CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE SEMIOTIC CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IDENTITIES

(A Análise de Discurso Crítica e a Construção Semiótica das Identidades de Gênero)

Izabel MAGALHÃES
(Universidade de Brasília[1])

RESUMO: *Este estudo examina aspectos textuais e semióticos de anúncios publicitários segundo a análise de discurso crítica. O foco do estudo é o conceito de identidade de gênero. Nos anúncios, diferentes textos são apropriados de novas maneiras, de forma explícita e implícita. Aqui os textos funcionam em um processo de tecnologização do discurso. Tanto o feminino quanto o masculino são representados discursivamente em sua heterogeneidade: o feminino é representado como um corpo mercadorizado; é também frágil e patológico. O masculino é ligado ao poder, mas também à moda. Os anúncios posionam os/as leitores/as ideologicamente, com o fim de definir suas identidades de gênero como consumidores/as.*
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Tecnologização do Discurso; Identidades de Gênero; Análise Semiótica; Publicidade.*

ABSTRACT: *This study examines textual and semiotic aspects of adverts according to critical discourse analysis. The focus of the study is the concept of gender identity. In adverts, different texts are appropriated in new ways explicitly as well as implicitly. Here texts work in a process of discourse technologisation. Both the feminine and the masculine are represented discursively in their heterogeneity: the feminine is represented*

---

as a commodified body; it is also frail and pathological. The masculine is linked with power, but with fashion too. Adverts position readers ideologically, so that they can define their gender identities as consumers.

Key-words: *Discourse Technologisation; Gender Identities; Semiotic Analysis; Advertising.*

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to investigate the inherent hybridity of adverts as discourse technologies and to look at the ways in which the self is constructed in relation to the other, through the voices represented in this genre. The main interest here is to examine the semiotic construction of gender identities as a dynamic flux of social representations, mediated by such textual aspects as vocabulary, cohesion, grammar (modality), intertextuality and other aspects pertaining to imagetic representation, discussed in detail by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). Adverts are considered here as preferred sites for the recontextualisation of styles and genres, which draw on traditional and innovative discourses, setting up heterogeneous, hybrid texts and identities as discursive products of late modernity.[2]

Social theory discusses late modernity by focusing on changes in urban contexts. In so doing, it has contributed to shaping identities flexible to change. Foucault (1987ª) points out the role of social sciences in the surveillance and objectification of the subject. Giddens (1991, 2000) suggests that people nowadays learn to deal with risk, a notion which helps us to understand the nature of these changes and their effects on people. No doubt risk has become part of everyday life, and the amount of instability faced by the self can indeed lead to an identity crisis.

Two tendencies which have been noted are: first, a process of decentring of the self, and, second, a process of change in self-identity (Hall 2000). As a result of these tendencies, essentialist identities have given way to new

---

[2]   De Barros' paper on bank adverts in Brazil focuses on interactive features of address forms, in the light of French semiotic analysis (De Barros, 2002). One other paper on bank adverts is Strehler's (1997). This is a critical discourse study, which examines the concept of discourse type in a *corpus* of texts published by *Istoé*. My paper adds to these studies the focus on adverts as discourse technologies in the semiotic construction of gender identities.

ones, characterised by fragmentation and hybridity of the self. Such issues related to sociocultural identity in late modernity are part of a wider social process, involving changes in the ways that people refer to the world and in the frameworks which have traditionally provided them with ontological security (Giddens 1991).

The theoretical debate about identity is related to late modernity, characterised as a post-traditional context in which printed and electronic media play a significant role in identity construction and in which social systems are globalised (Giddens 2000; 1991). Late modernity has affected people's identities and their personal feelings. Changes in the notions of time and space have had a considerable impact on self-construction, with the rise of quasi-interaction, a genre defined by the possibility of its uptake in a different context (Thompson 1998). This means influencing people's view of themselves and of others in spatio-temporal reception settings which can be very different from production settings on a global scale. I will deal with this in the next section.

2. Critical discourse analysis and gender identities

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) offers a number of contributions to developing a conceptual framework to discuss both the issues of gender identities and the ways in which they are constructed in semiosis as part of discursive processes. Broadly speaking, Fairclough (1992 – trans., 2001; 1995), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), van Dijk (ed., 1997), Fairclough and Wodak (1997), Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), and Fairclough (2000) have proposed steps to advance CDA as an approach which links the detailed analysis of text, which is practised in Linguistics, with societal concerns about class, gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality as studied in the social sciences (Wodak and Meyer, eds., 2001).[3]

In relation to gender identities, we need to problematise essentialist identities since they have little to do with present social life, shaped to a

---

[3]   A Portuguese collection focusing on CDA is that edited by Emília Pedro (1997). One other collection was published in Brazil (see C. Magalhães, ed., 2001). A published research report in Portuguese is *Eu e Tu: A Constituição do Sujeito no Discurso Médico*/You and I: The Constitution of the Subject in the Discourse of Medicine (I. Magalhães, 2000a).

great extent by quasi-interaction in the media. Traditionally the roles of women and men were fixed in diverse institutions, such as the family, religion, schools, medicine and tribunals. At present, as a result of intercultural relations caused by migration, these fixed identities have given way to mobile, hybrid identities.

Talbot (1998) suggests that the mother identity now coexists with other identities, such as that of the feminine, which is constructed in the media (magazines, papers, radio, television). Caldas-Coulthard (1999) examines women's stories in magazines dealing with sex which is paid for and enjoyed. Barát (2000) analyses autobiographies of women, focusing on professional identities. Walsh (2001) extends the debate to consider other institutions and organisations, such as the Church.

Gender identities are constructed in dynamic social processes, as a result of the interface between verbal and visual texts. Texts are defined here in two senses: as the semiotic dimension of practice, developed by systemic functional linguistics/SFL (Halliday and Hasan 1989; Halliday 1994; Hasan and Williams, eds., 1996); and as a discursive contribution designed to be uptaken in a different context (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Every time texts are uptaken in a new setting, involving time and space relations, they can be reinforced, extended, abridged, quoted, criticised, denied, or imitated (Bakhtin 1997). Textual transformation, such as in advertisement, enhances the development of new technologies. In adverts, different texts are appropriated, quoted, or recontextualised in new ways explicitly as well as implicitly. Here texts work as discourse interventions in a process of technologisation of the self.

