Nice Work Sisters

Marketing (and) Cultural Studies (and) the Third Way

> Without doubt the most appropriate content for the universal is sexual difference… Sexual difference probably represents the most universal question we can address. Our era is faced with the task of dealing with this issue, because, across the world, there are, there are only, men and women.[1]

> Sexual difference is probably the issue in our time which could be our 'salvation' if we thought it through.[2]

After ten minutes of frivolous indulgence in watching television commercials – it's such a shame they are so often interrupted by films – one will quickly gain the impression that sexual identity and sexual difference seem to be the favourite vehicle for contemporary advertising. Some samples may serve as illustration:

Murphy's Irish Stout launched its ongoing advertising 'narrative' in October 1998. It is based on the characters of three guardian angels – three "ordinary Irish girls" who received their 'call' to protect the average male Irish Stout drinker in everyday embarrassing situations. The ordinary Irish girls are 'transformed' into the famous and breathtaking Sisters of Murphy's. A blend of Charlie's Three "Angels" and the Sisters of Mercy these three all too feminine powerwomen watch over the slightly dazed and confused Murphy's man in absurdly banal crises of average masculinity (as for example the 'bloke' who is drinking his pint in the middle of nowhere where he is rescued by the Sisters's whistle from a giant chandelier crushing to the ground; or the one who knocks his glass off the snooker table, luckily a Sister passes by and prevents 'spillage' by miraculously catching the glass before it hits the ground, etc.). The spots' serial 'closure'

---

1   Luce Irigaray (1996) *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. Alison Martin, London: Routledge, 47.

2   Luce Irigaray (1993) *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. C.Burke and G.C.Gill, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Pr., 5

device is the slogan: "Keep up the nice work, sisters", uttered by an unidentified narrator of uncertain gender.

Another ongoing beer marketing campaign is that of the Australian Foster's. Foster's plays with the well-known stereotype of the Australian man as the ultimate macho. The twist it adds is a kind of 'globalised' transnational dimension by using situations in various national contexts which help create the impression of a Foster's males' New International. The slogan, uttered by an unmistakably Australian male voice, is: "he who drinks Australian, thinks Australian". There is, for example, an Italian 'straight' tailor who faces the prospect of a homoerotic encounter with his employer, a Mafia boss, who thanks all his employees by kissing them (in the 'Italian' way) on the body parts that constitute their 'role' in the 'organisation'. So, for example, he kisses his informer's ears saying: "Salvatore, che cosa sarei senza i tuoi occhi che ascoltano tutto per me". When it is his turn, just before making a hasty exit, the tailor turns to the person standing next to him and explains: "devo andare; ho fatto il suo pantalone."

All the spots are in their 'original' languages with English subtitles. There is a 'charming and sophisticated French gentleman', sitting in a Parisian café reading *Le Monde* who jumps up immediately when he sees an attractive young woman carrying a number of shopping bags (presumably full of 'women's wear'). He says: "vous ne devriez pas porter des sacs si lourds, comme ceci" and starts taking the bags from her. However the next scene shows the woman carrying her bags in a newly arranged grotesque way while the 'gentleman', obviously pleased with himself, finishes his sentence by saying: "vous devriez plutôt les porter comme celà". The woman scrambles away shouting: "merci", just before the spectator sees her fall over at a distance, and hears the above slogan.

There's also a German businessman whose wife has been kidnapped. The scene takes place in his home with a group of police detectives and him waiting for the kidnappers to call. The telephone rings, the husband answers and persuades the kidnappers to let him have a few words with his wife. To the detectives' amazement his first and only question is: "Liebling, hast du eine Ahnung, wo meine Golfschläger sind?" She tells him, he puts down the phone and says: "Du bist die Grösste."

Possibly the most interesting spot in the series is that of the South-American barman who sets his eyes on a flashy 'tart'. She agrees to a rendez-vous outside. When he discovers that she is a he (with hair on his breast) he only shrugs his shoulders and asks the 'bloke' to give him a hand with some building work.

