Advertising and the "American Myth" in Italy: 1946-1955

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ABSTRACT

This study examines print advertisements for American goods in Italy between 1946 and 1955 as an adjunct to the large-scale political propaganda campaign launched by the United States during the same period. Although the motives attributed to the advertisers involved are not primarily political, a close reading of the messages they conveyed demonstrates their role in constructing and propagating an ideological framework which, largely through its replication of American beliefs, was ultimately favorable to American interests. American advertising is thus shown to have been not only particularly effective in encouraging pro-American feeling by favorably depicting the quality of life in the United States and the international superiority of American achievement, but instrumental in provoking more fundamental transformations in popular beliefs and ways of life to further influence the wide-spread and deeply-rooted Italian perception of the United States as a nation whose priorities were compatible with its own.

RESUME

Ce mémoire examine la publicité de press pour les produits américains en Italie de 1946 à 1955 en tant que complément de la campagne de propagande politique lancée par les Etats-Unis à la même époque. Quoique les annonceurs en question soient sans motifs proprement politiques, l'analyse détaillée des messages véhiculés démontre bien leur rôle dans la construction et la propagation d'un cadre idéologique qui, en reproduisant les valeurs américaines, s'avéra très utile aux intérêts américains. La publicité américaine a donc joué un double rôle: d'abord, en faisant voir sous leur meilleur jour la qualité de vie et la supériorité internationale des réalisations américaines, elle a encouragé de façon particulièrement efficace des sentiments favorables aux Etats-Unis; ensuite, elle a provoqué une mutation profonde des croyances populaires et du mode de vie italiens afin de renforcer le sentiment très partagé et profondément enraciné chez les italiens d'une convergence entre les intérêts de leur pays et ceux des Etats-Unis.

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INTRODUCTION: The United States and Italy in the Postwar Period

One period which has attracted the attention of many researchers from different branches of the social sciences in recent years is that of reconstruction in Europe after the Second World War.[1] However, although a general consensus exists as to the key role played by the U.S. in this process, not all aspects of such involvement have yet been studied.

The American effort to reshape European societies in its own image was nowhere more impressive nor more broad-based than in Italy. Nonetheless, most of the studies dealing with Italian postwar reconstruction have focused on the economic and political aspects of American involvement, while its cultural implications have largely been neglected.[2] Only two (unpublished) studies, for instance, have examined the massive propaganda campaign that the U.S. mounted in Italy during the immediate postwar years.[3] These, moreover, are limited to a mere, albeit detailed, description of the U.S. government sponsored, "official" propaganda activities preceding the 1948 elections and, in keeping with the theoretical perspective of most communications research in the 1950's, are primarily concerned with their "effectiveness," although no systematic method for its measurement or even criteria for its identification (beyond the election results, themselves) are presented. After a description of the political atmosphere in Italy prior to the elections, the authors review different aspects of the campaign the U.S. mounted to minimize the chances of a Socialist-Communist victory and what many felt were its disastrous consequences for the West. Finally, on the basis of reports and opinions of participant observers and a comparison of the election results with those of 1946, they conclude that the American propaganda effort was paramount in ensuring the victory of the pro-Western Christian Democratic party. Although such a conclusion might seem somewhat hasty, given the

lack of consideration for other potentially significant variables, American "official" propaganda undoubtedly was important in the development of an "American myth" (which idealized the United States as a land of political freedom, prosperity and unlimited individual possibility) which was promoted to rival a Soviet one (of classlessness) throughout the Cold War years. However, despite the role of these activities in the myth's development, it certainly could not have been sustained by them alone, since once reaching their peak in the first few months of 1948 they dwindled steadily thereafter. Conversely, the American myth (unlike the Soviet one) flourished and continues to survive, although arguably not with the same intensity or themes.[4] This would seem to suggest that something other than the propaganda campaign contributed to its longevity. Both propaganda studies stress the importance of what they term "unofficial" activities in influencing the outcome of the 1948 elections, although in focusing on the government-sponsored campaign they fail to analyse and, thus, relegate them to a sort of residual category whose impact is never seriously considered.

In addition, despite their conscientious accounts of the U.S. government's objectives, activities and appraisal of its own success in influencing Italian public opinion, neither of these studies ever discusses the situation from a broader Italian perspective by considering any of the numerous other factors which certainly contributed to an image of America whose impact on everyday Italian life extended well beyond the polls and derived from a wide variety of influences and historical tradition. By the early postwar period when the propaganda campaign was first begun, in fact, it would be safe to say that a popular conception of the United States, however mixed, was well enough entrenched to enjoy a status which was

almost folkloric.

The "American Myth" as Tradition

In the context of postwar Italy (and undoubtedly a good deal of the rest of the world at that time, as well), the American myth could generally be defined as the way in which the United States, and "the American Way of Life" in particular, captured the popular imagination and ultimately acquired a peculiar significance of its own. From the European vantage point, J. Martin Evans confirms that America had always symbolized foreign hopes and aspirations from the moment of its discovery but was, predictably, usually found unequal to expectations.

> ... America has been, sometimes quite literally, the creation of European wishful thinking.... The same basic pattern of unrealistic expectations followed by bitter disillusionment recurs over and over again in the records of European perceptions of America.... Throughout its history, one could say without too much exaggeration, America has been taken for something that it isn't (Asia, the ideal state, the terrestrial paradise, to name only the most obvious) and then accused of fraud when its true nature has finally emerged. The sheer weight of idealism which the New World has been forced to bear from the Fifteenth century to the Twentieth has virtually ensured that one of the keynotes in European writings about it should be disenchantment.[5]

George Gilkey adds that, in modern times at least, the idealization/disillusionment cycle has probably been no more evident than in Italy. Beginning towards the start of the Nineteenth century, increasing numbers of Italians left their homelands for the promise of easy

riches in the New World. At a certain point, much to the dismay of both governments involved, it even appeared that the drive to make one's fortune in America was nearly universal among Italians and so firmly ingrained as to be an impediment to Italian economic development and social stability.

> In contrast to the dreary hovels, oppressive landlords, and malarial fields of the (Italian) peninsula were the opulence, freedom, and cleaner air of America. The fever to go to America, we are told, swept Italy. In the southern province of Calabria, an official testified in 1907: "one is born with the idea of going to America; it is a contagion that can not be resisted." The strongest influence of America in Italy ... was her appeal as the promised land to the Italian peasantry. By the hundreds of thousands Italy's peasants streamed to the ports in response to this call.[6]

Encouraged by advertising circulars from prospective employers offering high wages and unlimited opportunity and compelled by rampant unemployment and the rigidity of the Italian social hierarchy, young laborers left the southern provinces in droves,[7] only to be disillusioned by the America they were to experience firsthand. In pursuit of "the American Dream," they were destined to become "the Italian Problem," regarded by the more firmly entrenched as a scourge to be blocked by restrictive immigration quotas. The illusion, however, persisted (at least in Italy) and continued to be fed both from overseas, by letters from friends and relatives in America which often contained money, and by returning nationals *("Americani")* who were almost duty-bound to live conspicuously as a gentrified sub-culture within their former peer group, who now regarded them as successful American entrepreneurs regardless of their actual status and experiences while in the United States. These people helped both to instigate and accentuate changing economic and social standards in Italy by their own non-conformity and to imply a principal American role in social

amelioration within Italian communities.

> ... repatriates who had lived away from home no longer showed the traditional respect for the hereditary gentry. America entered the social struggle between the defenders of the old order and the peasants. Dollars gave to the repatriates the means to invade the ranks of the landowners and to claim for themselves the amenities belonging to that class.[8]

By the early part of the Twentieth century, then, the *Americani* had begun a tradition of belief in America as a land of unlimited possibility and universal opportunity, unlike Italy where class was ancestral and presumed to be lifelong, and were establishing a precedent for the favorable transposition of American status to Italian culture. These beliefs, in turn, inspired among Italians an avid following of American news and culture, as well as a popular desire to participate in them in order to experience the benefits such participation was thought to convey. Thus, as Umberto Eco maintains in a recent essay tracing the roots of the American myth in Italy, an idealized vision of the United States ultimately led to its being accepted as a "dream, vision, myth and model for the generation that grew up under Fascism."[9]

The heavy exposure to American culture which became part of the common Italian experience reinforced the American national image while exerting a profound influence on Italian society in more subtle ways, as well. American literature was extensively translated by Italian novelists who were also collectively developing their own school of realism, "as a means of breaking through Fascism's cultural isolation and of experiencing something of the artistic upheaval taking place elsewhere in the world."[10] Apparently, the America discovered by literate Italians during the Thirties was revered for its seeming youth and innocence: the problems known to

prevail elsewhere were thought not to have had time to develop in the United States. The American image, therefore, was such that it was almost perceived as being a younger, less evolved version of European nations like Italy which nonetheless was destined to follow a different course, having learned from the mistakes of other nations and thereby able to avoid the pitfalls they had fallen into. As Cesare Pavese attested in 1947:

> For many people the encounter with Caldwell, Steinbeck, Saroyan and even old Lewis revealed the first hint of freedom, the first suspicions that not all the cultures of the world would end up Fascist.... During these years of study, America was not **another** country, a **new** beginning of history, but a gigantic theater where the universal drama was enacted with great sincerity.[11]

Despite the affinity Italians supposedly felt towards this image, therefore, in a society where the school system and mass propaganda allegedly celebrated only the Italian civilization and condemned most others, it remained (as Italo Calvino claimed) "an amalgamation of everything Fascism claimed to negate or exclude."[12] America thus endured as an attractive symbol which was rendered even more so by its ambiguity, being perceived as both historically similar to and politically different from Italy. Indeed, Alexander Deconde maintains that during the Thirties "the interest in American intellectual life was an act of protest against Fascism. The mere reading of an American book was, to some, a symbolic revolutionary act, a form of personal resistance against the established order."[13] Eventually, restrictions were tightened to the extent that it became almost impossible, even for the initiated, to keep abreast of many developments in American scientific research, literature and popular culture.[14] Despite this challenge, however, the pre-existing positive image of the United States was certainly not completely destroyed.

After the war, belief in American superiority and prestige engendered a rebirth of popular interest in the United States. For a variety of reasons, English replaced French as the primary second language and American idioms even became commonplace in everyday Italian. In academic circles, as well, the merits of American life and intellectual achievement were routinely debated. In part, this sudden interest may have been linked with the increased distribution of Hollywood films, probably the best-documented and, arguably, most influential exposure to American culture common to the majority of Italians. Despite the quality of their own neorealist films (and, ironically, the prestige these films enjoyed in America), Italians strongly preferred those produced in Hollywood, or Italian facsimiles thereof, because of their characteristically optimistic themes and flashier format. The "cult" of the Wild West was, in fact, at least as popular in Italy as in the United States, inspiring any number of songs, literary works and even an opera (Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West*).[15] As Deconde confirms:

> For a while in the postwar years, it seemed as though Italians read only American books, saw mainly American films, and listened primarily to American records. More than any other people ... Italians wanted to imitate Americans.[16]

However, despite historical interest in the United States and the vitality of its resurgence, there were some detractors. Whereas sentiment was reasonably strong and widespread that Americans were Italy's "best and most powerful friends, a people worthy of study and understanding,"[17] many Italians held equally longstanding grudges against the United States which had stemmed from unpleasant first-hand experience, supposedly discriminatory immigration policies, and the prejudices encouraged by the

Fascist regime. By this time, therefore, literature and films about American society had to account for the usually frustrating experiences of those Italians who had emigrated there, resulting in a sort of bittersweet rendering of the average Italian's dream of a land of easy wealth, tainted by personal experiences of those who were able to recognize this image for what it was: an illusion elusive to most and attainable by few.

"Information" and the Promotion of the American National Image

Perhaps understandably, this reserve of negative feeling was considered worrisome by American officials who viewed it, in the presence of vigorous Socialist and Communist parties at a time preceding the first important national elections of the reconstruction period (1948), as a threat to the American objectives of rebuilding a market-regulated economy and of politically allying the country with the West, since Italy was seen to have considerable strategic value in the struggle that the U.S. was waging against the Eastern bloc. Although evidence to support this supposed menace has never been conclusive,[18] massive (indeed, unprecedented) efforts were undertaken to ensure its destruction. U.S. government-sponsored activities, supervised by the Office of International Information and Culture (OIC) which directed material to U.S. Information Service (USIS) offices in Italy, had begun as early as 1943 in preparation for the invasion of Sicily and included showing and lending documentary films and film strips, circulating press releases about American aid to

Italy, establishing a network of "American Information Centers" (libraries), setting up photographic exhibits on the United States, overseeing special radio programs, and providing information to the Italian press and "opinion leaders" (newspaper editors, librarians, writers, scientists, intellectuals, politicians, government officials and political groups),[19] in addition to arranging academic exchange programs with the United States. Immediately before the election, the U.S. also promised to sponsor Italian membership in the United Nations and to return the Trieste region from Allied control, both popular measures to which the Soviet Union was publicly opposed. In addition, Communist votes were discouraged more directly by the frequent reiteration of threats to prohibit such voters from entering the United States and their ambitious complement, the "Letters from America" program, in which Italian-Americans were urged to write to friends and relatives in Italy, extolling the virtues of the United States and advising them to vote the pro-American Christian Democratic ticket. The propaganda campaign also capitalized on simultaneous extensive aid programs, advertising American contributions as they were used: streetcars and busses bore placards stating that without American natural resources transportation services would have been paralyzed, the pay envelopes of employees of American-funded work-relief projects and bread ration tickets were stamped with notices identifying these necessities as American gifts and, likewise, household bills contained a notice that gas was produced with free American coal. Most visible was a post office stamp which cancelled 75 million letters a month with the words, "Aid from America -- Bread and Work."[20]

Such efforts undoubtedly were influential in the development or maintenance of longstanding good feeling towards the United States during

the reconstruction and may, in fact, be one reason that many political historians now view postwar Italy's political affinities with nonchalance. However, given the historical precedent, it does not seem entirely surprising that pro-American sentiment should persist, nor unlikely that the officially-recognized propaganda campaign should have been only partially responsible for its longevity.[21] In addition to these government-sponsored activities, commercial advertising, like film, may conceivably have played a significant role which went well beyond the sale of American goods in laying the foundations for and reinforcing the "official" campaign by creating a climate of opinion favorable to the American cause.[22] It is notable that after a fourteen-year embargo the post-1945 period in Italy saw a marked increase in the importation of American consumer products and both a corresponding growth of American marketing methods and the reopening of American advertising firms to implement them. American-assisted commercial development also closely parallelled the escalation of the propaganda campaign and a strong pro-American feeling which manifested itself as a widespread interest in and frequent desire to replicate the "American Way of Life." Thus, advertising messages were **at least** potentially complementary to American propaganda and may, in fact, have been more influential than some of the other programs whose **primary** goal was to promote the American national image, since (at least to Italians) this image was actually defined by Americans' opportunities to determine their own destiny and to live in unimagined luxury along the way.[23] Deconde actually attributes the allure of the American lifestyle **mainly** to this possibility of material possession.

Although most Italians could not afford the luxuries of

> the affluent society, they admired them -- big glossy cars, neon signs, movies, jazz and rock-and-roll music blaring from jukeboxes, the countless gadgets and technical competence of the American life. Most of all, the Italians envied the success for which these items stood.... Technological progress and social change, more than academic exchanges, made Italians more willing than at any time in the past to accept doses of American popular culture. Italy's young people wanted a slice of affluence and saw opportunities at least to work toward that goal. Even in the backward regions, they sensed that somehow they might have a chance to taste a better life than their parents had known, a kind of life that they knew existed in America. This sense of hope, especially among the young, accompanied the readiness of Italians to accept things American.[24]

Commercial development thus helped to perpetuate the popular beliefs which had grown out of American efforts to recruit Italian labor and been perpetuated by the *Americani*, equating American life with success. Increased exposure to American advertising and consequent familiarity with commodities and their role in American life then engendered a certain desire for their acquisition as a means of becoming more "American" without having to emigrate to the United States.

The "side effects" of increased advertising activity, therefore, would seem to have a number of pragmatic implications relevant to the then-current political situation. First, the superficial information conveyed by advertisements about the new availability of American goods and services (and, consequently, the American Way of Life) to Italians was consistent with the propaganda campaign's basic message of the magnitude of the United States' contributions to reconstruction and Italy's economic progress. Second, the same information served to document the desirability of the American Way of Life while furnishing more precise details of the amenities which accompanied it, necessarily fostering pro-American sentiment to complement the material manifestations of an aspiration

towards Americanism. Third, by promoting consumption, advertising had at least two beneficial effects from the American point of view: in addition to creating a new market for American products, it helped to shape Italy into a "consumer society" modelled on the United States by strengthening the pre-existing popular identification of the "American Way of Life" with progress (or "The Good Life"), to which consumption of American goods became a sort of initiation. This effect, which does not even enter into the postwar propaganda studies' peripheral consideration of "unofficial propaganda," is probably the most significant with respect to advertising alone, the others serving only in conjunction with related phenomena (such as the political propaganda campaign) in a general, "public relations" way to enhance the image of the United States (for political and economic ends) rather than to directly ensure that its political and/or economic systems were emulated.

In other words, by encouraging consumption, American advertising may have provoked more profound socio-political changes than would be derived from a mere promotion of a "positive" American image, although the desirability of this image was vital to such a larger influence. It seems likely, in fact, that by fostering consumerism the United States was able to profoundly influence values at the "grass roots" level and, consequently, to influence social structures and political institutions, in accordance with theories advanced by several recent studies on the impact of multi-national corporations in developing countries.[25] Karle Nordenstreng and Herbert Schiller, for instance, found their well-known book on international communications on exactly this principle:

> In countries connected to and accepting the general principles of the international market system, the social patterns prevailing in the power centers of the system

> are replicated or created afresh peripherally, though modified by local conditions. The values, goals, social relationships, to say nothing of the basic production relations specific to capitalism, are reproduced, however much they may be filtered first through unique local experiences of history and geography.... Most of the (trans-national corporations) are only indirectly related to the mass media, but still they have a decisive role in determining -- largely through advertising -- the content of media flows and, consequently, the social consciousness prevailing in society, propagating the system's values and reinforcing its authority as the ultimate definer of issues.[26]

Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner reach a similar conclusion albeit in different terms, specifically defining the "values, goals, social relationships," and so forth, reproduced by commercial interests through the media as "modernity."

> The symbols of modernity, and with them the entire vision of the modern world, are not simply diffused in a haphazard manner. Often they are deliberately manipulated, for either economic or political reasons. In those areas of the Third World that continue to be penetrated by Capitalist enterprise, such manipulation is undertaken by advertising. It is not, needless to say, terribly different from the manipulation undertaken by advertising in advanced industrial societies of North America or Western Europe. In the Third World, however, it has a much greater impact because it links up directly with sometimes desperate expectations of a better life.[27]

In Italy, then, American advertising clearly served to document the terms of modernity as "American-ness," which was in turn inherent in particular properties of the consumer goods which symbolized it. From a broader perspective, however, since its purpose was to encourage the emulation of illustrated ways of life, advertising ultimately caused social patterns and values to become more like American ones, encouraged the production/consumption cycle which characterized the United States and, as a result, helped to establish American authority and potential control.

