**ADVERTISEMENT ANALYSES HALL OF FAME**

The following submissions, on various advertisements, were chosen for their astute and well-grounded perspective as paradigms of theory-informed analysis. The essays are organized by advertisement analyzed.

A great thank you to all your talented peers who graciously agreed to share their work with the rest of the class!

**Gillette Advertisement Analysis**

Aliko Aurora

Psychoanalysis - Jacques Lacan

The theory of Lacan about the unconscious, our own self and our relationship to our mother can help us reach the deeper meaning of Gillette’s short film.

First of all, Lacan used Saussure’s idea about the signifier and the signified to understand the unconscious. According to Lacan, the unconscious is built like a language because people associate an experience/concept (signified) with another experience/concept (signifier) in an arbitrary way. Each experience turns into a sign and each sign is associated with another sign. This way we make a set of associations called ‘syntax’. This syntax belongs into our unconscious and is, therefore, unreachable, yet very powerful. The society we live in will develop the ‘language’ of our unconscious. Most of societies are patriarchal, so they use any means they have to promote the Phallus, the idea of male supremacy. Derrida used the term ‘Phallagocentrism’ to show that language reflects the supremacy of the Phallus. And since our unconscious is built like a language, it will definitely absorb ‘Phallagocentrism’.

In the video, we see that men (signifier) are associated to violence, rape, assault (signified). The video presents news, music videos, films as well as instances of real life, where men are both violent and figures of authority. It also uses language to generate the ‘fear of the Phallus’. For example, TV presenters use words like toxic masculinity or bullying when referring to men. This way, people unconsciously make a connection between men and violence/authority. In the video the combination of images and language shows how our idea of the world is formed. As a result, society teaches us to fear men, because every man stands for violence and authority.

Furthermore, Lacan recognizes two stages of development: the pre mirror and the post mirror stage. In the pre mirror stage the baby is completely connected and identified with the mother. It cannot understand itself as a separate human being neither recognizes its body parts. The baby is confused, because it feels one with the mother and believes its brain is far more developed than its body. However, it also feels valuable and important because of its mother’s devotion and love. All these combined to Freud’s Primary Narcissism and the need to stay alive, lead the toddler to the image of the ideal I. The ideal self makes us feel that we are better than what others think of us, because we are taken care of and our brain is far more developed than what others can see.

In the post mirror stage (3-5 years) the child becomes aware of its own self. It sees itself through a ‘mirror’ which is a metonymy of how ‘Others’ see us. The child becomes a sign and therefore, a subject. This second level of existence is the social self and is related to how we are perceived by ‘Others’. We are defined by what other people see in us. We realize our existence because we are signified by ‘Others’. This way we establish a relation between ourselves and society. However, both the ideal and the social self are just impressions and illusions. Our real self can never be approached. The only way to approach it is by using language, which is a sign, so it will automatically turn the real into a sign. Thus, the real self can never be understood.

The moment we enter the post mirror stage we are fundamentally split between our ideal and social self (double self). We acquire subjecthood, but we are divided into how we see ourselves and how ‘Others’ see us. This fight between the ideal and social self is very precisely depicted in the video. In the beginning of the film we see men who are desperate and disappointed when they see how they are perceived by society. They feel like their social self is not identified with their ideal self. They see themselves in a mirror, which shows the differentiation between their ideal and their social self. We immediately identify with the characters of the film because all of us believe that we are better than we actually are. The speaker of the video uses this image as well as words like ‘best’, ‘believe’, ‘change’, ‘right’ to reassure us that they believe we can be the best version of ourselves. It is quite clear that the creator of the video affects us emotionally by supporting that we can reach our ideal self. The video uses this ideal image to get across its message for change and gender equality. However, we should always remember that the primary aim of a company is to sell its products. Therefore, it is implied that by using Gillette products all men will reach their ideal self and prove society wrong.

However, this is only an illusion created in the film. We can never approach our ideal self because it is only a sign. Moreover, it exists in the pre mirror stage, where we can never return. When we enter the post mirror stage, we have to let go of our mother (object A) and subject ourselves to the masculine authority. To fill that void we spend the rest of our lives searching for anything that can provide us with the same pleasure and affection our mother did (object a). However, this romanticized idea of our mother can never be substituted. People cannot accept this loss and trauma, so they try to substitute their mother with anything that offers them pleasure. In this attempt, people take advantage of everything society offers them (glory, money, fame, knowledge and sex) in order to reach their mother and their ideal self. Although it is known that we can never reach Object A, the video creates this illusion by presenting a variety of objects a. For example, we see chairmen who probably seek for recognition and money, actors for fame and protagonists in a music video for sex and money. However, the most important object a are Gillette products that are indirectly promoted. By watching the video, we feel like Gillette will lead us both to our ideal self and Object A and therefore, the pre mirror stage.

In conclusion, it could be said that the short film uses a series of psychoanalytical theories to convince men to change their behavior, but most importantly buy Gillette products.

Aliko Aurora

New Historicism – Michel Foucault

The theory of New Criticism can help us understand how the concepts presented in the video are naturalized and what we can do to challenge them.

New Historicism approaches history as a text which is flexible and open to many interpretations. It shows that there is no absolute truth, because everyone interprets the text differently. However, it also depicts how people use history to justify violent or discriminatory actions. They also tend to construct concepts that present their unjust actions as timeless and immanent, therefore moral. This idea is seen in the video, where women are objectified and harassed. We understand that society has constructed the idea that men can disrespect, humiliate and assault women. The speaker uses the phrase ‘it’s been going on far too long’, which shows that these discriminatory actions have always been conducted. These actions are, thus, converted to a historical fact: ‘men have always been violent towards women and that is a fact, so there is nothing that we can do’, which some people may use to justify their violence.

New Historicism assesses this behavior as wrong and offers us alternative ways of approaching reality. First of all, we should understand that society has the power to naturalize concepts and discourses and present them as given. Therefore, we should criticize any ideology promoted by the status quo and see whether it is really true. Another thing that we should take into account is that society uses tradition, god and nature to present ideas as universal and timeless. Thus, it hides their origins, so that we absorb these concepts more easily. This idea is central in the video, because we see that men change their behavior and try to eliminate violence. If the idea that men should mistreat women was natural or true, then men would not be able to change it. The fact than men, in the second half of the video, reassess their behavior shows that every notion is socially constructed and therefore, can be easily left behind.

Michel Foucault was a queer theorist – activist who supported that the Truth exists only as a concept that is constructed by those in power. These people have the power to construct ideologies that serve the purpose of sustaining the system. This means that nothing around us is natural, true or right. Everything is constructed by humans and thus, is changeable. For instance, the fact that these men manage to change their behavior shows that it was not instinctive (biologically explained) but based on social constructions (socially explained). The establishment uses a variety of media to brainwash society. In the video, we see that people have been repeatedly exposed to the idea that women hold an inferior position in society. For example, TV, which is a powerful medium, presents women who are being harassed and do not react against it. In another case, it presents the stereotype of the sexy half naked young women who parties all the time. This proves that these discourses are so powerful and so extensively repeated that they are even internalized by women.