3. Discourse technologies and gender identities

According to Fairclough (1992: 215-216), discourse technologies have taken on the 'character of transcontextual techniques'. These techniques work as 'resources' or 'toolkits' in strategic actions in preaching, teaching and advertising. They are based on the connection between knowledge of language and power. For instance, in interviews the interviewee is usually under the control of the interviewer, who is in charge of both selecting the topics to be examined as well as asking questions. This is also the case with the preacher in relation to the congregation in religious services, such

as in Evangelical Pentecostalism, in which the latter is restricted to taking the 'amen' turns (Magalhães 1997). In adverts, the producers position the addressees in such ways as to make them take the views advocated in the text, and which have to do ultimately with acknowledging the qualities of the advertised commodities and making up one's mind to buy them. No doubt the reception of a text is rather complex, involving the appeal to legitimated and preferred discourses. Admittedly, readers do consider different ways of interpreting a text by drawing on internalised resources from previous experience (Fairclough 1989 and 1992; Thompson 1990). However, in the production of adverts, diverse resources are appropriated in the attempt to appeal to potential consumers, involving textual transformation, expertise, photographic and video techniques, cameras, scanners, computers and printers.

Discourse and technology are related in different ways. On the external level, machines such as computers are developed to file and retrieve information in processes which imitate the human memory. Machines are also made to interact with people, and the obvious example is the computer always asking us what we would like to do, if we really want to delete a specific file, if we want to save a file before turning off the machine, and so on. Here there is an interlinking of discursive and technological processes. In addition, the relation between discourse and technology is dialectical because their interlinking can give rise to new developments in discourse and technology. Current machines are produced to replace humans, as 'cyborg-sex' experiences indicate. Thus, the difference between nature and culture is no longer clear-cut (Haraway 1990). In adverts, it is often the case that machines are presented as more perfect than humans. One example[4] is an advert of the French car Peugeot: the text portrays a wedding scene in which the bride is replaced by the car, suggesting that a perfect wedding is that between man and the car.

This point is taken by Mey (2000) in his discussion about the metaphor of the computer as prosthesis. Here Mey warns us about the dangers of considering the computer as a mental aid. One of these dangers is that 'we may be tempted to reverse the direction of the metaphor: rather than thinking of the computer as a metaphorical prosthesis for the mind, we may conceive of our minds as prostheses for some outside agency, a central

---

[4]   *Veja*, 1758, 3rd July, 2002.

computer that keeps us all in place via an intricate system of wiring' (: 26). The other danger is that we think of mental functions as 'a set of independent yet connected components' and of the brain as an 'organized, distributed architecture' (: 27). Mey's critique of the metaphor of the computer as prosthesis is that 'we should ask not only what the computer can do as a prosthesis, as a help *in* our lives, but what it does *to* our lives and to ourselves, as well as to our environment' (: 28).

Mey's critique is relevant to our analysis of adverts if we consider for a moment the ways in which the computer and the scanner have contributed to bringing together photos, written/spoken texts, citations, reported speech in *embodiments* of the self, thus producing and reproducing consumer identities and lifestyles for the feminine and the masculine. In light of this, in order to feel the need to buy the products being advertised, we are made to believe that we are part of the world represented. In fact, these representations are socially constrained in the dialectics of discourse (Fairclough 2001), so that particular representations construct particular reader positions.

Thus, adverts as discourse technologies produce identities which are in a sense flexible because we can disagree with these reader positions. Nevertheless, given the attractiveness of adverts, the possibility that we identify with the selfhood which is represented in these texts is indeed high. For this reason, we view gender identities in this study as both flexible and fixed. As Walsh (2001: 15) notes, in her book about language, gender and power in politics, the church and organisations:

> On the one hand, it will be argued that gender does not simply reflect a pre-existing identity, but helps to constitute, maintain and transform that identity in everyday situations via talk and the paralinguistic behaviour that accompanies it. On the other hand, the metadiscursive control exercised by others, and especially by the media, constrains this process of identity formation.

Advertising contributes to representing and constructing gender identities in complex urban landscapes in which modernity often coexists with a traditional past. Both modernity and late modernity are associated with the technological and cultural development of Europe and the United States. Such historical development is associated with the globalisation of mediated communication (Thompson 1998). With globalisation, countries like Brazil are often viewed as the target for the language of buy-and-sell.

This is because globalisation was designed to favour large corporations which have become more powerful as their profits increase. As these corporations' interests have been imposed on local populations, it is often the case that modernity is masqueraded as consumerism. In this sense, Brazilian cities have become complex, proposing a sense of freedom from traditional values without offering satisfactory conditions for the development of an alternative self. There is a parallel between hybrid genres and lifestyles, and hybrid identities. In such a context, gender has been taken as a mobile site which is often explored as a target for consumerism.

Adverts appropriate gender discourses in the process of the construction of ideal readers, 'policing' gender identities, while simulating a personal relationship with the reader in order to sell the image of the product being advertised. Fairclough (1989) calls this 'simulated personalisation'. Texts portray a tense coexistence between traditional, essentialist gender identities and new identities influenced by intercultural relations brought about by globalisation. In focusing upon Foucault's notion of 'forms of coexistence' (Foucault 1987b), I defined two gender discourses: a traditional one and a new discourse, which seeks an egalitarian relation between the genders (Magalhães 1995). This emancipatory gender discourse is associated with women's participation in public domains (Magalhães 2000b).

Lazar (2000) views these discourses in a kind of stable coexistence. My own view, however, is that they are in a constant ideological battle for social visibility and power, as stakes in the construction of self-identity lie exactly in the interdiscursive frontiers between them (Bakhtin 1997; Magalhães 2003).

