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Refashioning the Grand and the Small: Meaning and Value Transfer in Print Advertisements Based on Double-Scope Blending[*]

Abstract: In this article we look at a class of print advertisements that bring together elements from two different conceptual domains. What is worthy of attention in these ads is that sometimes a remarkable semantical and axiological distance exists between the two domains. We purport to analyze these prints as hybrid entities resulting from a process of *double-scope blending*. This interpretive frame is based on a conceptual apparatus imported from the field of Cognitive Linguistics. It provides an encompassing framework to analyze the direction, nature and scope of the meaning transfer set in motion by these ads. We believe that proper understanding of the effects of these ads depends on proper understanding of the consequences of this meaning transfer. Once such understanding is achieved, researchers can take a further step and look closely at the direction and the scope of the value transfer within specific print ads. We call readers' attention to one peculiar feature of the rhetorical action of these ads. The consumer is systematically encouraged to reconsider grand values through the lens of small, accessible, fast-food-style substitutes. Whether they use grand ideas as vehicles for promoting trivial products, or they use trivial concepts as vehicles for promoting important cultural brands, the print ads we analyze seem to collaborate in sending one overarching message: the consumers' little world, no matter how devoid of true values, is taken to be the measure of all things. Anything that might suggest the grand, the ideal, anything that embodies values of prowess or tradition is immediately redressed in a "take-away" style, so as to preserve consumers' control over it. We consider advertising format and consumer culture logic as conditions that make possible this systematic diminishing of the Grand.

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1. Stating the problem

To set the stage for our inquiry, we invite the reader to take a look at Figures 1 and 2. They share one feature that constitutes the centre of our attention: they bring together two cognitive domains that are asymmetric in what concerns their position in the intricate web of meanings we take to be our "culture" (Geertz 1973, 89).

Figure 1. Print ad for Johnnie Walker, a brand of Scoth whisky. Slogan says: „Keep walking". Tagline says: „Always progressing".

The print in Figure 1 is meant to advertise Johnnie Walker, a brand of Scotch whisky. The slogan "Keep Walking" and the tagline "Always Progressing" are anchoring[1] an image which artfully depicts the progress

[1] In line with Roland Barthes, we take it that words attached to an advertising picture perform an *anchoring* function on the message, giving the reader an interpretive key to the image (Barthes 1964, 44-48). However, fifty years of research into how images mean have shown that the interaction between images and words entails mutual interaction, the elements having variable importance according to the context of each discourse. In line with generally accepted assumptions in the field of visual rhetoric, we believe that meaning emerges from the combination of image and words in an artifact. For purposes of our present discussion, it does not matter what part of the meaning amounts to words

of Western civilization through the centuries, as it is embodied in some of its architectural landmarks and most important technical inventions. When the viewer realizes that the visual element which supports this sequence of accomplishments is the inside of the Johnnie Walker label, the air of grandeur suggested by the beautifully-designed "line of history" may be dissolved (or at least its meaning may be radically reconsidered). What makes this association exciting for rhetorical examination is the fact that the brand of alcoholic beverage constitutes the object of this discourse, while the other cognitive domain functions merely as a discursive vehicle by means of which brand meaning gets constructed (Batey 2008, 209; Kapferer 2008, 179). In other words, by bringing the Grand and the Small together, the print emphasizes the Small. It is the trivial element that is lifted to a level of the symbolic that surpasses even the most fanciful connotations which may be attributed to the product features. It is the trivial element that is imbued with meanings in the attempt to turn it into a cultural symbol, on the one hand standing on its own in the world of seemingly free-floating social entities called *brands*, on the other hand being able to influence product choice in the concrete and measurable world of alcohol consumption, where *brand equity* is expected to influence profit and sales.

Figure 2. Print ad for Van Gogh Museum Cafe in Amsterdam

and what part to the visual component, since this separation is out of the scope of this article and arguably it may be out of the scope of relevance of visual rhetorical studies generally (Daly Goggin 2004, 87-109; Foss 2004, 303-312).

The second print shows a mug with a broken handle. The text says "Van Gogh Museum Cafe". The viewer is supposed to infer that the mug points to the tragic episode in Van Gogh's life when his ear was cut off (by himself or his friend Gauguin).The dramatic character of the episode creates a powerful contrast to the air of detachment and relaxation implied by a Cafe. Again, it is the trivial conceptual domain that represents the object of persuasion, since the ad is supposed to drive sales for the Cafe.

