mood and self-pleasing attitude, celebrating pleasure-seeking sexuality, it ends with a male voice-over issuing a warning: "When it comes to travel, we have thought of

everything. Have you?" The last scene portrays a middle-age couple, enjoying their evening meal with their sun glasses on. As they take the glasses off, we see their faces burnt by the tropical sun leaving white marks around their eyes. With their faces revealing their little secret, they look funny as well as worried. The expression on their faces can be read as an admission that clandestine extra-marital pleasures always come with a certain risk and danger: if one is not thoughtful and careful enough, one should be prepared to face the consequences.

Openly challenging monogamy as the ideal form of heterosexual couple relationship, this advertisement introduces a conception of female sexuality that differs significantly from the one constructed through the operation of the 'have/hold' discourse. Central to this conception, which I will discuss in detail in the following section, is its permission accorded to women to free their sexuality from desiring only the intimacy and emotional security that could be found in marriage or long-term relationships.

I finish this section by recalling the Peugeot advertisement that was mentioned in the previous section when discussing motherhood and sexuality. The advertisement acknowledges the widespread representation of marriage as hardly consistent with sexual passion only to question its ethical effect. Through a visual style and music that create a meditative mood and, in a way, inspire a critical attitude towards taken-for-granted assumptions about a range of different identities, this text urges the wife to look at and approach her husband as a lover. By addressing her rather than him, the advertiser sees her as more responsible for the absence of passion in marriage. The implicit suggestion is that the wife tends to be so absorbed in maternal responsibilities and pleasures that she becomes capable of perceiving her husband only as a father of their children and not as a man who inspires her sexual passion. As the caption "a husband is not just a father" suggests where the problem might lie, the images of the couple passionately kissing each other point to a solution. These images bursting with sensuality, attempt to stimulate pleasurable erotic imagination and encourage women to make a change in the way they experience and manage the relationship between their different, often conflicting, subject positions. Unlike a great deal of advertising, this advertisement suggests that marriage may well involve sexual passion, and that the wife/mother may well be the subject of active, passionate sexuality. What is important to stress is that the advertisement does not advise women on how to perform their wifely duties. Rather, it tries to encourage them to feel free to take the initiative without any sense of guilt or impropriety, and (re)discover their husbands as lovers because such a move would enable them to lead a more emotionally satisfying life.

Brief erotic encounters and casual sex relations: permissive sexuality

The attention now turns to the construction of female sexuality that is made possible by the operation of what Hollway terms the 'permissive' discourse (1998, 234). It has been used in advertisements for cosmetics and luxury products ever since the early 1970s (see BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter') to represent the pleasure of flirting games, brief erotic contacts and casual sex relations. Within this discourse, women, just like men, are encouraged to take an active role in the pursuit of their sexual pleasure. The 'permissive' discourse interprets female sexual desire too as natural and as something that should be expressed rather than repressed; hence the permission accorded to women, and not only men, to actively and more self-confidently initiate sexual relationships for the sake of their own enjoyment.

Despite this significant difference, the 'permissive' discourse is in some respects similar to the 'male sexual drive' discourse. First, both discourses subvert the principle of monogamy and downplay the importance of intimacy, responsibility and commitment. The central concern here is with the pursuit of erotic excitement and sexual pleasure, regardless of whether or not the relationship would lead to the establishment of long-term bonding. Second, both discourses emphasise the idea that being beautiful and attractive is an immensely important quality of female sexuality. As advertising in general avoids any references to homosexuality, being attractive in both the 'permissive' and the male sexual drive' discourses means being attractive to men. However, these two discourses produce rather different sets of guidelines about how women should understand and make use of this quality in their erotic encounters with men. I will illustrate the difference by discussing several textual examples.

An advertisement for 'Peugeot 206 Coupé' is a good example of how attractiveness defines female sexuality within the 'male sexual drive' discourse. This text is also interesting in regard to its representational style as it does not depict or speak about the topic in explicit terms. Rather, it represents the relationship between the elegant car and a peacock observing it in a way that invites the viewer to interpret the relationship as analogous to, or symbolically expressive of a little flirting game between an attractive woman and a male admirer. If one accepts this frame of interpretation, then the text appears to represent the excitement and erotic pleasure of looking and being looked at. A tender soul melody with a refrain "simply beautiful", soft light, slow camera moves over the elegantly curved surfaces and the style of editing all work to enhance the sensual appeal of the imagery and encourage the proposed reading. The woman (symbolised by the car) proudly displays her beautiful body to be looked at and admired; she receives the appreciative gaze of the man (symbolised by the inquisitive

peacock) and waits passively for him to initiate the next move, possibly a closer physical contact. Encouraged by this invitation to keep looking, the man expresses his sexual interest more actively by investigating the elegant lines and soft curves of her body from different angles. They both seem to be satisfied with their respective roles in this erotic game: the woman as the object and the man as the subject of the admiring/appraising gaze.

Many other advertisements describe, through visual rather than verbal means of signification, female sexual attractiveness in terms of displaying their bodies with an emphasis on elegant curves, shiny hair, silky skin, beautiful face, juicy lips, etc. By offering women a form of visual pleasure that stimulates fantasies of ideal beauty and of imagining oneself as a gorgeous object of male desire, these images encourage them to believe that their sexuality is essentially a form of indulgence in the act of attracting a male gaze and responding to the male initiative. The same discourse invites men to be much more active in approaching the attractive, sexually alluring woman in order to satisfy their goal-oriented sexuality. Some advertisements, such as those for 'Nationwide Credit Card' and 'Vodafone', openly suggest that a beautiful woman is a necessary component of a male notion of having fun, which also involves forms of pleasure derived from sporting activities, going out, alcohol, music and dance. Within this framework, the casual sexual relationship with the attractive woman is not only a practice of satisfying the burning male sexual desire but also an instrument for constructing a form of bold, macho masculinity. Clearly, female attractiveness is here associated with a rather passive and docile form of sexuality.

However, a considerable number of advertisements, usually promoting brands of beer, spirits, other alcoholic drinks, ice-cream or chocolate, are constructed out of the 'permissive' discourse that offers a contesting conception of how physical attractiveness shapes female sexuality. These advertisements address women as capable of drawing power from being attractive to men, the power which they can use to take a much more active approach to erotic games. Advertisements for 'Solero' ice-cream, for example, feature women who epitomise notions of alluring female sensuality and who base their self-confidence on a charming and controlled use of the seductive power of her body. They feel free and confident to initiate a passionate erotic encounter with men who appear to be almost paralysed by their own sexual desire for them as much as by the women's unexpectedly confident and provocative conduct. Furthermore, these women are shown to derive pleasure from such an active approach rather than just attracting a male gaze and waiting to respond to the male initiative.

In a representational style which imitates that of popular adventure films, an

advertisement for 'Reef', a brand of fruit drink with a touch of alcohol, tells another brief story about how young, uninhibited women approach men in search for their own pleasure. We see the young woman in a bikini standing on the tropical beach with her women friends. They all have the demeanour of the women who are aware of how attractive and desirable their bodies are. A sailing boat arrives full of young men. The lead female character approaches the boat in an effort to select some men. Although the exact purpose of selecting them is not specified, it is quite clear that this confident woman indulges greatly in submitting those men to her inquisitive and desiring gaze. As the men whom she finds too submissive or not attractive enough are all thrown into the sea, the sense of adventure gets even more intense by a strong pattern of sound produced by drums and percussion instruments. In eager anticipation of the resolution, the viewer can feel the suspense created by the blinding light of the tropical sun, tensed close-ups and fast editing transitions. Finally, a succession of close-ups on the decisive expression of the lead female character and then on a man's face and certain parts of his body signals that she has eventually chosen a man handsome enough to flirt with. With a visible sense of satisfaction, she takes a bottle of 'Reef' and rejoins her friends, in a rather nonchalant manner.

Inviting female viewers to identify with this powerful woman, the advertisement can be read as a fictional attempt to reverse gender positions constructed by the operation of the 'male sexual drive discourse'. It offers different forms of textual pleasure, ranging from those of suspense and satisfying curiosity, derived from watching scenes of adventure, to those of being tele-present in wonderful tropical scenery, which has, through a myriad of media texts, become synonymous with an ideal setting for indulging in various hedonistic activities. The images also stimulate highly pleasurable erotic fantasies. But the most powerful pleasure for the female viewer is probably that associated with fantasies of female revenge and symbolic violence against men. As Macdonald (1995, 100) notes, "fantasies of taking our revenge against men, and getting away with it, are the most daring dreams on offer". Their deep attraction lies not only in belittling men but also in imagining oneself as having a kind of power that is lacking in 'real' everyday life. Although the text provides the viewer with pleasures of fantasy, these should not be dismissed as a pitiful form of wishful thinking. Fantasies are indeed linked to the way in which the subject emotionally invests in positions that confer relative power. The process of such 'imagining oneself otherwise' (Mackenzie 2000) may generate a motivational force encouraging women to use their attractiveness to men in a way that would bring them a type of sexual pleasure combined with a greater sense of power,

that is, the power to act on one's own initiative.

Assuming the role of either an adventurous pleasure-seeker or a confident seductress, young women are, within this 'permissive' discourse, always represented as daring and sexually uninhibited, always in control of their own sexuality as well as the relationship with men which they seek to establish on their own terms. In a campaign for 'Bacardi Breezer', to give yet another example, the woman seductively orders the man with whom she dances in a night club "Be my tiger tonight!". Most obviously, she seeks sensual excitement and playful erotic experience and not romance or commitment. The style of visual signification works to emphasise her daring sexuality. She is in charge of her erotically potent body and charm, and she knows how to use them not just to seduce the man but, more importantly, to please her own desires. If she feels it necessary, she might even let the man think that he was the one who is in control of their relationship. She might make use of flattery or deceit; she might give the man a hint that she is capable of outsmarting him, but assuming a submissive or passive position in the erotic relationship is just out of the question for her.

Mature women, who are either single or whose marital status is not specified, are represented, in a number of advertisements, as equally active and self-indulgent in initiating casual erotic encounters. Some advertisements suggest that attractive and self-confident mature women often tend to engage with much younger lovers. For example, one 'Smirnoff' advertisement combines comic elements with dramatic action to represent the woman, in her mid-forties, as she comes to visit her grown-up son in his little apartment. As the son opens the door and greets her mother, she immediately catches a glimpse of his friend who was about to leave. The son introduces them to one another but, from the way they exchange glances, it becomes clear that her son's friend happens to be her former lover. The woman and the lover are both amazed to recognise each other. After the initial shock, which they promptly manage to bring under control, they appear to be amused by the situation. Although neither of them seems to regret their sexual relationship, they are both eager to conceal it from her son/his friend. The young lover resolves the tense situation by saying "I could've sworn she was your sister". As he turns to leave, the slogan "Smirnoff, as clear as your conscience" appears on the screen.

The way in which this slightly embarrassing situation is represented suggests to the viewer that she should not be judgemental about the woman and her young lover. In effect, the viewer is invited to reconsider the idea that pleasure is more often than not associated with not having a brilliantly 'clear conscience'. Although the text admits that their choice of sexual

partners might be reproachable from the point of view of a conventional and more traditional morality, it also offers an alternative view of such a relationship. By leaving both protagonists with a smile that expresses no regret, by showing that no one has been hurt by the affair and that there is not a slightest hint of scandal created by the affair, the text invites the viewer to justify this brief sexual relationship. These three elements may suggest, at least to some viewers, that the woman as well as the young man should feel entitled to search for amusement and sexual pleasure without a strong sense of impropriety. Also, by recognising the sexual desire of mature women and by approving of their active approach to satisfying it, this advertisement can be read as encouraging mature women to see their sexual attractiveness not so much in terms of dazzling good looks but in terms of the experience they have, which younger men might find desirable.

Other advertisements, such as those for 'Blinding' beer, or 'PM Mouthwash' focus more on warning mature women that engaging in casual sex relations with younger, less experienced or slightly clumsy men can be associated with embarrassing situations. The warning is expressed as a piece of friendly advice offered to women rather than blaming them for pursuing such a relationship. In spite of the tacit but widespread assumption that the sexual desirability of women decreases with their age, mature women are no longer represented as sexually unattractive, much less inactive. When their physical attraction starts to deteriorate, they are advised (in an advertisement for 'Blinding' beer) to use their charm, experience, wit and sense of humour to attract men in order to satisfy their erotic desire.

To sum up, advertisements analysed in this section speak of female sexuality as a crucial aspect of femininity by representing various types of heterosexual couple relationships. This implies that women are by definition heterosexual and that homosexual women are out of the norm. However, the advertisements representing heterosexual women are not constructed out of a unified discourse that regulates how relations of desire, power and pleasure combine to shape female (hetero)sexuality. Rather, several different discourses are mobilised to depict the female need for intimacy, emotional stability and commitment as well as the desire for erotic excitement; and a docile form of sexuality as well as an active pursuit of sexual pleasures. The fact that these different forms and aspects of women's sexuality are represented suggests that the interactive operation of techniques of power and signification encourage and count on the ability of the heterosexual female viewer to choose what set of represented ethical categories to consider as useful guidance for understanding, evaluating and (re)shaping her own sexual experience and desire. The guidance mainly takes form of three sets of advice. One set seeks

to help women relate to their emotional experience of a long-term sexual relationship by reminding them to accept the 'truth' about the hardly controllable male sexual drive as a means to ease, at least to some extent, their feeling of insecurity. Another set of advice addresses married women in particular, instructing them on how to establish/maintain their authority in relation to their husbands. This involves suggestions about how to show appreciation for the husband's opinion, or how to express one's independence and self-determination, or how to discipline the husband when necessary, often by causing him to feel embarrassed. Based on the 'permissive' discourse, a third set of advice is formulated to help women achieve greater satisfaction and power in their sexual relations by assuming a more confident and active approach to erotic games. Most importantly, this includes advice on how to use seductive powers of the body as well as personal charm and sense of humour in order to experience sexual pleasure. The analysis of stylistic forms through which these sets of advice are expressed demonstrate how the exercise of 'modest' power tries to motivate the involvement of the viewer by providing various forms of potentially pleasurable and empowering readings.

REPRESENTING THE FEMALE BODY

The idea of the constructed nature of the body and its centrality to (re)defining self-identity underpins the regime of representing the female body in television advertising. The body appears as a site of intervention and improvement, as a site of a range of practices that are to be performed by the individual self concerned with shaping and cultivating its identity. Two mutually dependent discourses emerged from my textual material as central to structuring the relations of power and pleasure which affect the construction of the female body. Although these two discourses operate in close interaction with each other, I will, for analytic purposes, analyse them in separate sub-sections. Thus, I will first talk about the discourse concerning bodily aesthetics that articulates the notion of female beauty and stresses the visual character of the construction of the female body. The emphasis which is placed on the appearance, on the body to be displayed and looked at, is here analysed in relation to notions of female attractiveness and sexuality. In the second sub-section, I will analyse the discourse that regulates forms of acting upon the body with the aim to cultivate it in accordance with represented canons of female beauty.

Canons of female beauty

Images of beautiful women are widespread in advertisements for a wide variety of products, such as cars ('Peugeot 206 Coupe', 'Peugeot 307', 'Ford Focus', 'Jaguar X-Type', 'Renault Scenic'), albums of popular easy-listening music ('Chilled Ibiza', 'I Need You' by LeAnn Rimes, 'Subject to Change' by Vanessa Mae), chocolate bars and ice-cream ('Twix', 'Kinder Bueno', 'Solero', 'Carte D'Or'), alcoholic drinks ('Reef', 'Bacardi Breezer', 'Tetley's'), eyecare services ('Specsavers'), financial and telecommunication services ('Nationwide Credit Card', 'Vodafone'), etc. Although these advertisements provide a valuable source of relevant data for exploring the construction of the ideal female body in television advertising, campaigns for cosmetic products deserve special attention as they focus entirely on the representation of female beauty.

In these advertisements, as well as in other forms of media texts and popular culture in general, female beauty is primarily characterised by the shape of the body. The ideal body is white, tall, perfectly proportioned, fit and young. It is elegantly slender and defined by moderately rounded shapes and without any excessive fat or soft loose flesh. Even the maternal body appears in many advertisements as elongated and slim with no sings of recent pregnancy, such as flabby stomach and swollen breasts. However, compared to some other industries and cultural discourses focused on the construction of the beautiful body, such as fashion photography and the haute couture industry, television advertising does not promote the ideal of the skeleton-like, extremely thin female figure. In television advertising, the ideal female form is still delicately curved, lean but not too skinny.

Apart from the overall figure, particularly important elements in defining female beauty are skin, face and hair. The skin is softly textured, with no marks, blemishes or bodily hair so that the body appears like a marble sculpture, whose smooth and shiny surfaces can be only compared with the thinnest and finest white silk, as depicted in an advertisement for 'Dove Body Silk', for example. Fine complexion, as suggested by an advertisement for 'Witch' facial wash, provides the woman with a 'natural skin confidence'; this is a distinctive characteristic of the beautiful woman who attracts the admiring gaze of both men and other women. In addition to its smoothness, perfect facial skin is also defined by its capacity to capture light in such a way as to appear 'radiant', or 'illuminated' ('Revlon Skin Lights'). The most attractive feature of that 'glowing' female face are lips that are red, 'glossy', 'glam shine' and, of course, highly eroticised. In the words of the mellow female voice-over in a 'L'Oreal' advertisement, sensual lips are 'smooth, juicy lips that shimmer irresistibly'. The beautiful hair is, just like the

skin, 'shiny', 'glossy', 'silky', impeccably styled and described in terms of absorbing light and provoking an appreciative gaze ('Garnier Lumier', 'Nice 'n' Easy', 'Pantene Pro-V', 'Wella Vivality', 'Organic Shampoo', etc.).

The most interesting stylistic feature of advertisements that depict the ideal size, shape and texture of the female body is the emphasis that is put on the visual aspect of the text. This is to say that the viewer is invited to consume the representation by looking in a similar way to which one looks at paintings and sculptures exhibited in a gallery. The setting, within which the body is placed as an object to be looked at, is an immensely important factor of meaning production. It may vary from a completely decontextualised space to the spacious sun-lit beach; from some fictional, dreamlike, computer designed scenery to a deserted urban location or a large bed in an empty room. All these different settings share an important quality of directing the viewer's attention to the displayed object, i.e. the female body. A piece of ambient or 'chill-out' music used in these advertisements suggests a relaxing mood as an appropriate affective context for watching the female body as something to be investigated, evaluated, admired and desired. A soft and friendly female voice often points to the importance of proper care for the body and/or amazing physical and psychological effects of the advertised product, but it never draws attention away from the visual character of the body. In short, all the elements of this representational style combine to construct the body as a form of spectacle.