This in itself may be reason enough to re-examine the propaganda studies as lacking an important area of inquiry and to begin to investigate advertising campaigns launched in Italy during this period. However, since most theoretical studies of propaganda also unquestioningly accept advertising as but one variety of their object of interest, its omission in applied studies such as those of American efforts in postwar Italy is all the more glaring.[28]

The following pages will therefore explore the socio-political implications of advertisements for American products in Italy during the postwar years in order to discover their potential (or actual) benefits to a pro-American propaganda campaign. The advertisements which will be cited throughout the text which follows in support of the hypotheses presented[29] are selected from a corpus of approximately five hundred ads for various products, representing all of the American products (or products claiming American qualities, which were not always American-made) advertised in five Italian weekly magazines between 1946 and 1955. These periodicals themselves were chosen with an eye for diversity, in the hope of reproducing the American image as accurately as possible. The sample therefore consists of three popular newsmagazines from different publishing houses, of which one's content was largely pictorial *(Domenica del Corriere)*, another focussed on entertainment and personalities *(Tempo)*, and the third, first published in 1950, introduced general-interest "hard news" *(Epoca)*, as well as a woman's weekly which appeared in Italy only after 1949 *(Marie-Claire)* and one for children *(Corriere dei Piccoli)*.

Consumption as the American Way of Life

In order to interpret American advertising, whether in Italy or the United States, one must have at least a rudimentary understanding of the social climate in which it was engendered. In other words, if the importance of these advertisements once exported abroad was their role in replicating American values and habits, largely as regards consumption, then how were American attitudes towards consumption representative of the American stance towards life, in general? The necessity of consumption to American life did not instantly spring into being in response to the nation's manufacturing capabilities but, instead, developed slowly in response to ideological and institutional changes.

The so-called consumer culture, at least as it has been manifested in the United States, is characterized by a quest for leisure, compulsive spending and an emphasis on individual fulfillment. Needless to say, such a society could neither spring up fully formed nor spread through mere "informational" advertising, but had to develop from an appropriate ideological base. In the United States, a number of religious, psychological and institutional changes took place near the beginning of the Twentieth century to condition the environment for the advent of what would eventually be recognized as "the consumer culture."

Since the turn of the century, consumer goods had become increasingly linked to popular notions of American life. To Americans, "the American

Way of Life" referred more specifically to a standard of living than to a system of justice, despite the nation's historical commitment to political ideals. Democracy, the cornerstone of the American judicial system, was even perceived as inherent in consumer goods, which themselves were seen as "egalitarian:" widely available, equally functional to all who chose to use them and, ultimately, non-compulsory.[30] Most importantly, the two were seen as intertwined to such an extent that each was thought to be a means of preserving the other. In short, the appeal of the American Way of Life was derived from consumer goods and, correspondingly, any hope for the future was linked to them as well. Consumption thus was both a way of improving the quality of life insofar as the goods it involved were seemingly designed for such purposes, replacing laborious practices with the instantaneousness of commodities, and a means of safeguarding democracy, since it, like voting, was seen as a democratic act allowing all citizens, regardless of race, education or religious beliefs a chance to voice an opinion of sorts.

More specifically, the rise of the consumer ethic in the United States was marked by the historical coincidence of particular circumstances: the establishment of a national marketplace and the growth of national advertising media, the emergence of a new professional/managerial class working within a strengthened institutional framework and their cultivation of what some have called a "therapeutic" ethos[31] in response to the individual feelings of "unreality" associated with widespread urbanization, technological development and an apparently resultant yearning to experience the "real life" which was generally believed to transpire elsewhere. These feelings were directly attributed to a perceived loss of identity which, in turn, was thought to derive from

the anonymity of the city, a supposed "lack of first-hand experience" resulting from the preponderance of processed foods and other ready-made goods and, finally, a business community which was becoming increasingly dominated by large corporations whose employees' jobs had become more specialized and, consequently, less inter-related but more interdependent. Work, therefore, began increasingly to have more to do with manipulating people than things, while "success" was correspondingly defined by interpersonal skills and appearances (or "impression management"). The need to constantly project a personal image rather than one's character contributed to a "loss of selfhood" or, in David Reisman's terms, a change from inner- to other-directedness as self image began to be determined by the perceptions of others.[32] Correspondingly, the self imagined by most Americans was either featureless and concealed by a wardrobe of social "masks" or fragmented and socially constructed. Advertising institutionalized these beliefs by its own acknowledgement of them, depicting its audience as unfulfilled or insecure and offering consumption as a means of self-expression, while social commentators played their own part in defining it as a cure for social ills.

Advertising's incorporation of both the therapeutic edict to relax and experience life to the fullest and the advice of professionals on how to do so led to the development of a social hierarchy dominated by an emerging business, or professional, class comprised of social and medical scientists, as well as celebrities, who took on the advisory functions once filled by the clergy. Social scientists, in particular, established a precedent for this reliance upon professional expertise largely because their own commentary on the plight of "ordinary" people established a hierarchy in which they, as "experts," were distinguished from the public

they studied and their advice, correspondingly, given greater weight.

In the United States, the chief remedy proposed by the professional elite was rest and relaxation as "rest cures" and recommendations to save personal energy abounded. A subsequent trend towards the advocacy of "letting oneself go" paved the way for self-indulgent consumption and contributed to a denial of the work ethic, since work began increasingly to be seen primarily as a means of acquiring the wherewithal to create leisure which, in turn, was identified as happiness. However, the weakening of this ethic as well as the religious ideals which once directed individual behavior more compellingly actually contributed to an individually-perceived lack of direction and the widespread individual malaise which the therapeutic ethos proposed to remedy. In other words, with the advent of the Industrial Age, the old ideal (the Protestant work ethic) had to be re-defined to accommodate the realities of a new social organization. Whereas earlier ideals had celebrated hard work, competitive struggle and thrift as the keys to individual salvation and the heart of American achievement, such individuality became increasingly difficult to realize in the face of a growing emphasis on the collective gain. As a result, the American Dream emerged as a more "collectivized" ideology in which it was acknowledged that social progress (notably in the forms of science and education) was the key to social unity and resultant individual well-being.[33]

Especially during the boom years that followed World War II it became usual for Americans, inspired by the revitalization of their own economy, the regeneration of pre-war family life and the recent, spectacular and universally acknowledged displays of technological world leadership, to view the future as a time which must necessarily be not only profoundly

different from the past, but undeniably "better" than the eras which had preceded it. In the popular imagination, the development and deployment of the atomic bomb had served as a metaphor for the socio-economic changes which were expected to occur domestically: just as science had worked destructively for the good of mankind it was capable of working constructively towards the same end. Likewise, since the bomb served as both a source and a symbol of power, pride in a new-found sense of military and technological world leadership was widespread and supported internationally. The "Technological Age," therefore, was heralded as a fundamentally different era of transformation during which the already substantial achievements of previous generations would converge and acquire new significance because of more recent advancements made in science and education.

In keeping with these general beliefs and following the success of J.K. Galbraith's book of the same name, it became popular to refer to America as "The Affluent Society" and to believe that permanent solutions were being developed for both social and material problems. This "Second Industrial Revolution" meant that, broadly speaking, two determinants of social position, money and education, were becoming more universally available -- the former as a byproduct of technological development and the latter as its precondition. Thus, it was hoped that class distinctions would be more or less obliterated as the middle class expanded to accommodate increasing numbers of professionals and new standards of material abundance, while machines replaced unskilled laborers and traditional problems became irrelevant. As Richard Parker comments:

> Poverty was declared an afterthought, and politics was said to be facing an "end of ideology." Gains in education and technology and the growth of a new class of

> managers and professionals were supposed to be the first steps toward an automated society where leisure, not work, would be a burden.[34] ... What poverty was left, and whatever inequalities might be created by the shift to automation, could be solved by a government administered benignly by liberal professionals.[35]

Thus, hopes for a brighter future were pegged to popular confidence in the developments of the present to bring it about. Widespread belief in the abilities of the scientific community to improve the quality of life for all led to a corresponding faith in the results of their investigations to be useful in achieving this end. Just as commodities, in general, were credited with personal or social attributes, therefore, those which were identified as new or innovative were particularly appealing in the opportunity they seemed to provide to acquire some vestiges of the scientific process and participate in its benefits. Advertising reflected these beliefs by "scientizing" commodities while science, in turn, became commodified.

As these "scientific" products came to be marketed abroad, where the mysteries of science were augmented by their identification as American, advertisements helped to instill American beliefs about the properties of consumer goods while reinforcing popular respect for American scientific development and the United States, in general. The ideology advanced by advertisements for American products abroad was not contrived for the benefit of foreign audiences, therefore, but part of American life itself. Since changes in the popularly-perceived value of goods had been taking place in America for decades, a system of advertisements designed largely by Americans (or in imitation of an American model)[36] to sell American goods on the basis of an American endorsement were undoubtedly instrumental in reconstructing American beliefs abroad, where such a new understanding

of the properties of goods necessarily corresponded to changing definitions of social class, values and, in short, of the dominant ideology. As Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen contend, it was precisely the identification of the American Way of Life as a seemingly logical, mechanical and therefore "manageable" lifestyle model which enabled the U.S. to establish the kind of influence it came to enjoy abroad, particularly since these audiences had access only to images and impressions of this way of life which were themselves controlled and managed.

> As the domestic frontier was closing, the United States embarked upon assembling a world empire. Surely such a direction required, in a renewed sense, a deep commitment to the idea of a manageable "world-machine."... It was a "machine" that, in the name of effecting a more pacific home front, developed a public face that disowned the cold calculation of the mechanical world-view -- at the same time pursuing it, internationally, with a vengeance. The "machine," and particularly the decisive machinery of mass communications, would hereafter serve as the public champion of universal possibility and well-being.[37]

The limited vision of American life advanced by American advertising in Italy helped to establish a hegemony of American beliefs about consumption from an already active interest in and general pre-disposition to admire the United States. In so doing, it helped to create a sort of taken-for-granted "reality" in which the American Way of Life was made to seem both natural and desirable. The first phase of this "americanization" process was therefore dependent on its creation (or perhaps accentuation) of the same set of fears, anxieties and expectations as existed in the United States, coupled with a similar lack of faith in previous standards. The second was its depiction of an idealized vision of the United States in which these fears, anxieties and expectations had been reconciled and the third was to encourage the adoption of American standards and solutions to

daily problems.

Advertising/Propaganda and the American Image in Italy

Advertisements for American products common in postwar Italy played a significant role in initiating such a process, largely by replication of the American vision of consumption and reinforcement of a pre-existing positive image of the United States. This seemingly "non-commercial" information, presumably neither regarded by its creators as persuasive nor by its receivers as contentious, expressed within these advertisements spoke most clearly of the American experience and was thus most likely to have contributed to the general effort of the propaganda campaign. The following chapters, therefore, will examine the features of the American image in Italian advertising and its role in promoting sales of particular consumer goods and, ultimately, the American Way of Life abroad.

Although the officially-constituted political propaganda campaign and its objectives will be used as a point of departure in discussing the overall impact of advertisements for American goods, the purely administrative question of whether advertising, in general, is in fact a variety of propaganda, insidiously masquerading as a benign and ideologically-vacant vehicle for commercial information, or a "category" in its own right, possessed of distinct qualities, characteristics and implications of its own will not be answered here. The objective of the present study is not, after all, to make sweeping theoretical

pronouncements from which future generations of research studies may cull categorical distinctions with which to delimit otherwise homogeneous phenomena, but to investigate a particular facet of a set of circumstances (the commercial development of Italy by American interests) which were ideologically meaningful and potentially important politically, given the concerns of the "information-providers" (as a nationality) with respect to the "information-receivers" at the time. The government-sponsored, officially-recognized propaganda campaign is itself only peripheral to the present discussion, therefore, and the matter of taking a defensible stance within propaganda theory irrelevant. The scope of this research is rather less awesome, being strictly confined to discerning the meaning of specific ads common to the period and attempting to understand the way they might have worked together to influence both beliefs and action at the popular level during a particularly politically-charged era.

However, insofar as a concern for the propagation of specific ideologies impinges upon the domain of propaganda research, this study attempts to be informed by the useful aspects of this literature without strictly adhering to a rigidly proscribed position within the theoretical debate centering on the definition of the phenomenon itself, since in recent years the descriptive concept "propaganda," variously grouping a nearly limitless set of communicative acts relative to considerations of utility (intent vs. effect), content (information vs. persuasion), or "democracy" (hierarchical vs. interactive, "open" vs. "closed"), has been redefined, repositioned within the communications paradigm and even rejected as a useful analytical category for communications research.[38] In the most general terms, then, the greatest contribution propaganda studies have to offer investigations of advertising like this one is a result of

their common preoccupation with persuasion, the driving force behind them both. Starting from this premise, the study to follow will first proceed to determine **how** and **of what** advertisements for American goods were persuasive before attempting to assess their influence on pro-American feeling, social change or, more generally, the United States' propaganda objectives in postwar Italy.

In order to identify the ideological presuppositions inherent to advertisements promoting American products to Italians and to recognize their sphere of influence as being beyond buying behavior or even the popular definition of the American image abroad, affecting popular perceptions of life itself, it is therefore necessary to turn first to a more general examination of the way advertising's meanings are conveyed and achieve credibility. In other words, one must consider the means whereby advertising is persuasive, effecting some sort of attitudinal or behavioral change on the part of its audience. Since this is the feature that advertising shares with propaganda and one which raises questions among some of its critics as to whether advertising is really distinct from propaganda or merely a new name for an already familiar concept, it may occasionally be helpful to turn to the propaganda literature for further explanation of the way persuasive communications "work."

The first of the following chapters will therefore deal extensively with the pragmatic features of the American image, outlining its utility to advertisers in motivating desire for their products and to consumers in constituting consumption as a means of self-expression. This dual function will be demonstrated as integral to the way advertising, itself, is structured: building from an ideology of consumption which sees goods as bound to certain ways of life from which they, in turn, derive value, these

ways of life, or lifestyles, are made to seem both attainable and, by virtue of their heightened visibility, even more attractive. In this instance, the symbolic value attributed to American consumer goods was their apparent role in a lifestyle which, from the Italian perspective, appeared to characterize a universally-realized "American Way of Life" which was also epitomized in Hollywood films. From the advertisers' point of view, the pre-existence of an American mystique, of sorts, was advantageous in generating ready-made interest for their products and a basis from which positive and believable assertions about them might be made. To the consumer, on the other hand, once impressions of life in the United States had been synthesized and expanded upon by advertising's depiction of selected aspects of it, it would have seemed a logical assumption that the possession of these things should invariably enable one to live as their other owners did, given the central role purchasable commodities played in these representations. Such beliefs are, in fact, the fundamental rationale invoked by advertisements to justify consumer purchases ("the ideology of consumption") and thereby serve the interests of advertisers. Furthermore, since this ideology is so strongly linked to self-image, its perpetuation actually seems to be in the consumer's own interest. Finally, from the standpoint of the U.S. government's propaganda objectives, advertisements also "sold" the American Way of Life by first documenting its benefits, then presenting it as more accessible than other alternatives might have seemed.

However, even this feature should not be unquestionably categorized as propaganda, if that term is to be understood as a deliberate attempt to coerce, since belief in the superiority of the American Way of Life and unquestioning faith in the promise of technology was by no means an

exclusive creation of American advertisers and propagandists, nor was this outlook shared only by Europeans. In fact, it undoubtedly was the sincere enthusiasm of Americans themselves for their own stock in life and prospects for the future that made these advertisements both appealing and effective. This structure of beliefs will be the focus of this study's second section, in which advertising's representations of an "ideology of progress" underlying the American commitment to industrialization and technology (and consequently apparent in numerous aspects of daily life in the United States) will be examined and its features detailed from evidence afforded by advertisements for the commodities so intimately associated with it.

Building from the glamorous illusions created by the Hollywood film industry, these advertisements developed an American image in which allure was more or less directly a result of a scientific or technical stance towards life which categorically incorporated manufactured goods. Thus, American strengths were attributed to only one set of underlying forces: scientific progress teamed with superior manufacturing capabilities and impressive sales. Once again, this image presented an appealing view of American life which made its benefits appear attainable to non-Americans, insofar as they seemed to be less a factor of nationality than of habit. Such a world-view was itself attractive because it denied many differences, like class and nationality, which were already perceived to exist between people and to group them accordingly. Advertising, instead, offered an opportunity (consumption) to be like Americans who, for a variety of reasons, were thought to enjoy a society in which social distinctions were neither insurmountable nor consequential, in the long run, since all of its members were depicted as enjoying nearly equal standards of material

well-being.

As a logical outgrowth of such beliefs, an Italian perception of American pre-eminence internationally would seem to be inevitable, since at the time the United States clearly enjoyed an undeniable advantage over other nations in terms of scientific development (nuclear weapons), was admired for its leading role in securing an Allied victory and, furthermore (if advertisements were to be believed), produced goods which were in demand the world over. Moreover, inasmuch as this last also stressed what seemed to be a sort of commercial philanthropy to complement widely-acknowledged American military and economic aid it additionally enhanced this already-positive image of the United States. Nonetheless, it is the values and beliefs advertising advanced and their lingering importance in the broader realm of Italian culture which makes it most interesting as an object of investigation -- and most likely as a type of propaganda in its own right. Generally speaking, it is the probability of such effects which would have been most beneficial to U.S. propaganda objectives at the time, given that the State Department's intent was not merely to improve the national image, prompting Italians to think of the United States as an attractive place to live or visit, or even to assert that Americans were well-intentioned people. It endeavored, instead, to make Italians not only admire the U.S., but want to become more like Americans, themselves. Having documented the characteristics and various attractions of the American image, therefore, the real potential of American advertising's impact on postwar Italy remains to be questioned. This, therefore, will be the focus of the third section.

Since advertising is influential in reflecting the organization and values of a society as well as effecting socio-political change within it,

American advertising had two likely immediate effects in postwar Italy which would have allied it with the stated purposes of government-sponsored propaganda. First, insofar as it described the standards of American life in an appealing way, it was another means of providing the "full and fair" picture of America the State Department wished to advance. This deliberate and seemingly commodity-derived image then modified previous notions about American life and contributed to new, and probably more explicit, definitions of "American-ness." Second, because this concept was presented as specifically meaningful (or even useful) to Italians, it acquired properties which could be called mythical, if myth is to be understood, following Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, as "the logic by which ... people ... conceive of and organise their relations to each other and the world."[39] The "American myth," then, is more than an exaggerated belief in the respective powers of the United States and its technology and must, instead, be understood as the significance its image holds for others. Indeed, although many have written about "the American Dream" at home (now almost part of the national heritage) and the American image abroad, such beliefs do not invariably have the status of myth, but might instead be better understood as stereotypes. Myth, rather, is stereotype with a purpose.

As a preliminary step towards understanding the purpose served by the images of America offered to Italians by the international advertising industry, therefore, the study which follows divides the problem of relating commercial advertising to popular beliefs into three primary areas of concern: advertising's appeal to the individual (its persuasiveness, credibility and resultant promotion of consumption, all of which are in turn founded on the lure of personal attractiveness and/or social

prestige), its contribution to the development of particular notions of group identity (which, ultimately, are transferred to notions of nationality and national standing) and the role of these beliefs in establishing social control. From here, it will be possible to assess the role of advertising's images of American life in furthering the cause of American propaganda more accurately.

Notes

1. See, for instance, the papers presented at the Fourth International Colloquium of the Inter-University Center for European Studies dedicated to "The Reshaping of Europe 1944-1949" held in Montreal on March 25-29, 1981 and now collected in *Europa* 5:2, 1982.