One can feel (not without pain) the horrific commoditization not only of art, but also of artists and their lives. Elements of the artists' lives which should invite deep reflection are instead transformed into visually and cognitively comfortable "slices" which can easily be packaged as *products* and transformed in sources of cheap pleasure for *the Consumer*. The Grand is made Small. Things that were once expected to shatter consciences of museum goers are now transformed into edible, drinkable, enjoyable merchandise. *The Consumer* must not be bothered too much, the Museum must be just as "user-friendly" as a bar or a shopping mall. This operation of refashioning the meaning of art and culture in forms which are easier to integrate in the cognitive world of the average consumer reflects contemporary marketers' recommendations about how to draw more people into the museums (Kotler et al. 2008, Wallace 2006). Branding and marketing notions such as *consumer-targeting* and *one-word selling proposition* are now on the lips of many museum managers.

One must wonder, however, how far we wish to take this attempt of turning cultural issues into *brands* that could be described in "marketable" concepts – short, catchy, accessible for everyone. If making Van Gogh a brand means understanding him through the short-but-marketable description "guy with the ear cut off", we doubt this direction is to be cherished. Highly valuable in this context is Giovanni Sartori's warning about the price paid for the attempt to translate culture in terms that can easily be understood by everyone: "If the price paid for a culture addressed to everyone is its transformation into a subculture, then the operation only brings loss" (Sartori 2006, 29).

More serious scholar attention devoted to axiological issues involved in the translation of cultural values in the language of the masses is needed. One part of the problem may be represented by advertising with the conventions that define it as a genre (Nan and Faber 2004, Arnould and Thompson 2005). The short, compressed format that characterizes the advertising genre leaves little room for articulating complex ideas. Consumer culture, construing through its discourse an implied addressee known as the *Consumer* who is always invited in a world where pleasure

and comfort are central values, leaves little room for topics which might be troublesome for one's conscience. It may be that advertising format and consumer culture logic, in their contemporary shape, are a discursive area with high difficulties in accomodating grand values. We feel that there is in them a pronounced tendency to raise the Small to a grand status - as expressed by contemporary branding theory which emphasizes the importance of a rich conceptual identity of the brand, often incorporating grand values and ideas that are seldom justified by the product (Batey 2008, Kapferer 2008, Sugden 2012). At the same time, we notice a tendency to diminish the importance of the Grand and use cheap, accessible substitutive cognitive entities that only capture the most superficial, visible part of the object of attention, as shown by the contemporary way of thinking about branding marketing cultural institutions (Kotler et al.2008, Wallace 2006). However, expressed in the form above, our ideas are hard to turn into a research hypothesis on which one could build a rigorous academic study. So we decided to take one first step in the exploration of this phenomenon and look at ads in which the Grand and the Small are literally brought together under the eye of the spectator, in a discourse that systematically emphasizes the Small and systematically diminishes the importance of the Grand.

What are the effects of these ads? How do they shape mental representations of the object of persuasion in the audience's mind? How does the other cognitive entity get represented in the audience's mind, what connotations does the print attach to it? Only one of the two is the object of persuasion, yet meaning-attribution will occur for both entities brought together in the semantic space created by this print. To answer such questions, we will first review some works that might help clarify the rhetorical action of these ads. Once they reach their explanatory limits, we will turn to *Blending Theory* to gain additional insight on the meaning-transfer set in motion by such ads.

2. Light and blind spots of contemporary literature in what regards these ads

The print ads which bring together elements from cognitive domains that seem to be worlds apart (one belonging to the domain of grand values of our culture, the other belonging to a domain of trivial entities) would most likely be celebrated by contemporary advertisers as „creative", „different", „incongruent" (and other synonyms that have become part of a *wooden language* of the advertising industry). Most books written by

advertisers obsess with the much-needed departure from ad clichés. The usual story emphasizes the thirst for creativity in a world of formulaic ads that the consumers find tiring and reject (Barry 2012, 9-15; Fallon 2008, 1-23; Newman 2003, 42-68). Many works on advertising address the difficulty to stand out in a world where competition for consumers' attention is ever higher. Bringing together elements from cognitive domains that are semantically far removed from one another can be described as a rhetorical strategy aimed at calling the audience's attention (Lee and Schumann 2004, Phillips and McQuarrie 2004).

However, the relationship between these two cognitive domains is not limited to their sharing the stage of a print, nor to their building a „creative" ad. Therefore, our interest in these cases is not caused by their power to capture the audience's attention against the clutter which characterizes nowadays' media world. What interests us is the direction of the meaning-transfer they set in motion.