The great majority of current beer adverts function by playing with stereotypes of masculinity and femininity (Worthington's slogan, for example, is: "it's a man thing" and makes fun of the pub 'lad'; Kronenbourg represents a beer drinker whose prospective date would rather share her beer with her lesbian partner, etc.). Obviously, the other traditionally 'male' object of consumption, the car, also engages with the contemporary discourse of feminine and masculine identities. Renault, for example, in its campaign for

the Clio features a French 'vamp', lavishly demonstrating the principle of 'lateral suspension'. She asserts – measure tape in hand – that "size matters" while a desperate average 'wasp' male test driver timidly insists that "it's what you do with it that counts."

But it's not just a 'man thing'; adverts targeting women are also obsessed with the changing nature and the 'surprises' of sexual identity and difference. The *Le Monde* issue of 20 Mai 1998 featured on its front page an article discussing the precedent of an advert which uses male homosexuality as an enhancing device for selling perfume to young women: "En Grande-Bretagne, la pub s'affiche gay pour séduire les adolescentes". The product (perfume) in question here is "Impulse" by Elida-Fabergé. The slogan, "Men can't help acting on Impulse", is illustrated in the commercial by an attractive young woman who accidentally drops her shopping in the street. A handsome and stylish young man helps her pick up the pieces, their hands touch over a red apple, he smells her perfume, their eyes meet… But the romance is interrupted by the man's male partner who jealously urges him to move on. The woman turns round and suddenly notices all the previously missed 'signs of queerness', an old transvestite with his lap dog, male couples, street names which suggest a scene in San Francisco.

While there is undeniably some irony and maybe even some critical and culturally challenging potential in most of these adverts, especially in the Impulse commercial, it is arguable to what use this public 'coming out' is put in the context of marketing and consumption. If it is true, for example, that "men can't help acting on I/impulse", this may just as well be understood as a critique of masculinity, as it can mean a return to heterosexual essentialism and thus, ultimately, another denial of homosexuality. The lyrics of the soundtrack – "the female of the species is more deadly than the male" [by *Space*] – adds even another twist to the parodied conventional love story of girl meets boy: boy's already engaged with boyfriend. The theme of cruel and powerful femininity contributes to the general ambiguity of the message and forms a bizarre alliance with the homophobic closure of 'true' masculine impulse.

Advertising has become very 'clever' indeed, and most adverts are technically and aesthetically very sophisticated constructs. They have to keep up to date with continually changing cultural habits and try to influence, encourage, exploit or even 'create' them in the first place. It is therefore not surprising that Cultural Studies spends so much time and effort analysing adverts. Very often, however, adverts are treated as 'media texts', semiotically analysed and, almost as in the times of New Criticism, are evaluated as 'objects in themselves'. But what exactly is the relation between the meaning constructed in or by a television commercial and 'culture'? And, even more intriguingly perhaps, what is the relation between (cultural meaning as constructed in or by) Cultural Studies and (mediated or commercial) 'culture'? The most popular way of conducting undergraduate Cultural Studies programmes seems to be to teach them in combination with Media Studies. Many graduates find work in the expanding sector of the 'cultural and media industries' and the employment statistics for Cultural Studies graduates look very positive.

Virtually all find work and many, eventually, get involved in 'marketing'. This is certainly one of the reasons why advertising has become so 'cultural' that one could rightly talk of a 'cultural turn' – associated with the general rise of 'postmodernism' – as for example in most social sciences and humanities.[3] At the same time Western societies, and especially the English speaking world, due to processes of multicultural fragmentation and cultural relativism, had to become more 'culturally' aware, so that any trend or major phenomenon, any minority and their ethnic 'way of life' are usually referred to as a more or less autonomous (sub)culture.

In the context of this development and by producing graduate students who are 'experts of the cultural' Cultural Studies is sure to have a major impact. But is it really aware of its own cultural politics? The (late) capitalist society in and with which its students have to work is itself 'culturally aware' to the extreme and capable of exploiting this consciousness by turning the 'cultural 'into its major field of consumption. The question is therefore: how much of their knowledge can these students actually use while remaining 'critical' and 'analytical'? Shouldn't they feel that rather than becoming a part of the 'system', they have a social 'pedagogical' function in encouraging detachment from and resistance to it?