In adverts, women are partly represented as liberated. At the same time, however, they are treated as commodities to be consumed with the products being advertised. In addition, new forms of masculinity are represented in adverts, something which can be subsumed in the noun phrase 'the pleasure of being a man' (Section 4). In studies of masculinities, it has been pointed out that just as there are different feminine identities, so too masculine identities are diverse. Hearn (1992: 4) notes that 'not only do men dominate women, but also different types of men dominate other men – able-bodied over men with disabilities, heterosexual over gay, and so on'. Also Johnson and Meinhof (1997) advocate the need to use 'masculinities' in the plural, so as to indicate these intragroup inequalities.

Therefore, advertising exercises surveillance on both women and men, telling them not only what they should wear and how they should live to be part of a valued lifestyle, but also what kind of person they should be in global consumer communities.

4. The technologisation of discourse and the semiotic construction of gender identity in adverts

Two questions are examined in this paper: 1) What kind of identities are constructed for women and men by the discourse of advertising? 2) What is the power relation which determines gender identities in the discursive conventions of advertising? The first question is about the definition of women's and men's identities, while the second question deals with the power relation between the genders, and the representation of women's and men's voices in the hybridity of these texts.

The analysis of the texts follows Fairclough's dimensions of description, interpretation and explanation (Fairclough 1989; 1992 – trans., 2001). First, we describe the semiotic and linguistic aspects of the texts which construct gender identities. These aspects are then used as evidence for our interpretation and explanation of the texts as discursive moments of social practices (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). The discursive moments hold a dialectical relation with five other moments, defined by Harvey (1996): power, social relations, material practices, institutions/rituals, beliefs/values/desires.

The main semiotic aspects are women's photos either complementing the linguistic text or replacing it. Women can, therefore, be represented as mothers and as sex objects. These are two identities which have been historically constituted for women in Brazil (Del Priore 1993; Figueiredo 1993). The mother identity is examined in my study of doctor-patient interviews (Magalhães 2000[a]). However, this will not be analysed here. Professional women are also represented.

Initially, I analysed 10 adverts published in two general readership Brazilian magazines *Veja* and *IstoÉ*, which address middle-class readers.[5]

---

[5]   This *corpus* was collected by Denise Goulart de Miranda.

These adverts define a consumer identity which sustains problematic representations of women and men, in the sense that they appropriate changes in gender identities to reinforce traditional identities. Thus, women are often represented as dependent on men, their aim in life being constructed as limited to please men's desires.

In a later stage of this research, I expanded the *corpus* with adverts published in the women's magazine *Cláudia* and in the men's magazines *Vip* and *Quatrorodas*.

Figure 1 presents a tentative framework for the textual and semiotic analysis of adverts. This framework should be taken as in construction, since new items can be included. However, we argue that the analysis of adverts will benefit from textual and semiotic analysis (Fairclough 1999).

semiotic aspects
vocabulary
cohesion
modality
intertextuality

Figure 1 – Gender voices represented in advertising

Semiotic aspects – The ways in which photos represent women and men, their styles of dressing and issues related to their bodies, as well as the particular place of photos in adverts. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 55) suggest that there is an 'interchangeability of visual and verbal participants' in visual genres such as adverts. The participants, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, are heterogeneous. Verbal participants are headlines or blocks of written text, but it is the semiotic aspects which make them coherent semantically. What kind of semiotic aspects are we talking about? They are of different kinds, and we will refer to four of them: pictures, abstract shapes, words and letters. 'The key to understanding such texts therefore lies above all in an understanding of the visual semiotic means which are used to weld these heterogeneous elements into a coherent whole, into a text.'

For the study of the modality values attributed to colour, Kress and van Leeuwen distinguish four coding orientations associated with highest and lowest modality (: 171):

Coding orientation	Full colour saturation	Less than full colour	Black and white
Scientific/technological	Lowest modality		Highest modality
Abstract		Lowest modality	Highest modality
Naturalistic		Highest modality	Lowest modality
Sensory	Highest modality		Lowest modality

Figure 2 – Modality values of colour
(Adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 171)

In the scientific/technological coding orientation, the visual representation is guided by the blueprint principle, so colour has low modality and black and white, high modality.

In the abstract coding orientation, high modality is linked with the reduction of the individual to the general and concrete to essential qualities. The ability to read texts in this coding orientation is considered as a social distinction, characterising an 'educated person'.

The naturalistic coding orientation is considered to be dominant and refers to the shared assumptions when people are addressed as members of a culture. One can draw on different coding orientations, for example an educated person can use the abstract coding orientation in an art gallery and the naturalistic coding orientation in other situations such as watching television.

The sensory coding orientation is oriented to the pleasure principle, for example in fashion, advertising, cooking and in particular forms of art. Colour here presents high modality, in vibrant reds and soothing blues, not only giving pleasure but also constructing affective meanings.

These coding orientations can be very useful in the analysis of adverts, especially the commonsense naturalistic and the affective sensory coding orientations. They can also be linked with intertextuality, since visual

presentation is one of the ways in which heterogeneity and ambivalence can work together in the process of reader positioning.

Vocabulary – Of particular interest here are lexical choices, what kinds of wording are favoured, and whether or not words are attributed new meanings in rewordings and in new lexicalisations (Mey 1985: 166-168; Halliday 1978: 164-182). In addition, it is important to consider if there is an attempt to explore lexical items of a specific semantic field in the process of overwording, which refers to the diversity of ways for representing one particular meaning (Fairclough 1992 – trans., 2001: 236). Thus, when new words are created, new meanings are constructed and new lexical items are codified. Fairclough presents the example of cosmetic surgery, in which new words are lexicalised. Such lexical items as 'eyebag removal', 'nose refinement', 'wrinkle improvement' and 'bat ear correction' give cosmetic surgery 'the prestigious status of scientifically-based therapy', while generating 'new culturally important categories'. (: 237/1992: 191)

Cohesion – In adverts, clauses and periods are connected so as to produce a particular rhetorical mode, one which will arouse in the readers the desire to purchase the product being advertised in the text. Such cohesive markers as reference, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical items will be of interest here.