2. Early contributions to this literature were made by H.S. Hughes, *The United States and Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956). More recent additions have been provided by Elena Age Rossi Sitzia, *et al., Italia e Stati Uniti durante l'Amministrazione Truman* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1976); Roberto Faenza and Marco Fini, *Gli Americani in Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976); John L. Harper, *The United States and the Italian Economy 1945-1948* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, the Johns Hopkins University, 1981); Alan Platt and Robert Leomardi, "American Foreign Policy and the Postwar Italian Left" *(Political Science Quarterly* 93:2, Summer 1978, pp. 197-215); Simon Serfaty, "The United States and the PCI: The year of decision 1947" in Simon Serfaty, Lawrence Gray, eds., *The Italian Communist Party: Yesterday Today, and Tomorrow* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980, pp. 59-74); and Giorgio Spini, Gian Giacomo Migone and Massimo Teodori, eds., *Italia e America dalla Grande Guerra ad Oggi* (Padua: Marsilio, 1976).

3. Robert W. van de Velde, *The Role of United States Propaganda in Italy's Return to Political Democracy 1943-1948,* unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1954; William Stuart Caldwell, *The Organization and Operations of American Information and Propaganda Activities in Early Postwar Italy,* unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1960.

4. Evidence of the myth's continuing role in Italian popular culture can be observed in such films as "Un Americano a Roma" (Monicelli, 1953) and in many Italian popular songs.

5. J. Martin Evans, *America: The View From Europe,* San Francisco: San Francisco Book Co., 1976, pp. 22-23.

6. George R. Gilkey, "The United States and Italy: Migration and Repatriation," *Journal of Developing Areas* II (1967), p. 24.

7. See *ibid.,* pp. 23-35. These emigrants, ranging in number from thirty in 1820 to 3,150,000 between 1900 and 1920, but decreasing to 500,000 in the following decades, were primarily men of peasant class origin (farmers, construction workers; herdsmen and woodsmen), usually (85%) from Lucania and Calabria and between fifteen and thirty-five years old.

8. *ibid.*, p. 30.

9. Umberto Eco, "Il Modello Americano," in *La Riscoperta dell'America*, Rome: Laterza, 1984, p. 5. My translation.

10. Alexander Deconde, *Half Bitter, Half Sweet: An Excursion into Italian-American History*, New York: Scribner's, 1971, p. 310.

11. Cesare Pavese, *l'Unitá*, August 3, 1947. Cited in Eco, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7. My translation.

12. Italo Calvino in a 1953 introduction to an anthology of Pavese's work cited in Eco, *op. cit.*, p. 6. My translation.

13. Deconde, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

14. Interestingly, although government control of the media came earlier in Italy than in either of the other Axis powers, it was not the most extensive. Because his public image in the United States was initially not disadvantageous, and because he was himself a devoté of American cinema (having pseudonymously written numerous articles on the subject in the critical press), Mussolini was relatively lenient in the restrictions placed on American media products, especially Hollywood films, which still accounted for 75% of the Italian market by 1937 (See Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media are American: Anglo-American Media in the World*, London: Constable, 1977, p. 141). In addition to maintaining at least partial contact between the Italian populace and American culture, this tolerance was probably good public relations, making his government seem less restrictive, more objective and less threatening to Italians while encouraging Americans to think of the country as "not really Fascist" and to adopt more benevolent policies during the occupation.

15. See Deconde, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

17. *ibid.*, p. 316.

18. In fact, its likelihood was probably greatly exaggerated. Few recent studies of Italy during this period take the possibility of Socialist/Communist victory very seriously and at least one study undertaken at the time (P. Luzzato Fegiz, "Italian Public Opinion," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 2, Spring 1947, pp. 92-96) concluded that the predominant feeling was pro-American.

19. These activities essentially continue through the present time, after having reached prominence in early 1948 with supplemental poster campaigns and window displays.

20. See Caldwell, *op. cit.*, and van de Velde, *op. cit.*, for a more detailed description of these and related activities.

21. Indeed, there is even some evidence that, in the long run, the propaganda methods employed by the United States in Italy had a negative effect on the popular image of America because they were seen as patronizing and inadequate. Specifically, Italians had difficulty rationalizing the discrepancies between the overly simplistic images presented by the American government to the Italian media and the actual conduct of American political leadership and were particularly offended that the U.S. seemed to make no effort to explain them. See J.A. Raffaele, "United States Propaganda Abroad: Some Notes on the USIS in Italy," *Social Research* 27:3 (Fall 1960), pp. 277-294.

22. The value of such "climates of opinion," "pre-propaganda," sub-propaganda," "facilitative communication," etc. to formally conducted propaganda campaigns has traditionally been part of most studies of propaganda. For examples, see J.A.C. Brown, *Techniques of Persuasion: From Propaganda to Brainwashing*, (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963); Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, (New York: Knopf, 1965); George N. Gordon, *Persuasion: The Theory and Practice of Manipulative Communication*, (New York: Hastings House, 1971); and L. John Martin, "Effectiveness of International Propaganda" in Heinz-Detrich Fischer and John C. Merrill, eds., *International and Intercultural Communication*, (New York: Hastings House, 1976).

23. In addition, it should be noted, advertisers themselves have spoken out in favor of a more commercially-oriented approach to the promotion of the American image abroad which would draw from the findings of advertising theory. In 1970, several executives were openly critical of the programs organized by government agencies since the 1940's on the grounds that they were aimed at an intellectual elite and ignored the "man on the street" advertising was designed to influence. According to their recommendations, the U.S. government would have been well-advised to consult the advertising industry to design a propaganda strategy which both improved the national image **and** helped to create a better business climate for American expansion abroad (see Armand Mattelart, *Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture*, Michael Chanan, trans., Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982, pp. 238-239).

24. Deconde, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-301.

25. For instance, see Michael H. Anderson, "An Overview of the Wide, Wide World of Advertising and the 'New World Information Order' Debate" (paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, Houston, Texas, August 1979); Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, (New York: Vintage, 1974); Herbert I. Schiller, "Madison Avenue Imperialism" (In *Communication in International Politics*, Richard L. Meritt, ed., Urbana, IL: Univ. of Illinois, 1972) and *Communication and Class Struggle* 1 (Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub, eds., New York: International General, 1979).

26. Karle Nördenstreng and Herbert I. Schiller, *National Sovereignty and International Communications*, Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1979, pp. xii-ix.

27. Berger, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

28. George N. Gordon, for instance, discussing the division of persuasive communications into sub-categories of propaganda and advertising from a historical perspective, does not distinguish between the two in any respect other than their individual spheres of influence. His typical stance regarding the relationship between varieties of persuasion is succinct and unequivocal: "Persuasion itself became industrialized in the world of commerce and called 'advertising,' in the world of ideology it was known as 'propaganda,' and in the world of schooling it became 'citizenship education,'" (*Propaganda: The Theory and Practice of Manipulative Communication*, New York: Hastings House, 1971, p. 72). However, and perhaps surprisingly given the seeming homology of advertising and propaganda, advertising is seldom if ever considered as a propaganda *type* in its own right. For instance, books on international communications and propaganda commonly include in their tables of contents a section dealing with various channels/media of communication which may influence public opinion internationally, in addition to government-sponsored "information" campaigns. Typically, these include: the press, radio, television, film, literature, libraries, educational programs and tourism, but never advertising.

29. All translations are my own.

30. A 1944 American Hoover ad expressed the predominant sentiment of the time when it amended Woodrow Wilson's famous Four Freedoms with one of its own: the "Fifth Freedom," freedom of choice. For decades thereafter, that phrase apparently evoked images of commodities.

31. See Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Norton, 1979) or T.J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture" in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980* (Richard W. Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds., New York: Pantheon, 1983).

32. See David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1961).

33. See William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1957, for elaboration.

34. Richard Parker, *The Myth of the Middle Class*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, p. xv.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

36. At least one article in the trade press ("If Foreign Advertisers Imitate ...," *Printer's Ink*, Feb. 9, 1945, p. 38) demonstrated that the international standard for advertising copy, layout and

illustration was American by displaying blatently similar ads for both domestic and foreign products.

37. Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982, p. 32.

38. See *ibid.*, pp. 9-40, for the definitive formulation of this position and Katka Selucky, "Propaganda and Ideology," *Working Papers in Communications* (Montreal: McGill University, 1982), for a discussion of its development and relative merits.

39. Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, p. 16.

ONE: The Ideology of Consumption

"American-ness" as Exchange Value and Lifestyle Model

Underlying this reading of postwar advertisements, in which certain products seem to have been made more desirable by virtue of specific properties which identified them as "American," is Marx's distinction between "use value" and "exchange value:" a basic understanding of the properties of goods themselves as being related to the satisfaction of consumer needs either by their utility, or performance, characteristics (i.e., *"natural"* properties or *use value)* or by qualities which may make them **socially** desirable within the context of a capitalist society (i.e., *"labor-created"* properties or *exchange value).* Exchange value is neither related to use value nor even an intrinsic property of the commodity, but acts instead as an indicator of social relations between consumers. Specifically, in Marx's own words:

> The mystery of the commodity form is simply this, that it mirrors for men the social character attaching to the labor products themselves, mirrors it as a social natural property of these things. Consequently, the social relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labor presents itself to them as a social relation, not between themselves, but between the products of their labor.[1]

Any object's primary status as a commodity is determined by and implies exchange: its availability to select individuals and its scarcity to others. Exchange being simultaneously the moment of social contact between buyer and seller and material transference, it is also the point at

which social value becomes material and quantifiable (i.e., the point at which exchange value is both created and measured). In other words, the process of exchange establishes relations between the labor products exchanged (their exchange value) and, consequently, between their producers. Thus, "social relations connecting the labor of one private individual (or group) with the labor of another, seem to the producers, not direct social relations between individuals at work, but what they really are: material relations between persons and social relations between things."[2] At the moment of exchange, then, all commodities acquire **social** value which enables them to be compared to others, regardless of whether or not they can actually be **used** for similar purposes.

The commodity's dual value is not particularly significant until the market becomes extended: both goods and their producers proliferate to such an extent that there is competition between a number of producers of goods with identical use values while consumption levels remain finite (as in postwar Italy, which was more or less inundated with foreign goods without a corresponding rise in the buying power of its citizens). At this point, it must be implicitly acknowledged, as goods are necessarily produced with regard for potential exchange value thenceforth. In other words, the need to differentiate between products does not really exist until manufacturers have the ability to produce beyond existing demand, as did American firms whose products and/or applications thereof were initially unknown in Italy. It is only when supply exceeds demand that manufacturers feel a need to advertise in order to inform the public not merely of the existence of goods, but of differences between these products and their competitors which might then be portrayed as advantages. Therefore, assuming such an extended system of producers/consumers, the insignificance of use value as

a factor in commodity preference, and the consequent growing importance of exchange value in both production and consumption, a tendency to promote exchange value at the moment of consumption would appear to be inevitable. In this instance, the exchange value attributed to American products was their very "American-ness."

In practice, modern advertisements[3] really present exchange value in the form of a variety of desirable lifestyle models through deliberately created product "images," particularly when the advantages of a particular product's use and its differences from similar products are unclear. Such lifestyle models serve not only to assert the product's worth relative to other objects of pre-established value, but to incorporate the consumer into the value hierarchy as well, equating the social with the material by portraying the advertised product in context with valorizing artifacts, often in such a way that its consumption by desirable and/or delighted individuals (who may or may not be depicted) is implied. In so doing, the advertisement encourages the consumer to empathize with or envy the product's user and to believe that he/she can become more like him/her by consuming in a like manner[4] Thus, as Judith Williamson and a number of feminist critics of advertising argue so convincingly, the exchange value being promoted is clearly some sort of pre-fabricated personal identity.

> Advertisements are selling us something else besides consumer goods: in providing us with a structure in which we, and those goods, are interchangable, they are selling us ourselves. And we need those selves.[5]

Advertising, then, "works" insofar as desirable human qualities are projected onto commodities, conferring either social standing or personal identity to their consumers.

> Addressing us in our private persona ads sell us, as women, not just commodities then but our personal relationships in which we are feminine: how we are/should be/can be a certain feminine woman whose attributes in relation to men and the family derive from the use of these commodities.[6]

In short, a host of qualities (such as love or sexuality, for instance) which are aspired to in interpersonal relationships, and consequently advantageous in terms of both prestige and self-esteem, are presented as being for sale although they are not intrinsic properties of the commodities being sold.

In Italy (as in the United States, especially during the postwar era), the attractive personae affiliated with certain commodities as part of the "user community" frequently were Hollywood movie stars whose attributes were well documented by the many American films which then enjoyed international distribution. One of the most obvious instances of this practice is found in ads for beauty products endorsed by American movie actresses. Lux soap (fig. 1.1) was marketed for years both in the U.S. and abroad with variations of the slogan "Nine stars out of ten prefer it!", accompanied by a picture of and "personal message" from such noted and glamourous women as Dorothy Lamour, Joan Bennett, Hedy Lamarr, Elizabeth Taylor and Zsa Zsa Gabor. Likewise, Max Factor featured Ava Gardner, Shelly Winters, Esther Williams, Arlene Dahl, Lana Turner, Rita Hayworth, Veronica Lake and others whose beauty was credited to the use of the product they endorsed. Even less subtle was the frequent depiction of blonde women in seductive poses with captions such as American Atric-Oil Method 6's "You'll be like this too" (fig. 1.2), promising that the product inevitably transformed its user into an approximation of the popular ideal (the depicted model). Within the system of Italian advertising, then,

products claiming an "American" exchange value promised to make their users more like individuals they admired and, as a result, implied consumer participation in a way of life already known to an elite group: the "user community," which was, in this case, made up of the inhabitants of the United States. Thus, the "American-ness" of the commodity, which here was usually defined by the positive connotations of personal attractiveness and prestige conferred to it by members of the "user community" and attested to by the geographical circumstances incidental to its manufacture and advertised use, was presumed to be transferable to the consumer, thereby heightening his/her own "desirability" or status. In addressing all members of the audience alike as consumers, advertisements tend to obliterate many pre-existing differences between them, regrouping them as "users" and "non-users" within advertising's own system, which does not always recognize the merits and shortcomings of its audience members which might otherwise be acknowledged. Part of the exchange value advertisements attribute to the commodities they represent, then, is participation in a "user community" in which other indicators of social standing (such as education or ancestry, for example) may be ignored or overcome.

Thus, the values presented within advertising relate to the world itself, idealizing it as a potential paradise, the non-attainment of which could only be due to an individual's failure to consume "appropriately." As one contemporary critic comments:

> Consumerism has become a kind of ideology in its own right: an apolitical egalitarianism founded in our common status as "consumers" and whose central demand is value for money.... In their imagistic elaborations, symbolic ads absolutize this consumerist matrix into a full vision of a world without work, social conflict, or indeed any socially negative aspect at all.[7]

In advertisements for American goods, of course, this depicted world became increasingly accepted as an accurate representation of the United States, adding further credibility to its reputation as a land of opportunity.

Significantly, the expression of this utopic world-view by the depiction of equally idealized user lifestyles is far from coincidental. The objectives listed by practitioners in the creation of a product image reflect just these concerns, specifying that not only must such images distinguish products from their competitors, but that these commodities, themselves, must be established as necessary to "the good life" and therefore objects of desire in their own right. The elimination of unpleasant characteristics of the real world, familiar to the audience through lived experience, is obviously not sufficient to this end and must be supplemented by product attributes which are compatible with the consumer's notions of happiness and/or satisfaction and, thus, complement his/her personal aspirations. Consequently, such concerns are duly emphasized by advertising textbooks which, in turn, are of primary importance in determining the structure of subsequent ad campaigns. Two of these, for instance, specifically direct interested practitioners to heed the consumer's personal ambitions when designing ad campaigns by advising that:

> The task of marketing is that of making goods recognized as psychological things symbolic of social patterns and strivings.[8]

> An advertiser may feel that he can best sell his/her product if he can get the consumer public to think of it in a particular way. For example, he may decide sales can be increased if the product is given an aura of prestige, is associated with "fine living," and is made synonymous with top quality. A campaign may be developed to create such a product image in people's minds by always presenting the product in association with objects

or symbols that represent the desired characteristics.[9]

Advertising's aim, therefore, is generally to replace real-life experiences, and their disappointments, with images of commodity-mediated happiness and satisfaction.

Following Tibor Scitovsky's thesis that happiness is determined by relative criteria such as social status, which by its very intangibility may easily be conveyed by the allusions of advertisements, rather than specific ones such as income, a condition of daily life,[10] a recent study by Stephen Kline and William Leiss indicates several parameters of satisfaction: personal status, prestige of occupation, novelty and comfort.

> There are four dimensions. First, there is empirical evidence that people derive satisfaction from status itself, that is, from relative social ranking or interpersonal comparisons that occur at any income level. Second, satisfaction is derived from work, but again largely as a function of the relative income and "prestige" attributes of a particular job in the social hierarchy. Third, satisfaction correlates positively with novelty in one's experiences, but our own culture tends to standardize experience and progressively reduce novelty. Fourth, material progress is translated primarily into increasing comfort.[11]

Advertisements incorporating positive lifestyle models, implying product consumption as a means towards their emulation (i.e., consumer satisfaction), therefore might be expected to have in common a representation of certain of these attributes, desirability being determined on an individual basis according to the nature of the consumer's needs/wants.

Within American advertisements, where the details of a particular American lifestyle were already part of popular knowledge about the United States, these qualities were often deliberately emphasized through

references to the habits of American movie stars. In terms of personal and professional prestige, these individuals were unsurpassed in their beauty and celebrity, the luxury with which they surrounded themselves, and even for the seemingly everlasting succession of the younger, more beautiful and more flamboyant who eventually replaced them. The novelty dimension was even more successfully supplied by the scientific aspect of popular beliefs about the American Way of Life alluded to in scores of advertisements whose text began "New!", "Latest News!", "Sensational American Discovery!", "Latest Finding of American Scientists!", etc. Thus, because of pre-existing belief in a high American quality of life, lack of evidence to the contrary, and occasional explicit comparisons of ordinary American citizens to Hollywood stars, the strata of American society were increasingly perceived as homogeneous: it seemed that all enjoyed a nearly equally high standard of living.

The Creation of "American" Brand Images

Advertising's attribution of commodities with "desirable" exchange values is also corroborated by the fact that it is recognized as a "strategy" to be employed by practitioners in designing advertising campaigns. Popular advertising textbooks include the creation of a recognizable "product image" among techniques to be used in achieving the campaign's primary goals of, first, making the use of a particular type of product desirable (or, in some cases, acceptable) and, second, of making

one brand of this type preferable to others with the ultimate aim of increasing its sales.

Most important in asserting the advantages of one product over those of its competitors is, of course, a brand identity. Advertisements of a particular brand must situate it within the parameters of desirability which identify the product-type as a whole (the product image) but imply its unique qualifications in some facet of that image (the brand image). In practice, this involves the promotion or creation of what advertisers refer to as the product's "unique selling point:" some factor, however intangible, which can be cited as the critical difference between it and its competitors. Since there were undoubtedly instances of qualitative similarity between American and non-American products, from a pragmatic point of view the chief responsibility of American advertisers was to **differentiate** between their products and others on the market, just as contemporary advertisers in decidedly more developed markets must distinguish their products from the field of their competitors. To quote Williamson once again:

> It is the first function of an advertisement to *create* a differentiation between one particular product and others in the same category. It does this by providing the product with an "image."... There are no natural distinctions between most products.... The limits of identity are chosen arbitrarily, it is clear.... Obviously there *are* products with special qualities or particular uses, but these do not usually need extensive advertising campaigns: the bulk of advertising covers exactly the areas where goods are the same.[12]

Thus, the commodity, or in this case primarily the American commodity, is "negatively" defined according to its relationship to the "product system" as a whole: in other words, as what it is not, rather than "positively" for what it is. This can best be understood, as Williamson

explains, as a sort of "reverse totemism:"[13] rather than merely using objects to indicate social relations between people, distinctions existing in social mythology are used to create similar distinctions between products. Advertising, according to such a definition, might then be understood as both "totemic" and "reverse totemic," since the differentiation process works in both ways simultaneously. Unlike true totemism, which refers to ideological relations between **natural** and cultural systems, advertising "totemism" unites two cultural systems: the social structure and the system of advertised products, which are defined by the perceived social status of the people who use them. Therefore, rather than being based on natural properties, as in true totemism, or on class distinctions derived from labor, the social structure built from the ideology of consumption is, in a circuitous way, based on itself, insofar as it dictates both social status as a benefit of material possession **and** the relative value of goods according to their respective functions in lifestyles of differing prestige.