As we learn from Freud (1986 c), looking always implicates some erotic dimension. This suggests that the ways in which the ideal female body is offered to the look is inevitably linked to an understanding of female sexuality. It is possible to argue that the aspects of the female body that dominate the advertising imagery are those which are invested with most powerful erotic meanings. I mentioned, in the previous section, that an enormously important dimension of female sexuality is captured by the notion of being attractive, of being able to arouse male sexual interest by displaying the beautiful body to the male gaze. Judging by advertising images, the most aesthetically pleasing and erotically exciting aspects of the female body are the slender figure characterised by elongated lines, softly rounded curves, smooth and soft skin, fine and radiant white complexion, silky long hair and juicy lips. Another erotic feature is the gaze of such a sensual beauty, which is either direct and seductively inviting or averted away from the spectator and absorbed in some erotic fantasy (heterosexual as much as narcissistic).

In the same way in which looking at the female body is not an erotically neutral activity, the act of displaying it also involves relations of power, desire and pleasure that come

to structure various forms of spectatorship. The practice of offering the female body to the appraising and desiring male gaze is represented in some, but by no means all advertisements (as mentioned in the section on heterosexual couple relations) as constitutive of a rather passive and docile form of female sexuality. However, it would be misleading to propose a stable and one-dimensional semantic link between 'to be looked-at-ness' of the female body, to use Mulvey's (1999) term, and its construction as a passive object of predatory male desire.

Such a proposition would be a gross simplification of the ways in which relations of power and desire that constitute the practice of displaying and looking at the feminine body are represented in television advertising. In many advertisements (especially those for cosmetic products and various brands of beer and alcoholic drinks), the act of displaying the attractive female body can be read as an active form of self-presentation that is knowingly staged to impress the onlooker, as a performance from which women derive pride, self-esteem and erotic empowerment. The act of displaying the body is here a vehicle for exercising power and experiencing pleasure rather than a sign of submissiveness to male desire. Far from expressing submissive sexuality, women represented in these advertisements use their seductive bodies in a calculated as well as playful way to initiate erotic games and exercise power over the (male) subject of looking, which is in itself apparently productive of pleasure for women. The emphasis on the attractive appearance, as these advertisements clearly demonstrate, does not necessarily imply female passivity and the construction of what Bourdieu terms the 'body for others' (Bourdieu as quoted in Shilling 1997, 89).

The female practice of presenting their bodies to the male spectator is not, however, the only topic that constitutes the spectacle of the body. Women are also represented as displaying their bodies to their own inquiring gaze in the mirror as well as to that of other women. The admiring or, perhaps, envious look of other women is regarded by many advertisements for hair products ('Organic Shampoo', 'Garnier Lumier', etc.) as the most valuable proof of the beauty, and hence power, of the bearer of the gaze. Looking at and appraising the bodies of other women also involves a component of self-monitoring. Many advertisements for cosmetic products insist that the self-inquisitive gaze and the related narcissistic pleasure play an important role in the cultivation of the female body and sexuality, but this is a topic that will receive more attention in the next subsection.

At the moment, I wish to conclude by noting that while there is certainly a strong association between looking at/displaying the female body and eroticism, the relations of power, desire and pleasure between the onlooker and the bearer of the look are neither simple

nor stable. The ideal of female beauty is important to analyse because it acts as a norm; it specifies standards of the body that are aesthetically pleasing and erotically attractive. By representing such a body as a major asset of femininity, advertisements use these aesthetic standards to define the goal women are encouraged to strive to achieve. Hence, body aesthetics is also inextricably connected to certain ethical categories that regulate the way women relate to their own bodies. Attention now shifts to the question of how represented canons of female beauty affect the modes of evaluating, cultivating, disciplining and modifying the body in order to come as close as possible to the desired goal.

Cultivating the body

The most fundamental piece of advice that advertisers try to offer women is not to relate to their bodies simply in terms of the corporeality within which they are born. Rather, advertising (as well as a myriad of other forms of discourses concerned with the body) puts forward a proposition that women should look at and relate to their body as available for conscientious self-management through practices that connect the ideal of feminine beauty with issues of appearance, erotic attraction, health, fitness, self-esteem and pleasure. An advertisement for 'Brita water filter' expresses such a relation to the body in a very concise form. Here, we see a woman drinking a glass of filtered water after having done a series of pull-ups. Without pausing to draw breath, she explains to her partner/husband that "[her] body is a temple". He casts an admiring and desiring glance at her semi-naked body, admitting that it is "a nice temple". While having a fit body here clearly means having an erotically attractive body, the metaphor suggests that the woman's approach to her body also involves devotion, 'pious' care, discipline and, possibly, some form of sacrifice.

It is possible to discern two tightly related techniques for managing, cultivating and embellishing the body as represented in television advertising. The first technique is that of the meticulous cosmetic care of the body and playful experimentation with make-up, hairstyle and other forms of embellishment. The second technique seeks to discipline the body and impose certain control over bodily processes such as gaining weight and menstruating. Practiced in combination with each other, as many advertisements suggest, these techniques of cosmetic care and discipline structure the 'correct' relationship of the woman to her body. It is of great importance to note that both techniques are based on the ethics of constant self-monitoring and self-evaluation. However, they do not emphasise only work, endurance, discipline and constraint, but also pleasure: the pleasure of being capable of producing a better, more

attractive and fitter body as well as eroticised narcissistic pleasure.

Cosmetic care of the body

The central theme in many advertisements for cosmetic products concerns different ways in which the woman should act upon her body in order to maintain and improve her appearance and, consequently, raise her self-esteem. This relationship of the woman to her body involves a number of topics. First, there is a concern with the cleanliness of the body. Generally speaking, women's toiletries are never advertised by reminding women to keep their body clean because of the fear that such patronising advice would be insulting to the viewer. For that reason, advertisements promoting various brands of deodorants play upon the anxiety about the body odour by deploying two representational styles that seek to entertain rather than tell the viewer, through a direct mode of address, how to maintain her personal hygiene.

The first style is exemplified in an advertisement for the 'Impulse' deodorant, which relies on humour created by a comic exaggeration of women's embarrassment about body odour. The second style borrows some elements from the action film genre to make the imagery more appealing to women who would like to see themselves as always on the move and eager to perform well, as in an advertisement for 'Sure Wipes'. In this as in other similar texts, the central message, emphasising the liberating and empowering effects of bringing perspiration under control, is always delivered through the pleasures of light entertainment: those derived from laughing at the caricature of women making stiff and grotesquely funny arm movements at a house party ('Impulse'), or from watching fast actions of the woman performing some sort of martial arts in a fictional setting with a trendy design ('Sure Wipes'). In order to become a high-achieving professional as well as a stylishly attractive woman like the one in the 'Sure' advertisement, the modern woman is advised to examine constantly her body and be ready to tackle any cause of potential embarrassment. The represented benefit of consuming the product is not merely in eliminating body odour. It is also presented as helping women with a hectic lifestyle attain greater freedom of movement and self-confidence. In the words of a friendly female voice-over, the 'Sure Wipes' "clean, deodorise and freshen you up fast [when] you've had a hard day and you [have] got to get on in the evening". Offering women a pleasure of identifying with this energetic form of femininity, this and similar advertisements encourage women to become more determined to perform well and impress both as a hard-working professional and as the subject of sexuality.

The concern with the proper care of the body is essentially related to the aim to

impress, involving much more than just a satisfactory level of cleanliness and the absence of unwanted odour. In order to be able to display proudly her body to the admiring gaze of others, the woman is also advised to use a range of skincare products to 'cleanse', 'condition', 'moisturise', 'soften', 'brighten' and 'illuminate' their skin. The advice recommends a serious approach to the daily cosmetic ritual, providing detailed instructions on how to carry out all these procedures of proper skincare. It encourages the woman to subject her face to scrutiny in order to look for some unwanted signs and evaluate her feelings about herself. It is worth recalling here how important the skin and complexion are in defining the notion of female attractiveness. They are described as crucial attributes of female beauty and the associated erotic power of the female body. It does not surprise then that skincare is represented both as a major method of improving one's body and its sexual desirability, and as a practice implicated in the effort to discover some truth about the self.

Without exception, the proposed cosmetic procedures are described as empowering, as helping the woman to feel good about herself and have confidence in her abilities to impress others. An advertisement for 'Witch' facial wash, for example, explicitly acknowledges the link between properly cleansed skin and self-confidence as expressed in the slogan 'Witch, natural skin-confidence'. Working with mood, most skincare advertisements also attempt to infuse the guidelines on how to achieve attractive silky skin with a sort of relaxing sensual pleasure that is derived from looking at oneself and being satisfied with what one sees. These advertisements try to encourage the woman to experience practices of looking after her skin as a source of narcissistic pleasure, which is the trend that can be traced back to the early days of television advertising. With a very few exceptions, the dominant thematic framework of cosmetic advertisements has always been structured around female pleasures and fantasies characterised by a certain narcissistic aspect - finding pleasure in touching, washing, applying cream to and, above all, looking at their own bodies or their reflection in the mirror.

An advertisement for 'L'Oreal Shine Delicieux' lipstick collection best illustrates this long established trend of representing the pleasures of looking, assessing and fantasising as integral components of cosmetic care of the female body. In this advertisement we see an attractive woman, dressed in a glittery pink top and trousers, in a completely de-contextualised space dominated by shiny purple and silvery colours. A soft light, very slow editing, the woman's movements shown in slow motion, an easy-listening tune, and a strange, round and transparent object floating in the air, are all elements that signify the dreamlike quality of these images. The beautiful woman moves slowly and somewhat absent-mindedly through this shiny

dream-world until she reaches a transparent bubble containing "moisturising" lipsticks in fifteen shades of red and pink. Her movements are accompanied by a voice-over telling us that the product is especially designed "for smooth, juicy lips that shimmer irresistibly". The woman chooses one lipstick and slowly approaches a big and shiny vertical surface that looks like a mirror but is fluid like water. She stares at her own reflection for a while and then applies the lipstick to her soft and desiring lips. With a look fixed on the mirror/water and, at the same time, lost in reverie, she experiences an intensive bodily pleasure. She comes closer to the fluid mirror in order to admire or kiss her own reflection but passes through it, entering another decontextualised pink space where she, overwhelmed with satisfaction, moves elegantly with the slow rhythm of the music. She then directs her seductive gaze towards the viewer and says "Surrender, because you're worth it".

The style of representation in this advertisement is obviously not realism. Rather, it invites the reader to read the text as a representation of the fantasy of ideal beauty, inextricably linked to a fulfilling sense of satisfaction with the self and dreams of feminine erotic power and pleasure. Female viewers willing to identify with the woman in this advertisement are offered a model that structures how they should relate to their body and their sense of the self by means of looking. This look is inquisitive and concerned with assessing her appearance as well as self-indulgent. Crucially, it is connected to and inspired by what Mackenzie (2000, 126-129) calls 'imaginative visualising', that is, imagining the self on the basis of one's desires, aspirations and ideals. This spectatorial activity, so closely interwoven with fantasising about the ideal self, is recommended as a highly pleasurable mode of self-understanding and women are encouraged to engage in it without feeling any guilt. In this advertisement the viewer is even explicitly invited to 'surrender' to narcissistic fantasies and pleasures triggered by the temptation to experiment with new products for improving one's appearance and, consequently, self-esteem. In that particular respect, not only the 'L'Oreal Shine Delicieux' campaign but also many other cosmetic advertisements mobilise narcissism as involving the desire for what the self 'would like to be' in addition to the desire for a reflection of oneself (see Freud as quoted in Lewis & Rolley 1997, 296). It is important to stress that the narcissism implicated in this imagining/looking at oneself is represented as productive of an important technique of self-motivation, one that stimulates positive feelings and hopeful expectations that the effort to make the body more attractive and the self more confident would eventually bring satisfying results.

The theme of how age affects the woman's appearance and how to 'fight' the visible

signs of ageing on the face and skin dominates many cosmetic advertisements, particularly those for anti-ageing face creams. Women are consistently advised to invest a lot of effort in maintaining their physical attractiveness and sexual desirability but, at the same time, they are also reminded that they should no longer see the wrinkles on the face as a serious cause of anxiety. Innovations in modern cosmetic technology are represented as providing women with an opportunity to reduce this anxiety by postponing the development of and/or concealing those 'fines lines around eyes', 'visible pores' and other sorts of unsightly complexion changes that come with age. According to a campaign for 'Garnier Synergie Stop Cream', experts in the cosmetic industry are now able to help mature women 'stop' time from leaving its unwanted signs on their beautiful faces. When applied daily, this special "multiaction formula" cream has the power to 'make time wait' so that the mature woman can look as if she is forever in her early thirties. In order to conceal even the tiniest signs of age by smoothing out the texture of the skin, the mature woman is offered a "hypersmooth" foundation from 'Max Factor' which "instantly refines the look of [her] skin". The most valuable benefit of such products is made immediately visible. They work to smooth skin but, much more importantly, they bring a relief from the anxiety surrounding ageing. Advertising consistently attempts to infuse the practice of skincare with an air of optimism, encouraging mature women to try various cosmetic and make-up products as a technique of experimenting with new styles of self-presentation.

Being a significant element of feminine beauty, hair is given an equally important place in the care of the body. But because advertisements for haircare products deploy the same representational styles and encourage the same ways of relating to the body as the above skincare advertisements, there is no need to restate what I have already discussed. I only wish to stress that advertisements for hair products tend to emphasise the choice among a wide range of hair products (shampoos, conditioners, sprays, gels, mousses, hair colours, etc.) as a particularly playful area for experimenting and improving one's appearance. Whether the immediate goal is to discipline unruly hair, or to make it look 'warm', 'silky', 'glossy', 'healthy' or 'full of life', women are always advised to play with their hair style and colour in order to achieve a grater sense of satisfaction with their body and, consequently, achieve greater happiness.

Disciplining the body

A set of attitudes and regulatory practices which is concerned more with disciplining than cosmetic care of the body is another effect of the normative power of the images depicting

the ideal body. The norm grounded in the ideal of slenderness automatically signifies the bodies which have a certain amount of fat or soft loose flesh as bodies that fail to achieve standards of the aesthetically pleasing form. These bodies are categorised as ones which are not nice to look at and not erotically desirable. Furthermore, these bodies are represented as reflecting some form of 'internal failure' (Benson 1997, 141). Such evaluation generates an increasing anxiety surrounding the way women relate to their bodies. In order to address this problem and help women realise their desire to come as close as possible to achieving the ideal, advertisers (as well as other experts) advise them to exercise a rather strict control over the amount and kind of food they eat. Dieting is thus recommended both as an instrument for shaping the body and as a means of improving the self.

It is worth mentioning here an advertisement for 'Observer Food Monthly' as it tackles the topic of weight-watching with a touch of unsettling humour. It portrays a young baby girl looking at her mother's breasts and thinking which one to choose: on one breast there is a label which reads 'full fat' while on the other the label reads 'skimmed'. The viewer is left with an expression of confusion on the baby's face but the central idea is presented quite clearly: the concern with dieting is an obsession which starts tormenting women from a very early age. The humour used in this text works to give this obsession an absurd form but it does not try to minimise the importance of dieting and slimming as one of the most acute anxieties troubling modern women. A final close-up on the mother's serious look clearly signals the gravity of this concern. It is further highlighted by an authoritative male voice-over asking "At what age do girls start worrying about what they eat?".

Unlike a great deal of advertising referring to the same theme, this advertisement seeks to interpret dieting as a problem rather than a solution, as a practice which increases rather than relieves women's anxiety about being fat. But focusing on anxiety is a motivational strategy that most advertisements tend to avoid. While acknowledging the important role that weight and dieting concerns play in the way women relate to their bodies, most advertisements for low-fat food rarely play upon feelings of worry and dissatisfaction with body shape or size. Rather than invoking anxiety or questioning the ethical effect of the slender body ideal, these advertisements try to motivate women to comply with the norm by emphasising positive aspects of disciplining the desire to indulge in food. They put forward two main things. In order to feel satisfied with their body, which is represented as one of the most powerful feelings shaping female subjectivity, women should first develop knowledge about the nutritious values of the food they eat and then carefully monitor their daily intake of fat,

cholesterol, fibre, sugar and other substances. A diet that is healthy, low in fat and sugar and high in fibre is widely represented as an important aspect of a lifestyle designed for modern self-confident women. As constant adherence to such a diet inevitably requires strong willpower and the management of one's appetite and desire, women are regularly reminded that the practice brings gratification, though not always an instant one. For that reason, they are advised to be determined and patient, resist the temptation and exercise self-control for such an attitude will eventually pay off. Most importantly, women are led to believe that dieting and weight-watching are the most powerful instruments they have for attaining a sense of satisfaction with the body.

Advertisements attempt to motivate women to recognise the benefit of dieting by deploying several representational styles. The first style, exemplified by an advertisement for 'Benecol' yogurt, emphasises the warm atmosphere of an informal friendly conversation in which one woman tells another how a low-cholesterol diet makes her feel good and satisfied with her body. The connection between a healthy diet, beautiful body and a sense of satisfaction is in some advertisements, such as that for 'Danon Actimel' yogurt, highlighted by a voice-over offering scientific information about the type and function of bacteria cultures developed in the product. The language of science is here used to support the woman's testimony so that the viewer is provided with both 'objective' and subjective truths about the goodness of the product/dieting. An advertisement for 'Kellogg's Special' describes the second style, which stresses the link between a low-calorie diet and erotic empowerment. The text is structured as a mini-home video featuring the charming woman having breakfast on a wonderful sun-lit balcony and then flirting with her handsome partner. As they tape each other and engage playfully in an exciting erotic game, the attention is directed to her body. She is elegantly slim, stylishly dressed and aware of the beauty of her body, which is what brings her a sense of erotic freedom, confidence and joy.

All these advertisements that are constructed out of the discourse about disciplining the body through dieting insist that healthy food, self-restraint and refraining from indulgence in rich food are associated with great delight, pleasure of control and self-satisfaction, but an advertisement for 'Muller Light' yogurt goes a step further. It suggests a direct link between eating low-calorie food and an immediate and extremely fulfilling form of bodily pleasure. The intensity of this pleasure is depicted through a mini dramatic narrative that explicitly compares the pleasure of consuming a pot of fat-free yogurt with that derived from sex. The text portrays the attractive woman sitting in a plane, reading a magazine and flirting with the man sitting

several seats away from her. The way they exchange desiring glances signals their intention to meet, keeping the viewer in suspense. The plane is crowded, full of people chatting, being served a meal, complaining to flight attendants or just fiddling with newspapers or their hand luggage. Suddenly, the man stands up and starts walking toward the toilet, gesturing to the woman to follow. She looks around nervously and pauses for a second or two, making sure other passengers are not paying attention to her. But just when it seems certain that she would join the man to have sex with him in the toilet, a flight attendant comes and brings her a pot of 'Muller' yogurt. She decides to stay and eat the yogurt. Just a spoonful of this virtually fat-free yogurt fills her with the most blissful feeling which she apparently prefers to the excitement of casual sex.

What is important to emphasise about the workings of all the above advertisements (except the one for 'Observer Food Monthly') is that they attempt to entice women into dieting and weight-watching. A key instrument of such a mode of governance is pointing out various forms of pleasure that can be derived from disciplining the body. These involve the pleasure of being able to prevent the formation of any excessive body fat or to get rid of it; the pleasure of being in control of one's desire; and the pleasure of maintaining/producing a more aesthetically pleasing and erotically desirable body, all of which are represented as having an empowering effect on women's self-esteem and sense of satisfaction.