On the other hand, in the 'postmodern' university, Cultural Studies as a discipline has to make use of marketing itself in order to lure prospective clients to becoming a member of 'student culture'. In the process of becoming a marketable 'object' Cultural Studies has to emphasise its 'usefulness'. It tends to do this by claiming it can provide the 'cultural knowledge' and the 'analytical tools' necessary for employablility in the culture and media industries. Since the expert knowledge it aims to provide corresponds to the understanding of culture as 'the sum of a society's signifying practices' it becomes very difficult to maintain the analytical distance necessary to justify its existence unless it claim precisely that kind of moral value it had originally set out to combat (for example, idealism, humnaism, realism, etc.).

Marketing is therefore a particularly accessible but at the same time 'tricky' area for cultural analysis. Marketing's consumption agenda in late capitalist societies constitutes a semi-autonomous ideological 'apparatus' *par excellence*. Despite its frequent culturally 'progressive' aspect economically it serves 'conservative' masters; by being 'nice' it often does 'dirty' work. By being particularly entertaining it may mask effects of alienation and exploitation. After the Cold War it has become very 'unfashionable' to talk about consumption in these terms. Instead consumption is now usually seen as a potentially 'empowering' sometimes even 'subversive' leisure activity in itself because of its link with social constructions of identity (which coincides with contemporary Cultural Studies' main focus on issues of identity). In this context, marketing (and probably the media as a

---

3   Compare for example Fredric Jameson (1998) *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the   Postmodern 1983-1998*, London: Verso.

whole) seems to play the role of the intermediary or 'translator' between corporate capitalism and society, between culture and Cultural Studies. Or, put differently, marketing helps 'translate' cultural theory into (everyday) culture.

In Raymond Williams' short history of advertising,[4] written in the 1960s, he traces the social and signifying practice of marketing from early "processes of specific attention and information to an institutionalised system of commercial information and persuasion" (321) which, through economic and technological developments, becomes not only an essential part of modern capitalism but "the whole impetus of a society" whose "primary ethic" is "selling, by any effective means" (334). Marketing becomes "an organized and extending system at the centre of… national life" which, beyond mere selling, becomes "involved with the teaching of social and personal values",[5] and could thus be seen as "the official art of modern capitalist society" (334).

Williams foresaw the development of marketing into a modern form of "magic" with great accuracy. The main transformational work of advertising from the zero degree of materialism of the object or product to its symbolic 'surplus value', from 'man as user' to 'man as consumer', has to be read as "a cultural pattern in which the objects are not enough but must be validated, if only in fantasy, by association with social and personal meanings which in a different cultural pattern might be more directly available" (335). This transformational 'magic', as an essential institutional development within modernity and modern capitalism, serves as an ideological means to obscure the difference between use value and surplus value, between usage and 'consumption'.

Continuing this history of marketing up to the 'contemporary' moment means problematising Williams' materialism and his notion of consumption alike. If one were to follow a Baudrillardian line of argument this would probably lead to a postmodern condemnation of 'nostalgic materialism' and an affirmation of the symbolic surplus value as the only 'reality' or hyperreality available to us.[6] A product *is* its name and its symbolic

---

4   Raymond Williams, "Advertising: the magic system" in Simon During, ed. (1995) *The Cultural Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, 320-336.

5   Compare for example a development of this idea in Bernard Cova, "From Marketing to Societing: When the Link Is More Important Than the Thing" in Douglas Brownlie et al., eds. (1999) *Rethinking Marketing: Towards Critical Marketing Accounts*, London: Sage, 64-83.

6   See for example Richard Elliott, "Symbolic Meaning and Postmodern Consumer Culture" in Brownlie et al. *Rethinking Marketing*, 112-125. It is precisely the kind of "existential consumption" which "allows the individual to play a part in constructing both their subjectivity and their social reality" and which offers "the possibility to reconstruct the self by purchasing the symbolic meaning of goods" (114-115) which will be questioned below.

value – a version which is certainly analytically appealing for the social constructionist strand that currently dominates Cultural Studies, but also one that is quite self-defeating.