The system of brand/product images is difficult to reconstruct in the Italian sample, since American manufacturers had very little competition (and in many cases only from the pseudo-American). This is partly due to the fact that Italian industry was not well enough established at the time to seriously threaten American market dominance, while other foreign manufacturers were likewise disadvantaged by national reconstruction, attempting to replenish supplies of consumer goods with a reduced labor force and depleted financial, technological and natural resources. In other words, whereas American industry was capable of producing goods beyond the capacity of the domestic market to consume them (and, further, was **inclined** to do so in order to absorb a returning labor force of

ex-GI's), this could hardly be a priority for European nations. In addition, as Stephen Hymer points out, American industry was priviledged internationally because of a variety of factors which characterized it domestically.

> U.S. corporations began to move to foreign countries almost as soon as they had completed their continent-wide integration. For one thing, their new administrative structure and great financial strength gave them the power to go abroad. In becoming national firms, U.S. corporations learned how to become international. Also, their large size and oligopolistic position gave them an incentive. Direct investment became a new weapon in their arsenal of oligopolistic rivalry. Instead of joining a cartel (prohibited under U.S. law), they invested in foreign customers, suppliers, and competitors.... Some went abroad simply to forestall competition.[14]

In terms of international commercial development, the United States also had several other unique advantages. The extent and visibility of American economic aid abroad reflected positively on the national image there while also encouraging foreign consumption of American goods more directly either by promoting necessary economic vitality, or by introducing American methods and machinery to be maintained or supplemented at a later date by the acquisition of compatible (i.e., American-made) technology.

In addition, American manufacturers were priviledged in foreign markets because of their familiarity with the relatively advanced marketing techniques developed domestically and still not widespread elsewhere. The Italian market was therefore less competitive than the American one, both because European manufacturers were relatively less prominent than their American counterparts and because, even among American producers, there was less chance of rivalry between brands of the same product type. Not surprisingly, American manufacturers who exported to Italy were also among

the most successful on the domestic market. Therefore, few of their competitors there were as able to enter foreign commerce. Consequently, a mere assertion of "American-ness" was more or less sufficient as a product's brand identity. As American goods became increasingly well-accepted and Italian manufacturing capabilities greater, manufacturers of Italian brands attempted to win consumers from the American competition by adopting some aspect of the dominant American brand image as their own so that, at least temporarily, the product image, as well as a great number of the brand images which comprised it, was also American. There were many of these "copycat" brands, most of which, like Italian-made *Col Vento* perfume with its *"Via Col Vento"* ("Gone With the Wind") campaign of the late Forties, initially chose to exploit Hollywood's interpretation of Americanism. *Velluto di Hollywood* ("Hollywood Velvet") powder (fig. 1.3), for instance, manufactured by the Paglieri cosmetic company, not only appropriated the image of American film stars, but was only able to do so **after** Max Factor had been successfully promoting similar products in essentially the same way for at least a year. The Max Factor campaign featured slogans which claimed these cosmetics as the favorite (or essential) beauty product of American stars, supported by pictures of the actresses who were to be associated with its use, reiteration of these claims within the text, and the brand name itself, which was always printed as "Max Factor Hollywood" (fig. 1.4). The Paglieri ads, on the other hand, featured glamourous, but anonymous, women whose charms were attributed to the face powder, alluding more overtly to the transformation which the product's use should bring about. Max Factor products, being "the real thing" were created "for the Stars and for you" (the notion being that the consumer was privileged to be included in an elite group) whereas the

Paglieri powder, "the powder of the Stars," was developed "for you" exclusively. In some ways, this could have made the Italian powder seem more desirable, being ostensibly custom-made for the consumer, except that within this particular value hierarchy it was necessarily second-rate. Max Factor products had the advantages of their American manufacture (which implied superior technology) and a consequent and affirmed closer proximity to the Stars. *Velluto di Hollywood's* chief selling point, then, was merely that it **was like** Max Factor powder, possibly a mere imitator but nonetheless at least second best and of "international" quality. Therefore, Max Factor's ad campaign had accomplished the only really significant persuasion necessary to the promotion of both of these products by creating a **need** for face powder in the attainment of "American" standards of beauty. Once Max Factor had established its products as essential to the American style of beauty it then became more plausible to assume that the same cause-and-effect relationship might exist between an Italian-made powder and its users since both were, after all, "the powder of the Stars."

Such transference of an "American" exchange value from American to Italian manufacturers had precedents in other product types, as well. Nylon stockings, as a prime example, had originated in Italy as American, traded in by the stereotypical GI. Thus, the desirability of American stockings was already well-established after the war when an Italian manufacturer, Fama, began to produce them. The Fama ads are particularly interesting in their development over the first few months of 1947, when the stockings first began to be promoted, as an example of the "Italianization" of American technology. The first of the series of six all but claims that the stockings are American, but by the last they are

not only "the best made in Europe," but owe that quality to the "marvelous Italian fiber" from which they are made, whose name has also been transformed along the way from English (Nylon) to Italian (Nailon). The first two ads (figs. 1.5 and 1.6) describe the product's development as long-awaited and painstaking, the result of six years of research by high-ranking executives and demanded by the public at large. Like Paglieri *Velluto di Hollywood,* these stockings are asserted to be **as good as** the American standard. The spelling of nylon subsequently changes (figs. 1.7 and 1.8), however, to conform to Italian pronunciation as its Italian production begins to be stressed. Now the chemical processes involved have been claimed as Italian while the mechanical ones remain American and the resulting product retains its original quality, which is now not only comparable to that of American goods, but **better than any of the European competition.** In the fifth ad (fig. 1.9), the identity of "the marvelous Italian fiber" as nylon is presumed to be obvious enough not to merit special mention. Likewise, by this time, the emphasis has shifted somewhat away from the "American" exchange value to use value-motivated considerations of quality, comfort and durability which is reflected in the accompanying headings and illustrations, small sketches meant to schematize emphasized qualities, ranging from skyscrapers and scientific equipment to artists' materials and the product itself (fig. 1.10).

In practice, the product image is usually implied by a composite of brand images rather than being deliberately created.[15] Thus, in a contemporary context this image is likely to be fragmented, composed as it is by various brand images which have been designed specifically to contrast with each other, and, in fact, this fragmentation may form a market system in which brands of different product types actually typify

similar characteristics within their brand images.[16] However, since American brands essentially determined their own product images in the postwar Italian market, this is not the case within the sample studied here. Whereas this seeming arbitrariness could justifiably provoke a certain degree of consumer confusion as brand images conflict with each other, either because unrelated products are promoted as having the same image or because several products are promoted as being "different" from each other through very similar product images, during this period American advertising had exactly the opposite effect: since brand and product images which included American goods were relatively similar their composite was homogeneous, offering access to a stable purchased identity through a variety of commodities.

Interestingly enough, there was one ad within the sample which specifically acknowledged advertising's potential to confuse through conflicting exchange value claims (fig. 1.11). No such allegations are to be made on behalf of its product (Ipana toothpaste), the 1955 ad insists; they aren't necessary because it **works.** Such a claim essentially harks back to an earlier and "simpler" understanding of the purpose of both advertising and consumption, which held that advertising existed primarily for the purpose of disseminating information relative to a commodity's efficacity in accomplishing a specific, perceptible task and that consumption, correspondingly, served as an attempt to accomplish such a task. Thus, the motives underlying an advertisement such as this one stressing use value claims must have been an acknowledgement of a certain consumer dissatisfaction stemming from a growing awareness of the arbitrary nature of the properties advertised as the respective "unique selling points" of various commodities.

Given a measure of consumer skepticism, then, the purpose of the product's "American-ness" was not necessarily only to attribute it with the measure of glamour accorded to it by its identification as an integral part of that desirable consumer lifestyle known as the American Way of Life, but to assert that it was **functionally** superior to competing brands, since the sole evidence provided for this product's effectiveness is its American development and popularity. Such a re-definition of commodity "American-ness" claims from the original implications of conferred prestige to promises of improved performance is not a **rejection** of the notion of commodity exchange value, but an **acknowledgement** that the existence of such values was already widely-accepted. In other words, the assumption which seems to underlie this ad is that a general American endorsement is sufficient, in and of itself, to attest to the unqualified superiority of a particular product. Faced with such qualifications, its message would seem to be, "Why look for any other kind of gratification? If this toothpaste cleans teeth better than any other (as millions of Americans believe it does) then it probably also does everything else those other toothpastes claim to do better than they do."

Given the circumstances peculiar to postwar Italy, therefore, it was sufficient merely to advertise a commodity as American in order to increase its sales. Consequently there existed two fundamental exchange values, "American" and "non-American," which incorporated most advertised products. In a sense, possibly because of the relatively less sophisticated methods used by European advertisers, this worked far more to the American advantage than otherwise since the two images were not equally well-defined. The American brand/product image was basically reducible to characterizations of the scientific and/or glamourous (incorporating

appropriate adjectives, personalities and folk beliefs), while the non-American was indistinct (except when it imitated the American) to the point of seeming non-existence because advertisements for European products seldom relied upon brand images, stressing instead the utility or availability of their products.

In addition, both the brand/product image and, by extension, the system of differences to which it belongs must necessarily derive from a pre-existing system of signs, appropriating an antecedent relationship in terms of which the commodity may be understood. Such images, therefore, must be fashioned from ideological presuppositions which are already widely-recognized within society as a whole, although they may be slightly modified within the context of advertisements. Stipulating that "the task of the advertiser is to design the package of stimuli so that it resonates with information already stored within an individual, and thereby induces the desired learning or behavioral effects,"[17] Tony Schwartz supports Elizabeth Cowie's observations about the creation of meaning in advertisements. As she puts it:

> The image will draw on elements from other images and will use notions, concepts, myths, etc. already available in the culture. The image will not just reflect these however, but in reproducing them will reform them producing new meanings as it sets in play its connotative system -- its rhetoric.[18]

In other words, the reason why an advertisement's symbolic representation of social relations is effective in promoting sales is precisely because of the pre-existence of these relations. "American-ness" could never have been viable as an exchange value unless American superiority and desirability was already a commonly accepted state of being. This credibility was, in turn, due to the longstanding tradition of

Italian admiration for American ways and their temporary exhaltation by political propaganda. In thus allying itself with popular knowledge, advertisements are able to establish claims for the products they represent which appear common-sensical and almost taken for granted, the product image being a logical extension of such assertions. From the advertiser's point of view, these symbolic associations have a number of pragmatic objectives, chief among which are to differentiate a brand from other products of the same type and to attribute it with distinctive qualities for the purpose of making it easily remembered, rather than to manipulate ideology, although they may ultimately have this effect.

The extent of a product's perceived integration with the lifestyle models it is supposed to represent is determined by the degree to which it is portrayed as playing an active role in the process or state of being depicted. Kline and Leiss have appropriately termed this factor a product's "psychological utility:"

> The commodity appears designed for personalized use by fulfilling a *psychological* role.... Moreover, with the increasing implicitness and ambiguity in advertising imagery, the commodity seems to become a "projective field" in which the human states of feeling achieveable in consumption are fluidly superimposed upon the non-human, physical-sensory aspects of the commodity. Stretching the metaphor for a moment, the mask of the fetishized commodity, having incorporated the abstract qualities of human satisfaction, has more recently become mirror-like, reflecting back the vague and distorted images of well-being to be achieved in consumption.[19]

In other words, the commodity is increasingly viewed as a personification: acting as an intermediary between the consumer and the material as well as the social world, until ultimately "the use of the commodity with particular symbolic qualities merges with the identity of the user."[20] In this way, the consumer is drawn into the positive world view expressed by a

composite of the various lifestyle models, an end for which their desirability alone does not suffice. Rather than merely envying the depicted users, the audience must realize the possibility or, indeed, the **necessity** of being like them.

Following this line of reasoning, the lifestyle-models-as-exchange value hypothesis can be understood as dynamic. Not only is the relationship between advertising imagery and popular culture a reciprocal one, mediated by people who both create and decipher this symbolism, but these socially-meaningful and socially-derived symbol systems also develop into a self-affirming ideological system. Building from these premises, the purchased identity itself is equally interactive: because advertisements insinuate a pre-existing unity of consumer and product, the identification process is two-way. Commodities are given symbolic meaning (exchange value) by advertisements whose message is essentially that consumer and commodity are somehow "made for each other." Conversely, it is this value, actually the consumer's own identity, which makes the product desirable and increases its salability by offering its consumer a means of reinforcing his/her self-perceived social status and personality.

Since the promotion of consumption necessarily involves creating this impression of its desirability (or, more indirectly, the benefits of possession), advertisements tend to promote positive values. Ideological conflicts are therefore ignored, either through selective representation of positive associations or, with more difficulty, through the use of relatively unambiguous (i.e., widely understood as "positive") signifiers, such as "American-ness" in this instance. In many cases, then, ideological presuppositions must be restructured within the advertising text in order to provide commodities with stable cultural identities and focussed appeal.

For instance, Italians derive some sense of personal and national pride from the food they eat. If Italian cuisine is believed to be more delicious, then the merits of American food must be presented, for the sake of commerce, as different from those of Italian food -- or competing on the basis of some quality with which Italian food has never been attributed. Essentially, the criteria of excellence must be re-defined, which in this case means that Americans must eat more nutritiously, sensibly, economically: in short, they must eat "scientifically." Given this sales pitch, therefore, it is fortunate and not particularly surprising that the products presented are convenience foods. By far, the most prevalent of these are crackers, offered as a substitute for the traditional Italian bread. Nabisco Premium saltines used the campaign slogan *"come il pane, meglio del pane"* ("like bread, better than bread") and stressed the various qualities which accounted for this superiority in individual ads. One particularly stressed the **difference** between saltine crackers and the competition by claiming that they were more appetizing, flavorful and nutritious than similar food (bread) which was likely to go to waste, weighed heavily on the digestion and was fattening as well (fig. 1.12). Another emphasized the crackers' popularity in the United States (fig. 1.13), but the real attempt to link Americans with cracker consumption came from the Italian competition, Saiwa's Krek crackers. After reiterating the Nabisco formula for healthier carbohydrate consumption ("eat crackers because they are as nutritious, lighter, easier to digest, less fattening, more long-lasting and less expensive than bread"), these ads first asserted the value of crackers as a beauty secret of American film stars (fig. 1.14) and then (fig. 1.15) as a universal diet aid useful in the treatment of many significant health problems (nephritis, diabetes, heart disease),

making them better than bread on its own terms, but also something that bread is not and never before presumed to be, which is medicinal.

Values thus realigned are re-integrated into the social context, their repetition in an advertisement having served to emphasize or confirm their veracity. Reinforcement of the ideological *status quo*, or even the interests or beliefs of a dominant group over minorities, could then be seen as an important ideological property of advertising, a function whose impact could also conceivably extend beyond the sphere of commerce.

Insecurity and the Realization of New Needs

In contrast to these lifestyle models and the others whose lives they are meant to represent, the potential consumer is bound to feel disadvantaged or inadequate. Advertising then can minister to these socially-derived insecurities and the consumer's self interest, creating from them new needs for which a commodity may be advanced as a means of satisfaction, thus fulfilling the marketing objective of creating increased demand for a greater number of products by a larger number of people. As Stuart Ewen says:

> The advertisers are concerned with effecting a self-conscious change in the psychic economy, which could not come about if they spent all their time talking about a product, and none talking about the "reader."... The instinct for "social prestige" as well as others of a broad "constellation" of instincts are channelled into the terms of the production system. The use value of "prestige," of "beauty," of "acquisition," of "self-adornment," or of "play" is placed in the service

> of advertising's basic purpose -- to provide effective mass distribution of products.[21]

Thus, the viability of the advertising system both depends upon and reinforces a notion of the self-conscious consumer constantly scrutinized by his fellow men, taking stock of his status relative to them, and seeking consumption-oriented means to better his/her situation. An ad like the one Nugget shoe polish ran in 1954 makes this assumption explicit. "People are looking at you," it warns, "and actually start to judge you right from your shoes! Trust them to Nugget, the wax famous on five continents."

In Italy, as in the United States (and probably the rest of the world, as well), this insecurity is the primary instrument of persuasion in ads for personal hygiene products. Colgate toothpaste ads throughout the Fifties (fig. 1.16) featured a sort of oral hygiene-oriented "advice to the lovelorn" column in comic strip format, in which various common romantic problems (sexual rejection, spinsterhood, desertion of lovers, alienation of spouse, etc.) are depicted, attributed to poor dental health and resolved by a professional examination and regular brushing with Colgate. Likewise, even candy ads used this appeal, as Lifesavers did when it began one of its ads, "How many kisses have been lost because of personal carelessness?" (fig. 1.17). The question is never answered, but it really needn't be: a potential problem has been identified whose solution is painless and as available as the nearest candy counter. The advertising text's primary function, in these instances, is to re-assign familiar values, feelings and concepts to the marketplace in order to advance particular commodities as solutions to problems which are essentially social. Above all, such advertisements are designed to reinforce existing socially-related anxieties or, if possible, to create new ones by

convincing the consumer that "decent" people don't live the way he/she does. This strategy serves a secondary function in turning the consumer's critical faculties away from the text's assertions about the product and towards the quality of his/her own lifestyle, thus making the relationship between product and represented lifestyle less questionable and, ultimately, part of a created "reality." The advertising text can therefore be seen as emphasizing negative conditions relating to the individual (fear and discontent) while only implying their replacement by positive ones in his/her social environment through the intervention of the product. Ewen again emphasizes that the sole solution advertising holds out for the otherwise-discouraged consumer to meet the standards implied by its lifestyle models, emphasizing that:

> Consumerism [is] a world view, a "philosophy of life." But it [is] not a world view which [functions] purely in the economic realm -- selling of goods. While it [serves] to stimulate consumption among those who have the wherewithal and desire to consume, it also [tries] to provide a conception of the good life for those who [are] despairing of the possibility of well-being in their immediate environment.[22]

This framework implies a "self-fetishization," the consumer's own individually perceived exchange value derived from that of the products he/she consumes, which in turn defines a "commodity self" and establishes a position for him/her within the socio-cultural context. Advertising, therefore, uses the "social self," the individual's self-definition in terms determined by others' approval or disapproval, as the foundation of its message, encouraging self-criticism and narcissism while implying that personal attributes determine social standing and, ultimately, the consumer's ability to "successfully" perform his/her social role.[23]

By the 1950's, advertisements for American goods in the Italian press

typically began with exclamations like "Finally!" or "At last, even in Italy!" Such phrases were not particularly new or unusual, but they had had a different connotation less than a decade earlier, when products heralded with such fanfare were invariably being re-introduced to the market after their distribution had been suspended by the war. Later, as a greater variety of goods became available, these exclamations took on new meaning. At a certain point, advertisements apparently were selling not just lifestyles, but lifestyles which could clearly be identified as American. The insecurity created by the ad often related to more than the consumer's sexual attractiveness, taking on his/her entire way of life as manifested by consumption. Instead of constructing social situations in which failure was assured by doing without a particular commodity, compelling the consumer to buy it in hopes of avoiding this fate, inadequacy was implied by direct comparison with the model, which in this case represented the way of life of an entire nationality rather than a specific idealized user. American "discoveries" "finally" on sale in Italy were presumably developed in response to needs recognized by Americans, for which they demonstrably had provided necessary satisfaction and, consequently, were accepted as part of American daily life. Accordingly, the fact that they were not developed instead by Italian industry or even already desired by Italian consumers only seemed to be proof of their old-fashionedness relative to the presumed American standard. Air Fresh air freshener (fig. 1.18), a "sensational American discovery," for instance, promised to "destroy all unpleasant odors and to purify the air" as well as to produce "an inimitable feeling of freshness and comfort, making the house pleasant and cozy." But, by asking "Haven't you tried it yet?", one of its 1950 advertisements insinuates the relative untidiness of

a consumer who, having never before needed such a product, answers in the negative.