Apart from weight-watching and dieting, the disciplining of the female body also includes physical exercise. In advertising imagery, there are scenes of women swimming, doing tai-chi or some group fitness programmes similar to aerobics, but advertising does not elaborate on these techniques of keeping the body fit. These activities are generally represented as a necessary part of a healthy lifestyle for the active woman willing to maintain her fine looks. The emphasis is placed on the results of these techniques, such as a flat stomach, firm muscles, minimum of body fat and the absence of flabby flesh and soft bulges. The effort involved, the sweat and other features of a 'worked-out' body are not featured.

Towards the end of this section I need to mention the representation of one more aspect of the female body that is surrounded by a particular combination of discipline and care, namely the discomforts related to menstruating. A number of 'Always' advertisements suggest that 'being a woman [involves] unpredictability' as well as hyper-sensitivity and irritability that periodically tend to affect the woman's life in an unwanted, almost obstructive way. Associated with such negative feelings, menstruation is described as a bodily process that is likely to impose restrictions on the activities and conduct of the woman. At the same time,

advertising insists that the modern woman needs always to be active, cheerful and in control of her body and emotions. In order to meet women's need to minimise the element of unpredictability and irritability, 'Always' offers a wide range of highly absorbent pads with or without wings: 'Ultra thins', 'Maxis', 'Super longs', 'Pantiliners', 'Regular fresh', 'Extras', etc. Knowing "that looking good and feeling great are key to boosting your confidence", 'Always' has also made specially designed pads in black colour to match minimal black designer underwear. In addition to comfort and protection, these black pads provide an extra elegant touch to the perfectly stylish appearance, which is represented as being so important to enhancing female confidence. Without any exception, 'Always' advertisements use a very simple 'problem identification-problem solution' structure with a direct mode of address and optimistic mood in order to emphasise an active and cheerful approach to dealing with period problems.

I will conclude by stressing that the most obvious effect of the definitional and normative power of advertisements representing the female body is that it promotes a unified discourse which, without any ambiguity, specifies just one model of the body (characterised by slender figure, soft and silky skin, long shiny hair, sensual lips, etc.) as aesthetically pleasing and erotically desirable. Connected to this is the conception of the female body as a form of spectacle which implies that the practice of offering the body to the appraising, admiring and desiring male gaze is productive of pride, erotic pleasure and self-esteem for the woman. By reproducing such a conception, advertisements consistently remind the female viewer how important it is, for her sense of the self, to have a body that corresponds to the defined standard of beauty. The operation of power also seeks to encourage the viewer to relate to her body as a site of self-management by deploying techniques of self-monitoring, cosmetic care and disciplining the body and desire, all of which link the work on the body to various types of pleasure, an improved self-understanding and self-confidence. Crucially, this advice is offered through textual forms that emanate optimistic and energetic mood, encourage identifications with a pronounced narcissistic aspect, and stimulate fantasies about being more in control of one's body, more beautiful, more (erotically) powerful and more satisfied with the self.

REPRESENTING WOMEN AND PAID WORK

Compared to discourses on housework, motherhood, heterosexual couple relations and the body, the discourse on paid work is deployed much more rarely in advertising that

represents or addresses women. By focusing on women as housewives, mothers, wives, attractive objects of a male gaze, erotic pleasure seekers or body carers, a good deal of advertising treats the topics related to paid work as more or less irrelevant to depicting and appealing to women. Historically, portraying women in some connection to work/employment has never been one of the preferred themes in television advertising (see BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter'), and the advertisements from my sample certainly confirm the continuation of this trend. However, it would be misleading to suggest that television advertising makes an explicit claim that women do not participate in work outside the domestic sphere. Rather, in representing and appealing to women, advertisements tend largely to ignore the discourse of paid work.

Men's identities are comparatively more often depicted in relation to their jobs, specific occupational skills, professional responsibilities, or career aspirations. By associating the sphere of paid work more with masculinity, and by defining femininity mainly in relation to domestic work, child-rearing, and concern with the body and its attractiveness, advertising emphasises a gendered public/private divide as still highly relevant for constructing gender difference and identities (for the evolution of the public/private divide, see Martin 1989). To associate women predominantly with the private sphere, marginalising any aspect of their relation to paid work may seem as a surprising strategy for appealing to women today. It is important to note that some sociological studies (see, for example, Pilcher 1999, 32-53; Abercrombie et al. 2000, 197-201) show that women's participation in paid work in contemporary Britain accounts for nearly half of all employees. Although these studies also show that women's experience and patterns of participation in paid work differ from those of men (Ibid.), the above fact still points to the important role work plays in the life of so many women. The advertising industry prides itself on being in tune with consumers, and yet, in trying to influence the conduct of female viewers/consumers, it tends to ignore topics related to their paid work. While I cannot offer a competent answer as to why this is so (as the question is certainly beyond the scope of my present work), I wish to focus on a relatively small number of advertisements which do represent women in some relation to paid work in order to explore the ways in which this relation is made visible.

The committed service-provider

Although most advertising featuring or addressing women totally ignores the discourse of paid work, it has to be mentioned that a very small number of advertisements, which usually

promote cosmetic products or toiletries for women (as, for example, 'Sure' and 'Always'), imply that the represented woman is engaged in some sort of paid work. The viewer can only see her as being busy, with the setting suggesting that she is not being busy at home. But from such a vague description it is not possible to deduce much about her occupation, her experience of or relation to work. Much more expressive in this respect are advertisements that portray women as actually doing some sort of job. In these advertisements, women are predominantly represented as employees in the service sector, doing jobs that do not require much education, expert skills or special training. With the exception of three advertisements where women appear as teachers ('Learndirect', 'Peugeot 307') and health workers ('HSA'), female employees are represented as waitresses ('Heinz Tomato Ketchup', 'Carlsberg' beer, 'Wella Vivality'), shop/sales assistants ('Courts' furniture, 'Somerfield', 'Asda', 'Cornhill Direct', 'Priceline.co.uk', 'Ocean Finance', 'Claimline', etc.), flight attendants ('British Airways'), or security officers at the airport ('Extra' chewing gum).

Such a female worker is always described as an integral part of the advertised service/product. The manner in which her work is represented as just one of the factors that contribute to the provision of a good service, reveals a set of ethical qualities regarded as necessary for a good worker in this sector. She is helpful, kind, well-mannered and committed to her work. Her demeanour is that of a person happy to oblige and accommodate the customer. The appearance of the helpful service provider is usually characterised by a tidy hairstyle, as little as possible make-up and no jewellery or any sort of decorative details that might spoil the neatness of the uniform she is required to wear.

Although the uniform signals a highly disciplined worker, trained to follow the principles defined by the work organisation (see Hochschild as quoted in Entwistle 1997), advertising does not insist on the importance of external management of the worker's conduct as a key factor in delivering an excellent service. Represented as much more important than training and discipline is a deeply felt eagerness of the female worker to meet the needs of the customer. It is implied that her motivation and work ethic are essentially related to her 'natural' disposition towards serving/caring/obliging, which is what makes her regard her work not just as a paid job but also as a source of personal fulfilment.

An excellent illustration of how a committed service provider performs her job can be found in an advertisement promoting a new business class air travel from 'British Airways'. A very simple descriptive structure of this text stresses the relation between the customer's needs and the way they are met by a flight attendant. In a sequence of short scenes in the airplane we

see a businessman working on his laptop computer, and afterwards resting on a 'fully flat bed'. The focus on the passenger is emphasised by an unusual visual composition, showing his subjective point of view which is rotated for 90 degrees in relation to the viewer's point of view. A uniformed female stewardess comes to attend to him, first to serve a delicious meal and drink, then to see whether he needs another drink, and then to check whether he is comfortable and covered with a blanket. The emphasis is not so much on her professional relation to the business class customer as it is on her readiness to create the best possible conditions for such a busy man to have a proper rest that he so badly needs. Her determination to make his flight comfortable and enjoyable without attracting too much attention is expressed in such a discreet way that he (and the viewer) sees only her serving hands. The camera never moves on to show her face, implying that a good service provider does her best to act as an almost invisible servant.

In other advertisements promoting various financial/insurance products, for example, the viewer is able to see the face of the female sales assistant because making eye contact and smiling in a reassuring way forms an important part of the service provided in this domain. The representational style of most of these advertisements does not offer much imaginative textual pleasure. It is usually characterised by a direct mode of address in which female sales assistants as well as their male colleagues try to show the viewer how easy it is to deal with a certain financial problem or buy a certain financial product. A male presenter then highlights the most important piece of advice which is condensed into two or three easy steps to follow. Alternatively, this role may be played by a satisfied consumer expressing his/her personal experience with the service/product. There might be a piece of relaxing 'elevator' music or a memorable jingle, but elements of light entertainment, funny or unexpected developments are never used to motivate the engagement of the viewer. The underpinning idea is that such entertaining methods of motivation are regarded as inadequate for talking about such serious issues as managing personal finance.

The importance of the discourse of caring to the ethical regime that regulates women as committed service providers can hardly be overemphasised. The discourse appears to be so relevant to defining femininity that its operation extends beyond the context of the family and domestic sphere to shape the way women relate to their work. Just as the busy housewife is devoted to satisfying the needs of her husband and children, so is the committed service provider eager to serve and please the customer. With its emphasis on accommodating subjectivity, the caring discourse operates not only to link these two subject positions but also

to represent them as typically and exclusively feminine. Its overuse in advertising produces the notion of femininity as equated with virtues of caring to the extent of leaving little space for representing working women in terms of other ethical qualities, professional skills or aspirations.

An advertisement for 'Carlsberg' is worth mentioning here for two reasons. Firstly because it exemplifies how the caring discourse can be mobilised in association with the discourse of the attractive female body to represent the ideal female service provider. Though it advertises a brand of beer and not a financial institution, this text suggests, with a sense of humour, how a perfect bank should operate in the ideal world of the male beer drinker. An important aspect of representing this utopian vision is its imaginative visual style that emphasises artfully designed space and light. The central idea is that a bank should please the male customer by using all imaginable means, which include an exquisite interior design, extremely beautiful young woman serving excellent beer, exceptionally friendly financial adviser and an unbelievably generous loan to be repaid whenever it suits the customer. Because this imaginary bank is designed to offer an exciting combination of aesthetic, sensual, social and financial pleasures, the perfect female service provider is not here characterised only by her ability to serve the customer in a friendly, elegant and easy way but also by her personal charm and attractive looks. There are two other advertisements (for 'Extra' chewing gum and 'Wella Vivality' shampoo), which also highlight the female service provider's ability to excite male desire as a quality that enriches the customer's satisfaction. Here, again, the use of the discourse on female attractiveness/sexuality in addition to that of caring prevents advertising from depicting the working woman in terms other than her serving/pleasing capacity and sexually alluring body.

I return to the 'Carlsberg' advertisement as it contains another noteworthy point. It draws attention to the difference in occupational skills and status between the represented female and male service providers: the woman works as a waitress, while the man is a financial adviser, which is a higher ranking job. Similarly, in an advertisement for the 'HSA' health insurance, which features women as health professionals, women appear as nurses, physiotherapists and opticians but not as doctors, dentists or senior consultants, who are all male. Without any exception, the same pattern of gender difference is repeated in advertising whenever both women and men are represented as workers or professionals in the service sector. Clearly, the prevailing trend is to portray working women as employees in the service sector and as doing less skilled, lower paid and less respected jobs than men. No attempt is

ever made in advertising to question, undermine or criticise such a form of gender inequality. Instead, advertising's regime of representation works to make the tendency for women to hold lower positions than men in the hierarchy of an occupation or organisation, seem normal and naturally occurring.

The absence of the 'career' woman and 'superwoman'

As silences and omissions are also important in understanding the regime of representing women in the context of work, it should be mentioned that women never appear (in advertisements in my sample) in the position of a business executive. The world of business in contemporary advertising is represented as strictly male. In sharp contrast to the portrayal of businessmen (in, for example, advertisements for 'Honda Accord' or 'Compac'), working women are never defined by references to some specialist knowledge, decision-making authority or 'independent thinking'.

It is also worth noting that the figure of the 'career' woman, which emerged in the mid 1980s' advertising, mainly of cars and air travel (see BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter'), is almost completely absent now. Only one advertisement in my sample, the one for 'Volvic' bottled water, portrays what could be labelled as the 'career' woman. Its representational style is also unusual; it can best be described as a form of (staged) documentary about filming the advertisement. The filming team consists of a female presenter and two male professionals. The set is a picturesque village in rural France with mountains in the background, which is where the water supposedly comes from. We see the woman dressed in a white shirt and elegant black trouser suit. She is smart but not provocative. Her dress and posture reveals a serious work ethic and the professional identity which, in a way, emulates the conduct of male professionals or businessmen. She is standing in a rather stiff position, facing the camera and trying to pronounce properly the scripted sentences. At first, she is totally focused on her work, ignoring the disturbance caused by the local people, talking, laughing and moving around without any respect for the filming team. But, after several unsuccessful attempts to follow the script, she becomes visibly annoyed by the noise and hardly manages to retain her concentration on the work. She keeps trying and finally succeeds to pronounce her lines, though not exactly according to the script. Dissatisfied with her performance, she decides to take a break and leaves the set in frustration.

The focus of the text is not so much on depicting the professional identity of the presenter as it is on the contrast between the stiffness of her conduct and the much more

relaxed, spontaneous, playful and almost childish behaviour of the local people. The contrast is caricatured so as to produce a humorous effect. The viewer is thus more likely to laugh at than to identify or sympathise with the presenter and her frustration. Her frustration appears as laughable because she is so focused on her work, her tight schedule and her sense of self-importance that she becomes unable to understand other people and why they want to have fun. Hence the advertisement mocks rather than shows appreciation for her professional identity. The emphasis is on her stiff demeanour, her overly determined attitude to work and her complete lack of a sense of humour. By depicting her in that way, the text attempts to issue an implicit warning to women that such an attitude, if pursued too eagerly, may be productive of a rigid, narrow-minded subjectivity.

The 1980s' image of the 'career' woman was different and much more approving: it portrayed her as self-confident, strong-willed, professionally successful and financially independent. She was always on the move, hurrying assertively through the streets, driving a car, booking flight tickets or making phone calls, but she was never represented as doing her work in any specific way. Nevertheless, the viewer was always able to recognise a 'career' woman by her confident self-presentation, her elegant but not overtly sexy looks, her nice car or office as well as the way other characters relate to her. Most importantly, her identity was not defined by stiffness and frustration but by assertiveness, determination and authority. Although this form of femininity did not dominate the regime of representing women in advertising, it did mark an attempt to recognise the ability of women to work in professions or business, to occupy high positions in work organisations, and to define themselves in terms of their profession. Such recognition is hardly visible in the advertisements from my sample (which were transmitted in 2001). The topics that speak of or allude to career aspirations, financial independence or professional success are, most obviously, not regarded by advertisers as relevant for representing and addressing women today.

Absent from advertising at the turn of the century is also the figure of the 'superwoman', created in the early 1980s to represent a form of femininity that was capable of performing all her professional, domestic, maternal and wifely duties with equal excellence, ease and satisfaction. The most illustrative example is the woman featured in 'Oxo' advertisements: she was hard-working, disciplined, a good organiser, efficient as well as caring, high-spirited and never complaining. Because the 'superwomen' was relatively popular in television advertisements throughout the 1980s', her disappearance in contemporary advertising marks an important shift in representing femininity. Some advertising practitioners

and commentators speaking in the mid 1990s (see BBC 2 series 'Washes Whiter') predicted such a development. Their view was that the development would reflect a new type of 'traditionalism' that had been gathering strength to endorse a more domestic-centred type of femininity. Whether we are witnessing this new type of 'traditionalism', which advertising reflects, is open to dispute. If we define 'traditionalism' as a tendency to marginalise considerably the discourse on paid work in representing women, to reduce the visibility of different ways in which women contribute to productive activity, then it becomes clear that advertising is promoting this form of traditionalism.

The operation of power within the advertisements discussed in this section produces the imagery that avoids addressing women in terms of their experience in paid work, professional skills, career aspirations, or pleasure and recognition which they might get from work, suggesting to the female viewer that her relation to work outside her home is not one of the important practices for understanding and (re)shaping femininity. By representing the working woman mainly in the role of a committed service provider, advertisements also seek to remind women that the ethics of caring, so important to the construction of femininity within the domestic sphere, is equally relevant to regulating women's relation to paid work. This ethical regime emphasises the enthusiasm for and selfless devotion to serving the customer's needs rather than any special professional skill or knowledge, with the only appropriate form of pleasure being the one derived from pleasing others. It is perhaps not surprising then that the texts portraying the committed service provider do not offer female viewers light entertainment or any form of textual pleasure that stimulates fantasy or mobilises sensations. However, those inclined to identify with such a female worker are invited to draw pleasure from seeing their work being acknowledged as an integral part of a wider work organisation.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explored the ways in which advertisements address and attempt to influence female viewers by representing women as performing a range of everyday practices which position them as certain kinds of subjects. My intention was to look at how technologies of 'modest' power and representation seek to affect the conduct of women by shaping their ethical freedom and by activating their self-constituting capacities.

The basic instrument of the power-representation nexus appears to be the selection of discourses that advertisements mobilise in order to contextualise the advertised product/brand

within certain everyday practices and the related range of female subject positions. The analysis of dominant mobilising discourses shows that the woman's roles in the domestic sphere, her sexuality and her body are central to the construction of the female subject in advertising. These positions are identified as domains that need to be regulated by defining appropriate activities and their goals, type(s) of the relevant interpersonal relationship(s) and the desired ethical qualities of the subject in question. The female viewer is thus encouraged to think of housework, motherhood, sexual relationships with men and the care of her body as primary sites for constituting her identity and her sense of the self. The importance of her relation to paid work in this ongoing process is hugely downplayed. The question is where do some of the discourses regulating the construction of femininity connect with each other and where do they propose some contrasting ethical regimes?

There are some easily visible connections between the discourses concerned with regulating motherhood and housework as they all operate to define domestic activities as a domain of typically and exclusively female responsibilities. They highlight and celebrate the capacity for caring for others as a supreme ethical quality of the female subject. These discourses work to propose a regime of truth which naturalises this capacity and recognises it as socially worthy, leading women to realise that their emotional investment in family relationships and their practical engagement in domestic duties are an important avenue for achieving their own self-fulfilment and satisfaction. If interiorised, such a regime of truth is productive of an accommodating subjectivity structured around the desire to provide for and satisfy others.