However, in the video we see that this discriminatory behavior towards women is starting to change and does not represent 21st century societies. This is related to Foucault’s theory about the carceral. He explains that society is a prison of beliefs because it oversees its members/prisoners and it punishes them. Everyone is being observed in the prison of society. People know that they are being observed, so they change and control their behavior with respect to society’s norms. This prison of beliefs gathers information concerning its members which automatically gives it power and a superior position. Society can also punish its members through laws. However, that is usually unnecessary because, through observation, society stops the crime before it is even conducted or perceived. The feeling of being observed teaches us to police ourselves.

In the video, we see TV presenters referring to issues of sexual assault, the ‘metoo’ movement and toxic masculinity. We understand that mistreating women is no longer promoted by society. The men watching themselves in the mirror know they are being observed and that their behavior is not socially approved. Maybe, to some extent, these men change their violent behavior or do not adopt one, because they know they are being observed by the carceral and they fear punishment. They realize that society’s behavior towards women has slowly started to change and therefore, they also have to change. It is implied that violence and sexual harassment are only a characteristic of previous times. The advertisement proves Foucault’s idea about Truth and the carceral, because we see that the same people who, in the beginning were violent, later on change their behavior. For example, we see a father approving of his son’s violence towards other kids, but then advising him not to behave that way. Therefore, the concept of the Truth is socially constructed and bound to change, while people are trained to behave based on social norms.

Foucault suggests that we challenge the ‘truths’ of the carceral. This might be another reason why men leave behind their violent behavior. They use the power and knowledge provided by the carceral to reassess their behavior. When they realize that everything around them is socially constructed and therefore, changeable they begin to challenge these discourses and constructions. They understand that society is ready to leave behind misogyny and toxic masculinity and they practically contribute to this transition. This means that they change their behavior and encourage others to do the same. For example, the father protects a bullied child and inspires his son to do the same. This way, they create a carceral that is less oppressing and includes more people.

To conclude, New Historicism helps us realize how everything around us is socially constructed and motivates us to challenge concepts presented as given.

Dimakopoulou Zoe

Marxist Criticism: Luis Althusser

There is a divergence between the interaction of people in the real world and the manner in which an individual interprets these conditions of existence in order to meet his/her own needs. The latter is what Althusser describes as Ideology and propounds that it is actually the imaginary relationship of an individual with the world enforced by the Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses. Institutions such as the school, the church as well as the family and by extension the social environment have already prepared the specific principles people are going to have and thus the system is sustained through Ideology. That theory can find application in the Gillette advertisement as the subjects seem to succumb to the Subject, that is, people internalising what the institutions of power prescribe.

As mentioned above, both the Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses distort reality, each of them in a different way. Technologies such as the television presented in Gillette belong to the Ideological State Apparatuses and it is shown how easy it has been for the stereotypical characterisations for women to spread like wildfire. Such misconceptions are depicted as normal and, as a consequence, the boys and men being exposed to them are unconsciously affected. Just as the superstructure provides just enough wage to the base to help keep up with their lives, people are given such education (both from the school and the film industry as in this case in particular) so as not to be in a position to question it. They are focused on what it is introduced as supposedly reflecting reality and therefore they pass it on to others who may be their social group (the part in the advertisement about «boys will be boys») or their own family and a vicious circle is thus created.

The Ideological State Apparatuses apply ethical persuasion by indicating moralities and immoralities (and as a result the individual is labelled either moral or immoral) to keep an Ideology alive over time. However, that does not necessarily mean that they will not use violence to make people act in a particular way. The boy in the advertisement that is dubbed «freak» and «sissy» is an indicative of verbal abuse by other children who themselves have been taught that the definition of man has to be one who is strong, inscrutable and establishes relationships of dominance with women (that he is being called «sissy» may even indicate his peers’ disapproval of his homosexual identity). That process of name-calling does not only signify that a particular code of behaviour has been established and forcibly accepted, which in that case is the macho culture, but also uncovers the result of the recognition of the Ideological State Apparatuses, the process of interpellation. The fact that the boy’s peers are that irritated by his identity, his train of thought and desires, reveal that first they themselves have accepted and assimilated the paradigm of macho masculinity as well as having recognised their own selves this way. It is that very Ideology that has shaped their parents and many generations in general (a fact that can be implied by the black and white television as well) and it is ready for people to absorb it even before birth. That absorption is attained at a fast pace since it does not give to the individuals the benefit of the doubt, it is stored in them as a total norm and it becomes the way they interpret their own relationships and society at large. In that respect, they have the impression that they act of their own accord when, in actuality, replicate a behaviour, an Ideology which has been represented as normal long ago (the “boys will be boys” instance and the one with the man getting ready to utter inappropriate comments the minute he casts a glance at the girl are apposite).

The Ideological State Apparatuses conceal their origin, they conceal the need for control and discipline behind the norms each society has. The moment people recognise in themselves all the formative influences they become subjects. The advertisement by Gillette itself attempts to convey an Ideology, a new means of generating meanings, reassessing the quality of their interactions with the other people and establishing different conditions of existence.

Kapralou Aikaterini

An Exploration of Mimesis and Catharsis

In the ad “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be” by Gillete, we watch a series of snapshots of ways in which gender expectations and norms affect the way men act. The ad concludes with the hope that men can be better versions of themselves and teach others to improve as well. This can be tied in with Aristotle’s theory of mimesis, the didactic nature of art.

According to Aristotle, humans naturally tend to imitate others, and they learn through that imitation. A child playing house, for example, copies the domestic dynamics they have seen and learns how to behave accordingly. We see this idea explicitly in the end of the video: when three men do good deeds by breaking up two fighting boys, helping a kid running from bullies and stopping another man from harassing a woman, the camera focuses on the young boys watching. They look at the men with admiration, realizing these are the kind of people they should emulate. This reading is supported by the narrator ending the video by saying that “the boys watching today will be the men of tomorrow.”

This positive effect of mimesis, however, is not exclusive to the characters in the video. The creator has constructed a version of reality that is entirely plausible. This is achieved by the use of already existing found footage, like the news broadcasts and old cartoons, as well as very typical phrases and scenes. The phrase “boys will be boys” is one such example - the use of multiple men repeating it further emphasizes how common it is. Furthermore, while the scenes of a music video filled with women wearing bikinis and a man groping a woman followed by a laugh track in a comedy show are not from one specific source, they are so ubiquitous in pop culture that they stand in for all of them. By drawing from all these different aspects of real life, the creator showcases a specific perspective of the world that adds weight to what we are watching. As a result, we have plausible possibilities, the ideal form of organic mimesis.

By presenting reality in this way, the audience sympathizes with the experiences on screen, feels pity and fear, and wants the various situations to be resolved. While more mundane than classic tragedies, the actions presented register to the audience as great deeds, especially in the case of the bullied boy. When the men finally act in the end, we experience catharsis. We feel relieved because what we recognize to be the right thing has been done, the great action is completed.

