

## AD ANALYSIS PROJECT HALL OF FAME

### STUDENT A.M.

In the paragraphs below, the advertisement of the toy store “Jumbo” is analyzed using theory of postmodernism, Marxist criticism, psychoanalysis and a brand of Cultural Theory by Laura Mulvey which merges film theory, psychoanalysis and feminism.

Just the first second into the advertisement is enough to make us think of **Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”**. The ad starts with a close-up on the famous singer’s chest. She is heard breathing heavily and is shown wearing a heart charm with Djambo’s picture in it. It’s an example of the classic Hollywood movie practice of scopophilia.

Mulvey notices that the objectification of women in cinema is a recurring phenomenon. Women are transformed into erotic objects for the gaze of the male protagonist and the male audience. The theorist explains the practice in psychoanalytic terms. The woman is a “reminder of castration,” a trigger of castration anxiety, which is the fear of damage being done to a boy’s genital organs by his father as punishment for sexual desire for the mother. Women are also thought in Freudian psychology to be experiencing penis envy, as they see themselves as already castrated, lacking a phallus and thus lacking power. As a result, a woman should be punished for being a woman or redeemed, fetishized and objectified so as not to appear threatening.

The advertisement achieves this objectification by the opening close-up to the singer’s sweaty chest, where there’s no action taking place besides her heavy breathing. The woman’s body is fragmented, the breast is accentuated, the woman is cut-off from reality. It is a moment of pure voyeurism, offering the audience a moment of erotic fantasy as she waits for her savior.

According to Mulvey, besides voyeurism, scopophilia, the pleasure of watching, takes place through identification, too. The male audience identifies with the main protagonist, who usually holds a position of power. The actor is seen as the idealized ego of *méconnaissance*. The screen functions as a mirror and the protagonist embodies the idealized mirror image with which the audience identifies. In contrast with the passive female object, the male protagonist is in control of the action, promoting the narrative, taking advantage of the given for action landscape.

In the advertisement, the male protagonist, Djambo, a parody of Tarantino’s *Django Unchained*, monopolizes the action. While the singer is chained and static, he appears as punisher of the high prices who came to save the day and the girl. In the closing scene while the

couple is seen on a horse galloping away, the high prices get wrapped in flames in the exploding barn.

The advertisement reproduces the principles of scopophilia by objectifying the woman in order to attract the viewer and by promoting the identification of the latter with Djambo, the hero punisher of high prices. Ultimately, the consumer is urged to be like the projected powerful protagonist and kill the high prices by buying school supplies from the well-known toy store.

Another way through which we could analyze the advertisement is **postmodernism**.

Firstly, an evident postmodern characteristic is the use of pastiche (the mix of genres, the imitation of another style), bricolage (the use of various available materials for art production) and parody.

The advertisement imitates the style of Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* in order to produce a comic effect. The film itself merges disjointed elements. It uses the style of a western to narrate the story of a liberated African American slave, when the protagonist in westerns is usually white. In the advertisement, Django becomes Djambo, in wordplay in which Django and Jumbo, the advertised toy store's name blend. On top of these disparate elements, the role of Brunhilda is played by the popular Greek singer Katerina Stanisi, who wears makeup in order to appear African American, while Djambo comes to save her not from slave traders but from expensive school supplies. So, the technique of pastiche is doubled. The original movie borrows elements from the western and the advertisement imitates the movie. All these seemingly mismatched elements are deliberately brought together in order to entertain the viewer.

Postmodernism questions elitism and declares that avant-garde art shouldn't be considered more valuable than "low", popular culture art. Nothing is viewed as sacred as culture is approached with the notion that there are copies with no originals and thus, nothing is considered pure and untouchable. That is the case of the advertisement. If Tarantino can borrow from westerns, then the advertisement can borrow from Tarantino. For postmodernism there's no continuity, no authority, and thus it doesn't seek to create a slice of life, but rather celebrates artificiality. The artificiality is more than transparent in the advertisement, where even the costumes and the set seem to be taken from a dress-up party.

Furthermore, according to Jean François Lyotard in “Defining the Postmodern”, whereas modernism needs art in order to forget the trauma of the modern world, postmodernism embraces the trauma and turns it into a parody. In the case of the advertisement the trauma could be the Greek financial crisis, which can be identified at the need for cheap school supplies. However, the advertisement doesn’t create an atmosphere of self-pity. The expensiveness becomes a part of the parody. Djambo appears as a punisher and saves the girl from the high prices, doing justice to the average consumer. The anxiety of recession reconstructed in the advertisement has now a healing outcome for the consumer.

Postmodernism is used in order to bring clashing elements together, to create an unconventional advertisement and by producing a humorous and light-hearted effect to attract the viewer into buying school supplies from the specific toy store.

**Marxist criticism** could also be applied to the advertisement.

As is the case with the most advertisements, the product being advertised isn’t the product being sold, but rather a positive quality, desired by the consumer but projected onto the product.