Contemporary, or "postmodern" marketing, as Mark Edwards claims, renounces the "modernist" ideology of progress, of companies continually improving their products and hence their sales in terms of the company's "unique selling proposition", and instead embraces the fact that "nothing has any inherent value".[7] This is reflected in contemporary marketing campaigns in that the product itself becomes less and less important in relation to creating a unique tone, voice, persona, emotion or idea that stands in for the product – one could say creating possibilities of identification with an image of the product. The assumption behind this is that marketing can become much more influential if it can represent the 'difference' a particular product can make in people's everyday life.

Marketing obviously has an interest in writing its own (version of) history. It is quite remarkable to what extent 'postmodern' marketing theory and practice are informed by (cultural) theory, which seems to be a sign of a desire to increase its own 'marketability' or its surplus value. 'Theory' as for example taught on Cultural Studies courses, thus manages to blur the difference between academia and the world of 'work'. Postmodernism 'feeds back' directly into postmodern society through marketing and the media. The analytical discourse of cultural criticism is immediately absorbed into 'informed' practice. 'Postmodern' marketing is thus characterised by "hyperreality, pastiche, pluralism, anti-foundationalism and the "telling of tales" that are highly self-reflective, ironical and aware of major postmodern fictional devices like intertextual allusion, parody, self-implicated narrators etc.[8]

Although, as for fiction, it is structurally impossible and thus undesirable for advertising to represent a 'true' image of society and although any simplistic assumption about the ways in which ads are being 'read' by potential consumers is misleading – it is nevertheless inevitable to analyse adverts as public images that use familiar narrative patterns that are 'intertextually' related to the general cultural capital circulating in everyday life culture. As highly influential and reiterative symbolic system of representation, advertising at once reflects, reproduces and changes social meaning and interpretation and, of course, behaviour. If this exercise of cultural politics was not the case, for example, politics (as Williams anticipated in the 1960s), and New Labour in particular, would never have reverted to advertising for its election campaign and the marketing of its political decisions, by using a combination of Saatchi and Saatchi and spindoctoring.

---

7   Mark Edwards (1995) "Pitch and Tone", *The Sunday Times* 22 October 1995, 10/13.

8   Compare for example Stephen Brown's work in his (1995) *Postmodern Marketing*, London: Routledge, and (1998) *Postmodern Marketing Two: Telling Tales*, London: International Thomson Business Press.

The process of 'contamination' of politics by marketing discourses, according to Dominique Quessada, reveals a desire in marketing to take the place of politics in contemporary society:

> A travers la publicité, la société communi(qu)e avec elle-même… Discours de l'objet, la publicité fait apparaître ce dernier comme central pour comprendre comment se forme et subsiste toute collectivité: en se trouvant et en faisant circuler un objet commun – question qui apparie dès lors de façon évidente le discours publicitaire au champ de l'action politique.[9]

In taking over from politics as the main discourse of 'auto-mediation' of society, marketing turns society into its own "mediatic support", "une surface d'inscription pour la publicité, à la fois émetteur et destinataire du discours publicitaire." The political is thus represented as superfluous and dispensable while the 'real' possibility for popular democracy is offered through participation in consumption or in 'realising' (oneself in) the total consumer society. Ironically, the results of the various cultural liberation movements of the 60s are now being economically recuperated by the culturally 'informed' liberal discourse of marketing. The personal is no longer merely political but, through the selling of 'cultural politics as consumption', it is also or maybe even more 'marketable'.

It is therefore not surprising that sexuality and gender, as the most fundamental categories of identity formation, should become the favourite symbolic battleground for the cultural politics of marketing, as seen in the sample of adverts provided. It seems quite inevitable that the discourse of desire and its channeling, which is marketing, should be "inextricably linked with aspects of sexuality"[10], with the construction of identity and the consumption of difference. Psychoanalytically speaking, any marketing discourse has to be motivated by anticipating the desire of the imaginary other for his and her projected and introjected object. The images it produces are therefore overdetermined by reflections of symbolic difference in the 'face' of an unspeakable and unfulfillable desire of the Other threatening 'my' (imaginary) integrity.

The value of sexual difference in contemporary advertising is thus 'consumptive', imaginary, replaceable, discardable. Thus, given the 'merger' between cultural theory and the cultural 'practice' of marketing it may be less of a surprise to see that the commodification of difference coincides with a 'crisis' of difference as analytical category in intellectual discourses that are heavily dependant upon it like feminist, postcolonial and psychoanalytical theories. However, it is of course (radical) difference only that differs from itself at the 'price' of remaining unrepresentable, 'unusable', and hence resisting consumption.