As mothers, women are reminded that their 'natural' predisposition towards childrearing (which men lack) is not enough to become a good mother and derive maximum pleasure from mothering. They need advice about how to look after their children and how to act upon themselves. The recommended style of childrearing implies that the mother should invest a considerable effort in managing adequately her emotional experiences so that she can always be cheerful, patient and eager to engage playfully with the child while performing even the most mundane activities. In order to achieve this ideal, the woman is encouraged to constantly monitor and evaluate her emotions and conduct according to the norm that signifies feelings of frustration, exhaustion, irritability or dissatisfaction as signs of maternal failure. By legitimising only the emotional pleasures of motherhood, by downplaying the effects of the exhausting childcare work, and by pathologising concerns, anxieties and emotional ambivalence surrounding motherhood, this ethical regime requires women to exercise a rather

strict form of emotional self-discipline. But the images of the happy maternal identity, designed to evoke a cheerful and relaxed mood and a feeling of deep satisfaction, try to convince the viewer that such a technique of the self is most rewarding for the mother.

The woman is also advised to exercise self-discipline in her role as a housewife. There are, however, certain variations within the representation of housework, which significantly affect the way the woman should perform her domestic duties and relate to herself. One discourse constructs an ethical regime that emphasises hard work, duty, self-constraint and quiet efficiency, linking housework duties with the woman's devotion to her children and husband. Such a construction of housework, just like the projected notion of motherhood, produces an ethical ideal which does not permit the woman to express any form of dissatisfaction or frustration. Furthermore, it suggests that the woman's principle pleasure is that derived from meeting the needs of and pleasing their family members.

This ethical regime is also transferred from the domestic sphere to the domain of paid work in order to regulate the position of the working woman, who is most frequently represented in advertising as a worker in the service sector. Just like the hardworking housewife and caring mother, this committed service-provider is represented in terms of a deeply rooted eagerness to serve and oblige. It is important to note that the committed service-provider and the hardworking housewife are defined through the same representational style of realism. By concealing the constructedness of the text, this form of realism tends to encourage the viewer to read the text as though it reflects some sort of objective reality and, therefore, truth about the forms of behaviour and emotional conduct of the represented characters. Such a supposedly unmediated representation of 'how things simply are' is expressed through a very simple narrative structure and characterisation that avoids ambiguous developments and relations. In that way it invites the viewer to understand the text easily and, most importantly, unproblematically.

While not seeking to minimise the woman's domestic responsibility, the other discourse about housework advises women to understand housekeeping activities as non-work. The proposed normative ideal insists on the efficiency with which the woman should maintain increasingly high standards of domestic hygiene but without investing much time and physical effort. This suggests that for the housewife domestic activities are, in effect, enjoyable. The move to describe these activities as involving an element of fun works to eliminate any possibility for the housewife to feel tired or complain. In comparison to the stark realism of advertisements addressing the hardworking housewife, the joyful nature of housework is

emphasised through the representational style that produces more imaginative imagery. It often contains elements of suspense, surprise and/or humour, following some genre conventions characteristic for action films. Alternatively, it seeks to infuse the text with a relaxing and/or cheerful mood. The ethics of effortless and cheerful housekeeping also involves a slightly reformed notion of caring, according to which the efficient housewife is rewarded some free time to devote to her own needs and interests. Although this ethical regime does not challenge the view that the primary responsibility of a good housewife is to care for others, it makes an attempt to normalise her right to focus on herself too.

This regime also encourages the woman to enhance her domestic authority by delegating some occasional domestic tasks to her husband. The dominant expressive form through which guidelines on how to motivate the involvement of the husband are provided is one composed as a mini-situation comedy. Its humour is usually created by representing the wife disciplining her husband, who appears clumsy, slightly foolish, or embarrassed by not being able to oppose the authority of his wife. Such a form of humour serves as a suitable device for suggesting the female viewer that she should draw power from her position of a chief home-maker and take pleasure from mocking her husband's masculinity, while discouraging any expectation in the possibility of a substantial change in the division of domestic labour. The use of humour in advertising is rarely rebellious. The mocking laughter and pleasure it invokes may be empowering to a certain degree, but it does not involve disruption of the traditional distribution of gender responsibilities that profoundly shapes the housewife/mother/wife's accommodating subjectivity.

Discourses on the female body and sexuality propose radically different ethical regimes to those provided by the described versions of the caring discourse. If there is a connecting point between the two groups of discourses, it is the insistence on the desire to improve oneself through the work that promises some form of pleasure and encourages optimism. But the suggested normative ideals and forms of ethical work, self-understanding and pleasure are represented as contrasting. Unlike the caring discourses, those that speak of the female body and sexuality operate to legitimise and structure the woman's concern with herself. Central to this concern is the care of the female body and the way it is shaped and used in the ongoing process of constructing a self-identity. The woman is guided to approach her body as a site of self-management through various techniques of cosmetic care and disciplining the body (mostly by means of dieting). Emphasising the visual character of the female body, the defined normative standards of bodily aesthetics forge strong links between its beauty, sexuality and

pleasure. Such a construction shapes the woman's understanding and evaluation of her body primarily through practices of offering it to the appraising, admiring and desiring male gaze. A well cultivated and erotically attractive body is described as a major source of pride and self-esteem for the woman.

Two sets of advice that guide the woman's relation to her body seek to stimulate the desire to look better and to feel better about the self. First, women are advised to practice constant self-monitoring. This is proposed as one of the basic techniques of the body/self, involving several components: assessing one's appearance by looking for imperfections and emerging signs of ageing; applying the suggested cosmetic procedures; experimenting with new cosmetic products and styles of embellishment; and evaluating the shape and size of the body. The importance of self-monitoring is represented through a distinctive style designed to invoke the pleasure of fantasy. This form of pleasure is associated with the desire to discover some sort of truth about the body/self by looking at oneself in the mirror as well as by imaginative playing around with what the self would like to be. Incorporating a pronounced narcissistic aspect, pleasures of fantasy are suggested as a technique for enhancing self-esteem and generating a form of self-motivation.

Another set of advice is provided to strengthen the willpower women need to discipline their desire and bodies. With that aim women are advised to focus not on difficulties of self-restraint but on a range of pleasures: the enjoyment of eating low-calorie food; the powerful feeling derived from being able to resist the temptation to indulge in rich and tasty food; and the pleasure of anticipating oneself as more beautiful, erotically attractive and self-confident. The empowering effects of dieting are usually represented through a mini-personal testimony or a realistically enacted 'slice' of the everyday life of a satisfied dieter. Importantly, both expressive forms try to motivate the viewer by infusing the text with a hopeful, cheerful and energetic mood.

In short, women are guided to believe that the work on the body involves discipline and self-control as a vehicle for achieving self-enhancing pleasures in the continual effort to maintain their physical attractiveness, a fundamental quality of their sexuality. But the operation of power that seeks to regulate female sexuality does not propose a unified regime of how women should use the attractiveness of their body and understand their erotic desire. Represented are three contesting ethical regimes, all of which assume that women are by definition heterosexual. One regime, represented through a mini-romantic drama, tries to channel female desire into romance and marriage by means of which women should interpret

and practice their sexuality. It guides women to shape their sexuality according to the commonplace assumption that they seek lasting intimacy, emotional satisfaction and stability rather than sex, which is what men want. The texts promoting this regime advise women to accept the represented truth about the gender difference in experiencing emotional and erotic aspects of the relationship, as this truth would help them cope with a sense of emotional dependency and insecurity.

The other two ethical regimes challenge the norm of monogamy and liberate women from the overwhelming need for emotional intimacy. One advises them to think of their body and desire in terms of its capacity to stimulate and satisfy the desiring male gaze. The representation of this quite docile form of female sexuality conditions the production of the desire to be looked at and admired by men. Through images that burst with sensuality and stimulate erotic fantasies, this ethical regime encourages women to shape their desire in such a way so as to derive sexual pleasure and self-esteem from being able to attract and excite predatory male sexuality. In contrast to this, the other ethical regime leads women (married as well as unmarried) to realise that they can act on their own initiative and use their attractive body and seductive charm in active pursuit of sexual pleasures. Rather than shaping women's desire into a docile and responsive form of sexuality, this ethical regime urges women to take an inhibited and playful approach to discovering and satisfying their own erotic passions. It allows women the possibility for expressing their sexuality in a 'predatory' form, which is usually represented as a male preserve. This ethical regime is almost always articulated through representational styles which borrow heavily from situation comedy and adventure film/television genre and/or seek to visualise fantasy. These fictional expressive forms are characterised by their highly entertaining quality as well as the ability to suggest relations between the represented characters without resort to a more straightforward and assertive language of realism. Such formal features make these styles suitable for expressing the idea that symbolic violence against men may be empowering for women, inviting them to think of their sexuality as tightly connected with, though not reduced to, the desire to exert control over male sexuality. The power to do so is represented as productive of utmost pleasure for women.

In order to understand the relations of power, desire and pleasure that are represented as constitutive of femininity, I should also mention here that the emphasis on this assertive and fun-seeking form of female sexuality coincides with the almost complete absence of two important female identities which featured in advertising throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s. The first is the 'superwoman' who had a successful career but she was also a

caring mother, a diligent housewife and a devoted and attractive wife. This figure was the only form of femininity constructed in television advertising with the aim to represent the woman occupying a number of subject positions which require different ethical qualities. However, the representation of the 'superwoman' was not concerned with difficulties that may arise from performing several, potentially contradictory roles. Rather, it just presented women with a task to harmonise all the responsibilities, duties and desires into an energetic identity according to an ethical regime that does not speak much of pleasure. The 'superwoman' was a normative image that proposed a highly demanding ethical ideal but failed to suggest personally pleasurable means of achieving the ideal. It is worth pointing out that this figure also disappeared from women's magazines (see, for example, Woodward 1997).

The other form of female identity that is not visible in advertisements I analysed is the 'career' women, constructed through references to her professional skills, ambitions and success as well as financial independence. She was not associated with sexuality, uninhibited or otherwise. Rather, her confident self-identity was entirely based on her investment in career; she was able to compete on the same terms as men, drawing power and self-esteem from and seeking personal fulfilment through forms of paid work. But by expressing aspirations, capacities and forms of conduct that are categorised as male, she disturbed the conventional understanding of femininity as constructed mainly in contrast to masculinity. Hence, her sexuality was seen as not representable. For women, pursuing a career in the way men do has its price – the loss of sexuality that is regarded as one of central signifiers of femininity. By abandoning the image of the 'career' woman in favour of emphasising the sexually assertive and fun-seeking woman, advertising implies that women should preserve and cultivate their distinctive (and unified) gender identity in which such a form of sexuality plays a crucial role. Furthermore, women are implicitly advised to think of their sexuality as a more appropriate means of achieving self-esteem and a sense of satisfaction than their effort to compete and seek equality with men in the labour market.

As to gender equality in the domestic sphere, housework and motherhood discourses that are mobilised in advertising suggest that women should not expect any form of radical change in the way unpaid household work and childcare are regarded as exclusively women's responsibility. The involvement of the helping husband provides only minor changes. But as a form of compensation and reward for not wishing to disturb the traditional gender division of labour, women are allowed to ridicule mildly their husband's clumsiness in the domestic space or their exaggerated sense of masculine pride while showing motherly understanding for that

sort of behaviour. Though this ethical regime does not render the wife powerless, it does not encourage the woman to relate to her husband as an equal partner. It should also be noted that few advertisements try to offer an alternative ethical regime, which guides women to think of the husband-wife relationship in more egalitarian terms. It is represented through a stylistic form that can best be described as a mini-drama, depicting a confrontation between the wife and her husband and stressing the wife's determination and right to independent thinking. This regime allows the woman to express anger if her husband tries to be patronising, or oppose him resolutely in a discussion if she thinks she is right. Both forms of conduct are suggested as techniques for enhancing the woman's self-confidence within the boundaries of the domestic space and personal relationship with her husband.

I shall conclude by suggesting that the ethical regimes which are mobilised in television advertisements to regulate a range of female subject positions, can, in effect, be arranged into two broad clusters. The first is constructed around a strong emphasis on the capacity, will and desire for caring for others. Although there are variations in the way caring should be practiced, these variations do not question or undermine the crucial normative ideal, according to which the woman should relate to herself and achieve self-realisation and pleasure by focusing on domestic duties and needs and wishes of others. In sharp contrast to this ethical regime, which works to generate an accommodating subjectivity, the other cluster of ethical norms legitimises and regulates the woman's active concern with herself. It provides guidelines about how the woman should act upon her body, cultivate its erotic attractiveness and develop and use her seductive skills in order to improve her looks, raise her self-esteem, achieve greater sexual pleasure and gain a sense of satisfaction with the self. While the former cluster of ethical regimes proposes that the woman's subjectivity is fundamentally shaped around her dedication to and emotional investment in close personal (mostly family) relationships, the latter encourages a form of ethical work and self-understanding that are centred around the body, narcissistic fantasies, imagining the ideal body/self and sexual desire and pleasure.

Clearly, these two ethical clusters do not have much in common. The only point where both clusters meet is a highly optimistic tone of advice targeting and stimulating the desire to improve oneself through practices that are also productive of pleasure. But apart from that, they point to radically different subject definitions, ethical ideals, techniques of the self and forms of gender identity and subjectivity. This does not, however, lead to a conclusion that advertising represents, addresses and guides the woman as the multiple subject with a fragmented subjectivity, which is the conceptualisation proposed by the feminist perspective discussed in

Chapter 6. It is important to emphasise that the two clusters of ethical regimes are never mobilised within the same advertisement to show that the woman can acquire both gender identities and construct different subjectivities. The woman may indeed appear within one text as performing different roles, such as, for instance, those of a mother and a housewife, or a housewife and a wife. But the enactment of these subject positions based on gender is represented as governed by the same (caring) cluster of ethical categories, which addresses the subject as equated with the unitary, whole individual. By not representing the woman in the same text as occupying subject positions (such as, for example, those of a caring mother and a fun-seeking seductress) that are regulated by opposing definitions and ethical regimes, advertising does not introduce the difference within the subject itself. Within the sample I analysed, only one advertisement (for 'Peugeot 307) could be read as an exception to this rule, and that text, in effect, explicitly draws attention to the dominance of this rule. To put it simply, advertising does not see the subject as the site of competing identities and subjectivities but, rather, as the unitary individual capacitated to construct a single gender identity and a unified sense of the self. This leaves the female viewer with an unresolved problem of how to reconcile the contradiction between the two clusters of ethical regimes in an ongoing effort to construct a unified self-identity.

PART V
CHAPTER 9
<u>**CONCLUSIONS**</u>

Exploring advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance

This thesis focused on advertising as a 'soft' mode of governing the conduct of individuals positioned as consumers and viewers of television advertisements. It sought to explore the way advertising relates viewers, and in particular female viewers to the form of power which I describe as 'modest' because it favours minor procedures and operates without using instruments of coercion or threat. The interest in the 'soft' style of governance was inspired by my ethnographic observations of a series of unrelated sites in which individuals in the course of their everyday life get related to this 'modest' power. This wider insight into the field of 'soft' modes of governance achieved through ethnography underpinned my analysis of advertising, drawing attention to two particularly important characteristics of 'modest' power. These are: first, its focus on practices, experiences and desires that constitute the individual's private life, their way of being and their sense of the self; and, second, its style of operation - it is exercised and, to a great extent, experienced in terms of 'friendly' attempts to help the individual attain some practical goals or deal with some problems in a way that was represented as most appropriate, efficient, convenient, satisfying and enjoyable. These impressions, combined with my experience as a keen viewer of advertisements, encouraged me to approach advertising as a governmental practice facilitated and fuelled by such a 'modest' form of power.

I pursued my interest in advertising in a continuing dialogue between textual analysis of television advertisements and theoretical explanations drawn from the literature on governance, identity and gender, media representation and advertising. The question of understanding the concept of power and its ideological effects loomed large in this process. In many socio-cultural accounts of advertising (for example, Packard 1957; Ewen 1976; Williamson 1978; Leiss, Kline & Jhally 1997), the concept of ideological subjection figures as a central analytic tool for thinking about how advertising affects consumers. Such an approach involves an understanding of power as domination aiming at and invariably succeeding in subjugating more or less passive and gullible consumers/viewers to the dictates of the advertising message. This view suggests that advertising advances by deploying some irresistible though hidden textual instruments of manipulation which distort 'real' meanings of things, social relations and

identities, alienating thus consumers from what is regarded as their 'genuine' way of being and relating to the self. This understanding of advertising allows only for the proposition that power works to restrict the agency and freedom of the subject and deform its 'true' identity and subjectivity. But my ethnographic observations and preliminary analysis of advertisements suggested a rather different way in which advertising tries to act upon consumers.

In order to analyse advertising as a site of the operation of 'modest' power, I constructed a theoretical framework influenced mainly by Foucault's theorisation of power and of the subject. I drew in particular on his conceptualisation of a power relationship which aims to guide, influence or modify rather than restrict the conduct of the subject over whom power is exercised. From this theoretical position, I approached advertising as a governmental practice that both presupposes and produces subjects who are capable to act by choice in relation to the exercise of 'modest' power. This is not to suggest that advertising has no means or intentions to influence consumers but, rather, that it seeks to regulate and not repress consumers' ethical freedom. As Foucault's work was instructive in shaping my conceptualisation of power, it was equally significant for understanding the terms through which the capacity of the subject to construct an identity and a sense of the self became the vital element in the operation of 'modest' power. Exercised through advertising, this form of power seeks to enable subjects (positioned as consumers) to achieve some sort of improvement in the way they perform certain practices, relate to others and shape themselves. It attempts to do that through representing the advertised object as connected with certain ethical regimes (understood as sets of ideals, norms and practical advice regulating the subject's relation to itself), according to which consumers produce themselves and are produced as a certain kind of the subject. In that way, advertising is seen as a practice that provides consumers with what, following Rose (1992b), could be called the guidance of selves, that is, a form of help in interpreting desirable ethical ideals, in applying certain criteria for evaluating one's body, feelings, beliefs, desires, aspirations and conduct, and in choosing adequate methods of achieving ethical goals through various everyday practices.

An important issue in understanding the relation between the exercise of 'modest' power, forms of normativity and the consumers' practice of freedom of choice is that of how meaning is produced in representation, since the only means for bringing power relations into being, in this governmental context, is that of the media text. My view of this issue was informed by the works of Brunsdon and Morley (1978), Hall (1980), Barthes (1982) and Fiske (1987), to mention only the most influential authors who argued that meaning is not inscribed

in the media text but produced in the interaction between the text and the reader/viewer. From such a theoretical position, reading advertisements is seen as a fundamentally interpretive practice, conditioned by the operation of power through the textual structure as well as by the way in which the socially situated viewer/consumer makes use of their interpretative capacities and freedom of choice. This suggests that the textual structure of the advertisement is designed to guide viewers to activate some meanings and pleasures rather than others, but it does not prevent them from producing an interpretation according to their own criteria of evaluation. I argue that such an interpretive activity, which involves evaluating and connecting the perceived meaning of a text to a wider body of knowledge, beliefs, ethical categories, experiences and desires, may affect the practices through which consumers act upon selves in the ongoing process of identity construction. I also claim that the interpretive and ethical freedom of consumers is recognised, stimulated and used by advertising practitioners as a resource of governance; it is specified as a practice they wish to guide and influence by producing images that are not only descriptive but also normative. This Foucaultian understanding of the interdependence between relations of power and those of freedom, between governance and ethics, and between technologies for governing the conduct of others and those for governing the conduct of the self, forms a theoretical basis underpinning my study of advertising as a 'soft' form of governance.