According to Marxist theory, since capitalism was established, the relation of product to the worker changed. The worker is part of an assembly production line, working for a big capitalist corporation, alienated from the end product. There is no personal work for the industrial worker who day by day repeats the same mechanical moves. Thus, the worker is no longer an artist. He/ She is deprived from his/ her work and from interacting with customers, as impersonal relationships take over his/her life. But, we, as human beings, seek human contact, art, aesthetics; and capitalism knows how to sell the remedy by projecting what we lack on the product. We buy products in order to replace our lost interaction and elements of affective pleasure.

This advertisement is no exception. The focus of it is not the cheap school supplies, but Djambo. Djambo is the embodiment of the toy store who came to punish the expensive prices and save the girl. He appears muscular, powerful, a savior, embodying qualities of the “macho” man. Thus, the concept is “Be like Djambo, buy Jumbo!”. Be like Djambo, punish expensiveness, buy Jumbo’s cheap school supplies and save your family.

Another point, advocated by Marxist theory, which can be applied to the advertisement, is that art is thought to be a carrier of ideology. As workers are occupied with their dull, mechanical work, art is controlled by the upper class, who has the leisure to devote to it. As a result, art reproduces the dominant ideology and tries to make the lower class feel a part of it, without understanding how it is being exploited.

In a similar manner, we can view the advertisement as means of reproduction of the dominant ideology. As explained in the previous paragraphs, the viewer is made to identify with Djambo (who although embodies “Jumbo”, the corporation, appears as the protector of the weak), kill the high prices, buy Jumbo’s products and profit. In reality, the advertisement obscures that these low prices are made possible due to the exploitation of the poor workers who make them. It obscures the fact that the viewer most likely belongs to low middle class since he/she can’t afford expensive school supplies and therefore his/her position is similar to the poor worker’s. It conceals that by buying Jumbo the viewer supports the system which exploits his/her fellow low-paid worker and profits the corporation.

According to Luis Athusser in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”, a system in order to maintain the power relations as they are tries to normalize the current state of affairs and propagandize them as natural and inevitable. As its guardians the system possesses RSAs, Repressive State Apparatuses (e.g. government, courts, police, army) and ISAs, Ideological State Apparatuses (e.g. educational institutions, media, religion). In this way and since its channel is the media, the advertisement could function as an ideological state apparatus, disseminating the existent status quo.

The advertisement then, is seen as means of interpellation, as it obscures the ideology it disseminates and unwillingly we are made to accept our own oppression, to respond to the role the system wants us to play. We are lured by the low prices and having the illusion of profit and free-will we stay ignorant to the circle of ideological reproduction.

Lastly, another theory we could apply to the advertisement is **psychoanalysis**.

According to Sigmund Freud’s “Creative Writers and Daydreaming,” literature functions as therapy for both the writer who expresses his/her suppressed feelings in his/her work and the reader who identifies with the characters. When reading a well-written literary piece the reader gets a sense of “forepleasure”, an “incentive bonus”, an initial aesthetic pleasure from the form

before engaging psychologically with the content of the story. Then, the reader identifies with the protagonist. He/ She takes part in the story and he /she experiences the hero's feelings. The fictional character may get tangled up in all sorts of risky situations in order to liberate his/her repressed feelings and fulfill his/her desires, but the reader can experience the emotions without contradicting the laws and without being confronted with the aftermath of his/her actions.

For the analysis, literature could be substituted by the advertisement. Initially, the viewer experiences forepleasure created by the humorous and frivolous style of the advertisement. The costumes, the setting, the popular singer and her signature song, all of these elements contribute to the atmosphere. After that, the viewer processes the storyline and identifies with the central hero, Djambo, the punisher of high prices. At this point, the viewer understands the association of Djambo's position to his/her own. The viewer, as an average citizen living in the Greek society of crisis most probably has repressed, negative feelings against the exorbitance of everyday necessities and their inconsistency to the low wages of most Greeks. Therefore, by identifying with Djambo, the viewer experiences "catharsis", a pleasure deriving from the feeling of breaking the rules and contradicting the oppressive laws, without experiencing the consequences. In reality, contradicting the status quo isn't always easy and without repercussions, that's why literature and humor function as safety valves of our everyday problems.

Furthermore, according to Freud, in literature (especially in popular literature) we can identify the map of basic human emotions and mind principles. As explained in Freud's theory of the structure of the human mind, the unconscious, which is ruled by id, our "primitive self", is driven by the pleasure principle, our instincts urging us to satisfy our needs and destroy everything that stands in between.

The characters in the advertisement are presented struggling to pursue their basic desires. Djambo kills the high prices in an attempt to defend himself and save Brunhilda. It is the instincts of self-preservation that are being portrayed. Moreover, the instincts of sexual pleasure can be identified both in Brunhilda's sadistic capture by her oppressors and in her longing for Djambo's arrival. It is noteworthy that when asked how she understood that Djambo was coming, she said that she's "getting excited", a characteristic phrase taken by the singer's popular song. In this way the actions of all the characters of the advertisement portray basic human instincts.