Modality – This is an aspect of grammar related to the interpersonal meaning of language. One of the main purposes of the analysis is to define the degrees of affinity which charaterise the discursive representation of social relations and identities and the control of the ways in which reality is constructed in adverts. An effective exploration of modality markers – such as modal verbs (can, could, may, might, must, will, would, should, ought to, must), adverbs, colour and layout – is a powerful device in constructing reader position.

Intertextuality – This is a general term which can be divided into interdiscursivity, correspondent to the discourse types or genres which are drawn upon in the text; and manifest intertextuality. These terms are borrowed from Pêcheux (1988) and Authier-Révuz (1990). In the analysis of interdiscursivity, four questions will be of interest: a) How can the advert be characterised as a genre? b) What kinds of genre does the advert draw upon? c) What styles and discourses does the advert draw upon? d) What

kinds of interdiscursive properties can be defined? Are these properties conventional or innovative?

Fairclough (1992: 233) considers intertextuality as 'a grey area between discourse practice and text'. The purpose of intertextual analysis is 'to specify what other texts are drawn upon in the constitution of the text being analysed'. Why is it relevant to know these texts? The main point here is to understand the historical affiliation of the voices which represent particular social groups and identities in the advert which is being analysed. According to Kristeva (1986: 36), two dimensions of intertextuality can be distinguished: a) horizontal intertextuality refers to the texts which precede or follow a particular text, for example, a letter relates to other letters which precede it and to which it replies, and it can also anticipate future letters; b) vertical intertextuality is the historical relation which is established between a text and other texts which are part of its immediate or distant social context. A focus on intertextuality 'highlights the diverse and often contradictory elements and threads which go to make up a text', illuminating the ambivalence of texts (Fairclough 1992: 104). This is a crucial aspect in the study of adverts.

The Santo Antônio's Club

This text was published in the *Istoé* magazine.[6] It consists of a headline in large letters, one block of written text in the middle part of the page, in smaller letters, and the firm's logo, showing a small picture of Cupid centralised at the bottom, followed by the firm's address and telephone number.

Headline: A beautiful, executive and intelligent woman does not (have to) look for anybody for a relationship.

Text 1

(1) She makes a direct call to the Santo Antônio's Club so that they can find her

(2) ideal partner. If you also want to find your life partner, call the Santo Antônio's Club.

---

6   *Istoé*, 1414, 6th November, 1996.

(3) **For just 90 *reais*⁷** you will have as many chances as you need, through computers,

(4) expert psychologists and a number of events. Call the Santo Antônio's Club now,

(5) register and leave everything under the care of people who reach your feelings. You

(6) may be sure that you are going to have a happy ending to your search.

Vocabulary and interdiscursivity

The Santo Antonio's Club text points to an interdiscursive relation between counselling and advertising. This is partly achieved by wording: the lexical item 'relationship', in the headline, is attributed a particular meaning here, implying that professional women do not search for a husband, but for a 'relationship' (Portuguese/P: *relacionamento*), a 'partner' (P: *par*, line 2) and 'your life partner' (P: *a pessoa da sua vida*, line 2). Three other nouns can be associated with counselling: 'chances' (P: *chances*, line 3), 'expert psychologists' (P: *psicólogos especializados*, line 4) and 'feelings' (P: *sentimento*, line 5). In addition, the commands 'call' (P: *ligue*, line 2), 'register' (P: *faça sua inscrição*, line 5) and 'leave everything' (P: *deixe tudo*, line 5) suggest that executive women need help when it comes to finding a partner. These words are relexicalised as part of the discourse of counselling. Thus, the text questions women's autonomy to conduct their personal lives. There is also an interdiscursive relation with religion in the firm's name: Saint Anthony is popularly known in Brazil as the saint who helps those who are looking for a partner.

The mix of genres in this advert includes relating oral and written ways, which adds to the persuasive rhetorical mode of the text, in phrases like: 'she makes a direct call' (P: *ela liga direto*, line 1), 'ideal partner' (P: *par ideal*, line 2), 'call...now' (P: *ligue já*, line 4), 'leave everything' (P: *deixe tudo*, line 5), 'you may be sure that you are going to have' (P: *com certeza você vai ter*, lines 5, 6) and 'a happy ending' (P: *um final feliz*, line 6). The powerful appeal to the reader in the language of this advert is also noted in the choice of *você*, which is repeated twice. A Portuguese form of address characterising informal encounters, *você* (you, line 2) switches the

---

⁷   *Real* is the currency in Brazil; 90 *reais* are equivalent to approximately 30 U.S. dollars.

interpersonal, identity meanings in the advert from *ela* (she, line 1) – the woman who is talked about – to the reader – the woman who is addressed –, leaving no doubt as to reader position.

One additional point is that the text constructs heterogeneous identities for women by associating them with both the traditional gender discourse and the late modern gender discourse in which people have partners. This is achieved by modality, to which we turn now.

Modality

The text draws on commonsense notions of body and mind: 'A beautiful, executive and intelligent woman does not (have to) look for anybody for a relationship' (P: *Mulher bonita, executiva e inteligente não procura ninguém para relacionamento*, headline). Contrary to the traditional gender discourse, women are now represented by the high modality of the sequence of adjectives which links body and mind. Further, the modal phrase 'for just 90 reais' (line 3) indicates that this is a service which has to be paid for, rewording 'relationships' (headline), as we have already suggested, in terms of commodities in the market.

Intertextuality

The negative clause 'does not (have to) look for' presupposes intertextually that the new woman presented in the advert has a relationship problem, which is treated as a kind of pathology. The solution to the problem anticipated in the headline is presented in the clause which begins the text: 'she makes a direct call to the Santo Antonio's Club so that they can find her ideal partner.' (P: *Ela liga direto para o Santo Antônio's Club para que ele encontre o seu par ideal*, line 1). This suggests that professional women are lonely, needing expert help, no matter how beautiful, competent or intelligent they are.