In virtue of the Communicative Principle of *Relevance Theory* (Sperber and Wilson 1995), we believe that viewers of these ads will assume that there is a reason why these two cognitive domains are brought together and will engage in interpretive activity to figure out that reason[2]. In the course of this interpretive activity, both cognitive entities will be attached meanings that are a direct result of their association in this context. What does this unusual association communicate about each of the cognitive entities brought into the spotlight? We believe they influence each other's meaning in the mind of the audience, at least for the few minutes in which they share a mental space.

Mental spaces are defined as temporary conceptual packets of information constructed by the mind as it engages in thinking, talking and planning subsequent actions. They are partial assemblies of elements, structured by frames and cognitive models (Fauconnier 2001, 260). In other words, for a given amount of time, these elements dwell together in our minds, as if they were intimately connected from a semantic point of view. How does this impact on our way of thinking about each of them, on the long-term? Framing theories as well as experimental psychology might have some interesting things to say about that.

Semiotic framing is defined as the process of boundary setting and meaning construction performed by a discourse on a given aspect of reality (Hoffman 2011, 136). Any discourse represents its topic only

[2] For empirical evidence for readers' willingness to connect image content with brand content no matter how removed they are from one another, see experiment set up by Scott and Vargas (2007, 345-353).

partially and in a certain light. The systematic selection of aspect x from a wider reality R containing x may influence the audience into thinking only of x when thinking of R. The systematic presentation of x in a positive light and its connection with other positive values may turn the audience's attention from other less desirable aspect of x that are slowly pulled out of the audience's field of awareness. This is only a raw sketch of framing theories, but it will do for purposes of our discussion. What we wish to emphasize is the fact that one should not underestimate the consequences of a grand value's being presented as if belonging together with some other trivial aspect of reality. Even if ad engagement is almost always accompanied by a certain amount of skepticism and audience will most certainly keep an interpretive distance from the ad because of their acknowledging its persuasive attempt, one must not ignore the consequences of some aspect of reality being presented as if it naturally belonged with another (even more so if we talk about social reality, which is largely constructed by means of discourse).

We also mentioned above the support of psychology to our claim that the effects of such associations must be taken seriously. Many experiments have shown that *ad-hoc* associations of two concepts, when repeated for long enough time, may induce into the audience the impression that the two are somehow related (Osgood et al 1957). Given that advertising as a genre is characterized by repetition (i.e. every ad campaign means that consumers will be exposed more than once to one and the same ad), researchers could look further into the effects of such associations. In addition, many researchers have noticed that although ads compete on a commercial level, they often support each other on an ideological level (Brune 2003, Cathelat 2005, Lipovetsky 2007). This may mean that the same patterns of diminishing the Grand could be present in various ads, so repetition could also occur on this higher level, which may also increase their chances to influence public conscience in what regards these values.

What about branding theory? How would it help us understand the rhetorical action of these prints? The Johnnie Walker ad represents a current tendency to imbue brands with meanings that go way beyond those related to product benefits (Batey 2008, 111-159). Initially coined „emotional selling proposition" (as opposed to the more classical benefit-centered „unique selling proposition") this strategy has developed a great deal in the past twenty years (Newman 2003, 74-79). The concept of *brand personality* has come to the forefront of discussions on marketing communication (Aaker 1997, 347-349). All sorts of characters, narrative

plots, taglines, philosophical ideas are combined to create a *conceptual identity of a brand*, one that needs to be consistent from one campaign to another (Batey 2008, 207-225), one that builds on the long term a rich content of the mental folder attached to the brand (Mantonakis et al. 2008, 86). This mental folder which stores all sorts of „brand associations" is supposed to help build brand *preference*, given that competing brands may be indistinguishable on other market-related characteristics (price, real benefits, ingredients etc). In other words, brand communication may be an argument for brand choice. The battle camp is „creative" communication by means of which brands are attributed meanings and values, most of them taken from the world of relevant cognitive items for the consumer and attached to the brand by means of a rhetorical act which resembles that of a *Declarational* speech-act[3]. They become brand values because their authors present them as such and systematically associate the brand name with the characters, plot, colors that are supposed to become „brand properties" some of which are even trademarked (Batey 2008, 207-225, Newman 2003, 268-294).