## **STUDENT F.A.**

### Critical Analysis of 2011 COSMOTE Advertisement

#### Short summary of the advertisement:

In a parodic recreation of a Greek region's 'traditional' community, the advertisement creates the premise of an arranged marriage failing to occur because the bride's family (essentially her brothers and father who are the decision makers) object to the groom, presumably because of his appearance – stick-thin, lanky, non-traditionally masculine. In an attempt to regain agency, social capital and prestige, the hopeful groom purchases a contract with Cosmote, presented metaphorically in the ad as the groom having a big, strong family, a "soi" (clan) to support his bravado, an act which allows him to 'speak freely', as in to not get charged by minute for his phone calls. He proceeds to mock his once 'loved-one' for her appearance and ridicule her family's disdain of him, in view of their inability to 'speak'. As soon as the bride's family (the Karavakos family) find out about the Cosmote deal, they immediately reconsider, now deeming the man not only worthy to be part of their family but an asset to them, as they could all be part of a profitable family phone contract. The bride's father goes as far as to visit the groom, insist he call him 'dad', and exuberantly praise his physical appearance in a clearly sarcastic manner, in order to seal the deal. The ad ends with the couple looking blissful within a general atmosphere of joy from both family sides.

#### Analyses:

#### **Visual Theory – Laura Mulvey**

In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), film maker and theorist Laura Mulvey explores the positioning of women in mainstream film, introducing the term 'male gaze' to describe the indulgence in scopophilia during the viewing experience as an objectifying process, with women being the 'objectified other'. On the premise of the Cosmote advertisement being a 'short film' of sorts, a visual story made for the screen with a(n implied) beginning, a middle, and an end, I will attempt a Mulveyian reading of its portrayal and characterisation of the only notable actress (Aggelikoula) versus that of the main male actors (the protagonist/prospective husband, and the Karavakos family/brothers and father of Aggelikoula).

According to Mulvey, the patriarchal socio-political order is reflected in mainstream film through its structure of representation, its symbolic order. The woman's role is to function as a

‘castration reminder’ – with the absence of the phallus and its implications (i.e. removal of power) acting as a threat to the male actor(s)– and/or as a ‘bearer of male desire’ – essentially not an active agent but a passive recipient of whatever meaning the male protagonist (and by extension the audience) chooses to inflect her with. Those two roles converge and coexist within Aggelikoula, by virtue of the main actor having pursued her (made her an object of his desire) and been rejected by her (or her male family members), thus figuratively castrated. Aggelikoula could be classified as a ‘typical’ female role in that she does not speak (or make any sound bar an intentionally obnoxious if comical short laughter) for the entirety of the video, thus giving the impression that not only is she non-assertive and sheepish, but that she is asinine or unable to formulate any sort of response, produce any kind of output, have a say in her own predicament. On the side of the Karavakos family, she is again treated as an object to be preserved within the family or passed around in the most cost-effective manner possible; she is the price the family has to pay in order to profit from a phone deal. Therefore Aggelikoula is a character who cannot transcend the dominant patriarchal order which confines her personhood into a “silent image of a woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” (Mulvey, 1975).

In this particular narrative however, there is an added layer to the dual role of femininity embodied by Aggelikoula; in other words, she is not merely a typical or ‘mainstream’ woman as seen in cinema in the way Mulvey described it. Although it is true that the text (i.e. the plotline and character development of the ad) is indicative of the patriarchal notion that women are not subjects therefore not truly loved and respected as individual humans, this text particularly emphasises an approach to rejection by the male protagonist that not only strips the female actress of subjectivity, but encodes maliciousness and deep disdain even for her objectified self, instead of voyeuristic glorification of her appearance. Aggelikoula’s ‘suitor’ repeatedly insults her and mocks her effort to be ‘presentable’ when they meet, he calls her a ‘tanker’, mocks the way she dresses and notes the fact that she removed her hypothetical facial hair, thus suddenly became ‘prettier’. Implicitly but consistently, he is expressing the absurdly seen (by him and by extension by some of the audience, if one ascribes to Mulvey’s theory of identification with the male protagonist) as dignified notion of “I was willing to marry you even when you were uglier – even though you are *still* ugly”.

The groom-to-be presumably engages in this humiliating tirade because of his wounded pride, anger, or his own hurt feelings, or, more specifically and with regard to Mulvey’s

rationale, his reaction is typical in that it illustrates one of the three male responses to the fear of castration embodied in the woman: the man either redeems (saves), fetishises (objectifies) or punishes (rejects) the threatening woman. With the risk of digressing, I would like to argue that his behaviour is not just an arbitrary reaction to threat (his rejection by her) by mirroring rejection; it illustrates a trope that occurs frequently in male-female interactions when erotic subtext is present: aggressive retaliation to rejection, by physical or verbal violence. Based on an abundance of [anecdotal evidence](#), personal and peers' experience, and some -albeit lacking- scientific research (Stratmoen, et al., 2018), I would contend that women who do not embody the pinnacle of conventional beauty, women who would not be deemed beautiful enough to be fetishised actresses in Hollywood cinema (but 'presentable' enough to be cast in an advertisement for example), can experience dehumanisation twofold. Women are by and large subjected to what Mulvey calls the 'male gaze' in real life, not just on the screen, and if by an arbitrary standard they are both 'average'-looking *and* unwelcoming to the gaze, they are consequently deemed 'unworthy' of objectification, and are often attacked or humiliated. In this behaviour is encoded a notion that women are supposed to be grateful for their objectification because it is a mark of their highest virtue, their physical appearance, and therefore not all women will have the *opportunity* to be objectified, or *deserve* the male gaze. Thus, dehumanisation goes a step further and the woman becomes less than a thing to be observed, she becomes a thing that must be made aware that it is repulsive.