Through this catharsis, the audience comes to the moral of the video, the anagnorisis. Art, according to Aristotle, can teach us how to be better, it improves us through catharsis. It uses people’s natural inclination for imitation and their joy to learn in order to teach them something good. This ability of art to teach is what makes it a good thing. Men “need to hold other men accountable”, perform a positive version of masculinity in their lives.The video argues that the newfound awareness of sexual harassment and assault cases can serve as a motivator for men to reevaluate the ways they behave, “big and small”. Even in bad situations, there is something to be learnt. By framing the ways the men act at the end of the video as good and noble, through both the camerawork and the music, the audience is motivated to act like them. Moreover, by applying the concept of mimesis to the young boys, as explored previously, the male audience comes to understand that by emulating the men of the video, they can provide their sons or younger brothers with a positive role model of what it is to be a man.

In conclusion, by taking full advantage of the visual and auditory means at their disposal, the creators of the video construct an environment that amplifies the fear and pity their audience feels in order to create a stronger catharsis, that will in turn inspire a positive and productive imitation in their audience.

Kapralou Aikaterini

Gender Performativity and Masculinity

In the video “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be” by Gillete, the concept of masculinity is put in the forefront, being one of the first words spoken when it starts. With its focus on male gender roles, the ad offers a concentrated example of how men are expected to perform their gender and how that view of gender is perpetuated in society.

In one scene, two boys are fighting on the ground. As the narrator says that we have been “using the same old excuses”, one of the men at the barbeque shrugs and says that “boys will be boys”. That same line is repeated by an ever-growing line of men, and is an example of gender roles being justified by naturalization. This kind of essentialist thinking rationalizes that certain characteristics connected to gender are natural and inherent to someone based on their biological sex. In this case, it argues that aggression and fighting is natural to men – and that by extension, it is of no use to try and stop the fighting because “boys will be boys”. If a specific trait is inherent in a person - or a whole group of people - then it cannot change. It is therefore logical for men to be expected to be aggressive or competitive - it is “natural”.

A natural thing, it could then be argued, does not need to be socially reinforced. A falling apple does not need punishment or convincing to reach the ground. Gender roles and expectations, however, are often portrayed and modeled in media, showing people what the correct way to act is. The music video and the comedy show both showcase heterosexuality as an expected part of male gender performance. In the case of the music video, it is specifically hypersexual heterosexuality. The male singer is meant to be understood as worthy of admiration because he is surrounded by attractive women that - we could assume - are attracted to him. In ways such as this, heterosexuality and sexual conquest are defined as intrinsic aspects of male gender performance. The three teenage boys watching the music video are probably coming to the conclusion that if this idea of masculinity is repeated so much in the media around them, then it must be true, and they are learning from it.

Deviation from gender expectations is also punished. In one of the scenes, a mother is hugging her son while text messages on screen call him a “Freak” and a “Sissy”. The perceived failure of the boy to conform to gender roles has led to him being bullied and insulted by his peers. Going against the rules set for a person’s performance of gender results in feelings of disassociation or retribution by those around them.

So, if rules regarding the performance of gender are so deeply established in society and deviation from them is punished, how can they be changed in the way the ad suggests at the end? According to Butler, the accepted standards for gender performance need to be stretched, little by little, so that divergence from them will not be considered as a punishable offence.

It can be argued that the men’s actions at the end of the ad fit this idea, although in their own way. While they all do good deeds - helping a bullied child, stopping fights between both men and boys, stopping men from harassing women, empowering their daughters - they can all be interpreted to fit into already existing aspects of male gender roles. They are acting in a protective way, by stopping violence and showing accountability, fulfilling in a way the role of a man as protector. By giving the audience the ability to understand their actions in a familiar, uncontroversial way, the video offers an opportunity to redefine aspects of masculinity in a new, positive light, and thus slightly change what is expected of masculine gender performance.

Kapralou Aikaterini

Masculinity and the Social Self: A Lacanian Analysis

As one watches the ad “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be” by Gillette, two things become clear to them. Firstly, much of the video relies on the assumption of a shared context, a shared translation and understanding, for the events taking place on screen. Secondly, the camera often focuses on the act of watching. So, how do these things connect with Lacan’s ideas?

According to Lacan, the unconscious is built like a language. In language, a concept - a signified - is tied to a word, its signifier – we associate the image of a razor with the word “razor”. Similarly, everything one goes through becomes a sign associated with its own connotations based on one’s experiences. All of those signs combined then create a dictionary that dictates how a person reacts to and understands the world. For example, in the ad, we see a man interrupt a woman in a work setting and start explaining what she was already saying. Except, we do not see him give that explanation – we only hear the phrase “what I actually think she’s trying to say”. What follows that statement is not needed for us to understand what is happening because the signifier of the experience shown on screen exists in a lot of people’s mental dictionaries as “mansplaining”. The connection between the signifier and everything that has been associated with it is made the moment the audience hears the emphasis given to the word “actually”. Similarly, while the phrase “boys will be boys” is said in a relatively innocent context in the video - two boys fighting at a barbeque - it immediately brings up for the audience other circumstances where it has been used, the most alarming of which being cases of sexual harassment. Therefore, due to this - assumed shared - common dictionary of situations, phrases and experiences, the video can show brief interactions and still successfully get its message across to the audience.

As previously mentioned, a theme throughout the ad is people watching something, whether that is the news, a TV show, a music video, themselves or others. According to Lacan, a pivotal moment in one’s development is the mirror stage, when a person realizes they are an individual separate from the mother and thus they create a sign for the person they see in the mirror, their social self. The mirror in question is not necessarily an actual reflective surface; it can also be other people – how one fits among others, how others see them. One's social self is influenced by those around them, the way they are treated and how they see others treated. The social self reflects back what one has received in their upbringing.

We see that process very clearly towards the end of the ad. A video is shown briefly of a father holding up his daughter to the mirror and instructing her to repeat “I am strong”, thus influencing her social self. Likewise, when a man breaks apart the two fighting boys, he tells them that “we don’t treat each other like that”. By including himself in that statement, he is attempting to teach the boys how they should act by example, so they will treat others with kindness too. The hopeful note on which the video ends relies on this idea of one’s personality being formed through their surroundings. If “the boys watching today will be the men of tomorrow” then the treatment and the lessons those boys receive will shape their social selves and thus help them develop into people who show kindness, respect, and responsibility.

Kapralou Aikaterini

Visual Studies: The Watched and the Watcher

An undeniable reality of visual media is that they are meant to be watched – we are invited to look at the protagonist and his love interest, to witness his adventures. While a successful movie or ad will allow us to forget its artificiality, the question remains: who is meant to look and what are they looking at?

According to Mulvey in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, traditional filmmaking tends to position the man – on screen and in the audience – as the bearer and creator of meaning, while the woman is the image to be looked at. This separation of roles spreads to the scopophilic pleasure one gets from the screen. Narcissistic pleasure, the pleasure of identification and admiration, comes from the male characters and the voyeuristic pleasure of aesthetic appeal and sexual desire comes from the female characters. The gaze of the camera and the audience is assumed to be a male one.