The central research task of this study was to explore the micro-processes through which techniques of 'modest' power interact with techniques of signification to activate and guide the female viewer/consumer's self-fashioning practices. As explained in Chapter 2, I problematised this task in rather technical terms, that is, by analysing advertising as a form of political technology. Such a problematisation involved a set of questions that needed to be explored, starting with: What specific types of objectives for consumers do advertisers and advertising agencies seek to achieve? How do they conceptualise and differentiate between those whose conduct they seek to influence? What sort of expert knowledge forms the basis for making decisions about advertising to consumers in general, and women in particular? I sought to answer these questions by exploring advertising trade literature. In doing that my main concern was to identify the institutional and discursive relations which condition the production of advertisements in several ways: first, by formulating the intended objectives of advertising; second, by developing a body of knowledge used to classify, address and position target consumers (with a particular focus on women as consumers); and, third, by devising a range of strategies for constructing a persuasive piece of communication and suggesting how

the proposed style of consuming the advertised brand affects the identity of the consumer. This analysis sheds some light on how advertising practitioners explain their aspirations, operative concepts and instruments, but it was insufficient to provide answers to questions regarding the content and style of representation, through which practitioners actually try to exercise influence on the conduct of female consumers. Therefore, I carried out a textual analysis of television advertisements, focusing on questions such as: What discourses and ethical ideals are mobilised in representing and addressing women? Through what types of advice and representational styles do they attempt to influence women in terms of their identity? What practices of the self do they propose? How do advertisements try to motivate the engagement of female viewers?

In the sections that follow I shall sum up the conclusions that I drew from my examination of the above questions. While not attempting to provide a comprehensive understanding of such complex relations that constitute advertising, this study offers an insight into the way advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance seeks to structure games of truth and identity that affect the construction of femininity. Or, translated into more technical terms, this study works towards an understanding of how techniques of 'modest' power combine with and instrumentalise certain practices of freedom and forms of (textual) pleasure to advise women about how they should think of and shape themselves.

From the advertising practitioners' point of view: the will to 'influence people's behaviour'

The analysis of the practitioners' description of the advertising process, its strategies, intended objectives and effectiveness, presented in Chapter 6, highlighted certain ways in which the advertising industry rationalises its practice with the ultimate aim to 'influence people's behaviour' (Brierly 1995, 46). The practitioners whose accounts I analysed do not explicitly talk about their practice as having governmental intentions or effects. They do not use the concept and terminology of governance but, rather, the language concerned with styles of differentiating, representing and consuming brands. Their main concern is to build, sustain or modify a brand's identity (or 'personality') in such a way as to connect the advertised product with what they identify as the needs, tastes, desires and motivations of the target consumer. In that context, they speak of their effort to 'influence people's behaviour', which, as I argue, can be seen as a governmental practice.

The practitioners' explanations of how advertising seeks to influence consumers

involve aspirations, ideas and strategies that are in line with some aspects of the neo-liberal style of governance. Following Rose (1993, 1996a, 1996b), Burchell (1993) and Shore and Wright (1997), I described such a form of governance as oriented towards shaping the wills and attitudes of subjects of governance. This orientation is clearly visible in the way advertising practitioners explain the role of various systems of consumer classification in devising an advertising strategy. They develop and recognise these systems as major trade instruments for acquiring knowledge not only about the social positioning and purchasing power of consumers but also about their values, perceptions, habitual ways of doing things, preferences and desires, which is what they knowingly seek to address and influence.

Another important feature of neo-liberal modes of governance is the specification of the subject not merely as a target of the governmental practice but also as its willing and active participant, as an autonomous agent responsible for the way he/she conducts him/herself. Advertising practitioners' accounts of how consumers should be treated in order to address them effectively involves the same understanding of the subject of governance. The way practitioners explain strategies for sustaining attention and winning consent of viewers/consumers shows that they position consumers as free to choose among a wide variety of consumer brands and as free to decide how to respond to advertising. They openly acknowledge that consumers cannot be seen as passive and gullible receivers of advertising messages who could be told how to think, feel and act but, rather, as 'media-wise' viewers who actively produce and evaluate the meaning of advertisements and as free to make their own choices. Most importantly, practitioners understand and represent consumer choices as practices around which viewers/consumers actively define, shape and modify their style of life and a sense of identity.

So how do advertising practitioners think it is possible to stimulate the involvement of these 'media-wise' viewers who act by choice? Practitioners' accounts of some more recent trends in advertising emphasise a move towards an increasing aestheticisation and spectacularisation of advertisements. This is a move that favours the production of aesthetically pleasing, provoking, humorous and entertaining imagery rather than the construction of a persuasive selling proposition. Many practitioners believe that in the context of the increasing competition between brands and various media images, this strategy is more effective, as it tries to motivate viewers/consumers by inviting them to discover and indulge in some aesthetic, deeper emotional and experiential meanings of the advertising text. Such a strategy is knowingly devised to conceal the persuasive tone of the text and provide more possibilities for

various forms of spectatorial pleasure and sensory enjoyment. This demonstrates a growing belief within the industry that advertising is more likely to be effective if it is less persuasive and more entertaining. In other words, (textual) pleasure is believed to be a more powerful instrument for motivating the consumers' active involvement and influencing their freedom of choice than any technique of persuasion used in conventional advertising.

Advertising practitioners pride themselves on their creative use of knowledge about consumers, market relations and wider cultural trends but, at the same time, many of them openly admit that their knowledge is not organised as a unified and coherent system of categories, definitions and strategies universally regarded as valid and effective. They are aware that such a knowledge base enables them to make predictions which, no matter how well informed, cannot eliminate the uncertainty associated with how consumers interpret and respond to advertising. It is quite clear that many practitioners do not think of their knowledge as providing them with instruments and strategies which guarantee that their ambition to influence consumers would lead to successful results. Furthermore, they stress that their knowledge is in a continuous process of re-evaluation and re-construction precisely because it is more productive of conjectures and partial understandings of consumers than verified facts about their motivation and behaviour.

The examination of the industry's knowledge about women as a distinct consumer category shows that this domain is particularly susceptible to questioning. There appear to be notable tensions between contrasting discourses that compete to define distinctive characteristics of this rather broad and heterogeneous category. The tensions were created as certain segments of the advertising community came to challenge the adequacy of the established mode of conceptualising and addressing mature women. The proponents of what might be termed the 'critical' discourse claim that advertising often fails to achieve desired results because it works with 'myths' and misconceptions rather than 'true' knowledge about female identity. They criticise advertising 'myths' on a number of issues, such as: the use of a notion of female sexuality (and the related 'cult' of appearance) as a primary source for defining femininity; assumptions about how the process of ageing affects female identity and subjectivity; and the lack of understanding of the increasing complexity of women's social roles, to mention the most important ones. Problematised is also the way asymmetrical gendered power relations shape the industry's production and application of knowledge about mature women. The redefinition of these issues, so the 'critical' discourse claims, will help the industry gain a more 'realistic' insight into changing self-perceptions, attitudes and aspirations

of modern women.

While I do not approach these discourses in terms of being either true or false knowledge, I will argue in the next section that the conception of gender, and female identity in particular, is one of the crucial instruments by means of which advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance seeks to affect self-fashioning techniques of female viewers. I now want to conclude this section by stressing that an ethos of questioning the knowledge base and the effectiveness of its results is an important feature of how advertising professionals rationalise their (governmental) practice. Together with other points mentioned above, it demonstrates that practitioners knowingly attempt to exert their influence in a way a) which positions consumers as individuals concerned with shaping their identities; b) which respects and targets their freedom of choice and interpretive capacities; and c) which attempts to motivate consumers by stimulating certain forms of pleasure. Practitioners do not describe their will to influence consumers in governmental terms, but their explanations of their objectives and strategies seem to echo some propositions that I make about advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance.

The analysis of advertising literature clearly demonstrates that the industry considers gender as a crucial aspect and signifier of self-identity. The industry is concerned with understanding what constitutes gendered identities so that it can use that knowledge to influence identity-shaping capacities and practices of consumers. In the next section I shall summarise my analysis of how that knowledge is applied in television advertisements to construct and instrumentalise a conception of gender difference/identity and of femininity.

Conception of gender, female identity and boundaries of advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance

The centrality of gender in categorising, representing and addressing the consumer cannot be overemphasised. There are some, though very few, advertisements that do not address the consumer in terms of their gender identity but in terms of what is represented as some gender-neutral interest or wish such as, for instance, that for having a new 'high-definition' television set. A great majority of advertisements aim, however, at targeting and representing the gendered individual. The conceptualisation of gender difference/identity that underpins the advertising imagery thus appears as one of the basic techniques by means of which 'modest' power divides consumers and defines the make-up of the subject whose conduct it seeks to govern.

Textual analysis of my sample of advertisements suggests that the conception of gender

(re)produced through advertising reflects the sex/gender system that was developed in feminist theory and widely accepted in social sciences during the 1970s. This conception is based on the distinction between sex as a biologically determined category, and gender as a social construction and cultural elaboration of the biologically shaped sex difference. The conception implies that biologically given facts of sex determine whether the individual's body is female or male. This stable, dual and oppositional categorisation of sex, understood as an effect of natural forces, is also associated with heterosexuality as a normative practice. The 'naturally' sexed body and heterosexuality are taken as crucial constituents of gender identity. Although the body, and in particular the female body, is represented in advertising as an important site of intervention and self-management, the suggested body-shaping practices never come to problematise what is understood as fixed and naturally formed sexual identities and differences. The difference between femininity and masculinity in advertising is highlighted through representing gender-specific social roles and psychological predispositions as contrasting. For example, some of the typically female roles are depicted as those that are associated with the caring ethical regime, which is rarely, if ever, represented as regulating masculinity.

There is, however, one advertisement in my sample, that for 'Strongbow' cider, which is worth mentioning here because it can be read as an attempt to challenge this taken-for-granted assumption about the fixity and transparency of sex/gender identity and difference. The advertisement features what at first glance seems to be a very attractive woman, dressed intentionally to impress the male onlooker. She comes into the local pub and orders a pint of 'Strongbow' cider, instantly attracting the desiring gazes of all the men standing around the bar. With her beautiful face, long blond hair, perfectly proportioned and sexualised body and a flamboyant gesture, she seems to personify male erotic dreams. After just a sip of cider, and to the astonishment of all those men, this extremely sexually alluring woman transforms herself, by means of a loud burp, into a man or a transvestite, in any case into a form of gender identity which heterosexual men find confusing as much as repulsive. By constructing a distinctive brand identity for 'Strongbow' cider, one that is based on a strong masculine element endowed with the power to change the gender of its female consumer, this advertisement offers a conception of sex/gender identity which is most unusual in television advertising. The text attempts to draw attention to the more tentative and provisional nature of sex/gender/sexuality, through a rather jokey style of representation. Its humour, which is derived from the disconnection between common expectations and the application of a logic with an unexpected

outcome, may be read in more than one way: as questioning the conventional understanding of sex/gender, as mocking the unproblematic and self-assured male sexuality, or perhaps as expressing the male confusion caused by changing forms of femininity. But when interpreting this advertisement, one should bear in mind the highly polysemic potential of this type of humour, which can work to challenge the firmly established conception of gender as well as to reinforce it by suggesting how funny and ridiculous any other way of thinking about gender identity is. Precisely because this advertisement raises a very sensitive question, it uses a representational style based on humour, the polysemy of which produces ambiguous meanings.

Apart from this advertisement, the operation of 'modest' power in advertising reproduces and normalises the view of gender identity as unproblematic. Regarding the construction of female identity, this power works to outline and confirm conventional boundaries of femininity: it emphasises the significance of four discourses that speak of housework, motherhood, heterosexual couple relationships and the female body, while considerably marginalising the role of paid work. The choice of these discourses clearly marks the domains of action and the repertoire of subject positions that are regarded, by the advertising industry, as central to defining femininity; such a regulatory practice unambiguously associates female gender with the domestic space and the sphere of the private self. This is not to say that advertising never represents women outside this domain. Women do occasionally appear as participants in the public sphere, mainly as workers in the service sector. In that context, their capacity for accommodating and pleasing the customer is represented as their main professional quality, which signals an understanding of the female worker as, in fact, an extension of the hardworking housewife. As the textual analysis of my sample of advertisements shows, the figure of the 'career' woman, which was visible in the 1980s' advertising, is now almost completely absent, and women are rarely, if ever, addressed through a language that emphasises professional ambitions, career success or financial independence.

When addressing women as housewives, mothers, wives, sexual pleasure-seekers and body carers, advertising acknowledges that the woman can perform these roles in different ways within a regulated field of possibilities. As I argued in the conclusion to Part IV, ethical regimes which govern how these roles can be performed fall into two wider clusters. One cluster governs the way the woman experiences and fashions herself through caring for others. The other encourages and shapes the woman's concern with herself through forms of acting upon the body, narcissistic pleasures, fantasies about the ideal body/self and the practice of

sexuality. These two clusters suggest techniques and forms of understanding and relating to self that are hardly compatible with each other, although they both stimulate optimism, excite the desire for self-improvement and promise pleasure.

Another crucial point about how these clusters of ethical regimes are put into practice is that they are never mobilised within the same advertisement. Rather, one advertisement addresses the female viewer by activating only one set of ethical regimes. The reason for this may lie in the conception of gender discussed above and the way it shapes the intelligibility of the notions of the subject and self-identity. This point calls for some clarification. As mentioned earlier, I see the conception of gender in advertising as drawing on the system of sex/gender which was developed some thirty or forty years ago to challenge the dominant discourses of biological determinism. The system of sex/gender rejects the view of gender as biologically defined, but it nevertheless assumes that gender identity is fundamentally conditioned by binary and biologically determined sexual difference (Moore 1994, 36-53). The category of gender here represents a cultural means for interpreting sexual differences that are visible in features of the body and crucially linked to biological reproduction (Ivanovic 2003, 401).

As discussed in Chapter 4, this understanding of the relation between sex and gender was soon seen as problematic by feminist writers and anthropologists who, drawing on Foucault's work, came to challenge the starting premise of such a conceptual framework. The crucial move made by Foucault was to problematise the central notion of sex and explore the way it has been constructed within western discourses as a 'hard' biological fact that determines the body, its (hetero)sexuality and gender (see Foucault 1998; Butler 1990). Foucault's analysis demonstrated the social constructedness of sex and opened the door to a radically different way of thinking about the relation between sex and gender. Sex came to be seen as an effect of power and not as an ahistorical and determining factor of gender, which also meant that gender identity could no longer be theorised as a result of the biologically sexed, female or male, body (Butler 1990). From this theoretical understanding it becomes possible to explore the question of how the (sexed) body itself is being produced in and through cultural representations and regulatory practices, which the sex/gender system could not account for (Harding 1998).

The advertisers' (1970s' style of) separation of sex from gender, in effect, works to reproduce the notion of sexual differentiation between the two 'natural' categories of the body that correspond to two gender identities. Gender identity thus remains firmly rooted in the

naturally sexed body, without introducing any sort of internal difference through performing various socially defined gender-specific roles. Within this conception, as Butler (1990, 22-33) argues, gender becomes intelligible only in terms of the 'coherence' and 'continuity' that is established between biological sex, gender and (hetero)sexual practice. Crucially, this conception allows only the possibility for the naturally sexed body to inhabit one, discrete and unified gender position. This assumed coherence is then seen as productive of the internal coherence of the subject of gender.

By assuming a coherent sex/gender/identity, advertising equates the female subject with the unitary individual. It promotes just one, unified cluster of ethical regimes per advertisement, enabling women to construct a single gender identity and an undifferentiated subjectivity. But this leaves female viewers with the problem of the incompatibility between the two clusters of ethical regimes, each of which addresses and encourages the formation of the unitary self. Viewers are not offered any suggestion as to how to reconcile or coordinate, to a certain extent, contrasting ideals, forms of conduct, subjective experiences, aspirations and desires. If the advertising industry did mobilise both ethical clusters in one advertisement, that would expose their incompatibility. The point is that this incompatibility becomes a problem precisely because the industry works with the conception of sex/gender/identity that stresses the coherence and unity of the subject.

In contrast to that conception, the understanding of gender which emphasises the discursive construction of sex, the body and gender, proposes the view that the individual does not acquire a single and unified gender identity. Rather, the subject is engendered through the process of occupying multiple positions and negotiating a range of diverse gender definitions, which are productive of a fractured sense of the self. This means that, as the woman moves from one subject position to another, she becomes constituted around different configurations of responsibility, power, desire and pleasure, and is enabled to shape different forms of gender identity and subjectivity. If the advertising industry adopted this way of thinking about gender, then it would be able to put up the notion of the multiple subject and fragmented subjectivity.

However, the current advertising practice avoids representing the fragmentary woman within one text, leaving the female viewer with an unresolved problem of how to construct a unified gender identity by referring to two contrasting clusters of ethical regimes. An important question may be asked: Does this problem point to the current boundaries of the 'soft' mode of governance through advertising? Does the conception of unitary gender identity lurking behind the seemingly diverse images of women signal the current limitations of the way in

which advertising tries to govern the female viewer's conduct? This question seems to be implied in the argument put forward by a number of women practitioners in advertising and media industries who took part in the debate about mature women organised by Marketing Week (9 March 2000), which I discussed in Chapter 6. These practitioners claim that if the advertising industry is to address and influence mature women more successfully, it should seek to represent women in terms of the variety and complexity of roles they perform. The industry, they argue, should try to appeal to "different sides of a woman's character" that is manifested through different practices and ethical qualities, ranging from "being efficient at work to playing with children, to going out with the girls and being a bit frivolous and silly" (Marketing Week 9 March 2000, 58). This could be read both as an acknowledgement that advertising does not represent the complexity of multiply constructed female identity, and as a suggestion about how to overcome the current limitations of advertising to women.

While the above question is very large and cannot be explored in this thesis, another, equally difficult question can be posed: If advertising adopted the other conception of gender, one which emphasises the social constructedness of sex and the non-unitary nature of the subject and gender, what impact would that have on advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance? How would that transform the regulatory practice? One possible answer is that advertising would develop a significantly different governmental strategy, namely that which would seek to promote the plurality of ethical regimes guiding the woman to understand herself as fragmented and as capacitated to shape multiple identities and subjectivities. This prompts another question: Would advertising then try to provide the woman with advice on how to manage and integrate complex (and potentially contradictory) relations between fragments of self-identity? It is possible to suggest that it would. N. Rose (1992b, 150), for instance, analysed the role of expertise in psychology and psychotherapy in governing the 'enterprising self', arguing that "that the triumph of expertise lies in its promise to reconcile the tensions formed across the soul of the individual who is forced concurrently to inhabit different spheres". The meaning of 'different spheres' is here derived from Max Weber's analysis of 'spheres of existence' (spiritual, economic, political, aesthetic, etc.) that condition different 'styles of conduct' (Ibid., 149). So if the advertising industry followed the example of the experts Rose talks about, then it might seek to devise and promote some techniques for reconciling the disparate gender positions, definitions and experiences. But the advertisements I analysed show no sign of problematising these questions.