That being said, while Aggelikoula's physical appearance is explicitly attacked, her fictional future husband is not representative of the Hollywood male protagonist either. He's obviously weak and non-threatening, something that immediately challenges his masculinity and the respect he would otherwise command to his peers. In contrast with the audience of mainstream cinematic productions, the audience of this -and most- contemporary advertisements is not necessarily encouraged to identify with the main character by way of narcissistic image recognition (which Mulvey associates with Lacan's concept of the 'Mirror Stage'). In other words, the protagonist here is not an idealised, glamourised persona, but rather someone in whom the audience can either immediately recognise themselves or to whom they can readily consider themselves superior, based on image only. Thus, 'ego libido' is unconventionally achieved (through a more direct identification process or a comparison that favours the audience versus the actor) but still central to the viewing experience.



Overall, even though television ads are effectively a visual production that “transcends outworn forms”, something that Mulvey calls for in the conclusion of “*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*”, their innovative nature in terms of form does not necessarily entail innovative content. More often than not, and as seen in this case study, advertisements end up perpetuating rather than challenging the patriarchal narrative Mulvey castigates.

### **Gender Theory – Judith Butler, Judith-Jack Halberstam**

Third wave feminism is marked by the conceptualisation of gender roles precisely as ‘roles’, performances, “stylised repetitions of acts” (Butler) that imbue people with the characteristics that are widely associated with their sex and by extension their gender. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler introduces the concept of ‘gender performativity’ to describe a “persistent impersonation [of gender, sex, identity] that passes as the real” (PAGE NUMBER). Building upon Michel Foucault’s analysis of how a subject is shaped and regulated by institutions, Butler foregrounds the sociopolitical construction of identity and exposes it as unstable and unreliable in that it is fictitious. One of the institutions that consistently albeit insidiously perpetuates and legitimises conventional restrictive gender roles is mass media; analysing advertisements from a Gender Theory standpoint can hence be a revealing process.

The case study of the Cosmote advertisement illustrates one of the key points of Butler’s theory about the body: self is defined by the creation and exclusion of the Other (the Karavakos family cannot participate in the phone contract, they are therefore othered, figuratively ousted from the rest of the community, i.e. Cosmote’s clientele). The threat of exclusion is projected onto the audience, which is encouraged to be culturally defined by signification, that is to ascribe to the performativity of identity; an identity which results from the “various acts which constitute [the body’s] reality” (Butler, 1990). Furthermore, binary discourse and hierarchical frames permeate the text, alluding to the “constitutive science” of the gendered experience: heteronormativity.

The main female character, Aggelikoula, is an archetypal submissive, unsophisticated, dehumanised caricature of a woman: completely dependent on and compliant with the patriarchal

structures that have her passed around like chattel and never care for her say in the matter of her own situation. On the other hand, the male figures of the story share among themselves personality traits that are traditionally associated with masculinity: the Karavakos brothers are macho brutes exerting dominance through physical strength, the Karavakos father is a cunning self-seeker and the de facto head of the family, and Aggelikoula's 'love interest', the protagonist, is the one with 'the brains', the potential provider, the determined, resourceful, ambitious man. There is no question that the setting, acting, and script are intentionally extreme in their construction of gendered identities. In a sense, one could argue that gender performativity is challenged within the ad through ridicule, parody – a subversive act. However, a 'true' (i.e. meaningful) transcendence of gender confines is non-existent for Aggelikoula and for the male protagonist it is achieved only through a shift (within himself) in the codification of masculinity's essence - from being macho to being financially adept.

In *Female Masculinity* (1998), Judith-Jack Halberstam argues that “‘heroic masculinities’ depend absolutely on the subordination of alternative masculinities”, which are considered “female masculinities” (and are mostly female or queer). In the advertisement, the male protagonist is bitterly alluding to the time before his becoming a Cosmote client, when his masculinity was questioned by the Karavakos family apparently because of his physical build. It becomes evident that he could not bear the burden of being classified as unworthy due to his appearance, could not cope with being objectified, therefore had to resort to other means in order to command respect and exert power. “[T]he promise of social privilege” (Halbersham, 1998) normally embedded in maleness is achieved in a rather unconventional way, with a “technical special effect” (ibid.) of sorts that magically restores the man's masculinity: an almighty phone contract.

The man's proclivity to make the optimal choice, his 'success' as reflected in the ad, reinforces the Derridian concept of “phallogocentrism”, the theory that our society's construction of meaning designates the male subject as the possessor of epistemology (i.e. logic, reason, efficiency, etc.). All aspects considered, this advertisement banks on archaic gender roles not in order to dismantle them through parody, but in order to convey a message that is ultimately aligned with the dominant perception of the gender binary, heteronormativity, as well as with the performativity of identity it ascribes.