In the ad “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be” by Gillette, we see flashes of movies and TV shows playing. A jury of men whistling at a beautiful woman in a cartoon, a man groping a woman in a sitcom, and a woman dancing in a bikini in a music video – in every instance, the woman is not the agent. She exists in those scenes to be looked at or touched, to be desired by the male characters and the assumed male and heterosexual audience. Indeed, when the camera pans out, we see that it was three teenage boys watching the screen and that the studio audience of the sitcom is mostly men. Later in the ad we witness the result of viewing women through the male gaze in such a way, as existing only to satisfy male desire. A woman at a pool party is told to smile by a man – simply because he is attracted to her and wants her to smile, she should do it, regardless of what she wants. We see, then, this voyeuristic view of women come full circle, from its existence in the media to the real-life attitude that created it.

On the other hand, the audience of both the ad and the in-universe media is meant to derive narcissistic pleasure from the men they watch. In contrast to the woman in the music video, who is filmed from a higher angle, the man is shown from a lower one, making him seem bigger as he makes gestures and takes up more space on the screen to appear “cooler” and more admirable. The catharsis the ad ends on and the motivation it seeks to instil in the viewer rely on this narcissistic pleasure, that the audience will identify with the on screen hero and enjoy watching him do the right thing – that by extension they, too, did the right thing or could do it. While the ad criticizes the view of women through the male gaze, it adheres to its view of men and uses it to its advantage.

Similarly, through its framing choices, the ad acknowledges the existence of the male gaze and calls men to make themselves and other men what they gaze upon. As mentioned above, the audience of the TV screen and the sitcom are predominantly male, as are most of the characters in the ad – the instances mentioned previously are most of the appearances female characters make during its runtime. This places men as both the watched and the watcher, the recipient of the gaze and its source. By creating this mirror-like situation, the ad asks men to look at themselves and their behaviours, at voyeuristic pleasure and actions, at what they view as signs of strength in men.

Kdhairat Yasemin

Sigmund Freud, “Creative Writers and Daydreaming”

There are some parts of Freud’s theory that can be applied on this advertisement. The most important one of them is the constant fight between the forces of the id and the superego, two of the three parts of the human psyche. The id is the pleasure-driven, immoral part of the self, while the superego is the socially compliant part; the id is inherent in the self, while the superego is socially constructed.

So, an explanation for the nasty behaviours of men towards women and towards each other, as seen in the commercial, is that it can be a result of the fact that men are not encouraged to control their id as much as women. While women are expected to behave, and as a result, train their superego, uncontrollable and vulgar behaviour from men is excused because “boys will be boys”, which is why during the grilling session, at first, none of the dads steps in to stop the fight between the two boys. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that in the scene where a little boy is getting bullied through text probably by other boys his age, it is a woman who comforts him.

Another part of the commercial that relates to Freud’s theory is seen when three men are watching TV and changing the channels, and each channel shows variations of the same phenomenon; men in a superior role and women in an inferior one; the vintage cartoon, the sitcom, and the video-clip all have a feature in common, and that is the sexualisation and objectification of the female body. For Freud, the purpose of art is often the catharsis of the artist’s emotions, so when something immoral happens in a work of art, it is not seen as ugly as it would in real life, because, firstly, it is not real, and secondly, the artist has the necessary tools and means to make a normally tragic event look aesthetic. According to Freud, the catharsis of emotions that art provides the artist with is a result of the satisfaction and the pleasure of the id, because art gives us the opportunity to live out fantasies that would not be socially-acceptable in real life.

We have to remember, though, that art is not only a source of pleasure for the artist; with their art, artists have the potential to affect the people. So, it is only natural that the particular “art” as seen in the programs playing in this channel not only perpetuate sexist ideas as they have been established in the creators’ minds, but they also influence the audience into believing and further perpetuating these concepts.

Also, in the first two channels, with the cartoon and the sitcom, the sexualisation and objectification of women is seen as part of “dirty” humour; because it is socially-unacceptable and in turn forbidden, this kind of humour provides another source of pleasure for one’s id. Despite the satisfaction they provide, though, these comical scenes presented here are also harmful, because of their further reproduction of sexist ideas.

Khdairat Yasemin

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*

The relation to Butler’s theory and her concept of performativity is obvious in this advertisement. Basically, the commercial is determined to expose the performed nature of social gender and encourage change with a modified kind of performativity, through actions that promote the dissolution of supposedly natural barriers.

For Butler, social gender is simply a construction and behaviors that we grow up considering natural for our gender are actually learnt through performativity. For example, the scene with the two little boys beating each other up is dismissed by their fathers as something natural for their gender, and there are more instances where the harm gender roles can do is also exposed; those men who look at women on the streets as if they are objects and approach them with perverted intentions clearly used to be boys once, who learnt that their nasty behaviors would be excused, simply because of their gender.

But we must not forget that, like Butler’s theory supports, that gender roles do not only harm women, but also men, the commercial supports the same idea. In the scene where the little boy is bullied by other boys through text and then comforted by a woman, probably his mother, the commercial means to attack the part of practiced gender roles that harms men themselves as well, even though their gender is supposedly the one in power; the insult “sissy”, for example, used in one of the texts from the bullies to the boy, is used to describe feminine males; this shows how language is gendered, with the purpose to further promote the stereotypes and notions associated with gender.

So, the creators of the advertisement, keeping in mind that the product they want to sell is meant for men, try to encourage the male audience of all ages to reject these practiced roles, which are harmful not only for the opposite gender but for their own as well. Instead of the harmful gender stereotypes we grow up with, they propose a new, positive kind of gender performativity, one where men take action to promote equality. In the end of the commercial, instead of letting the boys fight and in the grilling session, one of the dads steps in to stop them and explain what they are doing is not right. Also, when a man with perverted intentions starts to follow a woman on the street, another man stops him, once again condemning his actions. One last important scene that promotes this positive kind of performativity is the one where a dad holds up his little girl and makes her repeat the phrase “I am strong”.

**Cosmote Advertisement Analysis**

Voureka Euphrosyne

Freudian-Lacanian Psychoanalysis

In a parody scene of a Greek village, Aggelikoula and her muscular brothers meet a young man. The young man mocks the girl for her image, and her brothers for the fact that they do not speak, in retaliation for the mockery of his thin appearance when he had gone to ask for Aggelikoula’s hand. The camera zooms out and reveals the young man’s clan/family that support him, and the first part of the ad closes with the phrase “when you join the majority, you win!”. In the second part of the ad, we are transported to Aggelikoula’s house (the Karavakos family), where everyone seems to be upset about the strong family connections of the young man. The whole Karavakos family immediately goes to find him in the village café, and the father starts flattering the young man, with the ultimate goal of securing the wedding of Aggelikoula and the young man.