Cohesion

The cohesive marker *ele* is ambivalent, since it can refer both to the club – *ele* agrees with the 'club' which is a masculine noun in Portuguese – and to the man who is going to be the woman's partner. In the second interpretation, *ele* is the man who is going to find his ideal partner.[8] This is

---

8   I thank Jacob Mey for this reading (personal communication).

clear in the last period, in which the modal 'you may be sure' and the noun phrase 'a happy ending' highlight the effectiveness of the partner agency ('You may be sure that you are going to have a happy ending to your search' – P: *Com certeza você vai ter um final feliz para a sua procura*, lines 5-6).

Semiotic aspects

This is an 'all-type' text, a text which does not explore visual effects, following the scientific/technological coding orientation (Figure 2). Except for the logo with the small Cupid photo at the bottom of the page, there is no appeal to pictures. However, there is an attempt to produce effects in the reader by such things as font and bold type. The headline in large letters takes almost half the page, followed by the block of written text in smaller letters, with the phrase 'for just 90 *reais*' in bold type. This means that the group of readers selected by the advert producers are professional women who will be interested in reading about the service offered by the partner agency.

Women and cars

The association between the performance of women's bodies and the performance of cars is frequent.

Text 2

In the Shell Helix advert[9], the qualities of the product are made to be seen as the qualities of the body: 'shell Helix transforms friction in smoothness...energy in performance. It's as if you had a new engine. Always' (P: *Shell Helix transforma atrito em fluidez, desgaste em economia, oxidação em proteção, energia em desempenho. É como se você tivesse um motor novo. Sempre.*) In this case, the 'new engine' is attributed to the woman, who is shown performing a dance, and to the product, which represents the performance of the car engine. The two photos associate semiotically the woman's performance with the product, which is presented between the photos, and suggesting the idea of 'transformation' of the still body of the first photo, on page 1 of the advert, into the moving, dancing body, on the

---

9   *Veja*, 1445, 22nd May, 1996.

right side of the product, on page 2.[10] The impact of this advert on the reader is obtained by the semiotic movement from left to right and by the integration of verbal and non-verbal participants (see Figure 3). This movement is indicated in terms of a transformation from a visual mode to a conceptual representation and then to a linguistic mode in the noun phrase 'a new engine'. The sensory coding orientation is adopted in this advert, with the woman's red dress and the sensuous appeal of what appears to be a Spanish dance implying the joy which results from the woman's transformation.

headline → 1st photo → image of the product → 2nd photo
                                                          ↓
                                          block of written text
                                                          ↓
                                                       brand
                                                          ↓
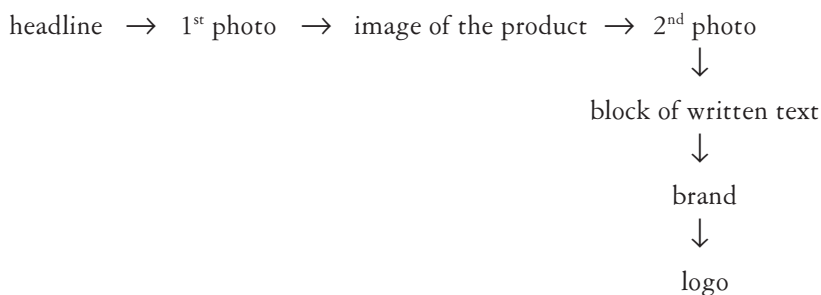   logo

Figure 3 – Integration of verbal and non-verbal participants

In addition to the semiotic construction of the product image through the photo presentation, the Shell Helix advert also makes use of bold type in the headline: 'shell Helix improves the performance of your engine. Immediately' (P: *Shell Helix melhora a performance de seu motor. Na hora*.)

In relation to the written text, this advert sets up an interdiscursive relation with health care discourse through the wording process:

(1) After Shell Helix, nothing will be as before. And the secret to this transformation is

---

10   M. Chamarelli Filho (2001/02) presents an analysis of photos of the wives of the candidates in the 1994 Brazilian election, published in *Veja* before the election, showing the political effects obtained by contrasting the pictures of the wives of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Luis Inácio Lula da Silva.

(2) its formula. An exclusive formula, composed of seven powerful, carefully balanced

(3) additives, acts deeply in the engine. Shell Helix transforms friction into

(4) fluidity, use into economy, oxidation into protection, energy into performance.

(5) It's as if you had a new engine. Always. **Shell Helix. The formula**

(6) **which transforms**

The choice of the lexical items 'friction/fluidity' (P: *atrito/fluidez*, lines 3-4), 'use' (P: *uso*, line 4), 'oxidation/protection' (P: *oxidação/proteção*, line 4), 'energy/performance' (P: *energia/desempenho*, line 4), 'formula' (P: *fórmula, formulação* – lines 2, 5) associates the functioning of the body with the functioning of the car engine. One other point about interdiscursivity is the use of English words ('shell helix', 'performance'). The English noun phrase 'performance' collocates with the Portuguese noun phrase *desempenho*, producing a globalised meaning linked with the car industry. The intransitive occurrence of the verb 'transform' (P: *transforma*, line 5) can also be connected with the emphasis on change, which is part of globalisation.

Text 3

The collocation of women and cars is represented in both the semiotic and linguistic texts: 'see how women and wheels fit perfectly?' (P: *Viu como mulheres e rodas se encaixam perfeitamente?*) In this text[11], an advert of Colonial Racing (imported tyres and wheels) – from *Quatrorodas* –, the collocation 'women and wheels' reinforces the view of women's bodies as machines. The semiotic text presents the picture of a woman's body with no head, and wearing a red swimming-suit, next to the picture of five wheels. Here again we find the sensory coding orientation in the colour choice (bright red).

---

[11]   *Quatrorodas*, June, 2001.

Text 4

This *Rodão* (Portuguese for 'a large wheel') advert[12] states in the headline: 'We used a woman to capture your attention. Do the same (use a woman) with one of our wheels' (P: *Colocamos uma mulher para chamar a sua atenção. Faça o mesmo colocando uma de nossas rodas*). The photo of a model, wearing a two-piece swimming suit and high heels, in front of a car leaves no doubt about the connection car/woman's body. This connection is established mostly semiotically, since the photos of the car and the woman take up most of the advert's space. There is also a block of written text which describes the Rodão wheels with high modality noun phrases, such as: 'beauty' (P: *beleza*), 'quality' (P: *qualidade*), 'performance' (P: *desempenho*), 'safety' (P: *segurança*). The phrases refer both to the wheels and to the woman.