## **Marxist Criticism – Louis Althusser, Edmund Wilson**

Advertisements are a cornerstone of the capitalist economy and society, since they are not only visualisations i.e. “reproductions” of the conditions of production of a system that aims to be “self-sustainable,” but also crucial tools with which the ‘free market’ fabricates, implants, and offers to respond to urgent needs in the collective consciousness of the people. (As capitalism and materialism is growingly intertwined with and encoded in modern culture, these fabricated needs arguably penetrate even the “collective unconscious”, a term coined by Carl Jung to refer to structures and symbols/archetypes that are universal and intrinsic to the human condition). The way a society perceives reality is directly informed by its ‘fiction’, its dominant narrative. Ads like the one analysed here, are in essence a fictional text with real-life implications; thus, based on their socio-economic function, they inherently invite a Marxist reading, which I will attempt based on writings of Edmund Wilson and Louis Althusser.

Expanding on the initial Marxist model of society being comprised by the superstructure (elite) and the base (working class), two uniform structures perpetually engaged in conflict (the class struggle), in “*Marxism and Literature*” (1938), Edmund Wilson contends that both antagonisms and identification can occur across the divide between the superstructure and the base. That figurative ‘civil war’ as well as the urge to identify with the opposing class (elite) is demonstrated in the Cosmote advertisement, since it displays a feud that goes deeper than just the failed courtship premise it relies on. The male protagonist denigrates the Karavakos family for their inability to speak (i.e. to be masters of their discourse, with discourse being closely linked to power), with his entire clan standing behind him, representing all the other customers who have become a “winning family” by means of a profitable phone contract. Thus people of the same economic background and class are positioned in opposite battle sides, with the divide between them being the symbolic ability –or lack thereof— of ‘free speech’, a concept packaged in the plot of a family vendetta that makes this divide more humouristic and easily palatable to the advertisement’s audience. And however funny it may appear in this particular package, the enmity and combat within the ‘base’ of society can be (and is) fostered by the system itself,

because the success of a few at the expense of the many procures its legitimisation and ensures its continuity.

This signification process, however, has to be covert in order to be approved, digested, and recreated by the masses. Or, as Louis Althusser puts it, in order for the status quo to maintain its current influence, it has to obscure the fabrication of the systemic structures and practices upon which power relations are built. The catchphrase of the advertisement itself asserts: “Όταν είσαι με τους περισσότερους, κερδίζεις.” (“When you side with the majority, you win/you profit.”), implying that it is the majority that benefits from the existing system, and simultaneously (re)assuring the prospective consumer that the opportunity to gain is offered to anybody (anybody who can purchase the specific phone contract nonetheless). The implication here is that ‘success’ is not merely the possession of/access to capital (being rich), but also the process of *chasing* profit (being financially ‘smart’), something that presumably anybody can do.

In “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1970), Althusser argues that ideology is to a certain degree “imaginary”, in that it pertains to how people imagine their own relation to the systemic relations of power and production. In effect, ideology distorts the representation of reality, and that aspect of it is clearly demonstrable in the advertising industry. However, Althusser also recognises a material existence in ideology because it manifests itself via the “ISAs” (Ideological State Apparatuses) which inadvertently affect individual and public behaviours. ISAs are essentially a construct, a fiction that people are persuaded to uphold for it appears as the only reasonable option. In the context of the advertisement, the characters actively engage in self-delusion bred by the confines that multiple ISAs have imposed on them via “interpellation” (the process of constructing ‘unique’ and concrete individuals/subjects within the dominant ideology): masculinity has to be physically asserted, feminine desirability equals conventional beauty, patriarchal figures are decision makers, a marriage has to be profitable for the family, all of which can be overpowered by a profitable deal that reverses any prior objections to an inadequate groom and make him an asset, a ‘catch’.

In effect, this advertisement both subscribes to and satirises the system that it serves: in its effort to sell a product, it highlights the nature of capitalism by blatantly exposing the pretense and absurdity of the key argument/concept of capitalism: that (financial) success makes a human worthy of respect, worthy of relationships, ‘love’, and guarantees prosperity, access to

services/goods/institutions, and social status; in other words, money (or material possessions) can instill enough gravitas to outweigh or redeem any and all other aspects of one's person.

### **Postmodern Criticism – Jean-François Lyotard, Roland Barthes**

Most, if not all, television advertisements are by definition Postmodern, for they are a product of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century's rampant technological evolution, are most likely influenced by and indicative of globalisation, and are made with the aim to become a pop-culture text in order to disseminate target information to the public. There is an intrinsic artistic aspect to advertisements, and their artistry reflects society's being 'at a loss', its confusion and disorientation; on a secondary level, their imaginative recreation of (or allusion to) the trauma of the modern condition allows ads to position the product they sell as an 'antidote' to chaos. Postmodernism rejects holistic theories as panaceae; it instead acknowledges and utilises differences amongst local systems of signification and blends distinct categories in a kind of 'pastiche' (what Jean-François Lyotard calls "bricolage") through which meaning is conveyed. Instead of being based on a 'Grand Narrative' that conventionally banks on realism and/or moralism, the Postmodern piece of art owns the fact that it is unorthodox, ambiguous, or a parodic re-creation of something that has already been made.