This implied inferiority is itself a means of creating consumer wants or even pseudo-needs which, given their fundamental nature as a desire to become more like the model identified as American, are more or less guaranteed to be insatiable. Thus, by perpetually exhibiting particular commodity-dependent situations as aspects of everyday American life to audiences whose knowledge of it was almost necessarily limited to just such representations, advertisers ultimately benefit from the insufficiency of the goods they promote to fully satisfy the desires which prompt their consumption. In other words, since the motivating factor behind consumer purchases and the basic appeal of advertisements themselves is, in this case, the desire to live like Americans (to be as content as Americans appear to be in Hollywood films, U.S. government-sponsored propaganda and the accounts of Italians who speak with the authority of first-hand experience) any satisfaction conveyed by consumer goods can only be partial, at best. Consumers in search of consumption-derived happiness and a self-image based on advertising's lifestyle models, therefore, would be obliged to repeatedly select from the various available product types which promise such results.

Within the marketing literature these phenomena are collectively described by the "trickle-down," or "two-stage," system in which new products are introduced to residents of urban centers, on the grounds that they have a higher discretionary income and a consequently greater willingness to experiment with their own consumption patterns, before distributing them more widely.[1] Thus, there are created two distinct classes of consumers: the **privileged** and those who **emulate** them. Clearly,

in this instance, these consumption-based definitions of class also appear to correspond to nationality, accentuating geographically-derived differences, while investing them with a broader meaning -- which was that of American superiority. In such respects, the advertising system served propaganda's ends in postwar Italy by advancing (or perhaps creating, as will be discussed in the following chapters) American strengths and creating an international hierarchy which generally valued the American over the Italian and benefitted both propagandists and manufacturers by reinforcing this American-dominated structure of authority and control. The nature of "trickle-down" marketing is, after all, not only that it creates a consumption elite whose standards non-members can afford to ignore only at the risk of ostracization, but that the opportunity it provides for them to close this gap (consumption) is illusory although they may feel that they are upwardly mobile because their standard of living has evolved over time towards that enjoyed by their supposed superiors at the **beginning** of this time frame, their relative status remains more or less unchanged because the top end of the scale has also advanced correspondingly.[24] Thus, the consumption "treadmill" is put into motion. advertisements first make the consumer aware of the symbolic properties of goods and their users, his/her own ability to acquire these qualities him/herself through the acquisition of appropriate commodities, and then offers the disappointing news of the rest of the world's progressive evolution and the new standards of "normalcy" it has engendered.

Individuality vs. Social Status

In order to lend further credibility to their created world-view, persuasive communications like advertising and propaganda tend to follow a strategy of always addressing the individual as a member of a crowd (and therefore part of a sort of community of values and beliefs) which, in turn, discourages critical examination at the individual level. Jacques Ellul observes that:

> The individual never is considered as an individual, but always in terms of what he has in common with others, such as his motivation, his feelings or his myths.... The individual is considered part of the mass and included in it (and so far as possible systematically integrated into it), because in that way his psychic defenses are weakened, his reactions are easier to provoke, and the propagandist profits from the process of diffusion of emotion through the mass and, at the same time, from the pressures felt by an individual when in a group.[25]

For this reason, advertising bases its appeals on the consumer's desire to be counted among a particular group and, by extension, reinforces a sense of personal identity. In Italy, at least during the postwar period, group affinities within advertisements often, if not always, seemed to be drawn along national lines, despite the fact that Italy was very late in developing a national identity among its inhabitants who until relatively recently did not even share a common language, speaking instead a variety of regional dialects. Nonetheless, there were no appeals based on membership in interest groups (political parties, professions, hobbies,

etc.). Actually, this may be due to the fact that nationality was not only the most all-inclusive "interest group" possible, but also the most keenly felt. If, following Ellul,[26] nationalism is often created out of widespread oppression, giving a common focus to otherwise disparate factions (the aforementioned political party members, professionals, hobbyists -- and, in this case, inhabitants of different geographical regions), then circumstances in Italy during the late 1940's and early 1950's could easily have been quite favorable to a development of national feeling: the war just fought had been a national one against an enemy equally menacing to Italians of all provinces and was accompanied by nation-wide devastation, poverty and individual loss. However, it should doubtless be mentioned that the war alone could never have sufficed to produce feelings of national solidarity among Italians since the event itself had been a divisive one: pitting the Fascist regime against the popular Resistance movement and polarizing their respective supporters. Thus, as Italians attempted to push aside the political differences which had stood between them in times of war, there existed at least a rare **potential** for national unity which, for the same reasons, were probably accompanied by a heightened sense of international fraternity, as well. The American government, in particular, was also actively attempting to demonstrate the deep-rooted affinities between Italy and itself (which took on the appearance of a true commitment to getting the nation back on its feet) by stressing the numbers of Italians who had taken American citizenship and the chance for others to do the same. Consumers, therefore, were recruited on the strength of a commodity's popularity among fellow Italians or those of other nationalities, of which Americans were by far the most common. In fact, when Italian acceptance was stressed, the

advertised product was certain to be American, for which massive Italian support was calculated to indicate that the benefits of consumption could be transposed from one culture to the other. In a 1952 Lifesavers ad (fig. 1.19), for instance, the immense and growing popularity of Lifesavers among Italians is demonstrated by sales figures and the results of a marketing survey, then contrasted with similar, although even more spectacular, statistics from the United States. Thus, the primary inducement to potential consumers was to reinforce the group identity (nationality) which was their birthright by engaging in a common pastime, the consumption of Lifesavers. Secondarily, but perhaps even more importantly in light of the entire system of ads within which this one was produced, was the implication that Lifesaver consumption was a way of being not only very Italian, but more American, as well. This appeal was sometimes used in reverse, as it was in an ad for an Italian brand of orange juice (fig. 1.20) which cited the popularity of juice-drinking among Americans and its responsibility for their well-being as a reason for Italians to adopt the habit.

Likewise, since advertising is "selling" both social status and personal identity, advertisements must simultaneously address the consumer as both part of a group and as an individual, as similar to other people and as different from them. Its mode of address is usually such that he/she is recognized as already being part of a specific group, those depicted within the ad as leading a "desirable" lifestlye, either through a caption (e.g., "People like you ..." or "Your friends ...", referring to the depicted group) or by visual conventions such as camera angle or the direction in which the depicted individuals gaze, both of which can imply the co-presence or identity of the viewer with those illustrated.

Consequently, the "selling" of this lifestyle/identity package is even more indirect than might first be imagined, since the consumer is to be convinced not that he/she is a **potential** member of a group of product users but, as Williamson asserts, that he/she **already** belongs.

> This is where "totemism" becomes part of ideology: you do not simply buy the product in order to *become* a part of the group it represents, you must feel that you already, naturally, belong to that group and therefore, you will buy it.... You do not choose in the shop, but in response to the advertisement, by "recognizing" yourself as the kind of person who *will* use a specific brand.[21]

Another Paglieri *Velluto di Hollywood* ad (fig. 1.21), for instance, was headlined *"Si, siete bella!"* ("Yes, you are beautiful!"), and then proceeded to undermine this attributed beauty by acknowledging that it was **not** natural but commodity-derived and precarious. Yes, you are one of the beautiful people, you do look like a Hollywood movie star, the ad says, "but it only takes one caress to destroy the veil of beauty that loose powder spreads over your face! Give your skin a softness, a smoothness, a luminous quality that will last all day! For the sake of your beautiful face, start using the most acclaimed discovery of modern cosmetology. Paglieri has finally created "filmpact" for you: the solid powder, *Velluto di Hollywood!"* The assumption behind such methods is something along the lines of the old saying, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." In other words, it is hoped that by assuming a higher status than the consumer actually enjoys an advertisement may compel (or shame, as some would have it) him/her to consume as a "natural" extension of a lifestyle/identity already presumed to be his or hers.

Therefore, Williamson continues, the same practices used to establish group identity also constitute the consumer as an individual within it (the

"you" in "People like you" and "Your friends").

> Although the aim is to connect a mass of people with the product, to identify them with it as a group, this can only be achieved by connecting them with the product as individuals, one by one.... There is only one receiver of the ad, the subject "you," already there in the very address. However, this address applies to all of us, and none of us: as an individual this imaginary subject does not exist, but in that we each "become" him or her, he/she exists as a set.... We consumers constitute a totemic set of one, we find our identity as part of a group the rest of which does not exist. We are appellated as already in a group of one.[28]

Advertising thus presents the consumer with an ideal which he/she believes to be attainable, given advertisements' presentation of (or allusion to) a group of people, the product users, who epitomize it. The consumer, then, is left in an ambiguous position: he/she is acknowledged to be **like** the product user group, but somehow second-class, technically belonging instead to the "non-user" group which has no identity of its own. Hence, the consumer has one foot in each camp, so to speak, and feels almost obliged to buy the advertised product as a means of clarifying the situation. The confusion created by the amorphousness of the non-user group (made up of potential consumers) is further compounded when the individual identity assigned to the consumer within the text is shown to be a complicated one, either incorporating a multi-faceted personality, a difficult and fragmented lifestyle or even representing him/her as being physically fragmented into a complex of bodily parts all of which seemingly have a personality, complete with needs of their own. The commodity, then, recognized as "you," seems to represent the only tangible juncture of all of these scattered bits of identity.

> Since parts of you have been claimed as separate objects by advertisements, in order to get back these "lost

> objects" you must buy them and recreate yourself out of your own "spare parts;" a sort of "Identikit." In buying products with certain "images" we create ourselves, even our past and future. We are both product and consumer; we consume, buy the product, yet we *are* the product. Thus our lives become our own creation, through *buying* an identikit of different images of ourselves, created by different products. We *become* the artist who creates the face, the eyes, the lifestyle.[29]

In circumstances like those discussed here, where the advertised identity is clearly more aspired to than innate, the consumer/commodity identification would most likely be even more a result of a **process** of consumption: the consumer progressively constructs an "American-style" self-image based on the attributes supposedly conferred by previous purchases. For example, beauty product ads customarily build on each other, offering more and more assistance to a precarious sense of self-esteem. If a woman buys Max Factor cosmetics in order to look like their other users, American movie stars, she will probably be willing to acquire additional commodities (like soda crackers, for instance) which are said to be integral to their lifestyle in order to "complete" her identification with them. This is particularly likely if subsequent ads are able to imply the insufficiency of a single product to this end, as the second Paglieri ad (fig. 1.22) does. In other words, as long as the consumer can be convinced of having fallen somewhere short of advertising's ideal, despite his/her efforts to purchase the appropriate goods, the potential for further sales is intact.

Once the consumer has been incorporated into the text in such a manner, convinced of a certain measure of both social acceptability and individuality, he/she presumably acts upon what has been described as part of his/her identity by "choosing" to consume the specified product and, in so doing, reaffirming both a supposed group identity, by seemingly

participating in a "user lifestyle," and a sense of individuality manifested in the act of consumption (and the implied possibility of non-consumption) itself. This, once again, is one of the foundations of the ideology of consumption: the obfuscation of commercial biases is made possible by the fact that the product's identity is allied so closely with the consumer's. His/her rational autonomy, the crucial sense of individual stature in a social context, depends, therefore, on a continued belief in the authenticity of advertising discourse and the system of relations it presents. As Williamson reports,

> This is the function of ideology: it gives us the assurance that we *are* ourselves, separate individuals, and that we *choose* to do what we do.... In an advertisement, we are told that we *do* choose, we *are* free individuals, we have taste, style, uniqueness, and we will act *accordingly*. In other words, having been attributed with the qualities connected with a product, we are projected as buyers of it, precisely because "given" that we "have" the beliefs implied in the ad, we will act in accordance with them and buy the product that embodies those beliefs. It is a sort of "double-bind."[30]

Consumption itself, then, represents the unique means whereby the consumer may enter into this system of relations, uniting it with the everyday reality of his/her lived experience, becoming by virtue of ownership the "you" described by the advertising texts. However, if for no other reason than that the fragmenting and alienating functions of advertising never cease (there being a seemingly limitless number of new products and new advertisements to promote them), the "self" it provides never seems complete. Once again, Williamson concurs:

> Advertising ... offers us an image of ourselves that we may aspire to but never achieve.... Advertisements alienate our identity in constituting us as one of the objects in an exchange that we must ourselves make, thereby appropriating *from us* an image which gives us

back our own value.[31]

Obviously, if an important inducement for Italians to buy American products was the expectation that they would thereby become "more American" themselves, they were necessarily destined to feel inadequate, creating potential desire for even more accoutrements of Americanism to fill the void. In this manner, the ideology of consumption perpetuates itself and, in so doing, fulfills the primary advertising objective of promoting consumption. Being essentially based in itself, it takes on what Lukàcs has called a "phantom objectivity, an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature as a relation between people."[32] Because the social nature of the relationship between things is unclear, the brand/product image is not recognized for what it is: a symbolic representation of a relationship between people into which the consumer is invited to insert himself through the act of consumption.

Its completeness and seeming accessibility make the model of the social order offered through advertising attractive to the consumer, who by participating in it (consuming) is doubly induced to believe in its authority, since if he/she does indeed derive some measure of his/her own identity from the symbolic properties of goods, lack of faith in these properties as represented in advertising would undermine his/her sense of "self." Because he/she somehow "belongs" to the order represented within the text, either in his/her role as consumer (by belonging to the "user community" whose lifestyle is represented in the ad) or in that of reader/viewer (who may be included by its mode of address, the nebulous "we" and "people like you," and/or by the physical attitudes or characteristics of the personae depicted), he/she is not inclined to

question it.

In addition, advertising's "voice" is anonymous and seemingly sourceless, a phenomenon that Williamson maintains effectively augments the "we" appellation by leaving a sort of space through which the consumer can be conveniently inserted into the text.

> Advertising seems to have a life of its own; it exists in and out of other media, and it speaks to us in a language we can recognize but a voice we can never identify. This is because advertising has no "subject." Obviously people invent and produce adverts, but apart from the fact that they are unknown and faceless, the ad in any case does not claim to speak from them, it is not their speech. Thus there is a space, a gap left where the speaker should be; and one of the peculiar features of advertising is that we are drawn in to fill that gap, so that we become both listener and speaker, subject and object. This works in practice as an anonymous speech, involving a set of connections and symbols.[33]

Yet another "gap" conveniently created by advertising rhetoric which is instrumental in advancing both its own believability and the desirability of **exchange value-promoted** goods is the customary lack of discussion of the advertised product as a purchasable commodity. In omitting references pertaining to the moment of sale (such as price), the inevitable necessity of expenditure (certainly a "negative" factor) is de-emphasized, allowing attention to be focussed instead on the alleged mythical properties of goods and the ad's ideological references. By portraying the commodity as an idea, references to tangible, empirical features related to performance are subordinated to psycho-cultural ones and the consumer's realization of the fundamental similarity of competing brands is minimized. The advertisement generally functions, then, to create a self-enclosed universe whose authenticity is confirmed by the illustrations it contains[34] and reinforced by its own exclusion of any information pertinent to production

and exchange, thereby discouraging its audience from questioning its motives and veracity.

Thus, the ideology of advertising, like other coexistent ideological systems, can be seen to represent a relationship between individuals and the social order by the substitution of symbolic relations within the advertising text which are self-contained or "closed," and therefore appear to be objective, for social ones in the world of the consumer's lived experience which, thus reinforced, then begin to appear "natural." Within the logic of such systems, the consumer is able to construct a self-conception which incorporates notions of both independence and group membership and is confirmed primarily through the act of consumption. Hence, the real "need" fulfilled by consumption, and in some ways reinforced by the ideology of advertising (through manufactured anxieties and/or the fragmented consumer identity) is not for the material properties of goods alone, but for self-affirmation.

Illustrations

Fig. 1.1 (Tempo, 1949)

Nine "Stars" out of 10 prefer it!

"I always use LUX Toilet Soap. It isn't possible to find a soap more pure ..."
-- Dorothy Lamour

The whiteness of Lux perfumed soap is the best proof of its purity. For this reason, every woman watchful of her own beauty will use LUX perfumed soap.
LUX ... the toilet soap of the "Stars."

Fig. 1.2 (Marie-Claire, 1954)

IT WON'T GROW BACK! YOU'LL BE LIKE THIS TOO ... without a single unsightly hair, if you rid yourself forever of the tribulation and humiliation of UNNECESSARY BODY HAIR with the most up-to-the-minute, utterly amazing scientific treatment of **AMERICAN ATRIC OIL** METHOD that women of all ages can employ at home, alone and unbeknown to anyone, with the greatest of ease to DESTROY HAIR AND ITS ROOTS ONCE AND FOR ALL, PREVENTING ANY REGROWTH, without causing harmful side effects or pain. REST ASSURED! With no obligation to you, we will send you FREE instructions in a plain, sealed envelope. Let us have your address immediately by writing to AMERICAN ATRIC OIL METHOD 6.

Fig. 1.3 (Tempo, 1949)

GONE WITH THE WIND (Metro Goldwyn Meyer) ... reveals the irresistible charm of Scarlett O'Hara. Siade's *Col Vento* will irresistibly reveal your charms.

Fig. 1.4 (Tempo, 1951)

Everyone will admire your beauty.

You'll be truly spell-binding with a complexion that's as delicate and uniform as soft velvet. You'll stay this way all evening without touchups because Paglieri has created the Movie Stars' powder for you.

Fig. 1.5 (Tempo, 1949)

Make your beauty stand out today!

Here's how your face can instantly become amazingly glamorous ... with the Stars' "make up" in Color Harmony, created by Max Factor.

--Pan Cake Make Up
--Powder
--Rouge
--Lipstick

These are the four indispensable requirements of the most seductive stars on the Hollywood screen. Try the Color Harmony make-up that's right for you ... and see what a surprising difference it makes in the way you look. Created for the Stars and you by Max Factor Hollywood. This Christmas, ask for a Max Factor Hollywood assortment in an elegant plastic box. In all major cosmetics stores.

Fig. 1.6 (Tempo, Feb. 8, 1947)

At last, fine NYLON stockings!