---

9   Dominique Quessada (2000) "Douce pub ou première guerre civile mondiale", *Le Monde* 29 March 2000, 16.

10   Elliott, in Brownlie (1999) *Rethinking Marketing*, 116.

What all the adverts mentioned above have in common is that they commodify stereotypical 'gendered' behaviour thus accentuating and, at the same time, eroding gender as a category. By exaggerating and parodying gendered subject positions they create a distance which demands of the viewer either a 'costly' confirmation despite the obvious instability or the transcendence of gender as a category support of identity formation. This is particularly true with regard to the transvestite in the Foster's advert whose potentially 'subversive' mixing of genders is quickly recaptured and neutralised, ridiculed as just another gendered identity. Why, indeed, not have as many genders as you like? For, even a 'third' (gender, way, etc.) is still another classifiable and thus 'marketable' entity. The adverts thus, at once, 'use' commodified difference and 'wear it away'. The stereotypical representation of differences and identities is merely the imaginary and symbolic tip of a cultural iceberg in the times of global warming. The otherness that drives the various economies of identity and difference and which lies at the bottom of their anxieties and desires is the prospect that identity and difference, gender and sexuality, male and female may only be, like the Derridean '*différance',* signs of an unknown and ultimately unknowable 'trace' that is neither a visible entity nor a simple 'nothing', but which is nevertheless structurally 'responsible' for any (illusion of) identity in the first place.

Marketing, *par excellence*, is the discourse which plays with this curious dialectic of difference, identity and otherness. The general patriarchal tendency is to 'eliminate' difference by attempting to define it, with the result of creating an identity haunted by the repression of an otherness 'forced' into mere representations of difference. Feminism and other minority discourses of resistance aim to protect the otherness by resisting definitions. The price usually paid for this is a 'weak' or 'negative' identity combined with problems of 'agency'. Marketing, as a discourse, exploits the mirror structure of this cultural binary by partially and playfully defining while deferring and differing from itself, by promising an identity through consumptive desire, as the ultimate 'object'.

This does not stop marketing, of course, from ultimately becoming in most cases an instrument of the dominant patriarchal discourse as seen in the 'Impulse' advert. In terms of sexuality and sexual identity, however, all three 'discourses' (patriarchy, feminism and marketing) are concerned with the (essence of sexual) 'difference' but each for different reasons. It is crucial, however, to point out that while this destabilises the opposition between difference and identity it nevertheless does not lead to a (dialectical) transcendence of a 'third way'. And here is the link between contemporary developments in cultural movements like 'postmodernism', 'postfeminism', 'postcolonialism, etc. for which identity *and* difference have become 'problematical', and a contemporary politics of a 'third way'.

The plurality of traditional, radicalised, reversed or reinstated, parodical etc. gender roles and sexual identities represented in contemporary advertising coincides with what Antony Giddens – the main proponent of the 'third way' and the main source of inspiration for

New Labour politics – calls a trend towards "plastic sexuality" (as freed from the needs of reproduction). This trend ultimately leads to "choosing one's sexual identity", according to 'self-reflexive' and 'risk' behaviour, and hence, with late modernity in general.[11] In the context of global liberal capitalism, gender and sexual identity, and identity politics as such become the main target for the market economy: choose and purchase your subject position and negotiate or use it according to your needs and sexual preferences.

Giddens starts from the assumption that: "At the moment, an emotional abyss has opened up between the sexes, and one cannot say with any certainty how far it will be bridged".[12] The issue of sexuality, gender and difference is certainly not just an annex to the thirdwayism that New Labour has embraced in Britain and has been trying to promote as a replacement for 'traditional' European models of social democracy. As the most fundamental ontological category of difference, sexuality is the category that rules the social production of meaning *ab initio*. It is thus, for any idealist and dialectical model presupposing an idea of consensus about the *necessity* to achieve consensus (and Giddens's is no exception here[13]), also the first difference that has to be 'overcome'. Going beyond the 'bipolar' world of Cold-War ideology cannot possibly leave bipolarities within societies – be they of gender, class, age, ethnicity – unaffected.[14] The emphasis, for thirdwayism, however, lies on communitarian models of equality as 'inclusion'.