Through psychoanalysis, manifestations of the mind such as dreams can be analysed as if they were a literary text. The combination of psychoanalysis and literature contributed to the analysis of many different aspects of life in general, while the principles of psychology contributed to the understanding of art in particular. Thus, approaching the advertisement as if it were a dream, according to the works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, will contribute to the decoding of its meanings as well as its impact on the human unconscious.

The interpretation of the Cosmote ad as a dream means that it is a codified message. There is a difference between the dream thought (the clear message of the unconscious) and the dream content (the coded message). At first, it seems that Aggelikoula is the object of the young man’s desire, but it is strange how insulting he is towards her (he mocks her on her clothing, her size etc). He does not seem pleased to see her until the very end when the Karavakos family finally agrees to their marriage. On the other hand, the young man appears quite pleased when he addresses the Karavakos brothers and mocks them on their inability to speak. Apparently, in the ad, the pleasure of defeating the antagonistic, muscular Karavakos family which originally rejected him (thwarting the libidinal eros force towards the instinct of Thanatos in the unconscious) is finally added to the libidinal pleasure for Aggelikoula (instinct of eros). This is due to the fact that, society-wise, feelings of love are more appropriate than feelings of antagonism. This interpretation may be justified by the Oedipus complex which was analysed by Freud: the desire for the mother figure creates feelings of hatred for the father figure as well as fear because of the father’s physical strength (fear of castration). As a result, in this imaginary context of the ad/dream, the young man wants Aggelikoula, but fears the muscular brothers and the father for their strength and power; thus, he attempts to castrate the Karavakos family through his privilege to speak up, and consequently marry Aggelikoula to compensate for his lack of physical strength.

This interpretation, according to Sigmund Freud’s work “Creative Writers and Daydreaming” (1908), works as a means of pleasure through creative writing. Although it is a parody, the advertisement is inspired by the village reality, and presents it like a play; it provides an alternative pleasure for the viewer through the language; even the insults towards the Karavakos family from their potential groom are presented as humorous; the character of the young man reflects universal mind principles (invincible ego, libido magnetism) and the viewers identify with him and his feelings with no shame or guilt; the popular kind of art masks their shame of such thoughts and thus they are led through the ad to the same basic wish-fulfilment.

The importance of language as regards pleasure was also discussed by Lacan, who extended Freud’s thought on the Oedipus complex, and talked about the Oedipal-linguistic development (psycholinguistics). He focused on the structure of the unconscious which is similar to the structure of a language; he concluded that language reflects the privileging of the phallus, as it is the ultimate Signified that determines all the other signs of the unconscious. It is not, then, just the Karavakos family that is castrated by the power of the young man’s words, but also Aggelikoula who strictly obeys her father’s instructions and endures the mockery from her beloved potential groom. Thus, both Aggelikoula and the wish for defeating the Karavakos family are for the young man what Lacan calls “object a”, that is, anything that can please and approach the Ideal self, the amount of pleasure that is provided in the connection with the mother.

In his work “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (1936), Lacan states that in literature, readers experience the “homeomorphic identification” with the hero and they desire his position. Respectively, viewers identify with the young man from the advertisement, because they see part of themselves in him (the same desires of the unconscious). They want to incorporate what he projects to fulfil the void of their fractured selves, to imitate him, and there is no other way to do so, than to “join the majority and win!”. In this way, the viewers are seduced to join Cosmote.

Evangelakou Freideriki

Feminism

The television advertising of Cosmote has a number of characters, each of which plays an important role in it. One the one hand, “Karavakos” family consists of “Aggelikoula”, the one and only “woman” and her two strapping young brothers being her protectors. On the other hand, there is her “lover” with his own family. The dispute between the two sides takes part in Mani, a place known for familial frictions. However, what is the role of “Aggelikoula”?

Even though there are female characters in the advertisement, “Aggelikoula” is the only one who has a first name. She remains silent the entire time, just like Victorian era’s stereotypes; a woman must be obedient, silent and chaste. Both parts of the advertisement show “ Aggelikoula” eating, walking, behaving like a baby girl when she is around her “lover” and chuckling at his insults to her, which are dark humor. The role she plays is that of the object of scandal and of mockery. Because of the fact she is a woman, she accomplishes both the roles.

Both families attempt to possess her, her family as their unmarried and overprotected daughter and her lover as his sexual partner. Additionally, her “man of her dreams” sneers at her, commenting on her appearance by being unattractive and lacking all the attributes of the seductive female role model. But, all of these are part of J. Butler’s definition of gender: “It is the kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real, a style of the flesh”. The way “Aggelikoula” is treated by men is encompassed in the socially constructed behavior of genders, which places men in a privileged position contrary to women.

Regarding the men of the advertisement, as it is already mentioned, they are divided into two opposing sides. The “true” red-blooded brothers of “Aggelikoula” are the perfect example of macho men. Tall, with brawny bodies and having zero tolerance, they seem they are able to do everything to protect their sister’s honor and along with their father, they will attempt to keep any lover away from their girl. Despite their masculinity, they play second fiddle to the main protagonist of the ad., the “lover”. The “lover” is not the expected male role figure. He lacks a mighty body, a low-pitched voice and serious facial expressions. All these characteristics do not fall into line with a typical hero. He is incapable of confronting with his future brothers-in-law, but he has all the luck by turning the village to his side. The numerous residents support the “lover” and his fighting over “Aggelikoula”.

In brief, genders are not biologically designed, but socially and culturally constructed. Every man and every woman can compensate for not responding to the standards of the society. A man can do that by being supported by others and a woman by remaining silent.

Evangelakou Freideriki

Visual Theory

Advertisements are “short films” and in particular, visual stories which attempt to present certain products through certain characters. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” by L. Mulvey is the theory I will use. It applies psychoanalytic approaches to cinematic visual structures exploring the positioning of women in contrast to male figures in movies.

According to Mulvey, movies reflect the positioning of women in the patriarchal society through its symbolic order. The woman’s role is two-fold. Firstly, she functions as a “castration reminder”, either as a seductive woman or as the good girl next door. Secondly, she functions as a bearer of compensatory phalluses by being pregnant to a boy, thus gaining power of the phallus, and as a male desire by looking beautiful. In the advertisement of Cosmote, “Aggelikoula” performs both of the roles. The “lover” aims at making her his wife by pursuing her as an object of his desire and she and her family members reject (“castrate”) the future son-in-law. “Aggelikoula” seems to be the passive recipient of all the insults and mockery of others, as she does not speak, nor does she stand up for herself. She is the typical female figure of a movie, which praises the male for the power and commodifies the female. She is unable to go beyond the patriarchal order since she is treated as an object by her family to be preserved within it.

Although the theory of L. Mulvey introduces the idea that movies are dominated by male figures promoting their superiority, another aspect is being presented in the ad. By rejecting the female, stripping her own subjectivity and treating her appearance with contempt instead of glorifying it, the male protagonist attempts to have the upper hand in their relationship-to-be. Perhaps his own trauma, a wounded pride or hurt feelings have an impact upon his reactions, which seem to be typical. The male figure can choose to respond to the fear of castration in three different ways. He can either objectify her, save her or reject the “threat”. This happens especially in occasions where the female figure does not live up to the expectations of the male: being and looking pretty, having a nice body and playing hard to get. When she does not follow the beauty models of the era, she is immediately rejected. The result is that “Aggelikoula” -and many more women- does not deserve the “male gaze”, a gaze which is full of power and confidence.