Branding specialists rejoice the fact that creativity today has reached the amazing level at which ads do not even have to make any promise about the benefits, that audiences have learned this new „advertising language" that accomodates almost any cognitive entity as „brand association", no matter how far removed it is from the product-related semantic area. The following quote from Jean Noel Kapferer illustrates this attitude:

> „There are cases where the brand makes no promise, or where the benefit it brings could sound trivial. For example, how would you define the positioning of a perfume such as *Obsession* by Calvin Klein in a way that clearly represented its true nature and originality? It would be wrong to claim that Obsession makes any specific promise to its customers, or that they will obtain any particular benefit from the product apart from feeling good (a property which is common to all perfumes). In reality, Obsession's attractiveness stems from its imagery, the imaginary world of subversive androgyny which it embodies (...) **What actually sells these brands is the satisfaction derived from participating in the symbolic world of the brand.** The same is true of alcohol and spirits: Jack Daniel's is selling a symbolic participation in an eternal, authentic untamed America". (Jean-Noel Kapferer 2008, 179 – *emphasis ours*)

[3] *Declarations* are a technical term in the philosophy of language that refers to those speech-acts which, pronounced by the authorized people, have the power to bring a state of affairs into existence merely by declaring its existence. Classical examples are "I baptize this ship Elizabeth" or "The meeting is adjourned" (Searle 2010, 12).

However, we are not equally convinced that this transformation of brand communication is something to celebrate. Rather, we feel that its effects are far from being adequately understood. The extreme focus of most researchers on brand equity and on how to boost sales has left a serious blind spot: what do these associations do to consumers' minds on the long-term? We are dealing with a mass phenomenon characterized by the systematic association of trivial products with all sorts of grand ideas.

Some of the ethical concerns that have been advanced with regard to this phenomenon envisaged the artificial price inflation for products wearing famous brand names that often have little in terms of ingredients to truly set them apart from their less promoted counterparts (Klein 2006, 15-109).

But the other direction of the meaning transfer has not received equal attention, although we believe it to be equally important. The way the other cognitive domain is framed by its association with the brand name of a trivial product should be brought to the forefront of scholar discussions on advertising. How does the above-mentioned „untamed" America get constructed in people's minds if it is systematically presented through the lens of Jack Daniel's values?

Or, better yet, what does it mean for consumers to see on a systematic basis elements of the universe reassembled in the shape of a vodka bottle? *Absolut* vodka is celebrated for its 20-year campaign in which the world is seen in „Absolut" terms: cities have the shape of the vodka bottle, so we see „Absolut Thessaloniki" or „Absolut London" in popular print ads. Objects in the house are arranged in „Absolut Feng-Shui" style and images of slender women standing next to their pregnant husbands illustrate „an Absolut world", used to promote the product line of Absolut vodka addressed to „urban women".

Despite its being indeed admirable as a marketing tool, this campaign also poses ethical problems that nobody seems willing to look at. If nobody sees anything wrong with looking at the world through the shape of a vodka bottle, it may be because we are all already drunk. Maybe not with vodka, but certainly with another substance, an „intangible" one („intangible" is another favorite term of marketing *wooden language* regarding brand values – see for example Kapferer 2008, 55). Maybe what affected our vision is the mental poison emanating from the systematic desacralization of everything grand, important and admirable and its lowering in just the right amount to fit in the Procrustean bed of the easy-to-take-in *brand significance.*

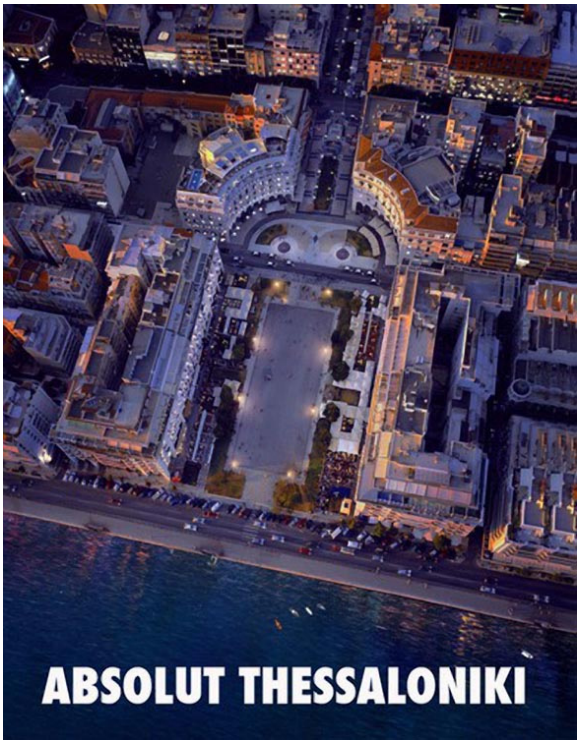

Figure 3. Print ad for *Absolut*, a brand of vodka

Now we do not claim that that somehow or other, every time people will look at Thessaloniki they will think of vodka. Nor that they will only think of Van Gogh through the lens of broken coffee mugs. Of course the strength of these associations does not reach that kind of intensity. Yet, we believe there are strong reasons to look deeper into the consequences of this systematic association of the Grand and the Small in advertising discourse. We believe that seeing these ads as *hybrid structures* resulting from the blend of two cognitive domains will help us get a more adequate image of how their association *frames* both aspects of social reality that constitute the blended cognitive domains.