While the realm of party politics has diminished, ecological questions and questions of identity ("the changing nature of the family, work and personal and cultural identity", *Third Way*, p. 44) now constitute the need for a "life politics" (a politics of "choice, identity and mutuality", *ibid*.). It is a politics of the "active middle" or the "radical centre". In thirdwayism the issue of gender, in terms of equality as inclusion, is addressed through the idea of the "democratic family" and of the "pure relationship": "Is there a politics of the family beyond neoliberalism and old-style social democracy?" Giddens asks (*Third Way*, p. 89). The breakdown of the "traditional" family, which was based on the inequality of the sexes, cannot be stopped by rightist ideas of nostalgic preservation but has to lead to a "democratisation" of the family as the most fundamental social institution. "Democratisation in the family implies equality, mutual respect, autonomy, decision-making through communication and freedom from violence" (*Third Way* 93). Hardly a

---

11   Antony Giddens (1992) *Transformations of Initimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2-3

12   *Ibid*, 3.

13   Cf. For example Antony Giddens (1998) *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2, on political idealism, and p. 26 on dialectics.

14   It is curious and rather ironic to note that the only surviving bipolarity for Giddens seems to   be the irreducibility of left and right which constitutes the "necessarily adversarial" essence   of politics as the "struggle of opposing views and policies" (*Third Way*, p. 39).

"radical" change, then, one might say, apart from the fact that parents should become more replaceable and interchangeable following the fluidity and instability of social relationships in general. It is for the sake of the children – despite the fact, acknowledged by Giddens earlier, that "the nature of childhood and child rearing has changed profoundly" (*Third Way* 92) – that the family need to be reconstituted: "The protection and care of children is the single most important thread that should guide family policy" (*Third Way* 94).

"[W]e must start from the principle of equality between the sexes" according to Giddens (*Third Way* 93) and thus, paradoxically, change the existing difference which is that "in the society at large mothers are bearing a disproportionate share of the costs (and enjoying a disproportionate share of the emotional rewards) of children" (95). By promoting a more positive image of fatherhood, co-parenting in general and life-long parental contracts Giddens can only hint at the ultimately "androgynous" and socially integrated two-parent family as the cornerstone of the wider fabric of social life. What is critical or in crisis here is not so much sexual identity (which is interchangeable, as an aspect of personal and cultural identity and choice) but the possibility of sexual difference. How is transcending difference going to "liberalise" identity? How is equality as inclusion going to recognise and evaluate insistent processes of discrimination? How is inclusiveness going to deal with that form of otherness which by definition cannot be included? A few questions inherited from poststructuralism, deconstruction and postmodernism which will not disappear and instead will work themselves into any form of thirdwayism, liberalism or communitarianism in order to reveal the element of psychotic obsession they easily fall prey to. The absolute place of control, the place of the Other, or the Lacanian real, is an uninhabitable space of 'pure change, one could say psychosis itself.

Therefore, what Tony Blair, was doing by claiming precisely this position (of 'pure change') as his "third way" is raising the political stakes to the heights of extremism. As he recently exclaimed in a speech addressing his European fellow socialists:

> What I have called the third way, but in reality is modernised social democracy, is to become the champions of change, managing change in a way that overcomes insecurity and liberates people, equipping them to survive and prosper in this new work.[15]

It is undeniable that a political discourse like thirdwaysim – a discourse that cannot be dissociated from marketing – would be unthinkable without the kind of identity politics to which the cultural politics of minority discourses and also Cultural Studies have largely contributed. Identity uncoupled from traditional stabilities like work, gender, sexuality, politics turns the process of identification itself into the main 'job' of self-realisation, of "becoming champions of change". Whether speaking of survival while putting this 'work'

---

15   In Paul Webster and Michael White (1999) "Socialists wary of Blair's crusade", *The Guardian*, Tuesday 9 November 1999, 13.

in the position of psychosis can lead to the desired better community of stakeholders seems more than uncertain.