In that sense, the Cosmote advertisement is profoundly Postmodern, if only on the basis of its plot and setting alone: it is a parody of the past (traditional Mani), fused with a strictly contemporary element (a cellphone contract). Profusely old-fashioned and outdated concepts and images (arranged marriage between the groom and the bride's father, 'showdowns' on a pastoral setting as a result of family feuds, démodé dresscode) are brought to the fore in a humouristic manner, and eventually all tie into the implicit message of the advertisement: if even country people who are portrayed as the opposite of intellectuals are resourceful and clever enough to pick Cosmote's deal, why won't you? Additionally, in line with Lyotard's "localising" theory of phenomena that are open to interpretation from multiple standpoints, the caricaturesque characters each offer a distinct perspective of the situation; there is no 'omniscient' narrator (barring perhaps the voiceover that announces the product at the end of the ad).

Roland Barthes, in “*The Pleasure of the Text*” (1973), argues that the meaning we assign to cultural phenomena is derived by their ‘syntax’, which is not strictly textual but potentially ever-expanding in terms of its signifying potential. De-coding the text and negotiating its meaning is to Barthes the reason we enjoy the consumption of art. Given the fact that the advertisement discussed begins ‘narration’ in medias res, so that the viewer has to infer the previous occurrences in order to derive meaning, its structure reinforces the Barthian assertion that pleasure of a text is found in its seams. The viewer’s mind is led by syntax to make forward leaps and create uniquely personal conclusions by interpreting the existing meaning in a ‘new’ way.

This “play of signification” (Derrida) that is allowed to happen in one’s reading of a text such as the Cosmote ad, eventually encourages the viewer to recognise and disregard his/her own “interpellation” (Althusser) if only for the duration of the viewing experience. Thus, according to Barthes, tweaking the syntax that is imposed on us can in itself be a (pleasurable) form of resistance.

### **Bibliography**

- Althusser, L. (1970). *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation)*. La Pensée.
- Barthes, R. (1973). *The Pleasure of the Text*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble*. Routledge.
- Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Liotard, J. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Mulvey, L. (1975). “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Screen* 16 (3): 6-18.
- Rivkin, J. and Ryan, M. (2004). *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. 2nd ed. Somerset: Blackwell Publishing.
- Stratmoen, E., Greer, M. M., Martens, A. L., & Saucier, D. A. (2018). “What, I’m not good enough for you? Individual differences in masculine honor beliefs and the endorsement of aggressive responses to romantic rejection.” *Personality and Individual Differences* 123, 151–162.
- Wilson, E. (1938). *The Triple Thinkers: Ten Essays on Literature*. New York: Harcourt. Brace & Co.

STUDENT F.G.

## PSYCHOANALYSIS

Since infiltrating the subconscious mind is an important principle, if not necessity, in advertising, it would be interesting to interpret the advertisement in terms of psychoanalysis. And in order to do so, it will be effective, as well as true to the principles of psychoanalysis (fiction as a form of dreaming, of exercising the subconscious), to view it as a daydream sequence, built in a certain way so it can imitate the viewers' own subconscious, turning them into the dream agents, and turning the advertised product into the plot of the dream itself.

What we are watching is a parody of a love story, adapted on themes common to old greek movies, thus familiar to the audience. We have neither the archetypical hero nor the archetypical siren, but we do have a familiar structure, as well as a seemingly happy ending, when Aggelikoula is in the hands of her lover, whom her family finally accepts. An easy-to-digest story, as well as a simple and clear moral: join the majority and win. Our company is trusted by the majority, so join our company.

The question is, why would the viewers interested in choosing a telecommunications provider get persuaded via watching an anachronistic love story between a villager and a woman surrounded by her vicious family members? The only reasonable answer is: everything is a symbol of something else, and this something else is precisely the reason the viewer/one is persuaded. By consciously or unconsciously paying attention to the advertisement, you take a peak into the protagonist's fantasy, you step into his shoes, you share his desire, you are the dreamer. You now want what he wants, but what you want, as well as what he wants, remain concealed.

So, since we are first of all focusing on the dream content itself, what is the object of his desire? Apparently, he has to fight over Aggelikoula with her brothers in order to get her, but if she is the object of his desire, why is he treating her in a demeaning, almost sadistic way, mocking her appearance and her value? Why is he willing to ridicule the woman he loves just to get a reaction out of her brothers, now watching in anger and frustration in front of the huge crowd he has employed as defense? It seems that our hero takes more pleasure in this victory over these two men rather than his accomplished love. In the second segment, when the two brothers have stepped aside in submission, the main event is the fact that the last "enemy", her

father, bows down as well, and names him his son. Which points to the idea: the object of his libido, his energy, struggle, desire, is not her, it is them.