3. *Double-scope blending* and its implications for advertising research

Conceptual blending is defined as the mental process by means of which people merge two or more cognitive inputs coming from different conceptual domains (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 40-59). Their fusion on a mental level creates a *cognitive hybrid structure*, one that possesses

new features, features that are not identifiable neither in the input spaces, nor in the generic space (the semantic space containing those cognitive elements that are shared by the two input spaces).

In other words, if fields x and y get blended and form a hybrid structure H, then H has meanings that are different from the meanings of x, of y *and* different from what x and y might have in common. Moreover, after having processed H, it is possible for x and y to be *framed* by H.

H may become a sort of interpretive filter between the subject and the x and y cognitive objects. In these cases, x will appear to the subject as H(x) and y as H(y). This projection of meaning must not be understood as something complete or permanent. The degree to which the transfer of meaning occurs and the period of time for which it lasts is clearly influenced by contingent factors. But the fact is that, for a while, on a mental level, such transfer implicitly occurs. So there are two things that need to be kept in mind about blends for the purpose of the present discussion: one is that H (the hybrid structure) possesses features of its own and functions fully as an autonomous entity. The second is that both input spaces can be invested with meanings in the process of their building H.

The most recent version of this theory is published in the book *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). The book is focused on demonstrating that conceptual blending is a mental process that underlies almost all our transactions with the world around us. The authors confess having started their research into conceptual blending in fields where creativity was flourishing, such as poetry and advanced mathematics. But in the process of amassing evidence from these fields, it started to become clear to them that blending was in fact a basic mental operation humans perform in an unconscious manner on an everyday basis.

The authors identify four kinds of blended networks: simplex, mirror, single-scope and double-scope (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 113-139). At the high end of the continuum of blending complexity, double-scope networks blend inputs with clashing organizing frames to produce creative emergent frame structure in a blended space. *Double-scope blending* is what we find in the print ads discussed in this paper.

Given that the authors are willing to emphasize repeatedly the fact that this mental operation underlies all our attempts to make sense of the world around us, it might seem inadequate for us to draw on this theory to explain the rhetorical action of the ads discussed in this paper. First, we

might be accused that we are using examples which are coming from a very far-end corner of creative work (a sub-class of advertising which is itself a sub-class of creative communication) and thus depart from what the authors believe is the key novelty of their contribution, namely the pervasiveness of this unconscious mental process, its presence in our lives on an everyday basis. Secondly, we might be accused of using pretentious language to describe one thing that is obvious. Anyone could tell that there are two semantic areas brought together in these print ads, whether they would call them *input spaces* or some other name. To save the reader from such misunderstandings, we answer these two critical thoughts that might arise in his mind. To the first critique, our answer is that we do not purport to advance *Blending Theory*. This paper could not provide an additional chapter to Fauconnier and Turner's book. Our intention is to import *Blending Theory* in advertising and see if it can help us understand better what is going on in these ads. It is not a further contribution to their theory. This is only an application of Fauconnier and Turner's ideas, one coherent with their assumptions and their conceptual apparatus, although it is much smaller in scope. Therefore, the fact that *Blending Theory* can be used as an interpretive theory for understanding the effects of advertising is not news to *Blending* theorists (Fauconnier and Turner already know that), but to advertising theorists.

In advertising, *Blending Theory* was used only to make sense of consumers' interpretations regarding logos and other forms of visual communication (Joy et al. 2009) and as an attempt to formalize the creative process (Forceville 2012). But up until now, no author took *Blending Theory* as a framework for understanding meaning and value transfer within double-scope print ads and its ethical implications. This is what we are up to here. This point hopefully answers the second critique, too. We are not just saying the same thing in pretentious words. A hybrid entity is more than a creative ad where we see two "worlds" coming together. A hybrid entity has a meaning of its own. Its emergent features create a mental space which is a novel cognitive structure to the subject. It is the inside of that structure that we want to bring to light, together with its rhetorical effects.