Games of 'modest' power, identity and techniques of guidance

My analysis of the workings of 'modest' power in its interaction with techniques of signification provides an insight into how it facilitates a 'soft' mode of governance of women through advertising, but it certainly does not suggest that this sort of governance successfully targets every subject it wishes to or that it achieves complete control over the conduct of its subjects. If it did, it would be misleading to call it 'soft'. It is 'soft' because it advances through the operation of 'modest' power that has no instruments for imposing norms and goals to which women as subjects of this governance must strive to achieve. It does not deploy techniques that try to coerce women into conformity by manipulating their capacities for meaning production and self-constitution. Rather, advertising as a 'soft' mode of governance recognises the capacities of women as viewers and consumers to act by choice, and it seeks to regulate their practice of freedom as identity. The basic instrument of such a regulatory practice is the selection of discourses that advertisements mobilise in order to contextualise the advertised product/brand within certain everyday practices and to connect it to a range of female subject positions and meanings of femininity. By analysing the mobilised discourses (on housework, motherhood, heterosexual couple relations, the female body and paid work), I sought to examine how the 'modest' power-representation nexus operates to propose ethical ideals, techniques of the self and criteria of evaluation that set parameters and give directions, according to which femininity can be constructed through various practices.

Two important aspects of 'modest' power characterise the way it is exercised through advertising with the aim to outline a space of responsibility, power, desire and pleasure that is represented as constitutive of femininity. One aspect deals with descriptions of what is regarded as normal, permissible, acceptable and socially worthy. To the extent to which 'modest' power seeks to articulate types of normativity and rely on the authority of normalising judgements, its operation can be said to have a disciplinary dimension. But it is important to emphasise that this dimension does not involve an overbearing and scrutinising disciplinary gaze which tries to produce docile bodies and subjectivities. For the focus and aims of 'modest' power are also akin to those that characterise what Foucault described as new pastoral power. I am not suggesting that these are two radically different types of power, as they both presuppose the subject's ethical freedom and capacities for change and self-improvement. Rather, these are two closely related dimensions of 'modest' power that can be discerned only for analytical purposes. While in its disciplinary modality, 'modest' power articulates relations of normalisation and subjectivity, its new pastoral dimension is concerned with assisting the

individual's efforts to fashion her conduct, experience, a way of being and self-identity in accordance with some notion of respectability, self-realisation and happiness. Tightly related to each other, both aspects of 'modest' power seek to target the individual's potential to cultivate, modify and transform oneself, not merely in compliance with a given norm but also in relation to the ideal of shaping a personally enjoyable mode of being.

The 'modest' power-representation nexus tries to activate such potentials of individuals through advice. Advertisements offer women various types of advice that translate ethical ideals and norms into detailed guidelines about techniques of the self, through which some concrete goals can be achieved while performing a range of everyday activities. Proposed techniques of the self may vary: from techniques which structure how the woman should understand, control and modify her emotional experience and conduct within various types of close personal relationships to those which guide her effort to enhance her authority within the domestic sphere; from techniques of proper cosmetic care and disciplining the body to those of narcissistic fantasising about the ideal self, and to those of using erotic capacities of the body in pursuit of sexual pleasure.

Though proposed advice and techniques have various practical foci and require different forms of ethical work, they all attach great significance to continual self-monitoring and self-evaluation. They all encourage the woman to turn an appraising gaze towards herself, implying that without exercising such a gaze, there is no possibility for improvement. For this gaze is concerned with assessing oneself in relation to the projected standards of caring, domestic efficiency and authority, maternal satisfaction, physical beauty, self-esteem, and erotic power and pleasure; it thus identifies certain imperfections that are to be corrected. In that way, 'modest' power works constantly to stimulate the desire for self-improvement as a crucial emotional and motivational force that guides the woman's relation to herself. This is the force that underpins the whole repertoire of desires that are represented as constitutive of femininity: the desire to be a caring, efficient and cheerful homemaker; to be a caring, playful and satisfied mother; to be loved and feel secure in a long-term relationship; to discipline the husband in some ways; to have a beautiful body and exert control over its processes and seductive powers; and to experience sexual pleasure and/or exercise power over men in erotic games.

Unlike the type of disciplinary power Foucault explored in 'Discipline and Punish', 'modest' power operating through advertising does not attempt to govern conduct through a mixture of micro-penalties and micro-rewards. The type of 'modest' power I analysed tends to

avoid using micro-penalties. Instead, it deploys the potential of micro-rewards to stimulate desire and activate the female viewer/consumer's engagement with meanings and pleasures of the text (and, consequently, in the governmental process). Micro-penalties or, perhaps, micro-warnings are sometimes hinted at, but their role is downplayed by a strong emphasis that is put on the reward, gratification and pleasure.

Micro-rewards are made visible to the viewer through the formulation of the product's benefit, that is, through representing the product as instrumental to achieving whatever is defined as a desired goal. This is to say that the product is represented in such a way as to act as a catalyst for the process that leads to some type of correction, greater satisfaction or improved self-esteem. The deployment of more subtle advertising strategies demonstrates that the product itself does not even have to dominate the imagery in order to represent its benefit as opening up the possibilities for personal improvement and greater satisfaction with the self. Not only does the representation of the product's benefit point to rewards and contain practical advice about how to achieve them, but it is also imbued with a highly optimistic mood. In that sense the formulation of the product's benefit serves as a technique of 'modest' power for motivating the viewer's willingness to follow the advice offered and for helping her attain desired goals, through which to shape and improve herself in a way that is socially acceptable as well as elegant and personally enjoyable.

By representing rewards and providing advice, 'modest' power also works to encourage the female viewer to analyse (though not necessarily consciously) the desirability of the reward and the significance of advice in relation to the commitment she is prepared to invest in suggested meanings and positions. This analysis is largely concerned with understanding and evaluating the potential of proposed ethical categories and practices to provide her with relative power and pleasure within a given relationship. However, this operation does not activate only rational and cognitive processes; it involves desire and affective responses stimulated by an air of optimism and various forms of potentially pleasurable reading. The representation of the product's benefits and the related ethical guidelines are thus inextricably linked with the ability of 'modest' power to invoke and instrumentalise pleasure. The offered repertoire of pleasures depends on the mobilising discourse, its central theme and the representational style of an advertisement.

For instance, some advertisements promoting caring ethical regimes often infuse the text with sentimental, cheerful and/or energetic mood to celebrate maternal pleasures and the ability of women to derive satisfaction from providing for and pleasing their family. Others

work with elements of suspense, surprise or humour following some textual and stylistic conventions that are characteristic of an action film, romantic drama or situation comedy; these advertisements seek to offer pleasures of light entertainment (and, in some cases, the pleasure of mocking the husband's masculinity), while acknowledging the housewife/wife's endeavours to maintain high standards of domestic hygiene and/or assert her domestic authority. In contrast to this, advertisements focusing on the woman's concern with herself usually deploy representational styles which stimulate narcissistic fantasies and/or eroticised pleasures associated with the care of the body, its erotic attractiveness and practices of sexuality. In one way or another, advertisements provide short instances of pleasure in order to entertain, excite optimism and entice the viewer into considering and evaluating the offered advice.

In its effort to govern the conduct of women as consumers, advertising produces a series of normative and entertaining images but the response of the actual female viewer to these images will depend on a complex set of factors conditioning the interpretive process. According to studies by Barthes (1982), Corner (1991) and Schroder (2000), for example, this process involves forging links between the perceived textual meaning of an advertisement and broader structures of personal knowledge, experiences and desires. It is through (re)articulating these links that some ethical categories represented in advertisements may affect the viewer's relation to herself. These categories may shape the way the woman cultivates her body, understands and conducts herself through performing a range of everyday, habitual practices; but they may also inform the imaginative repertoire on which she draws when evaluating her mental and bodily characteristics, ethical qualities and aspirations, experimenting with some alternative ideas about the self and fantasising about what she would like to become. By suggesting that advertising images stimulate desire and enter the space of imaginative playing around with self-identity, I wish to draw attention to the ability of 'modest' power to establish parameters which guide the female viewer's self-regulating capacities rather than mould, in some direct or simple manner, her subjectivity. The relationship between discursive forces that articulate 'the register of desires', to borrow the term from Rose (1989), and the workings of the individual's motivation and imagination, is surely very complex and beyond the scope of this study. What this study of advertising sought to explore was the content of the discursively constructed space of desire, power and pleasure and the way these discursive relations shaped by the operation of 'modest' power are put into practice to regulate ethical sensibilities of the female viewer/consumer through micro-rewards and pleasures.

APPENDIX

A VERY BRIEF REVIEW OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ACCOUNTS OF ADVERTISING

Rather than attempting to offer an exhaustive review of literature on advertising within the diverse field of cultural studies and sociology, the aim of this appendix is only to present my reading of a selected body of some of the most influential works in the domain. My approach to advertising is to a certain extent shaped in response to the ideas and arguments formulated in these works. It, therefore, seems necessary to discuss briefly main topics, research questions and lines of inquiry that structured various socio-cultural accounts of advertising.

The first section incorporates a number of studies (Packard 1957; Ewen 1976; Williamson 1978; Leiss, Klein & Jhally 1997; Jhally 1990; Wernick 1991) that problematise a range of questions about the persuasion, semiological structure and ideological functions of advertisements, and issues related to the role of advertising in establishing new relations of consumption, in manufacturing and promoting values of so-called consumer culture/society, and in remodelling the relationship between symbolic production and economy. The reason for grouping these studies under the same heading is their critical characterisations of advertising's ideological role in modern society. The second section deals with three studies which take rather different analytic approaches to advertising, focusing on the genealogy of advertising (McFall 2004), the representation of gender identities in print advertisements (Goffman 1979) and advertising as a complex institutional and symbolic practice whose social role is described in terms of "capitalist realist" art (Schudson 1984).

CULTURAL CRITIQUE: ADVERTISING AS MANIPULATION

Persuasion and management of consciousness

I begin with V. Packard's 'The Hidden Persuaders' (1957), which is one of the first studies concerned with what was to become a major theme in critical thinking about advertising. In this journalistic account of the problem of persuasion, advertising is approached as an institutional practice of covert manipulation of people as consumers. Packard focuses on what he regards as 'hidden' and devious forms of commercial advertising, and in particular its use of various tools of persuasion, implying thus that there is also another form of the practice which is not to be qualified in such terms. However, Packard does not say much about the

character of this non-devious form of advertising or the tools it deploys. What concerns him the most is the institutional use of psychiatric and psychological knowledge, which he sees as the main intellectual strength and the most important source of persuasive power of advertising. Packard reveals the manipulative nature of the practice by presenting a catalogue rather than analysis of the instances in which "mass psychoanalysis" and techniques derived from motivational research were deployed in order to penetrate the "depth" of consumers' psyche. Assuming that this type of advertising exerts influence on sub-conscious processes, he regards it as a form of covert manipulation which invariably succeeds in persuading consumers of whatever it is that advertisers or their clients want them to feel, think or do.

If one, for the sake of argument, accepts the view that advertisers are essentially concerned with addressing and manipulating consumers' sub-conscious anxieties, guilt complexes, impulsive drives or desires, the question still remains as to how it is possible to assess systematically the achievement of this ambition. This question was never an issue for Packard, as he expresses no doubt at all that advertising is always capable of attaining these highly ambitious aims. In Packard's account, advertising practitioners and their clients appear as insincere manipulators, whose enormous power resides in their (ab)use of expert knowledge about the secrets of human psyche. For him, the scientific status of this knowledge ensures the advertising's success in exercising a direct influence upon affective states and "unthinking habits" of consumers (Packard 1957, 11). In keeping with this conceptualisation of advertisers' power, consumers are here seen as an undifferentiated mass of isolated individuals, who are deprived of any identity and whose psyche is ready to be 'penetrated' the very moment they see an advertisement. It is as though the experience of reading advertisements transforms social subjects with complex identities, who show at least some degree of agency and instrumental rationality in other everyday practices, into passive, gullible and irrational consumers of advertised messages.

It is questionable whether Packard's view of consumers and the effectiveness of advertising's persuasion was ever shared by the advertising industry of the time. But it is possible to argue that Packard's conceptualisation of the advertisers-viewers/consumers relationship might have been influenced by the so-called 'effects' paradigm that emerged in the late 1930s in media studies to explain how media influence their consumers (see for example: Morley 1989, 16; Tudor 1995, 82; Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998, 4-11; Glover 1985, 372). The basic assumption of this paradigm is that mass media communication exercises enormous power upon a defenceless mass audience by imposing messages in the form of a 'hypodermic

syringe'. Packard's account of the effects of advertising (manipulation) in terms of a direct and unproblematic imposition of advertisers' messages upon the sub-conscious levels of the individual's psyche accords well with this model. His mechanistic understanding of the operation of power within advertising discourse, coupled with the notions of gullible mass audience and of advertisements as firmly structured texts, rejects any possibility to consider a variety of factors which condition the dynamics of the text-audience relationship.

Although media studies moved on to develop different, less simplistic paradigms of understanding "what the media do to people" and "what people do with the media" (Moores 1992, 137), Packard, as well as many commentators of advertising, never problematised the question of effectiveness of advertising persuasion or of the power of mass media that carries advertising. He, like so many critics after him, assumed that the use of different bodies of expert knowledge and the amount of money invested in advertising should be taken as a sort of guarantee that advertising always effectively achieves its ambitions. With few exceptions (for example: Schudson 1984; Nava 1997, Lury & Warde 1997, McFall 2004), this belief has had an enduring hold on critical thought about advertising. It is this belief that prevented many analysts from paying attention to the crucial problem of how exactly, through what processes and mechanisms advertising becomes effective, and in what terms this effectiveness may be analysed.

Manipulation of consumers, or more specifically, consumer demand, is also a central theme of Ewen's 'Captains of Consciousness' (1976). But unlike Packard, Ewen is more interested in the content of advertisements and the changing economic context of advertising rather than in secret persuasive techniques per se. For him, advertising is primarily an institutionally organised endeavour to manufacture symbolic attributes of objects in order to influence consumer relations to commodities and, consequently, their purchasing behaviour. In his illuminating historical analysis of advertising, he traces what appears to be a radical change in the industry's strategy that occurred in the 1920s. That was the time, Ewen argues, when advertisers realised that they had to encourage a change in the sphere of consumption in order to respond to a dramatic increase in industrial production. As a result, the advertising industry came to modify its approach to creating cultural meanings of goods. A novel advertising strategy that was then developed saw the consumer and not the product as its central concern. References to consumer habits, aspirations, desires and fears were now seen as crucial to enriching symbolic associations that shape cultural attributes of goods. Ewen writes that it was then when industrial goods came to be understood in terms of their increasingly important role

in communicating novel experiences, prestige and social status. What he is especially concerned with here are ideological effects of this new advertising strategy. As advertisers were driven (by the changes in economic forces) to adopt a more pedagogical stance in promoting new patterns of consumption and more individualistic aspirations, Ewen argues that they, in fact, made a move from the management of consumer demand to the management of consumer consciousness (Ewen 1976, 18-19).

Unfortunately, Ewen is not interested in explaining the mechanisms through which this 'management of consciousness' actually works in practice. He offers a detailed historical analysis of the economic conditions that encouraged a shift in advertising practice, demonstrating how the industry reshaped its practical strategies in response to these wider processes and institutional relations. This point and especially Ewen's observation of the industry's development of a pedagogical approach to addressing desires and aspirations of the individual consumer, informed my view of advertising as a practice that seeks to govern the consumer by providing advice about 'how to' do a range of everyday practices. But Ewen's model of how advertising exercises its powerful ideological control and contributes to the production of "commodity self" (Ewen 1976, 34) seems somewhat simplistic. The increasing ideological power of advertising is, in his account, related to its capacity and growing skill in creating cultural meanings that are dissociated from the technical description and instrumental utility of commodities. This manufactured desire-laden symbolism works to 'seduce' consumers while reducing their subjectivity to the needs that can be satisfied only through commodified consumption, which, ultimately, serves the interests of capitalist production.

This is also, in broad terms, the standpoint of Marcuse (1968), who criticises the indoctrinating influence of advertising (and the entertainment industry) in terms of creating 'false' needs that come to govern modern forms of consumption and, consequently, the production of what he calls the 'one dimensional man'. The consumer is here conceptualised as a victim of the operation of the definitional power of advertising and of the economic power of capitalist industry. This thesis is further elaborated in a number of Marxist informed critiques of advertising. With certain conceptual variations, they all share a similar theoretical position which I see as problematic because it involves an understanding of society as a unified and totalitarian entity; of power as a monolithic, one-directional and more or less coercive force; of ideology as a system of false representations; and of the subject as a victim of ideological subjection. From such a theoretical perspective, as Nava (1997) points out, the production and consumption of advertising appear as governed by a 'monolithic force' which acts upon the

naïve viewer/consumer who is left with no possibility to actively construct meaning or resist the manipulation of advertising.

Meaning of advertisements and their ideological effect

The most widely read cultural accounts of advertising inspired by but also going beyond some of the limitations of this Marxist thinking is 'Decoding Advertisements' by J. Williamson**.** It deserves special attention because of its considerable influence on shaping broad parameters of the critique of advertising as ideology (for example: Leiss et al.1997; Jhally 1990; Wernick 1991). This book is also of a particular interest to me as it explores, in great detail, questions of signification, power and the subject, though from a theoretical perspective which I would like to clearly signal my distance from. For me, the most inspiring idea coming from this study is Williamson's claim that advertising does not produce only meanings of products but also subjects. Concerned with an examination of the relationship between advertising, meaning, reality and the work of ideology, her approach is characterised by an exclusive focus on individual texts of advertisements while showing a complete lack of interest in the institutional framework or socio-economic context of advertising.

Informed by Barthes' semiology, she sets out to decipher an enormous number of print advertisements in a search for the meaning that is encoded in the structure of an individual text and hidden under the superficial layer of diversified imagery. To reveal this hidden meaning, she examines a series of signifying processes which operate to translate statements from "the world of things into a form that means something in terms of people" (Williamson 1978, 12). As a method, semiotics is concerned with the analysis of formal relations between the elements that produce meaning, and Williamson makes a truly impressive use of that method. 'Decoding Advertisements' often astonishes the reader with such a complex and imaginative analysis of signifying procedures through which an advertised object is made to mean something and to transfer that meaning to viewers. The book offers a detailed semiotic analysis based on the elaborated idea of exchange of meaning in an advert between a chosen image and/or feeling, represented object that features in the imagery, an advertised product and the viewer.

Williamson's central argument here is that this exchange of meaning, which is not an ideologically neutral process, is made possible by the semantic structure of the text. It is this structure that signifies, as it determines a possibility to create new meanings by turning signifieds into signifiers. In this process, so the argument goes, objects and persons are continuously re-used and re-contextualised so that they lose their authentic historical meaning.