Made with American machinery and chemical products, Fama nylon stockings are the same quality sold in the best American stores. Soft and smooth, finely-knit and elastic, they are as beautiful as Fama natural silk stockings. They cling perfectly and don't bag or wrinkle. Exceptionally durable, they come in four extra-colorfast fashion shades. Fama is proud to provide its customers with the fine Nylon stockings they've been waiting for.

Fig. 1.7 (Tempo, Feb. 22, 1947)

After six years of research in the land of NYLON ...

Fama's directors just returned to Italy a few months ago. Only now can we introduce our Nylon stockings. Made with American machinery and chemical products, Fama nylon stockings are beautiful, soft, smooth, finely-knit and elastic like Fama natural silk stockings. They cling perfectly and don't bag or wrinkle. Fama's five Nylon styles, in four fashion shades, are comparable to the best American Nylon stockings.

Fig. 1.8 (Tempo, March 15, 1947)

NYLON stockings of exceptional beauty ...

Fama Nylon stockings are different from any other produced in Europe. Made from the marvelous Italian fiber, Nylon, with American machinery and techniques, they're the same quality sold in the best American stores. Soft and smooth, finely-knit and elastic, they are as beautiful as Fama natural silk stockings. They cling perfectly and don't bag or wrinkle. Exceptionally durable, they come in four extra-colorfast fashion shades.

Fig. 1.9 (Tempo, March 28, 1947)

Like the best American NYLON stockings ...

Fama nylon stockings are made from the marvelous Italian fiber Nailon, with American machinery and techniques. That's why they're different from others made in Europe and have a quality unique untó themselves. Of exceptional durability, Fama nylon stockings are knitted with an added special smoothness, elasticity, and beauty which makes them seem like Fama natural silk stockings. They cling perfectly to the leg and don't bag or wrinkle.

Fig. 1.10 (Tempo, April 5, 1947)

The durability of NYLON and the beauty of silk ...

are characteristic of Fama Nylon stockings made from the marvelous Italian fiber, with American machinery and techniques. To exceptional durability is added a special smoothness, elasticity and knitted beauty which makes them seem like Fama natural silk stockings. They cling perfectly to the leg and don't bag or wrinkle. The five types of Fama Nylons, in four fashion shades, are of the same quality as the best Nylon stockings made in the United States.

Fig. 1.11 (Tempo, April 12, 1947)

They don't bag or wrinkle and cling perfectly.

These unique qualities of Fama Nylon stockings are due to the special treatment of the marvelous Italian fiber, Nailon, with American machines and finishing techniques. Of exceptional durability, Fama Nylon stockings are knitted with an added smoothness, elasticity and beauty that makes them seem like Fama natural silk stockings. The five styles of Fama Nylon stockings in four fashion shades are of the same quality as the best American nylon stockings.

Fig. 1.12 (Epoca, 1955)

A Puzzle! Choosing a toothpaste? It's not easy! One promises to lift your spirits, another to make you younger and a third to make your hair grow back. And there you are, speechless and confused. But there is a "quiet" toothpaste: IPANA. IPANA is one of the most widely known and used toothpastes in the United States and is judged by that public to be one of the best. It has a delicious new taste, is prepared according to the most recent scientific criteria and is a reliable product of a famous manufacturer: Bristol-Myers of New York and London. IPANA will promise (and guarantee) one thing only: to clean your teeth *well*.

IPANA resolves your doubts.

Fig. 1.13 (Epoca, 1955)

They're *MORE* appetizing and *NOT* a crumb is wasted.
They're *MORE* flavorful and *NOT* heavy on the digestion.
They're *MORE* nutritious and *NOT* fattening.

For every taste, for every need, PREMIUM crackers, the favorite. Thin, fresh, crisp **NABISCO** PREMIUM crackers, made by Motta. Enhances the flavor of any food.

Fig. 1.14 (Epoca, 1955)

THEY'LL BE YOUR FAVORITES!

MOTTA, under license from Nabisco, produces America's favorite crackers for Europe. Golden, crisp, ideal for crumbling, Nabisco crackers are fantastic by themselves, but are also a delightful accompaniment for any food, accentuating its flavor and garnishing it to perfection. RITZ crackers: with a delicate and immistakable flavor, pleasingly sweet and salted, which results from the careful combination of the finest ingredients and special manufacturing and cooking processes. PREMIUM crackers: delicately salted, the secret of their undisputed success is hidden in the simplicity of their recipe. They are also produced in an unsalted variety, "unsalted tops." **On any table, like bread, more than bread: *PREMIUM CRACKERS*.**

Everything is better with NABISCO crackers!

Fig. 1.15 (Tempo, 1952)

American actresses are always young and fresh, even after decades of work. The secret? A sensible diet based on the restriction of farinaceous foods -- and, above all, bread -- for which ultra-light and tasty crackers, better than breadsticks, are substituted.

Fig. 1.16 (Tempo, 1953)

Not bread, but Diet Krek! When special foods and the restricted intake of salts are indicated, Diet Krek (unsalted) both meets the dietary requirements of heart patients, nephritics, diabetics, etc. and yet is tasty and pleasing, remaining faithful to the high nutritional value and digestibility characteristic of "regular" Krek. On sale for only 50 lire a hectogram.

Fig. 1.17 (Tempo, 1952)

For goodness' sake, don't bring Lulu!

-- That's a good one! I must really be a bore if those two don't want me at their party!
-- It'd really be a shame if you didn't come, Lulu. It looks like they're planning something big.
-- Don't I know it! You think I don't wonder why I seem to be Public Enemy Number One?
-- You see, Lulu, boys don't go around looking for ... bad breath! But, now, don't feel bad! Go to your dentist instead!

(Lulu goes to her dentist)

-- It's been shown that in 7 out of 10 cases Colgate eliminates halitosis that starts in the mouth right away. It's also been proven that brushing with Colgate immediately after eating is the best way to stop cavities.

-- -- --

Two years of continuous research conducted in 5 of the most important American universities have shown that brushing the teeth immediately after meals with **COLGATE TOOTHPASTE is the best way to prevent cavities.** The Colgate method has stopped *more* cavities in *more* people than ever before recorded in dental history! No other toothpaste has *proof* of similar results, the best ever reported for any kind of toothpaste. **Colgate. The Most Widely Sold Toothpaste in the World.**

(Later -- Thanks to Colgate Toothpaste)

-- Thanks to Colgate, no one ever says that our Lulu is a bore anymore!
-- **Use Colgate toothpaste.** It gives your breath lasting freshness while thoroughly cleaning your teeth and helps stop cavities!

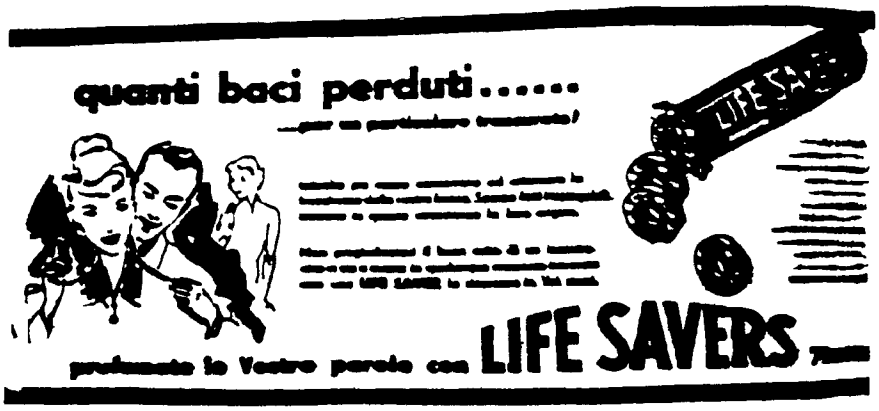


Fig. 1.18 (Marie-Claire, 1954)

How many kisses have been lost ... because of personal carelessness!
Sometimes there are many factors working together to ruin the freshness of your mouth. Unspeakable events often begin under such circumstances. Don't jeopardize the favorable outcome of an encounter that will capture your heart: in just a few moments you can find your self-confidence with a **Life Saver.**

Fig. 1.19 (Tempo, 1950)

Sensational American Discovery ...
HAVEN'T YOU TRIED IT YET?

Destroys all unpleasant odors and purifies the air. Gives an inimitable feeling of freshness and comfort, makes the house pleasant and cozy. AIR-FRESH, made from chlorophyll. In all the best pharmacies and perfumeries.

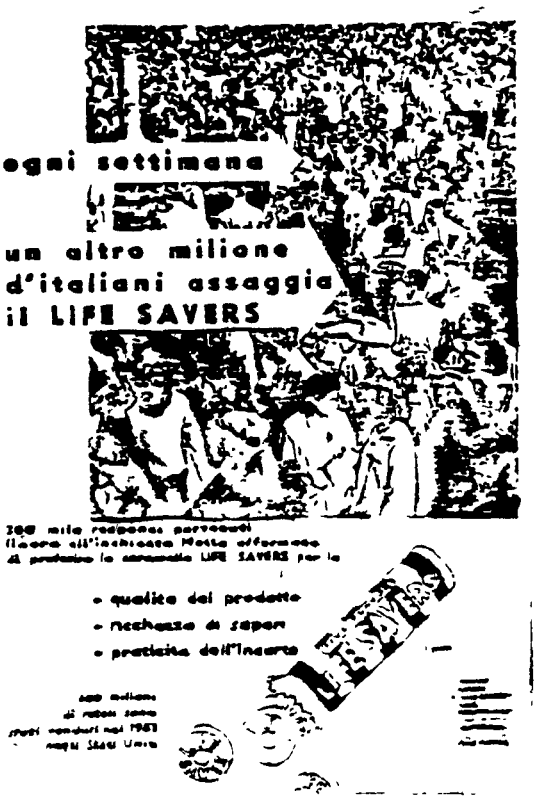


Fig. 1.20 (Tempo, 1952)

Every week another million Italians try Life Savers. The 300,000 Motta survey responses received to date attest to a preference for Life Savers candy because of its:

-- quality
-- rich taste
-- practical packaging

600 million rolls have been sold during 1951 in the United States.

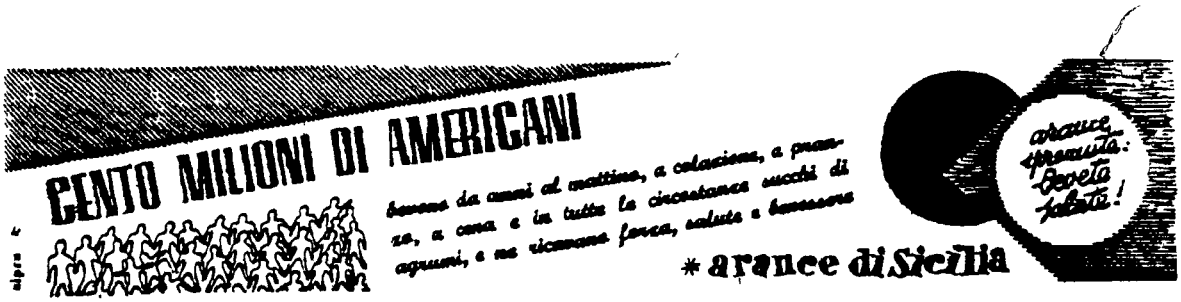


Fig. 1.21 (Tempo, 1951)

One hundred million Americans drink fruit juice for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and every time in between. For years, it's been giving them strength, health and well-being. **Arance di Sicilia.**

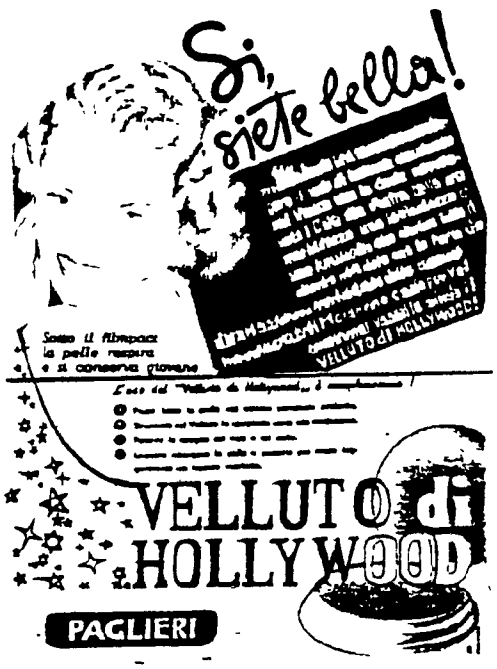


Fig. 1.22 (Tempo, 1949)

Yes, you are beautiful!

... but it only takes one caress to destroy the veil of beauty that loose powder spreads over your face! Give your skin a softness, a smoothness, a luminous quality that will last all day! For the sake of your beautiful face, start using the most acclaimed discovery of modern cosmetology. Paglieri has finally created "filmpact" for you: the solid powder, ***Velluto di Hollywood!"*** Under filmpact, the skin breathes and stays young. It's so simple to use *"Velluto di Hollywood!"*

1. Clean skin well using your own favorite method.
2. Rub *Velluto* with the accompanying sponge.
3. Apply to face and neck.
4. Let skin rest briefly, then gently dust off any excess.

Notes

1. Karl Marx, *Capital*, London: Dent, 1974, p. 45.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

3. The term "modern" here refers to a style of advertising which emerged after the First World War in which "psychological techniques" began to be used in an effort to persuade rather than to inform. For an explanation and examples of changing strategies and textual practices in advertising see Daniel J. Boorstin, "Advertising and American Society," in *Advertising and Society* (Yale Brozen, ed., New York: NYU Press, 1974, pp. 11-23); Gillian Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, chaps. 1-3 (London: Methuen, 1982); Raymond Williams, "Advertising: Magic System" (in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, London: Verso, 1980); or Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), for a more detailed history and analysis of the American advertising industry with particular emphasis on advertising in the 1920's and 1930's. For a comparison of theoretical practices used by "information" advertisements emphasizing straightforward use value (such as the ads of earlier periods and modern classified advertisements) with those promoting exchange value, see Andrew Wernick, "Ideology and Advertising: An Interpretive Framework," paper presented to the Canadian Communications Association, May 1980, pp. 7-14.

4. See Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) for an explanation of the conventions of pictorial representation similar to those used to equate consumer and product which are also used to establish the desirability (i.e., socio-sexual status) of the depicted product user.

5. Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*, London: Marian Boyars, 1978.

6. Janice Winship, "Advertising in Women's Magazines: 1956-74," Stencilled Occasional Paper, Birmingham: Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1980, p. 2.

7. Wernick, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

8. Sidney Levy, "Symbols by Which We Buy," in Lynn H. Stockman, ed., *Advancing Marketing Efficiency*, Chicago: American Marketing Assoc., 1959, p. 89.

9. Stanley M. Ulanoff, *Advertising in America: An Introduction to Persuasive Communication*, New York: Hastings House, 1977, p. 173.

10. See Tibor Scitovsky, *The Joyless Economy: An Enquiry into Human Satisfaction and Consumer Dissatisfaction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976).

11. Stephen Kline and William Leiss, "Advertising, Needs and Commodity Fetishism, *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2:1 (Winter 1980), p. 24.

12. Williamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

13. *ibid.*, p. 17.

14. Stephen Hymer, "The Multi-National Corporation," in *Introduction to the Sociology of "Developing Societies,"* Hamza Alavi and Teodor Shanin, eds., New York: Monthly Review, 1982.

15. Although there are some notable exceptions in contemporary America, such as the advertisements put out by milk, egg and beef producers to promote a general image of their products or those of the California raisin, Idaho potato and Florida orange growers who stress regional, rather than brand, differences.

16. Kline and Leiss' study treats this phenomenon in detail.

17. Tony Schwartz, *The Responsive Chord*, New York: Anchor Books, 1974, p. 56.

18. Elizabeth Cowie, "Women, Representation, and the Image," *Screen Education* 23 (Summer 1979), p. 22.

19. See *op. cit.*, pp. 45-47, for a fuller explanation of this terminology as it relates to advertising theory.

20. *ibid.*, p. 19.

21. Ewen, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

22. *ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

23. Ewen cites as the most obvious example of this phenomenon advertising directed at women, in which allure is dictated as the fundamental *duty* of womanhood and beauty and sensuality are advanced as requisites for success (i.e., love and support of family members) as wife and/or mother, implying, and potentially creating, the insecurity and competitiveness of these roles.

24. See L.A. Fallers, "A Note on the Trickle Effect" (in P. Bliss, ed., *Marketing and the Behavioral Sciences*, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1963, pp. 208-216) and Morris Janowitz, *The Last Half-Century: Societal Change and Politics in America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1978).

25. Ellul, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

26. *ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

27. Williamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

28. *ibid.*, p. 51.

29. *ibid.*, p. 70.

30. *ibid.*, p. 53.

31. *ibid.*, p. 64.

32. George Lukàcs, *History and Class Consciousness*, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971, p. 70.

33. Williamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

34. Many studies of persuasive communications attribute their verisimilitude to a hierarchy of discourses in which one is recognized as more objective or "truthful" than the others, which are instead credited as being mere "opinions," subjective accounts of individually-perceived phenomena. With respect to advertising, the dominant discourse is represented by visual images. In addition to their "disarming" esthetic appeal and the findings of some researchers that they are more suited to the portrayal of non-specific positive qualities than are verbal texts (see Kline and Leiss, *op. cit.)*, they are almost universally perceived as the simplest, and often most reliable, form of communication available. There is a widespread popular belief that pictures never lie. "Seeing it with your own eyes" has long been accepted as proof of the existence of phenomena or the occurrence of events, making any further evidence futile or unnecessary. Many authors have treated this phenomenon in a variety of different contexts. For instance, see Manuel Alvarado, "Photographs and Narrativity" *(Screen Education* 32-33, Autumn/Winter 1979/80, pp. 5-17); Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image, Music, Text* (Stephen Heath, tr., New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), also "La Rhetorique de l'Image" *(Communications* 15, Paris: Seuil, 1970); John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972); Victor Burgin, "Looking at Photographs" *(Screen Education* 24, Autumn 1977, pp. 17-24); Terry Dennett and J. Spence, "Photography, Ideology, and Education" *(Screen Education* 21, Winter 1976/77, pp. 42-70); Jim Pines, "The Study of Racial Images: A Structural Approach" *(Screen Education* 22, Spring 1977, pp. 24-32); Griselda Pollock, "What's Wrong With Images of Women?" *(Screen Education* 24, Fall 1977, pp. 25-34); and Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1978).

TWO: The Myth of "American-ness"

The American Image in Italian Advertising

At the first level of analysis, the social relations reinforced and "naturalized" by commercial advertising of American and "American-style" goods in postwar Italy helped to create, or at least supported, belief in a general American prestige. The American image "worked" to sell goods to Italians, first, because of the properties specific to advertising itself which actually made these undisputedly desirable representations seem accessible (but never quite realized) in a way they could not otherwise have been. This feature of advertising helped to highlight differences between users and non-users, making the commodity the critical distinction between them, and consequently investing it with the status of the "user community" (the United States), making of it a point of entry that the consumer could then use as a means of participating in the "user lifestyle" (American-ness), a progressive, additive series of fragments which constructed an image that, never being explicitly defined, could never be wholeheartedly rejected. Consequently, a product image (or even a brand image) was usually not conveyed in a single advertisement, but **constructed** by a succession of them which managed to display different aspects of what they implied was but a single way of life. This was particularly true with respect to the brand/product image here identified as "American," since it was one which apparently transcended product categories and even a commodity's place of manufacture. If these advertisements and the

lifestyle fragments they depicted were to be used as a means of understanding what life in the United States was like, they had to be interpreted as a system, in which individual ads were remembered as "layers" within that construct.[1]

Viewed as a composite of the various desirable users and user lifestyles, the American brand/product identity manifested itself in the Italian media through two basic themes, "science" and "beauty," which together came to define a contemporary image of the United States. These themes both re-affirmed and traded on the personal charisma of the Americans whom advertisements depicted as consumers and the advantages consumption brought to their seemingly already privileged way of life, which was presumed to be as universally accessible as goods themselves. Furthermore, the regularity of both themes was such that they reinforced each other: they began to be perceived as inter-related, parts of the same way of life which were equally necessary to its realization and the greater satisfaction this would bring about. Hence, "The American Way of Life" was re-constituted from the lifestyles depicted in advertisements in terms which had more to do with purchasing power than with nationality, giving new meaning to the concept of egalitarianism.