Marketing shares these delusions of grandeur, i.e. believing itself to represent or to be pure change, with neoliberal politics (whether disguised or not).[16] Interpreting the trend of the commodification of difference and identity as a 'crisis' of difference serves as a justification for waging a global war of cultural expansion and imperialism – a war in which marketing becomes a main and global player.[17] But, ultimately, both neoliberal (or neo'laboural') politics and global marketing are merely motivated by the desire of maximising profit, power and control.

What is at stake, then, is not so much the future of difference – which after all can be created and erased, attacked and reclaimed, used and commodified, defended, ignored or renounced almost at will. It is rather a different consciousness of the irreducible otherness behind the economies of difference and identity that should become the preoccupation of a cultural politics that seizes the opportunity opened up by minority discourses, and feminism in particular, to finally recognize (not the difference) but the otherness (for example) of woman. The hope that lies beyond this recognition is indeed the promise of a better community and 'true' equality (for example) between 'men' and 'women', together and/or alone.[18] The 'work' of Cultural Studies, of cultural theorists and practitioners must be to safeguard the political (whether it be in the context of politics, marketing or

---

16   Compare Quessada (2000) 16: "[La publicité] exploite un désir de changement et des convictions qu'elle sait mettre au service de ses intérêts en se présentant comme le changement lui-même."

17   Quessada (2000) 16: "C'est par… l'appareil mondial de fabrication de discours convaincant   (publicité, médias, marketing) qui le matérialisent que l'Occident part en guerre contre le   reste du monde."

18   Cf. for example in Alice Jardine, in her "Prelude" to Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine, eds. (1980) *The Future of Difference*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Pr., xxvi, raised   the question:

Is there a way to think outside the patriarchally determined Same/Other, Subject/Object dichotomies diagnosed as the fact of culture by Simone de Beauvoir [fifty] years ago, and, in the process, still include women as presence? In other words, do we want to continue reorganizing the relationship of difference to sameness through a dialectics of valorization,   or is there a way to break down the overdetermined metaphors which continue to organize   our perceptions of reality?

See also for example Mary Ann Doane, "Commentary: Post-Utopian Difference", in Elizabeth Weed, ed. (1989) *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics*, London: Routledge, 70-78; and Rosi Braidotti (1993) "Embodiment, Sexual Difference, and the Nomadic Subject", *Hypatia* 8:1, 1-13.

academia) as a place of and for this otherness in which reinscription must remain possible for future decision taking.

In clear contradiction to the epigraph quoted from Luce Irigaray's work, therefore, while (cultural) marketing has managed to commodify the feminine difference without any problem, if there is any 'salvation', it is by thinking through the question of the other's otherness not merely that of the other's difference. If postfeminism could mean this then the slogan: "nice work, sisters", could have a positive resonance after all.

Dr Stefan Herbrechter

Trinity and All Saints, College of the University of Leeds

Bibliography:

Braidotti, Rosie (1993) "Embodiment, Sexual Difference, and the Nomadic Subject", *Hypatia* 8:1, 1-13.

Brown, Stephen (1995) *Postmodern Marketing*, London: Routledge.

Brown, Stephen (1998) *Postmodern Marketing Two: Telling Tales*, London: International Thomson Business Press.

Brownlie, Douglas et al., eds. (1999) *Rethinking Marketing: Towards Critical Marketing Accounts*, London: Sage.

During, Simon, ed. (1995) *The Cultural Studies Reader*, London: Routledge.

Edwards, Mark (1995) "Pitch and Tone", *The Sunday Times* 22 October 1995, 10/13.

Giddens, Antony (1998) *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, Antony (1992) *Transformations of Initimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Irigaray, Luce (1996) *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. Alison Martin, London: Routledge.

Irigaray, Luce (1993) *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. C.Burke and G.C.Gill, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Pr.

Jameson, Fredric (1998) *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998*, London: Verso.

Quessada, Dominique (2000) "Douce pub ou première guerre civile mondiale", *Le Monde* 29 March 2000, 16.

Webster, Paul and Michael White (1999) "Socialists wary of Blair's crusade", *The Guardian*, Tuesday 9 November 1999, 13.

Weed, Elizabeth, ed. (1989) *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics*, London: Routledge.