In a typical fashion of displacement and condensation, listed by Freud as two of the dream distortion mechanisms, you have the face of Aggelikoula used as a mask to envelop the true objects of fixation. The father, the face of authority and order, the sons, on the one hand law enforcers, on the other hand masculine archetypes. They possess what he does not have, physical strength, an intimidating, non-laughable appearance, whereas the father possesses the ability to rule over his household, the respect, or even, to assume the possibility of the underlying oedipus complex, the mother. Since he cannot rip them off of them, he steals away the one thing in their possession that can be seduced away: Aggelikoula. And he does not do so by romancing her, at least that is not something of the audience's awareness; even his seduction is a power play: he uses the collective force of the villagers so he can turn from the underdog into the provocateur, the invader, the conqueror. Now since the viewer, the artificial dreamer, would reject in shame and guilt a violent battle for the mere satisfaction of the "id", they have the convenience of enjoying it concealed as an act of the "superego": the underdog's noble quest for love.

So in conclusion, and to answer the question we previously posed, the dreamers/viewers, immersed in the story of a man seeking gratification through overcoming other men, carefully woven so it resembles a comedic love story, desire what the hero desires, preexisting in themselves and awakened from this play; power and dominance, freedom to express their sexuality, ability to be the leader of the pack, ridicule of their enemies by robbing them of their supremacy. And in order to do so, they only have to "join the majority", translated as "join our company" and be able to "speak".

## FEMINISM

If we break apart the advertisement to a collection of characters, having different functions, aiding the plot and attracting the audience in different ways and so on, we can immediately notice patterns of connection between their qualities and their gender roles. And what makes it all the more interesting is the retrospective approach of the advertisement, on the one hand attempting to parody stereotypes of the past, on the other hand reviving and utilizing them for its own benefit.



First and foremost, we have Aggelikoula, the "woman". The only female character of the ad, the only who has a first name, in a way the center point of the plot, the essence of it, at the same time the one who remains silent, has attributes and descriptive qualities imposed on her, the one who never acts, never reacts, merely "exists". The only activities she performs is walking next to her brothers, eating, obviously giggling when ridiculed by her "lover"; above all, she performs being the "woman". Why the plot is in need for a woman could have many answers, but in this case her role is mostly constituted of two parts: a)creating friction between the male leads, b)being the comedic relief. Both parts of her role are accomplished because of the mere fact that she is a woman. She is desired and fought over for her possession, because she is a woman, on the other hand, she is ridiculed because she is, at the same time, physically unattractive and lacking refinement and grace. And this is considered funny, again, because she is a woman. She embodies a kind of irony solely inflicted by her own presupposed gender role, she parodies herself. Yet this parody is by no means subversive, but, in the words of Judith Butler, is domesticated and recirculated as an instrument of cultural hegemony, in this case, further dehumanizing and by no means liberating "Aggelikoula" from the prison of her own "style of flesh".

Moving on to the "men", we have two opposing sides, the bloodthirsty macho brothers, and the underdog lover, and main agent of our story. In a typical old-school romance fashion, the family fights to protect the girl's "honour" by intimidating away her potential suitor(s); one of them, however, is cunning enough to find his way to her. By placing the plot in a village of Mani, a Greek area notorious for its blood feuds, and, quite possibly, ruthless brothers, a certain depth is imposed on the characters, or rather, on the roles they are performing. The muscular, stern "Karavakoi" are perfect performers of ultra-masculinity, yet they are not agents themselves.

The one real agent of the advertisement is our protagonist, who embodies, once again, a parodic, albeit not subversive, version of his gender. His lanky body, high pitched voice, and funny facial expressions are opposed to the expectations of what a hero looks and sounds like; moreover, he is unable to directly combat with his enemies. What he can do, apparently, is turn the whole village to his side, and through their presence acquire the strength to face them. What he eventually does, however, is not to subvert them, but to replace them, by claiming their sister, by accepting the blessing of their father, by claiming, in a way, their own position in the social hierarchy.

What the viewer can thus take from this advertisement, is that a gender role can be fluid so long as you remain within the socially constructed limits of the gender, whatever those may be at the time, so long as you have the approval of society and are able to gain strength from it, and establish yourself in it. That a man who lacks masculinity can make up for it using the strength of others, and a woman who lacks femininity can make up for it by being silent and obedient, and this way everyone, even the underperforming gender performers, can be merry and have a happy end. And as for the viewers themselves, they can conclude, at the end of the advertisement, that since they are also lacking themselves, they can make up for it by signing a contract with this company.

## POSTMODERNISM

One of the most, if not the most, striking elements of this advertisement is its setting. Although we do know it is taking place somewhere in Mani, we are never informed of the time. It is safe to assume that this uncertainty is intentional, and since intentional uncertainties are always of great importance and interest, it would be valuable to look further into this one.

Just by not-too-closely observing the visual cues, as the type of clothes worn by the actors or the Karavakos's house and traditional café settings, we can assume the point of time is at least a few decades into the late 20th century. Upon a closer inspection, however, we can notice bits and pieces, such as a modern TV screen or the earring worn by one of the brothers, which suggest a much more modern setting. These clues, evident but by no means overpowering the general visual aesthetic of the videos, assist in creating a kind of visual fusion, that goes alongside the fusion of the plot itself.