A product image such as the one created for Star broth mix (figs. 2.1 and 2.2), an Italian product, illustrates the equal importance of both of these facets of the American image. In this, another instance of an Italian advertiser trying to invest his product with an "American" exchange value, "American-ness" is connoted by the brand name "Star" and the association of that word with American film personalities, reinforced by pictures of two of them and an offer of a free booklet of celebrity photos. The second ad builds from this, while adding a new dimension: now the ladle

that once held a star-shaped photo of an American actress is replaced by a ladle-shaped photo of a laboratory. The text also insinuates the desirability of knowing about a product's manufacture, a process which it claims distinguishes Star from the less scientifically-prepared and therefore less sanitary and digestible competition. These two ads, themselves, are essentially a model of the idealized "American-style" commodity: seemingly glamorous, scientifically-manufactured and intelligently-consumed.

The science and beauty themes, in turn, were usually sub-divided by individual ads into a variety of motifs which served both to refine each of them and and to integrate them with each other. As individuals, Americans were represented as extraordinarily knowledgeable, health-conscious, wealthy, efficient, enterprising and clean -- as well as beautiful. Even the "secrets" of American beauty were, in the final analysis, scientific insofar as they set a standard which, by definition, included the use of manufactured products (cosmetics and "beauty aids") which promised to transform their users' natural appearance into that of another "export product:" the Hollywood movie star. Furthermore, the "scientific-ness" (which in the absence of a glamorous personality was often the "unique selling point") of these products was frequently emphasized by their identification as "methods," "scientific preparations" or medical treatments, rather than as creams, lotions, waxes, etc. Even more numerous than the diet-related food ads were those for a variety of waistline-reduction and breast-augmentation schemes. The weight loss products were of two types, a "reducing suit" (Star of Detroit) and a "reducing cream" (Sveltor). Although such products were not touted as an integral part of the American lifestyle (as crackers were, for instance),

their American origins were used essentially to attest to their scientific development and resultant effectiveness. These ads, for the most part, also sought to establish more or less "scientific" standards of beauty. One of the Sveltor ads (fig. 2.3) instructed, "Your waist measure goes with your height.... Only with well-balanced proportions can you be graceful, charming and youthful. Don't give up out of ignorance! Modern cosmetology has perfected a purely *external* treatment which, without taking anything by mouth, without strenuous diets, without tiresome exercises, will allow you to regain your figure in less than a month!" Several others proclaimed, "Watch out if fat and cellulite invade your body! Say goodbye to youth, beauty and health! You should know that a recent discovery made thanks to progress in the international cosmetics industry allows you -- without taking anything by mouth, without tiresome diets -- to absorb excessive weight, cushions of fat and layers of cellulite in several minutes of treatment per day." Likewise, Seingalbe breast cream, manufactured by a multi-national firm whose American affiliations were emphasized, also urged women "who know that no woman however beautiful she may be can be attractive without perfect breasts" to "stop despairing."

The first purpose of such messages is obviously to challenge women's notions of the **natural** acceptability of their own bodies (breasts notwithstanding, how can a "beautiful" woman be thought "unattractive?") and thereby to modify previous standards of beauty. The second is to offer a commodity as a means of meeting these standards. Once again, the brand name ("Segreto Americano," "American Glamorous Breast System," etc.) or an assertion within the advertisement itself emphasized the American origin of these products, the knowledge their use implied, and the style of beauty it conferred -- as well as attributing their efficacity to American scientific

research. Sometimes it sufficed to describe a product as American in order to assert its scientifically-derived effectiveness, even in the absense of credible results of its use. "Miracle cures" such as the Hellas company's "mechanical therapy system" offered relief from such disparate physical afflictions as "bad proportions," shortness and flabbiness on the strength of **nothing** more than its American development (fig. 2.4). The Star of Detroit reducing suit (fig. 2.5) was masterful in this respect. Of course, the brand name "Star" conjured up feminine ideals established in Hollywood, but the product's "unique selling point" was its manufacture from a "scientific" fabric called "Opaltex," a "special heating and deodorizing material, the latest discovery of the American Chemical Laboratories at Star of Detroit."

The "scientific" characterization, in turn, spread from the commodities portrayed as synonymous with American superiority to their users, who **lived** "scientifically" by consuming particular goods and as a consequence **became** "scientific" themselves. According to these advertisements, Americans seemed to be preoccupied with or to "know" vast numbers of statistics relative to their daily lives, for instance. A 1952 Lifesavers ad reported that:

> Many are unaware of the physiological effects a candy can bring about and are overly concerned that their consumption may damage the teeth or disrupt the body's natural equilibrium. In the United States of America where knowledge of what is harmful or beneficial to health, agility and strength is more widespread, the average annual consumption of candies per person is now more than 8.675 kg. In Italy, it is 0.565 kg. This enormous difference is not justified by the difference in income (5 to 1). The American knows that the ten 2.5 gram candies he eats every day make up 100 of the 3000 calories he needs to maintain his strength and 25 of the 400 grams of carbohydrates his body needs daily. *The most widely consumed candy is the Lifesaver.*

Just as they had been by the soda cracker advertisements, Americans are here depicted as consuming food **scientifically**, nourishing their bodies rather than merely eating for reasons of hunger or enjoyment. This supposition ultimately seems to be borne out by a consideration of all the other food-related American commodities advertised in Italy. Their assertion that almost anything that was both ingestible and American was, in one way or another, better than its Italian counterparts (although, amazingly enough, all of the products advertised are regarded by contemporary Americans, at least, as "junk food"), was directly based on a supposition that Americans possessed superior knowledge in these matters and acted accordingly. Within the advertisements themselves, this was connoted by their attribution of Americans with very specific knowledge on a variety of subjects. They are often portrayed as thinking in terms of statistics. According to advertising, then, Americans were educated: they were in possession of all pertinent facts and figures, therefore their choices were the correct ones and to behave as they do must be to act intelligently.[2]

A belief in logical "American-style" deduction as motivation for consumption by an informed, statistically-aware consumer also underlies ads for a variety of products which stressed quantitative measurements of qualitative considerations. Overlay floor wax and OMSA stockings, for instance, each argued in favor of their products on the basis of "scientific" analyses of one sort or another. Both advertisers imply prior execution of such research with the statements "60% of all men look at your legs," or "Statistics show that even banks, offices, hotels, factories, clinics, theaters and cinemas always prefer *Overlay* for polishing marble, ceramic or linoleum floors," which they rely upon for credibility. Overlay

ran an even more interesting ad (fig. 2.6) during the same year which pictured a mechanical device, the "Gloss Meter," which was designed (in the United States) to quantify the luminousity/superiority of its product since, as the ad points out, "superiority isn't debated -- it's measured!"

Even Bomba Americana chewing gum, whose appeal was already well-supported in other ways, was promoted partially on the strength of its health-giving properties. Ads for "Bub" mechanically-dispensed gumballs always claimed that they strengthened teeth and gums and sometimes added that gum chewing improved the digestion. The Bomba Americana brand name, in fact, indicates the reason for Italian interest in American science: its role in ending the Second World War. The recent deployment and American development of an atomic bomb was then a topic of great interest, the subject of much speculative journalism which detailed its incredible destructive power and rejected the possibility of other nations (primarily the U.S.S.R.) soon reaching the level of scientific achievement necessary to their own production of such weaponry. Because of the seeming difficulty of comprehending its workings and the resultant elusiveness of the power it conveyed to all but the American government which had sponsored its invention, the atomic bomb remained an object of wonder, a kind of deadly "black magic" to most who had little or no understanding of what it really was.

Not surprisingly, this fascination was deemed useful to commercial causes and thus surfaced in ads which stressed military associations. Insecticide and air freshener advertisements, in particular, often incorporated war/bomb imagery. Both the nature of the product types advertised in this way and the specific content of individual advertisements for them would seem to indicate that one thing which almost

characterized the American presence in Italy during the mid-1940's was a concern for pest control and sanitation. As the occupation forces had attempted to instill the importance of D.D.T. fumigation to the control of disease, its initial status was both war-related and American.[3] The earliest examples (1946-1948) either clearly identified their products as American (Razzia, Ciak), reiterated health warnings (Episan Spray) or, at least, had English-seeming names (Killing, Flit, Super-Faust). Two of these, Super-Faust and Razzia, particularly stress war-time associations. Super-Faust (fig. 2.7) is identified as "the atomic bomb of the insect world" in a 1947 ad which depicts a tiny plane complete with maniacal-looking pilot jettisonning a container of it superimposed over a fog being emitted from a pump insecticide sprayer and concludes its description of the product's effects with an assertion that insects aren't merely overcome by chemical fumes and gradually incapacitated, but instantly annihilated, as if struck by lightening. Four years later, Razzia returned to the same theme. Its ad consisted of another airplane, superimposed on a Greek cross (the Red Cross emblem), bombarding a moribund fly and beetle who are apparently enveloped in a white cloud of insecticide. The text is headlined: "WAR on insects until death! ... using Razzia with D.D.T. and the power of Lindane. The most powerful insecticide produced by science in 1951." Consumer education efforts were continued into the Fifties in D.D.T. ads for an Italian manufacturer, Bombrini-Paradi-Delfino (B.P.D.), who by this time was producing Air-Fresh air freshener for the Air-Kem company of New York (and calling it "Air Fresh Bomb") as well as this Shell Oil-developed insecticide. But, of the advertising campaigns stressing war-related themes, Bomba Americana was perhaps the most arresting because of its otherwise improbable name, in

which connotations of American scientific advancement and international prowess are clear; "Bomba" literally means "bomb," but in this case is meant to refer to the gum's bubbles.[4] The earliest ads often served only to make this association with the atom bomb, depicting an explosion in which the candy's wrapper made it look vaguely missile-like (fig. 2.8) or suggestively announcing "Here's the Famous American Bomb!" (fig. 2.9) in reference to a dinner plate-sized spherical object (presumably a bubble).

The other remarkable characteristic of the Bomba Americana ad campaign is that, in addition to capitalizing on the military achievements and resultant international prestige of American science, it ultimately incorporated most of the other facets of the American image, from Hollywood glamour to heroism. Most of the ads, especially those which appeared in the Forties, presented an additional attraction: the manufacturer (American Chewing Corp.) also made motion pictures (known as "American Bomb Pictures" or "American Pictures") which were condensed as comics included in packages of gum or available by mail as flip books. These often featured "The American Bomb" being menaced by, and/or vanquishing, miscellaneous villains (fig. 2.10). Other ads ultimately managed to incorporate a number of themes which distinguished the American identity to Italians, offering such prizes as sheriff's badges and washable tatoos of cowboys and Indians (fig. 2.11), and to at least partially integrate them with Italian culture, most notably by marketing them as a means of playing *Totocalcio*, a game of chance based on weekly national soccer results (fig. 2.12).[5] Arguably, the use of specially printed mechanically-dispensed gumballs to play this game was, in itself, a further demonstration of faith in the powers of technology, since consumers must have believed that the machines distributed the balls in better than random order if they were to use them

as a means of predicting sports results and, furthermore, the advertiser had to have been reasonably confident that they would be used for this purpose before attempting to promote them accordingly.

The Bomb eventually developed into a separate, full-fledged character (fig. 2.13) named Giolli (from one of the two original candies, "Giolli Bomb" gumballs and "Bomby" sticks) who always "saved the day," and gave away candies by the dozen, with his gum-chewing terrier side-kick, Tim, and the American Bomb (which was by now an inanimate object with quasi-magical powers). An interesting series of ads based on this theme and featuring the Giolli character ran weekly in the children's magazine, *Corriere dei Piccoli*, during 1949. Being in comic strip form themselves and written in rhyming verse, concluding with a moral, they blended with the rest of the magazine and seemed to be a sort of fairy tale, complete with a hero (Giolli) who solves a problem of universal significance with the aid of a magic interlocutor (the American Bomb). This scenario is, in fact, a simple model of the image of America, and especially American science, in Italian advertising.

The Creation of National and International Stereotypes

Since, in this instance, the user community was represented as a national group, its continual glorification by advertisements ultimately contributed to the development of a national stereotype. This stereotype, essentially, was the result of advertising's gradual transformation of

pre-established beliefs about the merits of America and her citizens into more wide-ranging prejudices.

The simple, direct approach of the beauty product ads whose basic message was "this Hollywood movie star looks the way she does because she uses our product; if you use it, you'll look like she does, too" exemplified the first step in the creation of such beliefs. Once the would-be consumer becomes convinced of the cause-and-effect relationship between commodity and idealized user, the next step towards belief in the superiority of its **other** users, although nameless consumers themselves, over non-users like himself/herself is an easy one. Thus, the final leap of faith: since these products were imported from America, where they already were in use, then the depicted user (the movie star) must just be a representative of the "user community" which might then be made of other individuals with similar, if not identical, characteristics. As a case in point, the earliest of the Max Factor celebrity-endorsement ads (fig. 2.14) announce the availability of these products as something of a breakthrough in the daily lives of Italian women ("from HOLLYWOOD, RITA HAYWORTH gives the big news!") which enables them to resemble Hollywood stars **and American women in general** ("You too can participate in the beauty secrets that MAX FACTOR has revealed to all the American stars and women"). The supposed resemblance between film stars and average Americans also sustained a number of other campaigns which stressed American corporeal perfection as a national trait. Accordingly, many of the ads for breast development products and home permanents incorporated the American flag. Some, such as "American Glamorous Breast System" and "American Angel's Curls" also acknowledged the appeal of a generally "American" appearance in their own names. Thus, the attributes of personal prestige so obvious in American

movie stars, and later presumed to be common to the rest of their compatriots as well, ultimately encompassed the nation itself as it began to be imagined as populated by ravishing creatures who, furthermore, were actively involved in the development and consumption of exciting, even miraculous, new "scientific discoveries." Surely, the inhabitants of no other country could make such a claim.

The fact that "American-ness" was even perceived by advertisers as potentially effective in promoting sales prior to its commercial exploitation as an exchange value is an indication that American prestige had already been well established. But, in many cases, American strengths were further emphasized by the way the United States was portrayed in ads for products which were advertised as American-endorsed. The systematic presentation of only the best features of the United States was necessary to the promotion of consumption if Americans were to serve as the "user community" in ads which claimed an "American" exchange value for the products they represented and undoubtedly also enhanced the national image abroad. However, the selectiveness implied by such a practice steadily served to distort this image "positively" and to diffuse these increasingly general attributes onto phenomena which had previously been unrelated. Thus, personal prestige was translated into national superiority and military achievements (which were even further evidence of this superiority) became mere instances of an all-encompassing helpful generousity which verged on a kind of "savior" status.

This wide-ranging superiority was a general definition of "American-ness" and thus the "unique selling point" of products claiming an American exchange value. Although allegations of the superiority of American goods were usually none too subtle, it was less directly implied

by the frequent assertion that they were popular around the world. American brands were often advertised as the most of their product-type sold internationally, in addition to being the most popular in the United States, implying American dominance of a world-wide hierarchy of nations. Advertisers for Coca-Cola, for instance, often described it as "the most famous drink in the world" during their 1954 campaign. Likewise, Alka-Seltzer (fig. 2.15) was advertised during the same year on the strength of its effectiveness, which however was in turn attested to by the volume of its international sales. The text of the advertisement therefore consisted of information pertaining to the product's purchase (its price and packaging) and use (when, how and why to take the tablets), but the real reason given to buy Alka-Seltzer was that "millions of people use it all over the world." From the advertiser's point of view, the rationale behind this statement and the ad's description of the product's packaging as "familiar" was undoubtedly the creation of a "user community:" an international one in the first case and a specifically Italian one in the second. This is significant in terms of its role in constructing a hierarchy of national images. Together, both statements imply not only the existence of an international community, but Italian participation in and American mediation of that community. Thus, American dominance of such a model of the world is clearly indicated by the fact that this American-made product is internationally popular both because it is effective in solving a universal problem and because no other company in any other country has been able to develop a similar one. As the ad says, after all: "There's only one Alka-Seltzer ... nothing else like it!" As another instance, Bomba Americana chewing gum emphasized the world leadership aspect of the American scientific image with its frequently-used slogan, "Bomba Americana

... a world of fun" and a bubble-headed personification of the American Bomb freely distributing candies to men, women, children and an occasional dog. Later ads, like a 1952 promotion offering a facsimile coin from one of 100 countries with each ball of gum (fig. 2.16), evoked the United States' international influence more subtly.

Belief in American world leadership was further reinforced by references to it in ads for Italian products, since when advertisers of such products attempted to claim their dominance of the appropriate markets internationally they could not do so through any Italian association but, once again, were forced to take on that facet of the American image. This practice is evident in ads for two competing brands of Italian vermouth, Martini (fig. 2.17) and Cinzano (fig. 2.18). The 1949 Martini ad contained numerous American references: superimposed on the American flag, a cowboy leans casually against a bar while gesturing over his shoulder at the vermouth being served to him, apparently exclaiming (in English) "That's swell!" The product is then declared to be "the vermouth that's drunk all over the world." Seemingly, there is no further need to debate the quality of the product itself since verbal claims of superior taste, greater potency or even more desirable manufacturing methods are ultimately close to meaningless without some sort of support or "proof," which in this case is provided by a collective endorsement from the American people as a group. Both here and in the Cinzano ad incorporating the American flag, which ran five years later, this general American endorsement is intended to imply world-wide popularity and, thus, superior quality. Underlying this strategy there necessarily exists a widespread assumption that Americans have greater access to the highest-quality manufactured products than any other nationality from which their preferences for certain

products over others derive meaning.

Two other Italian liqueurs, likewise, use American endorsements to attest to their international superiority. A Carpano *Punt e Mes* advertisement from 1951 (fig. 2.19) repeats this theme in its slogan *"Campioni del Mondo"* ("World Champions"), referring to the vermouth as well as runner Jessie Owens who is depicted admiring its bottle. Once again, America (or, at least, an American) has demonstrated superiority. In being preferred by a world leader, the product becomes a leader in its own domain. A year later, an Alberti Strega advertisement (fig. 2.20) featured a New York socialite approving a glass of it with the words, "What a Flavor!" (also in English). The product's prestige is first demonstrated by establishing that of its users: the American woman is elegantly dressed, welcomed by the Italian elite and seeks diversion in "high-class" entertainment (opera premieres). In case of any doubt, then, her status is reinforced by acceptance in exclusive Italian social circles and participation in their amusements, among which is included the product itself. This serves to ally the elite of the United States and Italy, as well as their tastes, constructing an international social hierarchy in which distinctions are based on consumption rather than markers like nationality or, to a certain extent, income and taste.