(1) When you use one of our wheels in your car, more than beauty, you're using quality,

(2) performance and safety. So that you can be sure about this, the Binno and Rodão

(3) wheels are tested in the most stringent laboratory in this country: car racing. The

(4) drivers use the cars to their extreme limit – in braking, turning, starting

(5) and even in accidents – without running unnecessary risk in doing this. In addition to

(7) different design wheels, they need a very good performance, with resistance

(8) and safety, just like you! (In a sequence of bullets) Binno, from frame 15 to 20".

(9) Rodão, from frame 13 to 15'. Tested in the main national car racing competitions.

(10) Exported to over 30 countries. The only ones with the individual, numbered

(11) Warranty Certificate. Certified to the most stringent world quality standards.

---

12   *Ibid.*

The form of address *você* (you, line 1) refers to the reader, a male driver, who is linked with the 'extreme limit' and car racing 'accidents'. The noun *curva* (turn) is ambivalent in Portuguese, referring both to the challenging turns of racing and to the curved shape of women's bodies. The repetition of the verb *colocar* (use: headline – twice, line 1 – twice) suggests the discursive representation of women as objectified bodies, in the parallel between the woman and wheels.

In this advert, like texts 2 and 3, the connection machine/women indicates a technologisation of discourse which exercises surveillance over women by policing their representations: in order to be valued they have to be perfect in their bodies. This power over the ways in which women are represented in adverts suggests that one is far from free to choose one's identities in late modernity.

New masculinities

In relation to men, traditional identities are associated with the role of head of the family and breadwinner (Magalhães 2000b). Physical strength is also traditionally associated with men. For example, to represent the competence of two women journalists, one of the texts uses the effect of pastiche, presenting the women's faces with strong, male bodies. The text is about a television programme, which is presented by the two women from Monday to Friday.[13] The phrase 'completely new because women really get transformed after they are 14' (P: *totalmente novo, porque as mulheres realmente se transformam depois dos 14*) is developed in the semiotic aspects of the text, in which the meaning of transformation has a particular reference to men's physical strength. The phrase 'after they are 14' refers to the number of years in which the programme has been in existence. But it also holds an intertextual relation with texts which discuss changes in boys' bodies after the age of 14. This is what Kristeva calls vertical intertextuality, which relates this advert with other texts from the sociohistorical context. In this text, irony and hybridity indicate a mix of traditional and late modern gender discourses.

More recently, new forms of masculinities have developed in men's magazines, for example, addressing the issue of men's health. Instead of

---

13   *Veja*, 1406, 23rd August, 1995.

valuing the traditional attributes of men, such as physical strength, this kind of text constructs for men an identity related to such topics as fashion, trips and health. These are presented together with the topics of cars and women, which are not exactly new.

Text 5

Take the *Vip* text.[14] The photo of what appears to be a naked woman on a bed is suggestive of 'what to wear to be dressed the least possible period of time' (P: *que roupa usar para ficar o menor tempo possível vestido*). The issue of fashion is indicated in the word 'fashion' (P: *moda*) written in white above the photo, and in the red necktie which binds the woman's arms above her head to the bed. The photo takes up most of the page, and it is slightly ambivalent, for it can be interpreted as representing not a woman but a travesti.

The phrase which follows the word 'fashion' is in red, and it says: 'because we know that a man doesn´t think only about women' (P: *porque a gente sabe que homem não pensa só em mulher*). The colour high modality is characteristic of the sensory coding orientation.

This negative phrase relates intertextually to a recurrent phrase which says that men are always thinking about women. The inclusive form of address *a gente* (we, informal Portuguese) has been selected carefully in order to attribute the clause *men are always thinking about women* to commonsense knowledge.

Thus, the linguistic and semiotic aspects of the text (the photo and the alternation of colour) construct an identity meaning for men which is related to fashion. Such a topic has been traditionally associated with women.

(1) Only VIP talks about male fashion in a way that a man understands: what to wear

(2) to be dressed the least possible period of time. In addition to fashion, VIP

---

[14]   *Quatrorodas*, June, 2001.

(3) also presents 120 monthly pages about travel, relationship, sex, fitness, health,

(4) Internet, gastronomy, cars and, mainly, women. All with that witty humour which

(5) women will only have in another incarnation. Of course if they are lucky to be

(6) born men. www.vipexame.com.br VIP The pleasure of being a man.

The written text focuses on differences between men and women in order to reinforce the men's position as ideal readers of the magazine. This kind of effect on readers is produced by an attempt to seduce men by addressing men's solidarity, which has been referred to as 'homosocial bonding' (Sedgwick 1985, cited by Walsh 2001: 18).

This is clear from an analysis of modality: 'only VIP...in a way that a man understands; 'that witty humour which women will only have in another incarnation'; 'of course if they are lucky'. Such phrases suggest the construction of an ideological position of men's superiority over women. Modality here strategically symbolizes men and women as homogeneous groups, legitimising a power difference (Thompson 1990).

Further, the text tells men that they can enjoy fashion because this is one of 'the pleasures of being a man' (P: *o prazer de ser homem*). This indicates that there are new forms of masculinity which the text is addressing. The new masculinities, associated with late modern contexts, are hybrid, in the sense that they include identities which are not part of the hegemonic representations associated with traditional discourses (Moita Lopes 2002). The presentation of the magazine's Internet site in the written text suggests a new space for the manifestation of these hybrid identities (line 6).

Nevertheless, our analysis shows that both women and men are having their identities shaped for them by advertising in a mix of lifestyles and fragments of texts in discourse technologies which ideologically position people to accept identity changes in order to form part of consumer communities in global markets. Such changes will make them buy the products being advertised, like fashion.