In brief, the protagonist of the advertisement is not the idealized persona the audience aspires to be and look like, but an ordinary woman with whom people can compare themselves and feel superior. Television ads are, as we said, “short films” that have the power to undo and demystify the stereotypes and the inequality of genders. However, they prefer to carry on the patriarchal socio-political order rather than challenging it.

Nasi Elena

Visual Studies (Laura Mulvey)

In this particular advertisement, despite its comedic purpose, there are clearly several classical elements of film as described in Laura Mulvey’s theory of Visual Studies; visual material can reveal a plethora of information regarding a culture. The elements that Mulvey identified in 1970s film can still be found today.

First of all, it is evident from the camera angles alone that the camera vision identifies with the gaze of the main male character of the advertisement; as a result, our gaze, as an audience, also identifies with his in both advertisements.

Despite not following the model of conventional masculinity as far as appearances, the witty protagonist bravely faces the two much bigger men, Aggelikoula’s brothers, who had seemingly previously rejected his proposal to marry their sister. In spite of his lacking in size, in the first part, our protagonist uses barbed/ironic comments against the silent Karavakos brothers.

In contrast to the male protagonist, Aggelikoula’s deviance from conventional femininity makes her merely a grotesque figure. In fact, Aggelikoula is ridiculed in both parts of the advertisement; in the first part, after struggling to climb up the hill and needing the help of her two brothers, her suitor blatantly calls her a ‘tanker’ and ‘the largest mountain of Mani’ and also makes fun of her outfit, while in the second part, she is seen devouring her food with great gluttony and then, at the village’s café, after the male protagonist has seemingly accepted to enter her family, her short, cacophonous laughter, which was the only sound she had made in the first part as well, earns her a repulsed look from her father.

Interestingly, this laughter was the sole sound produced not only by Aggelikoula, but by any female character in both parts of the advertisement, considering her mother also does not speak. However, it is only the male protagonist and the Karavakos father who truly have the gift of language, for they are the only characters with true power; first and foremost, they are both male, and secondly, in the case of the former, he has the power of Cosmote and, consequently, the majority of the village on his side, while the latter is the typical authoritative father figure.

These two men do not only possess the power and, therefore, the control of language in the universe of this particular advertisement; they also have the power of expression. Although it is seemingly a minor aspect, Aggelikoula’s boyfriend and her father are the only two characters whose facial expressions are not either completely blank, submissive, or moronic; this is due to the fact they are both confident, and therefore, the protagonist speaks with humorous, and sometimes mocking, ingenuity, while the Karavakos father speaks with fake pride and addresses her daughter’s suitor with eloquently-expressed, though forced, adulation and adoration, immediately rendering him a son of his, for he is the bearer of a Cosmote subscription.

Concluding, in this advertisement, we have a peculiar case of a narcissistic protagonist. However, because the meaning is expressed through comedy, the reason the audience identifies with him is unique; it is not because of his or his woman’s good looks that are captivating, but his ‘heroism’, expressed through amusing one-liners and derived from his possession of a Cosmote subscription. Cosmote, therefore, successfully conveys its message that you need to become one of their subscribers in order to be able to stand on an equal ground with authoritative figures, to get your desired love interest, and to have the majority on your side; with Cosmote, all your problems will be solved and your Oedipal fantasies satisfied.

Nasi Elena

Psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan)

Even though it was Sigmund Freud who created psychoanalytic theory, Jacques Lacan incorporated several innovative aspects to it, through which he formed his own version of Psychoanalysis. In the current advertisement, we can spot multiple elements of Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory.

A significant part of Lacan’s theory that we can easily detect in the advertisement is the subjugation to the law and the name of the Father; after all, this accurately represents the reality for the society of the Greek countryside, which is characterized by its submission to the patriarchy and its rules. There is a unique twist, however, as far as this obedience to the Phallus; even though the Karavakos father is the representative of the Phallus in his family, as seen from how they all accept his decisions with no complaint and follow him around, there is a higher authority in the village than his own, which has presumably also replaced him in the highest position in the hierarchy of the village. This new and more powerful Phallus is signified by the young male protagonist, and more specifically, his Cosmote subscription serves as an invisible phallic symbol.

As seen in the advertisement, the village has been separated in two; the Karavakos family, who obey to the law and the name of the Karavakos father, and the more numerous and tough clan of the young protagonist, who have sided with the young farmer so that, through them, possess an innovative kind of authority. The “subordinate” members of the Karavakos family are completely obedient to the father and silently follow his orders; except for Aggelikoula’s peculiar laughter, no other kind of speech is produced by them. However, the protagonist, in the first part of the advertisement, reveals that it is possible the three Karavakos siblings do not speak because it will not be in their favor to do so; meaning, the young man with his Cosmote subscription, and consequently his capacity to speak more, might give the silent family the ability to speak as well.

Thus, Cosmote creates a parallelism here regarding the inability to speak because of oppression with the inability to speak on the phone due to not being subscribed to a suitable program; both would cost, in case one spoke under these circumstances. Therefore, the connection between language and power becomes evident; the people in power are also the ones with the capacity to speak, while it is assumed, in a way, that the silent characters will now too gain this ability due to adding the character with the highest authority in their family.

Even though Lacan’s theory speaks of the fear of castration as represented by the lack of phallus of women, in the particular advertisement, the female characters do not pose that threat to a noticeable degree. Women are not demonized in the traditional sense, meaning they are not there to represent the need for the return to the womb and its catastrophic consequences. More specifically, as far as the Karavakos mother, all she seems to do is silently follow her husband’s orders. Meanwhile, Aggelikoula represents the prize the male protagonist will win in exchange for sharing his Cosmote subscription, the ultimate Phallus of the village’s society, with the Karavakos family, restoring their high position in the hierarchy.

To conclude, in order to make its product successful, the advertisement aims to satisfy the viewer’s ideal “I”, the half of our fragmented psyche associated with the view of ourselves as perfect beings. This ideal self of ours is portrayed through the male protagonist of the commercial; through the phallic symbol of his Cosmote subscription, he gains power and authority through the ability to speak, as well as his beloved Aggelikoula. Interestingly enough, despite being the signifier of the Signified phallogocentrism, the Cosmote subscription also seems to serve not simply as a subject a, but as a subject A, the ultimate object of our desire; this, however, is typical for a company’s advertisement, aiming to attract as many possible buyers for its product and services.

Nasi Elena

New Historicism (Michel Foucault)

Michel Foucault’s theory of New Historicism, a branch of Cultural Studies, can be seen in the current advertisement in an innovative way. Despite several decades having passed since Foucault’s ideas were first published, these ideas can still be applicable to certain aspects of the modern culture and society.