Having clarified these aspects of our approach, let us proceed to the analysis of print ads through the interpretive frame provided by *Blending Theory*. We will first look at the print ads we already discussed and then move to a fresh example, to help the reader grasp the gains that might be brought by this angle of analysis.

What can *Blending Theory* help with in the case of the Johnnie Walker ad? Unlike other points of view discussed in section 2, *Blending*

Theory reveals the fact that we are dealing with a hybrid structure, one with autonomous meaning. The Johnnie Walker label is presented as if being inextricably linked with progress of the Western World. For a given amount of time, these two are intermingled within a mental space, interval in which the viewer's mind tests all sorts of double-directional meaning transactions between the two. Should we infer that all these discoveries were somehow backed by Johnnie? Were their creators equal admirers of this alcoholic beverage? Did it constitute the source of inspiration or perhaps the source of financing for all of them? The interpretation is open, since the slogan only emphasizes evolution over time, an interesting type of evolution, one which sees Johnnie remain equally valuable although the world is transformed radically from a technological and architectural point of view. According to *Blending* principles, we also must understand that the second input space can also be seen through the lens provided by the hybrid structure. In other words, Western progress is reduced to a sketchy representation and semantically juxtaposed with something as trivial as an alcoholic beverage. One might rightfully argue that people know this is an ad and therefore do not take its content to be informative about history, so discussion of its effects on this level is as pointless as discussion about the ethics in a joke or a science fiction movie.

But what *Blending Theory* points out is that these two cognitive domains form one hybrid structure which persists in the mind, with its autonomous meaning, for a given amount of time. Consider the fact that advertising is in itself a repetitive genre plus the information that many ads are built on the same type of Grand-Small conceptual blend and we get a slightly different picture than the superficial "it's only an ad" approach.

What we may be watching is a mass-phenomenon of taking values from the universe of cognitive entities that are relevant to the consumer and artificially insert a brand-name between the person and the value it aspires to. If found in an advertising book, this could be described as a good creative strategy, because the only criterion would be market efficiency. But scholars who look at advertising are generally not obliged in any way to look solely for the impact of brand communication on the market success of brands. Looking at its impact on people may be equally important.

In what concerns the ad for the VanGogh Museum Cafe, the hybrid structure creates a mental space that contains a cliché representation of van Gogh, blended with a coffee mug. The handleless mug has connotations that none of the input spaces, taken separately, possesses. It is not reducible to a simple message such as "coffee at the van Gogh

Museum". If one looks at it as a hybrid cognitive entity standing on its own, one can see how awfully disrespectful it is to van Gogh's tragedy. The ability to enjoy coffee while contemplating this type of dramatic episode in somebody else's life is indeed a trait that seems to pull the modern Consumer further and further away from human essence. Compassion is not "fun", so it is not welcome in a world where entertainment is the name of the game, even for a visit to the museum. Tragedy is refashioned to be entertaining or else the fun-seeking consumer might take his toys and move to the closest shopping Mall, where one does not have to face tragedies.

In addition to its being disrespectful to the human body itself (*any* human's body), the hybrid structure might have harmful effects because it reduces a conceptual domain as rich and complex as an artist's life and work to a sketchy representation that only captures the most superficial, marketable aspect of it.

Compression characterizes blends, all blends (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 90-113). In advertising, compression is guided by the implicit search of ad creators for the most "marketable" element. Recognizable for the *Consumer*, visible, uniquely associated with the brand – these are conditions that marketing theory imposes on the selection of traits to be promoted. Transferred in the world of art museums, such selection leads to the awful result we see in this hybrid structure. The cut-off ear becomes a marketable brand-property. Uniquely associated to the brand indeed, the brand being Van Gogh himself in this case. The Grand is "sliced" and the slice that is picked for promotion is the one that contains zero life and zero artistic meaning, which makes this hybrid structure worthy of the name "slice-of-death". Are we watching the flourishing of slice-of-death ads every time Grand values and trivial issues are brought together? Only a quantitative study could answer that. At this level of our research, we can only deal with isolated cases for which we can try to provide a larger theoretical frame of analysis.