5. Conclusion

This study of advertising discourse, based on a critical discourse analysis of adverts, suggests that traditional identities co-exist with new representations of women and men. In addition, it shows that the Brazilian media are still sexist in the ways in which they represent the feminine and the masculine. These forms of co-existence point to hybrid identities.

This does not mean, however, moving from 'pure' to hybrid identities (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 13). What is at issue is a powerful rearticulation of discursive representations by advertising as part of late modernity. Therefore, advertising has appropriated changes in the self and rearticulated these changes with the aid of the technologisation of discourse, thus associating knowledge of discourse and power.

> In late modernity, boundaries between social fields and therefore between language practices have been pervasively weakened and redrawn, so that the potential seems to be immense, and indeed hybridity has been widely seen as a characteristic of the 'postmodern'. But there are still social constraints on rearticulation which need to be established for different domains of social life...How the potential for articulatory change within a particular social field is taken up depends on how social subjects act within the field. (: 13-14.)

This 'potential for articulatory change' has so far been dominated by global media organisations, having no ethical concern about the effects of adverts on local life. One of the main issues in these so-called postmodern discourses, such as advertising, has been the transformation of people, so that they can take part in consumer communities.

Therefore, our analysis of advertising points out that social representations are controlled by the ways in which people are shown. The particular composition of adverts deals with current social practices, exploring new ways of being a woman or a man. However, these new styles are often mixed with old ways by means of particular ideological devices, mediated by discursive-textual-semiotic aspects, such as intertextuality/interdiscursivity, modality, vocabulary, cohesion and semiotic aspects (photos and colour).

Present gender voices are related to new verbs: 'to feminise' and 'to masculinise'. In relation to femininity, Talbot (1998: 171) makes the following comment:

> Femininity is articulated in and through commercial and mass media discourses, especially in the magazine industry and in the fashion industries of clothing and cosmetics. But most of all, it is articulated on women's bodies, by women themselves.

Articulatory change offers new possibilities for the feminine and the masculine, playing with tradition and innovation without falling into a rigid dichotomy. Tradition is present in advertising in the ways in which the feminine is constructed, in association with the idea of dependence on experts/men, even in the case of professional/executive women (The Santo Antônio's Club text). My analysis indicates that women are represented in this advert as needing expert help to conduct their personal lives. This construction of the feminine as frail, incapable and pathological is part of institutionalised symbolic violence, an invisible kind of violence, which is exercised discursively (Bourdieu 1999).

The feminine is also represented as a commodified body, which can perform as an engine and which can be desired in the same way that one can desire a new car or a new wheel. This identity is a product of the postmodern, globalised discourse of advertising.

In their study of *Cosmopolitan*, a globalised brand, Machin and Thornborough (2003: 468) observe that the representation of women's sexual and work practices is similar. 'They are presented as playful fantasies'. This suggests the underlying contradictions which allow women 'to signify the *Cosmopolitan* discourse.'

All the same, as we have argued, gender identities are both fixed and flexible (Section 3). Thus, this violence which is part of language and which is exercised on women's bodies, though appearing to be fixed, can be changed by political action. Bourdieu calls women to engage in political struggle against discrimination, with symbolic weapons which must be effective in changing institutions (such as the media, the Church, the school and the family) that contribute to domination. (1999: 5)

The masculine has also been reconceptualised in terms of heterogeneous consumer identities, based on health, fitness, travel, technologically-mediated communication. These consumer identities are hybrid in the sense that the masculine voices represented in adverts point to different ways of being a man, including heterosexual and homosexual identities. In terms of power, these changes indicate that men can change and still be in control of public situations.

Future work on the discursive-semiotic construction of gender identities in advertising should focus upon advert analysis as a way of debating the language of new capitalism (Fairclough 2002). Critical discourse analysis can offer an important contribution, both as a theory and as a method, to the study of advertising.

E-mail: mizabel@unb.br

REFERENCES

AUTHIER-REVUZ, J. 1990. Heterogeneidade(s) Enunciativas(s) (Hétérogenéité Montrée et Hétérogenéité Constitutive). Trans. C. M Cruz and J. W. Geraldi. *Cadernos de Estudos Lingüísticos* (Papers in Linguistics), **19**: 25-42. Campinas, SP, Brazil.

BAKHTIN, M. 1997. *Estética da Criação Verbal*. 2nd ed. Trans. M. E. G. Pereira. São Paulo: Martins Fontes (1979).

BARÁT, E. 2000. A Non-Repressing Model of Identity Grounded in the Genre of Oral Auto/Biography by Women. *Cadernos de Linguagem e Sociedade (Papers on Language and Society)*, 4: 30-67. Brasília, DF.

DE BARROS, D. L. (ed.) 2000. *Os Discursos do Descobrimento* (The Discourses about the Discovery of Brazil). São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo.

_____. 2002. Interação em Anúncios Publicitários (An Interactional Analysis of Adverts). In: D. Preti (ed.) *Interação na Fala e na Escrita* (Interaction in Speech and Writing) : 17-44.

BOURDIEU, P. 1999. *A Dominação Masculina* (La Domination Masculine). Trans. M. H. Kühner. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil (1998).

CALDAS-COULTHARD, C. R. 1999. Women who Pay for Sex and Enjoy it: Transgression versus Morality in Women's Magazines. In: A. Jaworski and N. Coupland (eds.) *The Discourse Reader* : 523-240.

CHOULIARAKI, L. and N. FAIRCLOUGH 1999. *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

VAN DIJK, T. A. (ed.) 1997. *Discourse as Social Interaction*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

FAIRCLOUGH, N. 1989. *Language and Power*. London and New York: Longman.

_____. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (*Discurso e Mudança Social*. Ed. and foreword to the Braz. trans. I. Magalhães. Trans. I. Magalhães *et al.* Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2001.)

_____. 1995. *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.

_____. 1999. Linguistic and Intertextual Analysis within Discourse Analysis. In: A. Jaworski and N. Coupland (eds.) *The Discourse Reader* : 183-211.