The storyline itself, a woman torn between her love for a man and her family's will, the conflict of satisfying her desire and preserving her purity/submitting to the family laws is reminiscent of times past, of traditional, closed societies and old-time patriarchal values. Furthermore, the antagonism of men for the sake of a woman is an old and familiar story to Greeks, going as far back as the war caused by Helen of Troy, or, in more recent times, the murders for the sake of Maria Pentagiotissa. Every sensible man and woman of our times would reassure us that these practices and mindsets are long left to the past, yet this advertisement serves as an example of how we often revive them, distorted, manipulated, romanticized or parodied, in art, media, and other cultural expressions.

This kind of subtle, ludic regression to different times, customs, morals, is telling of the fact that their echo is still alive in us. As the postmodern society births its culture by melting together bits and pieces of the societies preceding it, creating a "bricolage" of aesthetical, moral etc. values, every piece, even the ones we critically, and maybe rightfully, reject, finds its place in and around us. Likewise, the anachronistic notion of treating one's daughter/sister as a possession that shouldn't get spoiled by the desire of a man, despite being nowadays -mostly- morally rejected, can be used as material for art, can be laughed upon, or move people. To set this particular advertisement in Mani, well known to every Greek for its dark history, whole family bloodbaths for the sake of honour, is to further culturally charge it.

Therefore, we can hypothesize that this advertisement, among other similar projects, parodies a dark cultural point in certain space and uncertain time, as a way of "exorcising its demons", of reenacting a collective trauma in a light-hearted way, in order to heal it and give it a harmless place in today's society. On the one hand, it facilitates our internal need for regression, for return to a "better, simpler time", when people held firmly into values and supported each other through their implementation. On the other hand, it does so through the culturally aware prism of postmodernism: underplaying or mocking certain "pressure points", implementing "justice", giving Aggelikoula a happy ending. Of course, promising one to us as well, as long as we, blissfully immersed in this "timeless" comedic drama, decide to learn a lesson from it and change our provider to Cosmote.

## MARXISM

Given that a dramatized advertisement is very much a work of fiction, it is important to note this attribute that separates it from the rest: it is, clearly and honestly, made for the sole purpose of persuasion. Not to be confused with propaganda, as an advertisement promises to remain objective, even when exaggerating, to have good intentions, even when the main intention is profit, to not indirectly promote any ideologies, even if it is a piece of fiction. A whole problematic starts at this exact point, because fiction taking the place of simple informing is either used to showcase something in a more vivid way, or to conceal something effectively.

Let's take a look at the present advertisement, promoting the well-known telecommunications provider Cosmote. The plot follows the very amusing romance of Aggelikoula and her lover, both of them designed as caricatures of villagers of Mani, and her

family's animosity, soon turned into submission to their will. What marks this twist is a view of his entire family, large and strong, who is supporting the male lead both morally and physically, by literally standing right behind him. What the narrator suggests us to take from this story is to join the majority, so we will be able to speak (up), without worrying about the consequences. If we isolate this statement, we can immediately find ourselves in front of an important question: is informing the audience about the company's merits the only purpose/function/effect of this advertisement? If not merely informing, is it simply trying to persuade them to sign a contract? Isn't there a layer of implied meaning which has much broader social, political, ideological projections?

In order to answer those questions, we can attempt to employ Louis Althusser's approach of the function of art -given that we accept the advertisement script as a form of "corporately" engaged art- in the social system. As the system's main purpose is to sustain and reproduce itself, it utilizes as many methods as it can afford, including education, religion, media, art (ideological state apparatuses). What these institutions can do, usually better than law enforcement can, is to promote, internalize and naturalize the ideology necessary for the reproduction of their "base" system. What the ideology does, in turn, is to "interpellate" individuals by turning them into "subjects", building their identities, predicating their behaviors. So, moving over to the work of fiction in question, what is the ideology promoted, what kind of identities does it try to build and, by extension, what kind of system does it sustain?

By observing the power play between the characters, and focusing on the climax in the second segment's ending (join the majority in order to be able to speak), we come across a constant battle for dominance asserted in different ways. We have dominance of the father, because of his natural position in the family hierarchy, dominance of the brothers, because of their physical strength, dominance of the pursuer, possibly because of his charisma or persuasion but, as far as we can see, because of his employment of the mass. In a way, we are witnessing an allegory of authority, turning from traditional (father and sons) to charismatic (pursuer), carefully appropriating the last, seemingly more applicable to our times, type, rational authority. On the other hand, the narrator's conclusion is a twist of the advertisements moral; he doesn't ask us to seduce the mass and take over the authority, but to follow the mass, so we can at least have the authority to speak.

What the advertisement, therefore, in an innocent, humorous way does, is to build the profile of a potential inspirer of the mass, as well as call us to join the mass ourselves. We are invited to a figurative rebellion against our oppressors, whether that is political leaders or different companies, which can only take place if we: a)are on the side of the many, b)follow the rules of the established system to begin with. As for the minorities, if they don't want to be marginalized anymore, the only thing they have to do is not be a minority anymore, and they will gain the voice back.