This fresh perspective on the two examples that started off our investigation hopefully managed to introduce the reader to the gains that may be brought by *Blending Theory* in the analysis of this class of print ads. Seeing the ad as a hybrid structure helps researchers follow with more precision the rhetorical consequences of the advertiser's creative choices. Some associations may indeed seem exciting at first sight. Bearing the two input spaces in mind, one might think only of how clever it is to associate such different things in the same image. But once they are together, they *become* something else: to the viewer, they are a new

conceptual entity, with meanings of its own. To understand the rhetorical action of ads based on *double-scope blending*, one must look at this hybrid structure *per se* and understand its reception by the audience.

Now let us examine another example whose treatment as a hybrid entity may help illuminate its rhetorical architecture. Take a look at the print ad in Figure 4. In a typical setting for the Romanian countryside, we see three ladies chatting. Text says: "Forum and chat, age-old versions". In the right corner of the print ad, the logo of the Romanian Peasant Museum with its slogan "Always in fashion. Since 1906".

Two other print ads belonging to the same campaign emphasize the same brand promise from different angles. A man playing a traditional instrument in front of his house is accompanied by a text saying "Unplugged concert attended by enthusiastic fan mob". A series of traditional dresses are accompanied by a text saying "The new fall-winter collection, *prêt-à-porter* on all lanes". Basically, all three print ads show elements of Romanian countryside traditions redefined in contemporary terms. Again, we are dealing with a case of a "creative" association of two distant conceptual domains. If we look at this ad through the lens of *Blending Theory*, some other aspects come into the spotlight.

We mentioned above that the hybrid also becomes an interpretive filter for the two input spaces, once the blending process has occurred and a mental space containing the hybrid was created. In this case, the hybrid brings together two worlds and essentially communicates the idea that traditional peasant life might have more in common with urban life than we currently realize. Similarities will become obvious as soon as are willing to look beyond surface differences.

But the hybrid also projects meaning and value on each of the input spaces. In this context, it is worth noticing the direction of the value transfer suggested by this ad. Peasant life is valued precisely under those aspects in which it resembles the life of the target audience, the life of the *Consumer*. To put it bluntly, the most interesting thing about our peasant population, from 1906 until present times, is that they were/are "just like us". This perspective is weird to say the least, given that there are many other aspects under which the lifestyle of city dwellers and that of traditional peasants differ fundamentally. We would be tempted to say that it is precisely the points of difference that should draw our attention. But the Consumer is expected to look for mirrors of his Highness. What would he enjoy more than finding himself and his habits presented as worthy of the attention of a museum?

Judging by the crafts and the hard work they were devoted to, we would tend to say peasants would have a lot to teach young city dwellers

today. The point of attraction would not be the fact that they did some of the things just like us. The point of attraction would be represented precisely by those aspects in which they were not like us. Maybe peasants chatted too, but the amount of work they did around the house and on the field is uncomparably superior to what we are used to call "work". Judging by the amount of time they spent working, we might assume that the chat times could hardly come close to what happens now online with the youngsters.

Figure 4. "Forum and chat, age-old versions". Print ad for the Romanian Peasant Museum. Slogan says: "Always in fashion. Since 1906".

In addition, their work involved tools and techniques that many of us are strangers to. Their clothes were mostly hand-made. The skill of making them, the rich significance of the patterns, the tradition of keeping blouses and dresses from generation to generation as a precious treasure are amazing lessons for youngsters. Shouldn't these elements be the

centre of attention in an ad campaign for the Museum of the Romanian Peasant? Isn't this more interesting than American and French imported terms such as *unplugged* or *prêt-à-porter* which are applied to peasant realities as if they would somehow legitimate the young generation's interest in these topics?

Under current logic of ad discourse, the answer seems to be negative. Current logic of ad creation seems to be reducible to the following unwritten rule: "if something is grand enough to be admired, repackage it as something cheap and accessible, something that belongs to the cognitive realm of what they know, of what they master, of what flatters them". From all the points of interest that peasant culture could present, what does the advertiser select? The ones that say "these people are just like you". Everything that was Grand about their lives, everything that might uncover the ugliness of spending all your time on chats and forums instead of working (such as most of the audience of these prints does), is ellegantly removed from the field of awareness. Again, the *Consumer* must not be bothered, he must be flattered. He is the point. The ad is about him. The source of values is his world, even if this sometimes means paradoxical directions of the value transfer as is the case here. The *Consumer* is *Homo admiratus*, not *Homo admirans*, even when it comes to museums, a category where things should (by definition) happen the other way around.