First and foremost, here we observe how the society of the village, like all societies, functions as a Foucauldian carceral. As in all carcerals, the one with the power of the discourse, the male protagonist of the advertisement, also has the power over the village, and therefore the majority with his side. This power of discourse is both literal, in the sense that he has the power to speak more because of his Cosmote subscription, and metaphorical, since he eloquently handles speech. In contrast to the main character’s eloquence, almost all the other characters are silent.

As we can see in the first part of the advertisement, the silence of other characters, the Karavakos brothers in this case, is ensured by the protagonist, who, as we can assume from the information we gather, has been wronged by their family in the past and rejected from becoming Aggelikoula’s husband. Now, the previously inferior young man uses the two main forces of the carceral in order to scare the two bigger men; surveillance and punishment. He mockingly reminds the two brothers that they cannot speak, for it would not be in their favor to do so, and then the camera presents every member of the village being by the young protagonist’s side.

Therefore, it is a possible interpretation that the Karavakos brothers do not speak, despite probably having been able to speak in the past, because now they are being watched; to be seen is to be judged—and possibly, judging from the rifles carried by the young man’s clan, to be punished too; surveillance from the society has eternally been a tool used from the ones in power in order to establish their control and avoid crime or any deviant behavior. Here, the protagonists successfully avoids behind harmed in any way by the two intimidating men by using the threat of being observed against them; being watched and knowing it, according to Foucault, can be more a more effective punishment than the punishment itself.

The advertisement also shows us another aspect of Foucault’s theory, which is how truth changes according to who is in power. In the second part, the Karavakos father together with the rest of the family goes to the café where the young man works; once again, from information we gather, we can assume that this man and his family used to be the ones in power before the protagonist acquired the gift of Cosmote. There, seeing how everyone in the strongest clan is still on the young man’s side, Mr. Karavakos switches from his initial fierce disposition to a very kind and gentle stance towards the protagonist; that shift in his mood does not only occur because he faces the representative of authority, but also because, the moment he enters the café, he sees the plethora of people on the protagonist’s side and, once again, it is possible the threat of surveillance that causes the Karavakos father’s change of attitude.

In the final part of the advertisement, we see how not only peace is reestablished, but also the structure of authority; by joining the protagonist’s side and even accepting him in his family, the Karavakos family regains its former power in the carceral. This blissful last moment, where the protagonist and Aggelikoula ensure they will be able to marry and the Karavakos father gets his authority back, presents how life in the carceral is not necessarily unhappy, stagnant, and devoid of all pleasure. After all, a society without any pleasure would revolt, which would be completely against the interest of the carceral, for its order would certainly be disturbed.

To conclude, in order to function, the power structure of the carceral needs surveillance; in this case, the tool of surveillance is the society of the village and its inclination to judge depending on what they see, which is characteristic for the societies of the Greek countryside. Therefore, with humorous tone and with the intent to sell its product, the advertisement presents a part of the reality regarding its cultural and social context. Also, Cosmote playfully makes use of the fact the ones in power are also the ones who control discourse, in order to promote its services, which are meant to provide potential customers with the ability to speak on the phone in advantageous prices; the former case refers to the power of speech in a figurative sense, while the former is about being able to literally talk on the phone.

**Nescafé Advertisement Analysis**

Avgoustoglou Ermioni

Post-Colonialism

This critical essay will analyze NESCAFE’s advertisement under the scope of Post-Colonialist criticism. In the advertisement a man warns the audience that whenever somebody shares invalid and negative information about NESCAFE’s products, a squirrel dies. Thus, the man invites the spectator not to spread inaccurate information about NESCAFE by showing instances of people who lie about NESCAFE’s quality causing the death of more and more squirrels. This advertisement was created as a response against allegations that supported that NESCAFE’s products were of questionable quality.

From a Post-Colonialist point of view, the comic tropes of this advertisement can be interpreted as a parody of what post-colonized people underwent. In the advertisement’s universe we witness a Post-Colonial world in which humanity is the Colonizer and imposed its language and culture on the Colonized squirrels. As a result, squirrels learned to imitate the behaviors of human “grand-masters” and behave human-like. Yet, they are not seen as parts of humanity no matter how much they try to. Interpreting this situation with Spivak’s (1994) theory in mind squirrels arise as representations of the subaltern. Through the whole advertisement, they are seen as both “Other” and below humans; they might show humanized speech and action characteristics, however they only achieve to trivialize and ridicule themselves. No matter how much they try to be assimilated into the colonial human culture, they always stay subaltern. Whatever human action they are involved in; cleaning a window, playing cards, skydiving, disarming a bomb, trivializes and ridicules them. When the audience watches them involved in these actions, they start laughing because of how incompatible squirrels are with human acts.

What Spivak (1994) suggests to overcome the subaltern problem, (in this case would be for the squirrels to take what they have learned from the colonial culture and add their own untranslatable uniqueness to it, in order to make it visible to colonial humanity) is not employed. Squirrels appear as pathetic imitators of human culture. They manage to trivialize and present themselves as somebody who belongs neither in the human nor the squirrel race. By using the language of the Colonizer, they are silenced as it is a language loaded with racist terms that are against them. We see squirrels talking in the human language, but their voice has a funny effect on it in order to cause laughter, thus trivializing their attempt to use human language. Another instance of how their use of human language ridicules them is found at the beginning of the advertisement; a squirrel in a builder-suit sings a rebetiko-like song while cleaning a window of a skyscraper. In its song it uses a term for itself that is kind of degrading “skiouri”. Thus, the colonial human language is used against it. Also, the squirrel trivializes itself and causes the audience’s laughter as it reminds us of a traditional Greek man builder singing while working and the audience contrasts this image with the tiny squirrel destined to die because of a human’s mistake.

The whole advertisement is built on the comic skit of “saving a squirrel”. The reason squirrels are dying and need to be saved is Colonial humanity’s mistakable habit of sharing incorrect information about NESCAFE. The slogan of the advertisement might be “how to save a squirrel” but it actually shows squirrels as expandable material that will always be there to be killed due to the oversight of a human thus they are seen as subaltern, “Other” and bellow humans. Human Colonialists emerge as possible saviors and killers of the squirrels without caring about their subaltern life. Their murder is seen as a humorous way to make the spectator feel compunction for sharing lies about NESCAFE. Moreover, the ad invites the audience to save the squirrels only when it is a human’s fault. When some squirrels decide to go to play in the microwave, and consequently die, the ad calls them stupid and ignores them instead of calling the audience to rescue them. It seems as if their death is only noticeable when a human’s oversight is involved. Furthermore, the ad suggests that the colonized subaltern squirrel will keep dying till Colonialists decide to “save” some of them by simply being more careful. Thus, squirrels are at human colonialist’s mercy at any given moment, destined to die or be rescued by their hand. Notably, it´s only the working (useful to the colonizers and coopted to their culture) squirrels that are worth saving, the ones playing poker and goofing around are deemed “deserving” of their demise.