Although advertisements can seemingly incorporate anything, the structure of signification always works in such a way so as to produce semantic forms that refer to "hollowed-out systems of meaning" (Ibid. 168). Such symbolic forms are, according to Williamson, what ideological systems are made of with the aim to conceal or deform knowledge about society and things that matter.

But, unlike Packard or Ewen, Williamson does not look at advertisements as ideological 'brain-washing', as myths imposed on the viewers from above. On the contrary, her conceptualisation of exchange of meaning involves readers as participants in the process. On the one hand, she does acknowledge the active role of readers but, on the other, she sees this participation as completely determined by structural mechanisms of the text and, thus, as only seemingly productive. The problem is that, by adopting this hard notion of textual structure, Williamson leaves no space for conceptualising some degree of textual polysemy or any other, non-textual factor which might lead to differential readings of the same text. She understands readers' engagement as a process that is activated and manipulated by the way in which advertisements address their readers. They are 'hailed' as individuals and, at the same time, as members of a group, the identity of which is already textually constructed exclusively in relation to its imaginary connection with an advertised product. According to Williamson, this 'hailing' or 'appellation' is a crucial textual mechanism that channels the reading process and provides the key to its ideological nature.

Drawing on Althusser's understanding of how ideology works through practices of signification, Williamson uses the concept of 'appellation' to explain how readers get recruited into signified positions and produced as 'already' subjects of a particular kind. 'Appellation' is what determines conscious choices as well as unconscious identifications with a set of assumptions inscribed in the text. These assumptions are formulated as 'already' true, as statements that need not be questioned, which makes them, in Williamson's opinion, irresistibly persuasive. There is no possibility for any negotiation of meaning, let alone ironic reading. Although Williamson admits that that some idea of freedom or, rather, an illusion of freedom is vital to the operation of ideology, she argues that readers' participation in the 'vicious circle' of meaning exchange in advertising becomes actually an act of consumption rather than active production of meaning. And, consumption is here clearly defined as a practice of passive reception of the fixed and unambiguous message inscribed in the text of an advertisement. It is, therefore, devoid of any productive effort and of any practice of freedom. Such an understanding of the reading process and meaning production is, however, seriously

questioned by many audience reception studies (see, for example, Radway 1984; Seiter et al. 1989; Brunsdon 1997; Gray 1992, 1999), which draw attention to the relative instability of the meaning of various forms of popular media texts and emphasise a much more active participation of readers. These findings based on ethnographic evidence have significant implications for understanding the relationship between media texts (advertisements) and their readers as well as for theorising the ideological process, which needs to involve some degree of interpretive and ethical freedom of its subjects.

Williamson's analysis of ideology is, however, based on the idea of a total ideological closure of the advertising text. She maintains that advertising is ideology because it produces a structure of meaning that conceals knowledge about nature, history, society and the subject without leaving the slightest possibility for a different interpretation. As a structure that talks of objects and subjects of consumption, advertising is heavily criticised by Williamson for being a speech that avoids references to "genuinely significant things" (Williamson 1978, 168). She claims that advertising provides a framework which can be filled with any content precisely because it lacks the 'real' one (Ibid. 178). In this semantic framework, meaning is abstracted from the 'reality' of material circumstances, which Williamson regards as a procedure that conceals 'truth' and deforms knowledge. As such, advertising discourse is "dishonest" (Ibid. 174) and manipulative; it reproduces deformed values and definitions which cannot be negotiated, challenged or resisted in any way. There seems to be no 'escape' from their ideological effects of advertising except, perhaps, for those subjects positioned as cultural analysts.

This view of advertising as an effective mechanism of imposing and perpetuating 'false' meanings makes sense only insofar as its underpinning theoretical axioms remain unquestioned. But if one challenges the assumptions that regulate this way of thinking about relations of representation, knowledge and truth, then Williamson's chain of reasoning based on the opposition between meaning and reality becomes difficult to sustain. Another problem implied in Williamson's account of advertising as ideology relates to her conceptualisation of consumption derived from a dualistic mode of theorising the social. In her system of explanation, consumption is an irrelevant object of inquiry into the social; furthermore, it is a domain that stands in some kind of contradiction to what constitutes the social 'reality' as defined by relations of production. This opposition between economic production and consumption of commodities is, then, established as a key analytical tool for ordering a series of relations between material conditions and symbolic production, between the 'real' and

imaginary, and between 'true' and 'false' definitions. In accordance with this conceptual dualism, Williamson also emphasises the difference between two categories of identities. Accepting a notion of identity as a single, unified and stable entity, she treats identities constructed around patterns of consumption as ideologically constituted, that is, constructed through an "imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser as quoted in Williamson 1978, 40). It follows that these identities are not seen as authentic when compared to 'real', production-based identities.

Apart from this theoretically problematic concept of identity, Williamson's dualistic argument can also be criticised for discarding such a wide and diversified domain of social practices of consumption as a priori productive of 'unreal' and 'false' definitions/experiences/identities. Again, her position is only tenable within the boundaries of Marxist critical thought that is based on the idea of causal primacy and ethical superiority of production. Starting from different theoretical assumptions, some empirical research on consumption in anthropology and cultural studies (see, for example, Douglas & Isherwood 1979; Appadurai 1986; Miller 1997; Mackay 1997) propose a radically different view on the question of consumption. Far from treating contemporary forms of consumption with disdain, these studies approach consumption as an active process, as one that is constitutive of a range of everyday practices and as such an increasingly important object of inquiry into relations of representation and processes of identity formation, socio-cultural differentiation and social regulation. To conclude, while my reading of 'Decoding Advertisements' made me critical of Williamson's understanding of how relations of power, ideology, meaning and identity operate in advertising, my approach to advertising was inspired by Williamson's starting premise, which is that advertising representation affects the production of the subject.

Shaping the relationship between subjects and objects of consumption: 'masks for goods' and commodity fetishism

Williamson's work has had enormous influence on many critical studies of advertising which sought to examine how advertising works to regulate the way in which people relate to goods. This has become one of the major themes that shaped the approach to advertising within social sciences (McFall 2004, 37-45). Unlike Williamson, whose focus was limited to textual analysis of advertisements, other writers dealing with this theme broadened their approach to involve wider institutional and socio-cultural aspects of advertising as well as its historical development (Leiss et al. 1997), political economy of meaning (Jhally 1990) or the role of

advertising in fashioning a broader 'promotional condition' of contemporary western culture (Wernick 1991). All these authors maintain that advertising affects the relationship between subjects and objects of consumption much more strongly than any other institution or social practice and that the changes introduced to this relationship have far reaching social consequences.

For Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1997, 1), advertising is a "privileged form of discourse" through and about objects; its role in the 'theatre of consumption' is to produce meanings of products, depict ways of consuming them and define the notion of satisfaction. Following a Marxist tradition established by Williamson, they describe this process of symbolisation as a "systematically misleading" communication which does not speak of "essential aspects of our producing and consuming activities" (Ibid. 326). Instead, it creates a set of "masks for goods" understood as 'cultural frames' that fashion the construction of symbolic values of goods and, consequently, shape behavioural patterns of consumers in relation to goods (Ibid. 327-348). Leiss, Kline and Jhally discern four types of such masks which they term idolatry, iconology, narcissism and totemism. They argue that although these techniques of masking may overlie one another, they can also be taken as markers of different stages in the development of advertising in the last hundred years.

Framing advertising as a method of masking 'essential aspects' of important social practices, Leiss, Kline and Jhally's position comes very close to the 'false symbolism' thesis, according to which "goods should have no meaning over and above their functions as conceived in strictly utilitarian terms, because any additional meaning is false" (Ibid. 23-25). This line of reasoning overdramatises the contrast between functional utility and symbolic uses of goods, and, furthermore, it presumes a hypothetical condition of purely instrumental relation to objects in which subjects and objects of consumption would not or did not affect the identity of each other. This essentialist thinking is, however, hard to sustain in the face of the widespread theoretical emphasis which anthropology of consumption places on the premise that subjects and objects become intelligible only in their rather more complex, interdependent and changeable relationship constructed through a variety of historically specific discourses (see, for example, Appadurai 1986).

Jhally's subsequent work (1990) on advertising and commodity fetishism modifies this thesis in a certain way and proposes a much more theoretically elaborated Marxist analysis of how advertising structures the relationship between people and things. In 'The Codes of Advertising', Jhally starts from the assumption that this relationship is universally articulated

through the interplay between two basic categories: that of use and that of symbol. He argues that in the historically specific context of the post-industrial market economy, the relationship between people and things is regulated by an economic imperative to control consumer demand, which is being achieved through symbolic processes of advertising. This production and control of symbols is what, according to Jhally, explains the enormous economic as well as cultural significance of advertising. Drawing on the theory of fetishism which is primarily based on Marx's work and, to a lesser extent, on the appropriation of the concept of fetishism in psychoanalysis and anthropology, Jhally's focus is on the process through which commodities acquire a status of fetish in the context of exchange in the capitalist marketplace. He elaborates on the role of advertising in subordinating use-value of products to the strictures of exchange-value by inserting meaning in the 'hollow shell' that is left after capitalist production (rather than the textual structure of advertisements as in Williamson's account) emptied commodities of their 'real' meaning. He concludes that: "Advertising fills" what "[p]roduction empties" (Jhally 1990, 51).

However, Jhally does not see the 'real' meaning of objects as equated with their use-value; nor does he treat the use-value as inherent in commodities themselves. Rather, he rightly acknowledges the symbolic constitution of utility (27-35). The target of his critique is something else, namely this double process of 'emptying' and 'filling' of the meaning and the advertising's capacity to fetishise commodities. Jhally argues that this fetishisation is achieved through the process of mystification of the exchange-value of commodities. This process works first to conceal the fact that value can only be produced by people as social actors, and then to represents commodities as possessing some value in themselves, which is what consumers then come to worship. In this way, the authentic meaning of commodities, one that is related to "real social relations objectified in them through human labour" (Ibid. 51), is rendered invisible under the layer of meaning composed of imaginary social relations. Consumers have no capacity to 'un-mask' this process, since Jhally regards watching television advertisements as a form of labour. Following the logic of industrial production relations, he describes this labour as a compulsive and alienated activity and, as such, devoid of any possibility to negotiate meanings and appropriate their uses. Though Jhally presents a highly sophisticated analysis of how advertising manipulates meanings and thus shapes consumers' relationship with commodities, I wish to emphasise that my approach to advertising does not draw on his account as it rehearses the thesis of advertising as a practice which manufactures false

meanings and deprives the consumer of any interpretive competences or indeed capacities for practising some form of freedom.

Logic of the totalising promotional condition and the role of advertising in the production of 'consumer' culture/society

I need to discuss one more influential study that follows the tradition established in Marxist critical thinking about advertising. It is 'Promotional Culture' by Wernick (1991), whose central concern is to examine the logic of the totalising promotional condition of contemporary culture. An important part of this exercise is the analysis of the imaging of consumer goods in the marketing and advertising process, the result of which is the production of 'commodity-sign'. Wernick sees this entity as a specific sort of product compared to its pre-industrial forms. Its specificity is constructed through the manipulation of images over-laden with social significance which become inseparable from the use-value of the product; the process also involves forging another link that connects the 'ego' to the product, shaping thus the relationship between the two. Wernick shows no interest in exploring actual practices or mechanisms through which this linkage is facilitated and maintained. Instead, he offers only a generalised analysis of advertisements, putting forward a rather simple proposition. He argues that the standpoint of consumption, which is encoded in the design of advertisements, creates a perfect correspondence between the attributes of the consumer and those of a commodity and "imprisons the subjectivity it projects in a totally commodified ontology" (1991, 35).

Rehearsing a well-known view of advertising as a coherent and unified structure of (misleading) meaning, Wernick criticises advertising, together with cultural industries and media, for representing social relations in terms of an apolitical egalitarianism of a 'happy consumer'. He assumes that the representation of the 'happy consumer' directly affects the actual production of the subject as a 'happy consumer'. With a typically Marxist disdain for consumption and a Frankfurt School-style of theorisation of the subject as a stable and unified entity characterised by freedom, consciousness and autonomous agency, Wernick strongly protests against such devastating effects of advertising ideology. Not surprisingly, he points to the production "as human praxis – the satisfaction of human need through non-alienated self-activity…" (Ibid. 35) as an alternative to this 'commodified ontology'. But this suggestion only gives rise to a whole series of questions. First, it is not quite clear what practices constitute this ethically privileged domain of production. If it is work (as Wernick offers some hints), what kind of work deserves to be qualified as 'non-alienating'? And, how does the operation of

power facilitate the relations of this unrestrained 'self-activity'? And, how do we differentiate between alienated and non-alienated forms of self-activity? And then, there is also a problem of defining 'human need'.

Although Wernick does not discuss this problem at length, he seems to understand 'human need' in essentialist terms as referring to some sort of self-evident, authentic condition of human beings that is not susceptible to discursive construction and historical change. As such, this 'need' is seen in opposition to 'want', a notion which Wernick describes in terms of the unlimited desire that is created by advertising and the media. This suggests that want and desire should automatically be categorised as alienating precisely because they are amenable to external influence and change. From a position informed by poststructuralist theory of the subject, the above proposition appears as a highly problematic understanding of the relation between subjective motivation and discursive practices through which it is shaped and regulated. But even if one refrains from problematising the questions I raised, Wernick's suggestion that 'production' alone can satisfy the totality of 'human need' remains unclear.

Having briefly sketched some of the main themes and concepts that structure the critical approach to advertising largely informed by Marxist concepts, I would now like to address very briefly a widespread view which sees advertising as a crucial culprit in giving rise to 'consumerism' or 'consumer society'. I mention this idea because it is rather influential in cultural criticism and, at the same time, I wish to signal that my study of advertising does not raise any of the questions that this idea implies.

The view of advertising as central to sustaining 'consumer society' seems to be a logical extension of the argument based on the idea of the loss (hollowing out, masking, deforming) of authentic meaning and the advertising's capacity to manufacture new ideological structures of meaning. Precisely because advertising operates to deform 'real' meanings and conceal 'real' relations, it is held responsible for facilitating the emergence of new relations of consumption that are characterised, first of all, by an increase in the volume of consumption. Another crucial change brought about by advertising is a dramatic decline of utility-driven consumption and a proliferation of its more symbolic forms. These new forms of consumption, dissociated from 'real' needs (and utilitarian-based satisfaction) and connected to symbolically manipulated wants and desires, do not affect only the relationship people have with commodities. They are also seen to have a whole set of far-reaching social and cultural implications.

Ewen was among the first critics to suggest that advertising's practice of representing goods as symbols of prestige and status (rather than their functional utility) have a transformational effect on social life and the production of 'commodity self'. He was soon followed by many others. In the introduction to 'Social communication in Advertising', Leiss, Kline and Jhally write that one of their main concerns is to deal "with the more general issue of the decline of older European cultures and the creation of a twentieth-century 'consumer culture'" (1997, 5). As an important actor in this 'social drama', advertising comes to generate new meanings of satisfaction and well-being and new understanding of the relevance of consumption for the individual. The idea that 'consumer culture' is built on the 'ashes' of traditional cultural institutions is repeated in Jhally's work as well (1990). For Jhally, advertising is implicated in the wider transformation characterised by the decline of "community, class and religion" as defining features of social life (1990, 192) and the progressive expansion of the influence of marketplace institutions. As a practice of manufacturing exchange-value of commodities, advertising has made a significant contribution to this process in which commodity consumption becomes a basic practice through which meaning is constituted. The result, he argues, is that in advanced capitalism culture and commodity can hardly be distinguished.

Wernick offers a similar interpretation of the thesis. Imaging of goods (advertising) is vital to the spreading of promotion not only as a commercial tool but also as a wider cultural process, which is coupled with the expansion of the market as an organising principle of social life. Wernick maintains that the rise of promotion simultaneously affects the very nature of objects themselves and causes a change in the mode of producing and circulating signs, the process which he terms 'cultural commodification'. His central argument here is that a range of cultural phenomena conveying promotional messages has become so extensive that it tends to engulf our entire 'symbolic world'. Promotion is a commercial instrument put in practice through a mode of communication, but it has also become a dominant structuring element of signifying practices. Wernick talks of 'promotionalism' in terms of a broad transformational force that leads to commodification of non-commercial domains, cultural homogenisation and a novel cultural predicament of building identities in the context of unstable cultural meanings that are deprived of any "genuinely expressive intention"(Wernick 1991,192). This promotionalism, according to Wernick's thesis, comes to disturb the very relation between culture and economy. The outcome is some kind of 'mutation' in which "the ('superstructural')

domain of expressive communication has been more and more absorbed… into the integral workings of the commodified economic 'base'" (Wernick 1991, 185).

McFall (2004, 95-97) rightly identifies, as the main problem with this line of argument, a dualistic opposition between categories of culture and economy. Advertising can be blamed for blurring the boundaries between the symbolic and material production only if these two spheres are conceptualised as separate and autonomous domains. But, as McFall notes, it is questionable whether these domains could have ever functioned as autonomous. The way this question is formulated and interpreted depends, of course, on the definition of both culture and economy, which, like so many widely used categories, tend to be notoriously ambiguous of referent. If we accept that the notion of culture describes processes of meaning making, it then remains problematic how the economic sphere can ever function and become intelligible outside the concepts, definitions, values and criteria of evaluation that are culturally constructed (see also McFall 2004, 95-97). One can hardly describe any economic activity in purely material and/or commercial terms or in terms of a practice which is devoid of any connection to notions of value, utility or even beauty (which are cultural categories par excellence). The adoption of this dualism between culture and economy in the critique of advertising, as McFall writes, does provide "powerful and elegant ways to think about advertising and its role and effects", but it results in "reducing and simplifying what are in practice plural and contingent relations" (2004, 97).

Following McFall (2004, 91-97), it is possible to argue that critical literature on advertising is structured by several forms of dualism. She warns that these relations should not be understood as tidy and distinctive analytical tools but, rather, as descriptive indicators of a significant degree of similarity that can be perceived in the way different themes related to advertising have been treated in the critical discourse. One of the most easily perceived forms of dualistic reasoning describes the opposition between societies 'then' and societies 'now' (Ibid. 97-103). The description of the assumed difference between these unspecified historical epochs is informed by a widespread model of modern life/culture/society that is, in Miller's words (1997, 21), characterised by "a kind of fall from grace" when compared with the past. According to this model, people once, probably in the era before the emergence of mass media communication, lived in stable communities with stable values and means of organising their experience. They built stable identities that did not conceal 'real' social relations. They were much more active in the processes of meaning making and semantic structures themselves were much more stable and more expressive of 'authentic' meanings. Advertising 'then' did

not regulate the way people relate to goods and this relation was defined by the principle of utility. Commodities with their artificially manufactured symbolic meanings did not play such an important part in cultural processes. And, finally, culture and economy were autonomous and clearly distinguishable domains. Advertising was also different 'then' from what it is 'now'.