4. How this contribution fits in the larger picture of advertising studies

Kenneth Burke's call to look at literature as equipment for living (Burke 1973, 293-304), if well understood, could become a serious warning signal for contemporary scholars looking at the effects of advertising on society. Although literature is mostly judged through the lens of aesthetic criteria, its social influence should never be underestimated. Much of advertising communication also functions today as equipment for living, whether we are willing to accept that or not. It, too, is judged mostly through aesthetic criteria. On a common sense level, people distinguish between "stupid" and "creative" commercials, such as those awarded at festivals like Cannes Lions or Golden Drum. Schools of advertising teach students principles of *strategic* creativity. Strategic creativity is the one that best suits the goals of the brand. Jean-Noel Kapferer speaks about the fact the creative hunches are only useful if they are consistent with brand's legitimate "territory" (2008, 177-178). Every once in a while, an

isolated "ethics" course poses questions about the bigger picture in which we should integrate the so-called "goals of the brand". Such courses would often invoke Naomi Klein and other marxist critique of advertising seen as the machine behind all the evils of capitalism (Klein 2006).

But the pool of meanings from which the ad creativity draws its substance is seldom questioned from an ethical point of view. A large part of creative ads bring a second conceptual domain (other than that of the product category and related items) into the picture. That domain is often powerfully-anchored in collective representations of cultural values. What happens if it is systematically related to brand names and product classes in a way that constantly violates its true meaning and importance? What happens if ads systematically emphasize the short, the easy, the superficial part of all issues they bring into the picture? Should we be surprised if we see consumers' taste atrophy in what concerns those things which require deep reflection, those things from which the essence is irretrievably lost when one attempts to translate them in short terms that "sell"? Just like literature is in large part what authors have taught readers to read (as Margaret Meek famously defined it), so advertising is in large part what brand managers have taught consumers to find meaningful and relevant. Consumers' tolerance for brand values that are aberrantly broken from any product trait is already pretty high (Sugden 2012). We must wonder whether this tolerance is not taken to an even higher and more dangerous level, though. Let us hope that we will not watch our notions of *life* become what advertisers have taught us to *read* from the world around us.

This kind of idea has been out there for a while in works of authors that scan the content of ads to discover offensive portrayals of people or unethical representations of relationships between people (Hirschman 2011, Gill 2008, Grow and Wolburg 2006, Lindner 2004, Leiss et al. 1990, Merskin 2004, Williamson 1994). However, most of these analyses only look at what images say *per se*, without looking at the connection that is purported between the image and the advertised brand (Scott 1994a, Scott 1994b).

From this point of view, our angle of analysis is fairly new. However, it needs quantitative support to make a case. We would need to look at many combinations of grand ideas and trivial aspects of reality brought together before we might say that the refashioning of the grand in terms of the small is a rhetorical strategy used frequently enough in advertising communication to justify a serious public discussion and even a series of legal boundaries being set around this route to persuasion.

For the time being, we would be happy if we managed to call the attention of other researchers to these problems. We hope we have opened

a discussion that will be joined by other people interested in advertising but also in aspects of *framing* more generally. Of course, we do not suggest we should jump off our seat everytime we find some "grand" value packed with a trivial product in an ad, but use the Blending Theory lens to understand the direction in which the meaning and value travel within a given ad. There is no reason why we should not expect to find cases of print ads based on *double-scope blending* that do honour to the values under discussion. This issue would make a wonderful topic for empirical investigation.

The proposition that we look at print ads based on *double-scope blending* as *hybrid entities* can hopefully provide a sort of clarifying framework for intelligent discussion of their rhetorical action. We believe this part of our paper will be welcomed by anybody with a serious interest in understanding what ads do. On the other hand, our interpretation regarding the representation of the Grand and the Small in these prints may not be equally shared by other researchers. We do not pretend to have provided readers with an objective characterization of the rhetorical architecture of these print ads, nor an accurate estimation of their long-term effects on public conscience. Our speculations about the implications of the semantic and axiological transfer proposed by these ads are fully subjective. Yet, we believe such subjectivity is built-in the hermeneutic dimension of rhetoric anyway. When performing rhetorical analysis, one tries to make sense of how the author of a discourse anticipated the audience's response to certain rhetorical strategies, based on context, conventions and general knowledge of the audience's preferences. The analyst's choice of interpretive frames is most often a rhetorical choice, too. The analyst also tries to make a point, to unite all elements in such a manner so as to support his interpretation. Yet, sharing the same system of conventions as the ad creators and the intended audience can help a lot with bringing the interpretation closer to the discursive reality it purports to give an account of. We hope this is the case here. We believe ours is a controlled subjectivity, uncovering our premises and the bases for the conclusions we draw and inviting further researchers to build on this work.

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