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Avgoustoglou Ermioni

New Historicism

Proceeding to my next essay I would like to focus on New Historicism and specifically Michel Foucault’s Carceral theory, from his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975). For this analysis the world of NESCAFE’s advertisement will be looked at as an allegory of Foucault’s carceral.

Foucault’s (1975) carceral is a society that functions like a prison of eternalized observation to such an extent that people always assume they are being watched so they modify their behavior accordingly. Surveillance is a form of control. In a carceral society, whoever controls the constant “gaze” is the one in power.

In the universe of the advertisement, the one who seems to be in control of the “gaze” seems to align with the interests of NESCAFE. This means that, it is a carceral society where people are under a constant surveillance that supports the benefits of NESCAFE created the law: “Do not share negative information about our products”. If somebody breaks this law, as they are under constant surveillance, a punishment will come.

This punishment in a modern society like this, is not a physical one, inflicted on the “criminal’s” flesh, but a psychological one. Whenever somebody shares problematic allegations about NESCAFE, not them, but a squirrel is punished by death. As a result, “criminals” are to feel guilt and compunction for being the reason for the pain of these creatures, that otherwise would be unrelated to them but with this law their life depends on them. Also “wrongdoers” are presented as uneducated, ignorant and immature. Whenever somebody breaks the law, the advertisement calls their inadequacies out in a teacher-like and condescending tone and then proceeds in showing how invalid their words are by giving scientific explanations that support NESCAFE. As a result, under constant surveillance, the people of this world will eventually mold their behavior, discipline themselves according to the law and stop sharing bad assumptions about NESCAFE.

It is important to add how the feeling of everyone being observed in the advertisement’s world is created. Whenever they share invalid information about NESCAFE, they are in a coffee shop, a place where people go to chat with their friends without thinking that someone eavesdrops their conversation. In the first scene the two friends do not seem to acknowledge that they are being watched. They are under a constant observation, which is the key instrument of exercising power.

Therefore, it is clear that in the advertisement, the squirrels become a tool for defending NESCAFE as the ultimate company with the best products. This world created its own idea about moral, immoral and laws while everyone is constantly observed with punishment awaiting. Consequently, a standard of normal is created which is to only spread positivity regarding NESCAFE, in order to protect the squirrels, and not cause their death. By being able to control what is normal, NESCAFE holds power over everyone’s behaviors. Therefore, power is used in a way to make individuals self-regulate, to discipline themselves.

The moral and normal thing to do is to care about a squirrel’s life. The only way to do that is to discipline yourself according to the “law” and not deviate from it. If people know that a squirrel dies every time they spread controversial allegations about the products, they will become less and less willing to break the law of NESCAFE. Just the thought will be enough to stop them from doing it.

However, it is important to note that the squirrel’s life matters only when the conditions for its harm are related to the negation of NESCAFE’s power as a company of quality. This is especially evident in the last scenes of the advertisement. Just after the young man that vigorously invites everyone to save the squirrels by opening his arms and smiling to the camera, a squirrel that needs to be saved as it has fallen in a hole appears. Even though it needs saving, nobody comes to its rescue, unlike what the slogan of the advertisement, “how to save a squirrel” suggested. So, the law of saving a squirrel applies only when the ruling class’s, NESCAFE’s, benefits are at stake. When they are not, squirrels suffering become unnoticeable.

Outside the advertisement’s world, a “law” that has squirrels “executed” because of people sharing invalid information, is seen as a humorous situation. This is how NESCAFE manages to exercise its power in the outside world and support the quality of its products. This comic skit will come to the mind of every spectator of the advertisement whenever they hear allegations against NESCAFE. So, they will laugh them off by remembering how a pyrotechnician squirrel would die while screaming in a funny voice if the negative information appeared in the advertisement’s world. As a result, the carceral society of the advertisement in a way expands to the outside world and fulfils its purpose there; the reduction of negative assumptions about NESCAFE’s quality and the promotion of its products.

Ktistaki Georgia

Plato

For the purpose of this assignment, in this first attempt, I will analyze this advertisement on the basis of Plato’s Theory. To begin with, it is widely known that Plato thought that the good poets are those who speak only the truth of gods, while the bad poets will add their own elements. For Plato, people are chosen by the gods to speak their truth and those who complete this mission are thought of as “good poets”.

Having this in mind, I think it’s easy to say that in this advertisement the young boy who speaks along the advert and dispels the misunderstandings that other people have about the Nescafe coffee has the role of the good poet. In this sense, he seems to be sober enough to stay away from intervening human elements in the truth of gods. In this context the little squirrels could be seen as the gods. They do not exactly seem to speak the truth, but any misinterpretation of the actual truth (phrases like “coffee damages the stomach”) appear to affect them, which could be understood as a distortion of the truth. The truth is what the young presenter keeps saying: Coffee is good for you, so you need to buy it.

We also know that Plato used to believe that the world we live in has two aspects: the ideal world (where all the Ideal forms are) and the world we live in (where people are only able to see a copy of the ideal world, which therefore means that what people see is not the actual truth but is ,in a sense, distorted). In this sense, the young boy is the philosopher who has a deep knowledge of the Ideal world and tries to enlighten the rest of the people who do not have the skills to see clearly (in the context of the advert, people appearing all along saying phrases like: “this coffee is of bad quality” or “ this brand is harmful for your stomach”. Those people are the common people (different from the philosophers) who have no clue regarding the ideal world and keep seeing the distorted reality which, in this context, is that this specific coffee is bad for you.

Ktistaki Georgia

The Subaltern

In my third attempt, I will analyze the advertisement with the squirrels on the basis of Spivak’s theory. In Spivak’s theory the word “subaltern” is embodied by postcolonial people who are considered as Other by the society and, due to that have a lower status in the society. As they are consistently considered lower, the subaltern face two opposite difficulties : most of the times their ‘speaking is silenced or spoken for as “Other”’, or their ‘speaking is completely misunderstood as a result of using their own discourse.

In my opinion, the term subaltern could be related not only to the people who were colonized and the women of this area who were doubly victimized (not only seen as the ‘alien’ but were also women), but we should also keep in mind all those groups that society keeps pushing to the margins (for example the LGBTQ community)

Taking the above into consideration, I think that in the context of this advert the little squirrels would be the subaltern. First of all, talking in their native language could never lead to them being understood among humans (in a metaphorical way, as in the advert they speak as humans). Also, throughout the advert, the squirrels don’t appear to actually have interaction with the humans, but they are always spoken for by the young presenter.

What other people think about this specific brand of coffee (which affects the squirrels, as they appear to be involved with it somehow) is the common misconceptions that people have about “the other”, those who are consistently put in the margins of society.

However, we know that Spivak thought that there’s no ideal solution to this problem, as those groups have different contextual concepts and ideas that is difficult, if not impossible, to render into another language. In this sense, I think we could say that the young presenter has the role of a translator according to Spivak. He tries to convey ‘the truth’ of the little squirrels, even if sometimes people seem unable to understand what he’s saying- just like Spivak who thought that the most ethical solution is not to compromise when there’s no equal concept between the two languages.