The widespread inclination to comment on present forms of life/culture/society by comparing it with a somewhat nostalgic account of the past expresses what McFall identifies as an epochalist tendency in critical literature (McFall 2004, 97-98). This is a tendency to construct a period-based history in search of some overarching principle that structures an epoch and, hence the development of any observed phenomenon that took place in the epoch. Within such a perspective, advertising has been accorded an important historical role and, at the same time, seen as being significantly transformed. It has become a common place to state that, in the course of the twentieth century, advertising has both dramatically proliferated and increased its power of persuasion, which accounts for the equally dramatic expansion of 'consumer culture'. Shaped by the seductive force of advertising, modern consumption is perceived as a largely irrational, alienating and homogenising practice driven by desires and structures of meaning that are otherwise alien to consumers. Such a perception and explanation of modern consumption practices and of the role of advertising expresses a nostalgia for an imaginary past that is constructed according to values and anxieties of some late twentieth century humanist intellectuals. It does much less, however, to explore the concrete workings of advertising.

The development of the present form of advertising is in many accounts regarded as an outcome of the evolutionary process characterised by a steady increase of persuasiveness. This, in turn, is most commonly associated with the refinement of signifying techniques capable of achieving a much greater sophistication of visual content of advertisements. It is often emphasised that visual elements have become much more important means of communication than verbal messages and that there has been a general shift in formulating a selling proposition from the one based on information (technical description, functionality, availability, price, etc.) to those more emotionally compelling forms. The prevalence of images and forms of emotional appeal, so the argument goes, works to enhance the seductive power of advertising. As McFall points out (2004, 45-60), the increasing persuasiveness thesis is much too often derived from generalised comparisons between modern advertisements and their historical predecessors that are perceived to be more innocent, more product-information oriented, more based on a

'logical' (informative) argument and, thus, more appealing to the rational consumer. But, surprisingly, this comparison is rarely, if ever, supported by a detailed historical analysis. The exception is McFall's study.

SOME DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO ADVERTISING

Genealogy of advertising

For the sake of continuity with the topic I have already started discussing, I begin this section with the most recent work - 'Advertising: A Cultural Economy' by McFall (2004). Based on the historically informed investigation of advertising, this is by far the most systematic attempt to challenge the claims made by cultural critics about modern advertising. The aim of the book is to examine critically some central theoretical ideas and methodological procedures that came to frame critical thinking about advertising in the field of sociology, media and cultural studies, and to offer an alternative view on the development of contemporary advertising. It does not seek to suggest a definitive solution to the debate on the nature, effects and historical impact of advertising but, rather, to problematise some central assumptions and uses of history of advertising around which there is an unusual amount of agreement among the commentators.

McFall's attempt to deconstruct the dualistic nature of the advertising critique identifies three dominant theses constructed to describe the distinctiveness of contemporary advertising. They refer to the increasing pervasiveness of present-day advertising, its progressive persuasiveness, and its capacity for confusing the commercial (economy) and the aesthetic (culture). McFall's detailed analysis of these theses demonstrates that their development is rooted in a largely assumed history of advertising and wider cultural transformations that are often understood in epochal terms. The main problem with referring to this history as a source of explanation is that its details have rarely been an object of serious analytical inquiry. McFall also draws attention to the theoretically problematic notion of epoch or period, which has much too often been loosely defined as though the distinction between 'now' (modern life) and 'then' (the past) is somehow self-evident. The question of outlining a more precise historical periodisation is not, however, the central issue for McFall. Rather, the crucial question she asks is whether it is adequate at all to theorise modern life or modernity as a neatly defined and coherent period in history.

McFall here follows Foucault who suggested abandoning the approach which sees modernity "situated on a calendar" as an epoch that comes after a "more or less naïve or archaic premodernity" (Foucault 2000a, 309). Instead, Foucault's proposition is to speak of modernity as an 'attitude', as something close to the Greek formulation of 'ethos' that involves ways of thinking, feeling and relating to the world. Foucault does not see much use of trying to distinguish neatly between the periods of premodernity, modernity and postmodernity. The key question for him is to explore "how the attitude of modernity…has found itself struggling with attitudes of 'countermodernity'" (Ibid. 310). For McFall and some other authors (see McFall 2004, 101-102), this idea opens up a possibility to get engaged in a historical or genealogical analysis that is not based on theoretical dualisms which inevitably lead to a sort of caricature of concrete historical processes.

As a response to the widespread 'epochalist' approach to understanding contemporary advertising and its essential differences from its historical forms, McFall sets out to explore the 'genealogy' of precisely formulated topics and constitutive elements of advertising. These include different forms of early institutional settings and relations between advertising practitioners, businesses and the media, a range of pre-twentieth-century advertising media, definitions of the advertised product, the deployment of images, rhetorical strategies and techniques of emotional appeal as well as the use of aesthetic knowledge in the production of advertisements throughout the nineteenth century. Included are also some mid-nineteenth century highly critical remarks on the omnipresence of advertising messages, which often seem amazingly similar to the present day concerns about how pervasive advertising has become. The greatest contribution of this illuminating study is McFall's historical analysis which is problem- or topic-based rather than oriented towards reconstructing a linear narrative of development. Hence, she does not seek to trace a singular process of transformation that ultimately leads to a historical change in advertising and/or a shift of historical epochs.

Instead, her exploration of pre-twentieth century advertising puts forward three main points. The first is that the present development of the advertising industry should be seen not as a function of the epochal shift towards a 'consumer' society but as governed by the complex interplay between specific business requirements, institutional arrangements and regulations. The second point concerns the thesis about contemporary advertising being extremely persuasive while its pre-modern forms were largely informative. McFall's analysis of the use of images, persuasive styles of constructing verbal appeal and forms of eliciting emotional response, clearly shows that these elements, which so many analysts and commentators

consider as defining of contemporary 'persuasive' advertising, are not all the exclusive preserve of the late twentieth century practice. And, thirdly, she points out that the question of 'persuasiveness', as defined in terms of the above mentioned elements, should always be analysed in relation to the concrete historical context of advertising, that is, as affected by the interaction between technological possibilities/limitations, relevant politico-economic factors and specific media cultures.

McFall's study does not propose an answer to the question as to whether pre-twentieth century advertising, as a whole, was more, less or equally pervasive and persuasive than its contemporary form, as this would be a question formulated in epochalist terms. This highly informative study provides a more historically informed approach to understanding the interaction between specific epistemological, technological, organisational, institutional and legal factors which conditioned the development of modern advertising practices without suggesting a general outline of a singular evolutionary process. It sheds interesting light on the complexities of historical and organisational practices of the advertising industry, challenging the widespread assertions about the unprecedented and alarming persuasiveness of present-day advertising. Its critical treatment of the theses that were so influential in shaping many socio-cultural accounts of advertising and its ideological effects, informed my wider understanding of certain practices and relations that characterise contemporary advertising.

Gender advertisements

Another influential study that cannot be situated within the mainstream of critical literature on advertising is Goffman's 'Gender Advertisements' (1979), a textual analysis of a delineated topical problem – representation of gender definitions in print advertising. Goffman's central concern is with textual strategies of what he calls 'gender display'. He pursues this concern through three precisely articulated research tasks: to uncover the prevalent gender stereotypes in print advertisements of the time, to identify techniques of visualising them, and to reveal the dominant model that structures the regime of representing gender attributes and relations.

One of the most important analytical tools in his exploration of these tasks is the concept of ritual, a condensed and easily recognisable form of codified social behaviour that is seen as a single fixed element of 'social situations' defined as ceremonies. Goffman draws together a Durkheimian notion of ritual (its function of affirming the basic social arrangements) and ethological explanation of how animals make use of simplified and

formalised patterns of behaviour in order to communicate efficiently their intentions and emotions. Every culture, Goffman argues, develops a range of patterns of this 'indicative behaviour' that become specialised and routinely used to perform the function of informing. He terms this type of behaviour 'display' and then talks of gender display as a conventionalised and stereotyped portrayal of the "culturally established correlates of sex" (Goffman 1979, 1). The central argument is that advertising texts can be approached as ritual-like displays constructed through a selective use of attributes and definitions that are judged as adequate for creating formalised social 'portraits'.

Formal textual characteristics of advertisements are, for Goffman, largely responsible for constructing a particular kind of gender display. Because advertisements have to transmit their messages quickly, their communicative content has to be clearly sketched and structured in terms of broad, simplified and abstract categories. Aware of this requirement, producers of advertisements try to identify already existing ritualised forms of displaying gender specific attributes, skills, capacities and interests and utilise them to create images that are characterised by a higher degree of ritualisation than the interactions performed in actual life. This is, in Goffman's view, the most distinctive feature of advertising aesthetics, which he describes as 'commercial realism'. Hence, advertisements can be seen as a sort of 'hyper-ritualisation' of social behaviour, which enables audiences to recognise the code easily, although not necessarily consciously.

The main finding of Goffman's detailed textual analysis is that the representation of this 'hyper-ritualised' version of gender definitions and relations is modelled according to a specific cultural conception of relationships within the family and, more precisely, those established between the parent and child. The author claims that this code projects a male vision, within which women occupy the same position as subordinate men, and both of these categories occupy the same position that is designated for children. His analysis of some prevailing signifying practices (formulated as: the presentation of the relative size of different actors, visualisation of the so-called 'feminine touch' and function ranking, portrayal of family relationships, depiction of relations of subordination and representation of the 'licensed withdrawal'), clearly demonstrates the hierarchical arrangement of the above mentioned subject positions. As Goffman believes that this regime of representation has strong connections with social reality outside advertising, he, in fact, makes an important move to address the issue of politics of gender relations.

The significance of 'Gender Advertisements' as the first piece of work to address systematically the question of gender representation in advertising imagery is enormous. It is regrettable though that Goffman did not pay much attention to the question of how gender attributes and definitions represented in advertisements actually affect their readers. His conceptualisation of gender as cultural interpretation of fixed sex differences and the assumed process of acquiring gender identities are, however, theoretically problematic. The same could be said for his reflective or mimetic understanding of representation, as advertisements, like other forms of representation, do not simply reflect the structures of meaning which are established and firmly fixed in the world outside representation. But, unlike many social/cultural theorists and commentators on advertising, Goffman refrains from providing a general critical explanation of advertising and its irresistible ideological influence on modern identities and forms of social life. It is in this particular respect that I find Goffman's study inspiring.

Advertising as art of 'capitalist realism'

'Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion' by Schudson (1984) is the last work I discuss here. Schudson's object of analysis are not advertisements but advertising as an institution engaged in the marketing of goods, as an industry and as a system of symbols. This book influenced my approach to the study of advertising in two important ways. First, by emphasising the need to take into consideration the institutionally formulated intentions of advertising practitioners, their knowledge, the organisation of their work and uncertainties of the advertising business as much as the complexity of communication and the plurality of audiences' response to advertisements. Second, it is the way Schudson addresses the question of 'effectiveness' of advertising. Unlike so many commentators in critical literature (and some of the most enthusiastic apologists of advertising), Schudson is deeply sceptical about the capacity of advertising to manipulate the minds of consumers. Rather than using the notion of manipulation, which can hardly be made operational to facilitate an analysis of how repeated advertising affects consumers, Schudson makes an important attempt to explore the problematic of the effectiveness of advertising, the meaning of which has so often been taken as self-evident.

Schudson starts by commenting on the data generated by media companies, market-research firms and some advertising agencies that tend to promote the perception of advertising as enormously powerful practice. He does not take these data as expressive of some 'objective'

facts about the nature of advertising but, rather, warns that they should be viewed in the light of institutional interests of those agencies and compared with the findings of some economic analyses of the effectiveness of advertising that do not suggest any single or consistent conclusion (Schudson 1984, 15-16). Schudson proceeds by asking how exactly 'power' or effectiveness of advertising can be defined. His suggestion is that this problem can be addressed by asking another question: "Does advertising help sell products?" (Ibid.16). Schudson is very careful in assessing the connection between different types of advertising and sales. National consumer goods advertising, which is the form of advertising that attracts the most attention of cultural critics, differs from classified advertising in that the above connection is very remote. The effect of (national consumer goods) advertising on sales of specific goods is, Schudson claims, clearly limited. Even when advertising is judged as successful in this sense, it is seen by many advertising practitioners to work because it reinforces the existing purchasing habits and not because it manages to create new needs (Ibid. 92). Schudson's reading of the advertising trade literature and the interviews he conducted with a number of people involved with the industry led him to suggest that advertisers cannot afford to see viewers/consumers as gullible as most cultural critics imply they are. In his view, advertisers tend to value consumers' personal shopping experience and their critical judgement much more than most cultural critics would admit.

But, most importantly, Schudson points out that a direct effect of advertising on sales should not be mixed with other effects of advertising, namely that related to its "general role in shaping consciousness and providing a framework for thought and feeling" (Ibid. 43). Crucially related to the possibility of achieving this type of effect, according to Schudson, is a specific representational feature of national consumer goods advertising, and in particular television advertising. He describes this feature as a highly abstract style of representing places (which tend to be recognisable as 'postcards' rather than specific physical spaces) and people (actors do not usually represent particular persons but, rather, 'social types' or demographic categories with a more or less predictable consumer patterns). Admitting that the representation of a 'flat' and 'abstract' world is, to a certain extent, the outcome of an effort to construct meaningful connections between an advertised object and certain demographic groupings, Schudson argues that this type of abstraction (typification and idealisation of characters, settings and social situations) is central to the aesthetics and intentions of advertising.

The question of relationship between representation (advertising) and reality is a key issue for Schudson here. Advertising, he argues, is neither a mirror reflection of reality nor a

construction of a fully fictive world. His suggestion is that advertising should be seen as operating on a plane of reality which he calls 'capitalist realism' (Ibid. 209-234). 'Capitalist realism' is defined as a "set of aesthetic conventions" that are related "to the political economy whose values they celebrate and promote" (Ibid. 214). Through the analogy with socialist realism, Schudson tries to show that advertising comes to meet the same aesthetic and moral demands as Soviet art, such as: the simplification and typification of reality, the presentation of ideal forms of life, references to larger social categories, an optimistic outlook on life and orientation towards the future. It is of great importance to him to acknowledge "that advertising is art – and is often more successful artistically than commercially" (Ibid. 223). It follows that advertising may affect viewers/consumers in the same way in which art tends to affect its readers/admirers.

But what does such an art form as advertising do, how does it affect its consumers? Schudson is well aware of the complexity of the question and he does not try to propose a simple answer. He writes that: "However blatant the content of the art, its consequences remain more subtle" (Ibid. 230). As one way of understanding those consequences, he follows the suggestion of N. Frye, a literary critic who looks at advertising as a form of irony. This leads Schudson to put forward an idea about advertising creating a space in which it becomes possible to engage in the 'ironic game' "it plays with us and we play with it" (Ibid. 227). The important aspect of this game is that it does not demand a belief in advertising's explicit claims or statements. Advertisements are not to be believed literally. Whether reading television advertisements is characterised by a genuine aesthetic distance or just an 'illusion of detachment' as suggested by different critics, is a question for debate. But what is important for Schudson is a proposition that advertising "succeeds in creating attitudes because it does not make the mistake of *asking* for belief" (Ibid.226).

Another proposition, with which Schudson seems to agree to a certain extent, comes from Krugman, a leading market researcher, who insists that the 'special power' of television advertising is essentially linked to the low-attention regime of watching. Drawing on the research in psychology of learning, he claims that the 'low-involvement learning' is not without an effect. Because advertisements do not inspire belief and are generally held to be silly, so the argument goes, people watch them without activating their perceptual defences (which play an important part in reading texts that are regarded as important or serious). This has the so-called "sleeper effect", which explains why viewers do not have to be 'persuaded' of something in order to alter the structure of their perceptions (Ibid. 226-227). Schudson now

turns to Geertz's understanding of art as a kind of commentary on the lived experience, to argue that the effect of advertising is to shape a way of experiencing, a way of rendering experience into words, images and doctrines.

Schudson sees advertising as playing an important role in channelling the understanding and organising the experience of institutional structures that govern people's lives without assuming that advertising has some kind of monopoly or almost magical power in this domain. And this marks an important move away from theories of persuasion, manipulation and totalising effects of advertising on society and the subject. Regretfully, Schudson is not interested in exploring the mechanisms through which this rather broadly defined role of advertising comes to shape concrete everyday social experiences. In spite of that, he makes a significant contribution to changing the terms of socio-cultural understanding of advertising.

Conclusion

With some notable exceptions, much of the work on advertising I discussed in this brief review was highly critical of advertising. Putting it very crudely, the analysis of advertising was more often than not governed by the view that advertising as a whole (especially in its modern forms) produces undesirable or largely negative kind of cultural, ideological and/or social effects. In one form or another, the advertising as manipulation thesis came to dominate the research in this domain. The thesis has been explored in a number of directions marked by different but not mutually exclusive areas of topical concern. Although my study of advertising was not based on this thesis, the reviewed works influenced my understanding of advertising in many ways.

For example, Packard's study drew my attention to the importance of knowledge that is used and developed by the advertising industry, though I do not agree with his belief in the almost magical power of advertising to affect directly the sub-conscious level of what he sees as unified consumer psyche. From Ewen's account I drew several important points regarding the focus on consumer rather than the product as a central concern of modern advertising strategies; the view that the 'power' of advertising becomes increasingly connected with the industry's ability to represent the advertised object in terms other than its technical properties or instrumental utility; and, above all, the perception of advertising as providing a form of pedagogy, that is, guidelines about how products should be used and what sorts of relations such uses facilitate. This perception resonates powerfully with an idea that emerged from my

ethnographic observations of how advertising and some other instances of 'soft' governance work through the 'how-to' form of advice about various everyday practices. The main influence of Williamson's account on my approach to advertising is her central claim that advertising does not produce only meanings but also subjects. This is an enormously important thread of my argument, which is inspired by Williamson's work but constructed from a considerably different theoretical understanding of the question of power operating in advertising and its effects on identity and subjectivity of the viewer.

However, I should also note that the above studies as well as those by Leiss, Kline and Jhally and Wernick also led me to develop a critical approach to a range of theoretical ideas and problematisations associated with the advertising as manipulation thesis. My reading of the explanations of the wider effects of advertising on contemporary culture/society also made me wary of sweeping generalisations regarding the advertising's role in sustaining 'consumer' society. In effect, I did not use that concept, nor did I problematise such a role of advertising. As I explained in the Chapter 2, my interest in advertising was much more technical.

Located outside the advertising as manipulation paradigm, the works of Schudson, Goffman and McFall are important as they modified significantly the critical discourse on advertising without proposing all-encompassing critical explanations of social/cultural role of advertising. The way they ask new questions, or reformulate old ones, offers a different angle of vision and serves to enrich our understanding of a number of issues concerning advertising. For me, Schudson's work was most inspiring. It led me to believe that a study of advertising must involve a certain focus on intended objectives of advertising and forms of institutionally shaped relations of power and knowledge; I also followed Schudson's cautious approach to understanding the effectiveness of advertising. Although I did not seek to analyse advertising as a form of art but, rather, as a form of ethical guidance, I drew on Schudson's observation that advertising represents ideal and normative forms of life and identities through the imagery that is imbued with optimistic mood as an important characterisation of how advertising attempts to influence the consumer's conduct.

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