_____. 2000. *New Labor, New Language*. London and New York: Routledge.

_____. 2001. The Dialectics of Discourse. *Textus*, **XIV** (2): 3-10.

_____. 2002. Language in New Capitalism. *Discourse and Society*, **13** (2): 163-166.

_____ and R. Wodak 1997. Critical Discourse Analysis. In: T. A. van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse as Social Interaction*, pp. 258-284.

Figueiredo, L. R. 1993. *O Avesso da Memória: Cotidiano e Trabalho da Mulher em Minas Gerais no Século XVIII* (The Inner Side Out of Memory: Women's Daily Life and Work in Minas Gerais in the 18th Century). Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio; Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília.

Foucault, M. 1987a. *Vigiar e Punir* (Surveiller et Punir). 6th ed. Trans. L. M. Vassallo. Petrópolis, R. J.: Vozes.

_____. 1987b. *A arqueologia do Saber* (L'Archéologie du Savoir). 3rd ed. Trans.: L. F. Neves. Rio de Janeiro: Forense-Universitária.

Giddens, A. 2000. *Mundo em Descontrole* (Runaway World). Trans. M. L. Borges. Rio de Janeiro: Record.

_____. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hall, S. 2000. Quem Precisa da Identidade? (Who Needs Identity?). In: T. T. da Silva (ed.) *Identidade e Diferença* (Identity and Difference), pp. 103-133.

Halliday, M. A. K. 1978. *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.

_____. 1994. *Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 2nd ed. London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K. and R. Hasan 1989. *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hasan, R. and G. Williams (eds.) 1996. *Literacy in Society*. London and New York: Longman.

Haraway, D. 1990. A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s. In: L. Nicholson (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*.

Harvey, D.   1996. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. London: Blackwell.

Hearn, J. 1992. *Men in the Public Eye*. London: Routledge.

Jaworski, A. and N. Coupland (eds.) 1999. *The Discourse Reader*. London and New York: Routledge.

Johnson, S. and U. H. Meinhof (eds.) 1997. *Language and Masculinity*. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell.

Kress, G. and T. van Leeuwen. 1996. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design.* London and New York: Routledge.

Kristeva, J. 1986. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. T. Moi. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell.

Lazar, M. 2000. Gender, Discourse and Semiotics: The politics of Parenthood Representation. *Discourse and Society*, **11** (3): 373-400.

Machin, D. and J. Thornborrow (2003) Branding and Discourse: The Case of *Cosmopolitan*. *Discourse and Society,* **14** (4): 453-471.

Magalhães, C. (ed.) 2001. *Reflexões sobre a Análise Crítica do Discurso* (Reflections on Critical Discourse Analysis). Belo Horizonte: FALE/ Editora da UFMG.

Magalhães, I. 1995. A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Relations in Brazil. *Journal of Pragmatics*, **23**: 183-187.

_____. 1997. Linguagem e Ideologia no Discurso Pentecostal (Language and Ideology in Pentecostal Discourse). *Cadernos de Linguagem e Sociedade* (Papers on Language and Society), Brasília, DF: **3:** 21-65.

_____. 2000a. *Eu e Tu: A Constituição do Sujeito no Discurso Médico* (You and I: The Constitution of the Subject in the Discourse of Medicine). Brasilia, DF: Thesaurus.

_____. 2000b. O Discurso do Outro e a Identidade da Mulher: Da Colonização à Década de 1990 (The Other's Discourse and Women's Identity: From the Colony to the 1990's). In: D. Barros (ed.) *Os Discursos do Descobrimento* (The Discourses about the Discovery of Brazil) : 207-222.

_____. 2003. Interdiscursividade e Identidade de Gênero. In: I. Magalhães e M. C. Leal (eds.) *Discurso, Gênero e Educação* (Discourse, Gender and Education) : 33-62.

Magalhães, I. and M. C. Leal (eds.) 2003. *Discurso, Gênero e Educação* (Discourse, Gender and Education). Brasília, DF: Plano Editora: Oficina Editorial do Instituto de Letras da UnB.

Mey, J. L. 1985. *Whose Language: A Study in Linguistic Pragmatics*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

_____. 2000. The Computer as Prosthesis: Reflections on the Use of a Metaphor. *Hermes, Journal of Linguistics*, **24**: 15-30.

MOITA-LOPES, L. P. 2002. *Identidades Fragmentadas* (Fragmented Identities). Campinas, SP: Mercado de Letras.

NICHOLSON, L. (ed.) 1990. *Feminism/Postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge.

PÊCHEUX, M. 1988. *Semântica e Discurso: Uma Crítica à Afirmação do Óbvio* (Les Vérités de la Palice). Trans. E. P. Orlandi *et al.* Campinas, SP: Editora da Unicamp.

PEDRO, E. R. (ed.) 1997. *Análise Crítica do Discurso* (Critical Discourse Analysis). Lisbon: Editorial Caminho.

PRETI, D. (ed.) 2002. *Interação na Fala e na Escrita* (Interaction in Speech and Writing). São Paulo: Humanitas/FFLCH/USP.

DEL PRIORE, M. 1993. *Ao Sul do Corpo: Condição Feminina, Maternidades e Mentalidades no Brasil Colônia* (To the South of the Body: Feminine Condition, Maternities and Mentalities in Brazil-Colony). Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio; Brasília, DF: Editora Universidade de Brasília.

SEDGWICK, E. 1985. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press.

DA SILVA, T. T. (ed.) 2000. *Identidade e Diferença* (Identity and Difference). Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.

STREHLER, R. G. 1997. As Propagandas dos Bancos: Um Tipo de Discurso (Bank Adverts: A Discourse Type). *Cadernos de Linguagem e Sociedade* (Papers on Language and Society). Brasília, DF, **3** (1): 104-126.

TALBOT, M. 1998. *Language and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

THOMPSON, J. 1990. *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

_____. 1998. *A Mídia e a Modernidade: Uma Teoria Social da Mídia* (The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media). Trans. W. O. Brandão. Revised by L. Avritzer. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.

WALSH, C. 2001. *Gender and Discourse: Language and Power in Politics, the Church and Organisations*. Harlow and London: Pearson Education.

WODAK, R. and M. MEYER. (eds.) 2001. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.