Extending this idea one step further, the competitiveness of the American market could be used to raise not only the prestige of goods on sale there, but even the abilities of those who purchased them to "compete" within the "user community." In other words, not only was American acceptance of a particular product a guarantee of its international prestige, but American manufacture was essentially proof that it was compatible with "American-ness." One Parker pen, for instance, was

marketed as "The pen of important people" "all over the world" (fig. 2.21), first asserting the superiority of this American-made product over the international competition and, second, potentially at least implying that these important people were themselves American. Even more striking perhaps was the advertisers' presumed equation of importance, success and literacy in their opening statement, "We don't think we're exaggerating in claiming that if there's one thing that successful people all over the world have in common it might be the Parker '51.'" This, in itself, was perhaps just another way of accentuating national differences, drawing on the fact that, during this era, the rate of literacy was undoubtedly higher in the United States than in Italy. Thus, the product's appeal is based on the ad's underlying message that in order to be important in the eyes of the world one must first be literate (i.e., **able** to use the Parker "51") and then possess the accoutrements appropriate to literacy (i.e., the Parker "51", itself). In other words, the criteria of internationally-recognized success have been reformulated as literacy-based. Especially for those who are incompetent or uncertain in this regard, the ad goes on to confirm that the advantages of the pen are not its good looks, price or even prestige value but its ability to improve its user's performance, resolving whatever difficulties he/she may otherwise be confronted with.

> -- Its not an advertising gimmick then to say that there have to be good reasons for such a widespread preference on the part of people who know what they want.
>
> -- The fact that the Parker "51" is immistakable and inimitable, a pen that with a fortuitous new formula has resolved all the problems that afflict ordinary pens.

Thus, the reason given to buy the pen is neither only the perceived status of the pen or of its users, but the imagined enhancement of the consumer's

ability to perform in an area that the advertisement has represented as the proving ground of success. In this respect, the advertisement is able to advance the importance of a particular activity in which the consumer may feel at least potentially insecure to internationally-recognized success and to imply the product's widely-perceived role in achieving this success. This idea is further established in the last line of the ad: "For your protection, look for the Certificate of Origin with every pen to guarantee you of its authenticity." Such a statement further intimates the personal benefits delivered by the pen to its user by implying that it is imitated by its competitors, who therefore presumably recognize its unique qualities and hence try to "disguise" their products as something "better" than they are -- the Parker "51". The Parker company's identification of their own product can then be seen as a public service ("for your protection ...") rather than as what it really is: a deliberate attempt to **manufacture** differences within a group of products that are functionally identical. Of course, this interpretation complements the rest of the ad, whose purpose has been to imply that the company has produced and here distributed their products out of concern for the consumer, enabling him/her to benefit from their labor. From another perspective, **goods** have been marketed as **services.**

Even more strikingly, American oil companies devoted far less ad copy to describing the attributes and benefits of their products than to promoting their own corporate merits. In the immediate postwar period, Esso advertisements mentioned only the number of jobs Standard Oil provided through all of its various activities, explaining that the corporation was essentially pouring money into the country and then making a necessary natural resource available to its inhabitants (fig. 2.22). In the Fifties,

when economic recovery was clearly well underway, a new type of public service was undertaken, this time in the form of the ad campaign itself (fig. 2.23), which advised motorists to observe safe driving practices (e.g., not to pass on a curve, to use their brakes appropriately, or to drive at a reasonable speed).

As another case in point, a 1948 ad for the Italian edition of *Selections from Reader's Digest* (fig. 2.24) stressed both its Italian and international popularity with the headline, "All of Italy is wild about 'the most widely-read magazine in the world!'" Obviously, its being widely-read implied that the magazine was generally regarded as having some useful information to impart, but, although the American possession and dissemination of this material is already noteworthy as evidence of the perceived standing of the United States relative to the rest of the world, the type of information presented is also of interest here. The magazine represents itself as an international clearing-house, collecting and disseminating "all the best new writing from around the world." Its specifically American contribution, then, is basically a service: making the most interesting and important news of the day accessible to a new audience. Even more significantly, this "interesting and important" information is itself reflective of American expertise. The selected articles featured in the ad deal with topics already familiar to readers of other American advertisements as areas in which Americans had become established leaders (atomic science, dental hygiene, the recent war), played a principal role (the Cold War) or were instrumental (developing a "science" of marital relations, providing a venue for an Italian family's advancement).

The Lederle pharmaceutical company (fig. 2.25) drew from a number of

the recognized themes of "American-ness" to support its service attributes. First, with its headline "Scientists famous around the world work exclusively for LEDERLE," it presented itself primarily as a research facility underwriting the development of important medical discoveries by the most gifted scientists in the world. Second, the most noteworthy of these (the work of Harold Cox and nameless associates) seemed to be American and recognized as such internationally. Third, the contributions of American science to the war effort were made even more apparent by Cox's war-time affiliation with a U.S. government agency and consequent development of a vaccine that privileged the victorious armies. Finally, the American role in recognizing the importance of these and future discoveries by honoring and funding the scientists who made them emphasized not only the foresight of such agencies and a company like Lederle, but their public-spiritedness in implementing them where they were needed most, regardless of cost.

American products, often explicitly referred to as the end result of American scientific progress, are thus represented as being a means for the Italian public to improve their lot, made available to them through the beneficence of American manufacturers and advertisers. Like Max Factor's (fig. 1.2) claims to manufacture cosmetics for the good of womankind ("... made for the Stars and you") and to advertise them for the benefit of the masses ("You can participate in the beauty secrets Max Factor has revealed to all the American stars and women."), a 1948 ad for Acousticon hearing aids (fig. 2.26) asked:

> **You who no longer have the joy of HEARING ...**
> -- Would you like to know whether you can regain it?
> -- Would you like to know about the advances made for you by American science during these last few years?

By then proceeding to offer a free booklet in which these questions were answered, both the advertised product and the advertisement itself are presented as **services** rendered by the manufacturer to the consumer or, in this case, more specifically by Americans to Italians. In other words, a natural problem, deafness, is perceived as surmounted through the intervention of American manufactured goods **and** commercial information.

In terms of international stereotypes, then, America was generally depicted by advertising as a land of superlatives, home of the "best," the "biggest," the "most beautiful," and even, as was the case with the 1951 Skating Vanities touring roller skating revue (fig. 2.27), the "most expensive." Its superiority over other nations in such respects is attested to by the international popularity of American products, as its benevolence is demonstrated by its role in improving the quality of life in foreign countries through military intervention, programs of economic aid and cultural exchange, in addition to the distribution of "helpful" goods and/or commercially-available services abroad, apparently at great expense. Included in this vision of the international order was a characterization of Italy as a backward nation, lagging behind Americans, if not others with greater access to American goods, on the road to a better way of life. Given such premises, any Italian consumer might reasonably conclude that these goods provided the key to better living, which, in turn, was now specifically defined as "American-ness."

The "American Myth" Abroad

Generally, then, America was increasingly seen both domestically and internationally as a land of social promise, an impression which was in turn supported through the widespread dissemination of attractive images in the media. It was consequently widespread and unchallenged enough to assume the proportions of a stereotype which was so attractive as to inspire non-Americans with a fascination for and ultimately a desire to conform to it themselves. In the effort to achieve "American-ness" the most appropriate model was, by definition, specified by the "user community," which in this case was also strongly identified with the Hollywood film industry. Since movie stars were first the most common advocates of various American products and then presumed to be typical members of the larger community, the American Way of Life was also thought to be observable on the screen.

Advertising for American products (and especially those advertisements which incorporated celebrity endorsements), therefore, largely appropriated the ideological relations which characterized film to ground its own world-view. American film's appeal, in turn, was probably due to the illusion of abundance and well-being it usually conveyed and the opportunity it consequently afforded for fantasy. In postwar Italy as elsewhere, movies offered a way of transcending a community of peers and entering into an imagined one composed of individuals unlikely to even be

encountered in real life, whether for reasons geographical, linguistic, circumstantial or material. Movie stars (who were thought to be as wealthy and carefree as they were beautiful, judging from the then numerous journalistic accounts of their personal lives) were to be envied as actual members of this community, personifications of success and ideals of beauty and social ease. Furthermore, if envied, they were also to be emulated. Thus, as Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen maintain, American films also provided their audience with models of comportment, dictating "appropriate" (i.e., American) modes of behavior for dealing with change and achieving status within a changing social order.

> The ability of film to speak, in various ways, to the experience of its audience provides us with a key to understanding its appeal and power. In the first instance, film as a component of mass culture became a mediation between a historic uprooting and an unknown and threatening urban society. In the second instance, it was a mediation between traditional culture and the emergent terms of modern life.[6]

Both film and advertising helped to construct the American Way of Life as an "answer" to social problems, therefore. Just as this lifestyle model provided a key to attaining an improved standard of living, advertising offered instruction in its realization which was then reinforced by films giving specificity to and creating the desirability of its user community. Ultimately, this relationship between film and advertising also contributed to commercial efforts, insofar as emulation of movie star models invariably also necessitated consumption in an attempt to bridge the gap between the depicted "American" standard of living and the Italian one experienced by most audience members. Not surprisingly, as Jeremy Tunstall reminds, the U.S. Department of Commerce was not ignorant of film's value to the

promotion of export trade.

> The Washington government apparatus has long been especially favorable to the notion of media exports.... Films, in the eyes of the Commerce Department, had the additional bonus of providing a shop window for other goods -- cars, kitchen equipment, indeed almost everything made in America.[7]

On at least one level, then, film and advertising could be said to fulfill a similar function in dictating a certain type of behavior: consumption. In addition, if the "psychological utility" of film rests in its capacity to momentarily transcend distinctions of nationality and social class, then it is not implausible to expect that advertising, with its integral promise of consumption as a means of self-transformation, might have similar properties. As was seen in the preceding chapter, advertising functions primarily because of its implication that consumption conveys participation in "the good life," a realm of material comfort in which traditional indices of status are replaced with the transitory prestige of possession. Whereas film's claim to egalitarianism is experiential, part of an act of viewing which is not class-specific, advertising's appeal is more seductive because consumption's benefits are less easy to fix in time. The user community it creates is perhaps more ephemeral, never likely to congregate in even partial groups and manifests itself repeatedly with each use of the advertised product. Like film, advertising also provides models for its audience's understanding of new or foreign situations. Insofar as such understanding may facilitate coping with everyday life, it is mythical.

The utility, or "purpose" of such myth is then two-fold: to the individual it is reassuring, explaining the inexplicable in terms of the familiar, while to the society as a whole it is expedient, promoting social solidarity, lessening the discord brought about by confusion and

potentially serving the interests it represents. By re-formulating the incomprehensible in terms relevant to the history of the cultural group, as a whole, myth functions to reconcile the individual with his environment and history and, by reinforcing the acceptability of his/her perceptions and reasoning, to unite him/her with other members of the same society. As Rosalind Coward and John Ellis specify,

> Myth serves a particular process of conceptualising and sign-ifying the world, a process that is motivated by the necessity for a dominant order (its law and its thought) to represent itself as the natural order. Myth is a particular use of the faculty of language which takes over denotative language to use it to naturalise and dehistoricise a humanly-created reality.[8]

Advertising demonstrably performs all of these mythic functions: it offers an "instrument" with which to master the environment (the commodity), provides a personal solution for social problems (consumption), establishes a differentiation between the individual's past and present (product use), creates a peer group whose membership is based on a certain similarity of world-view, needs, taste, and behavior (the user community), and suggests strategies for dealing with that future (lifestyle models). Thus, the very attractiveness of the American images advertising provided to Italian consumers seemed to offer a technology-mediated solution to a variety of problems, which were both longstanding and, paradoxically, ultimately even technologically-created. Since, in the long run, one of the major shortcomings of industrialized society might be cited as the limitations it places upon the individual's use of his/her own time and ability to travel freely and therefore to collect and process "data" through which the real world might be understood, then such believable, accessible, and "efficient" opportunities for their transcendence would be likely to be

seen as a solution, rather than as part of the problem itself. Despite the inevitable failure of goods to totally fulfill the implicit promises of their advertising, therefore, these promises continued to be believable enough to be a workable means of promoting the acquisition of new products, rather than a rejection of this new system and a return to previous standards. The "American myth" advanced by advertisements for American goods in Italy essentially projected the United States as a progressive and prosperous national "community" in which social barriers were either non-existent or easily overcome.

The underlying belief that standards of life and even prestige could be bought contributed to popular perceptions of America as a classless society, in which equal opportunity was guaranteed on several fronts. First of all, if one was to believe the implications of various advertisements that Americans were primarily informed by quantitative considerations, by facts and statistics rather than feelings, then it might be reasonably assumed that they could not appreciate qualitative concepts like that of social class. Second, since these same advertisements also seemed to reflect a value system based on knowledge, literacy and education (in addition to material possession), it promised that status was equally accessible to all who availed themselves of the resources at their disposal. Finally, wide distribution of films and advertisements detailing particular attributes of the lives of high-status Americans (movie stars) and directly or indirectly implying that average Americans enjoyed the same standard of living fuelled beliefs that measures of taste which in Italy were traditionally the province of an aristocratic elite had become the prerogative of all.

Consumer goods thus became invested with even more important powers

or, put another way, the American exchange value acquired deeper significance. As consumption began to be seen as a means of creating social status, the goods themselves were correspondingly construable as embodiments of that status. Because of the pervasiveness of visual imagery in which consumer products were demonstrated in desirable contexts, in other words, it became common to see them as inextricably bound to privilege and leisure and to make of them a means of seemingly magical transfiguration. American goods then became synonymous with luxury, and their possession with personal well-being, so that even those without the means to enjoy them might recognize in the marketing efforts which promoted them varied images of "the good life." Ewen and Ewen note that:

> ... among the elite of European society, American exports were beginning to make their mark on everyday existence. The terms of luxury were being redefined, and they were coming in cans.... The brand names of this new, consumer economy became symbols of ... denial and class-bound status; they also became channels for ... desires, emblems of a world denied, embodiments of wishes unfulfilled. Mere objects, mass-produced in factories, held a highly personal significance; they were benchmarks of servitude, carriers of fantasy.[9]

Because advertising (as opposed to film) was constructed in such a way that these images could be integrated with life as it was actually lived by the general populace of potential consumers, it offered hope for a future (post-consumption) in which not only material circumstances, but social ones as well, were ameliorated. Whereas the appeal of film was its ability to bring individual audience members into the world it had constructed, that of advertising lay in its capacity to integrate its idealized universe with the consumer's actual daily life through the commodity. For this reason, the generally higher cost of American goods was thought to be more than compensated for, since advertisements promised the satisfaction of a

greater number and variety of desires as Ewen and Ewen once again observe:

> ... with the cost came the allure of the packaged product, the mundane surrounded by finery.... The dull familiarities of daily life were now confronted by the dazzling familiarity of promise; the challenge was formidable. To people schooled in the ways of home production, the inventions of the marketplace appealed to magic and wish-fulfillment, altering the terms by which objects were to be understood.[10]

Taken as a composite, advertising's images of the "American Way of Life" necessarily represented the United States as a land of ease and plenty, contributing to a popular understanding of the American Way of Life as one which assured relief from the familiar hardships of daily life in a non-industrial society like postwar Italy. As Ewen and Ewen have also remarked, this promise implied a sort of transcendance of nature, a replacement of the old by the new, which was necessarily viewed as advancement.

> ... the broad ensemble of alluring imagery ... offered a first glimmer of a distant society where industrial development and a triumphial ideology of progress were forging new and unfamiliar precepts of survival. America was not a land where existence proceeded according to the venerable laws of nature. Industrial growth was premised on the taming of the natural world; molding it into the expansive imaginations of technological dreamers. Man would create a *nature* of his own, beyond that to which people had historically been bound.[11]

Consumption thus would be viewed, categorically, as a panacea for the hardships of the consumer's everyday life, an impression easily supported by the types of American consumer goods which made their way to Italy. Largely developments of recent technological advancements, their advertisements seemed to imply that nature, or the "old-fashioned" way of life, was an obstacle to be overcome on the way to a higher standard of

living. In so doing, they necessarily represented a world-view in which the scientific displaced the natural as *status quo*, producing an image of American life as characterized by the aquisition and use of manufactured products. Thus, an equation was established in the popular imagination according to which "the good life" was "the American Way of Life" which, in turn, was consumption -- replacing the old with the new, the natural with the scientific. According to this equation, then, consumption must be the first step in the climb towards success, prestige and participation in an international movement of progress and, therefore, seems to be a general means of gratifying various desires and resolving an equal number of problems. By structuring and helping to propagate such beliefs, advertising may draw from, and ultimately reinforce, widespread presuppositions, values and notions of acceptable behavior.

Varda Leymore, perhaps the best-known proponent of this point of view, argues that advertising is a socially conservative force on the strength of both its foundations in pre-existing beliefs and its consequent construction of seemingly new alternatives premised on them. In her opinion:

> Myths serve to reinforce accepted modes of behavior by scanning all the alternative solutions and "proving" that the one which predominates in any society, in given circumstances, is the best. As such, myth is precisely like advertising, a conservative force. It is not concerned with revolutionizing the existing order of things but in preserving it. Advertising advocates consumption of new products, or reinforces consumption of old products, but both are done using accepted themes and well-established symbols of happiness, health and success. Far from changing values, it very much follows and upholds existing ones. Over and beyond this, advertising (like myth) acts as an anxiety-reducing mechanism. This is done first by re-stating, on the deep level, the basic dilemmas of the human condition; and second by offering a solution to them. It reiterates the essential problems of life -- good and evil, life and

> death, happiness and misery, etc. -- and simultaneously solves them. To the constant anxieties of life, advertising gives a simple answer.[12]

However, as will shortly be made apparent through the example of postwar Italy, advertising cannot be unproblematically characterized in this manner in an international context.

In this case, the "American myth" advanced in advertising drew from long-standing beliefs in the American ideal of social opportunity, the allure of American oppulence and personal charisma as documented by Hollywood films and the promise of American scientific achievement to improve the conditions of life worldwide, from which it essentially constructed a variation on the basic ideology of consumption: in a world where people must consume in order to know who they are, if commodities appear as "personified expressions of human characteristics and relationships,"[13] they also offer a simple means of understanding and participating in a seemingly complex set of relations between persons and objects which, in turn, becomes incorporated within the larger framework of popular culture, ultimately reinforcing and/or directing it through the continual re-cycling of advertising-influenced popular ideology by advertisements, themselves. Perhaps not surprisingly, since such explanations are likely to represent the viewpoints of those who offer them, this is the respect in which advertising's effect is most likely to be seen as adverse, the point on which it tends to be criticized, and the source of what has been called its "seductive," "subversive," or even "propagandistic" powers.

Although such assumptions of "subversiveness" may at first seem incompatible with the supposition that advertising functions mythically, the two are not actually mutually exclusive. The defining characteristic

of myth, following Leymore, is that it draws on the familiar to explain phenomena that are beyond the realm of its audience's everyday experience, thereby reinforcing the ideas upon which this understanding of the unknown is based merely because challenging them would mean undermining the welcome resolution of confusion, conflict and "anxiety" they facilitate. Thus, American advertising could easily have functioned as an adjunct to U.S. government-sponsored propaganda in Italy by enhancing the American image there and contributing to the development of a "positive" national stereotype. However, far from dismissing allegations of subversion or propagandism, such a definition of myth allows for the possibility of an active role for advertising in effecting changes in both attitudes and behavior insofar as it advances an ideological framework in which both consumption and a general notion of "progress" are idealized.

In support of her contention that advertising/myth is a conservative force, Leymore relies on Levi-Strauss' formulation of myth as a type of metaphor in which two forces are presented as conflicting and a solution offered by a particular course of action.[14] Because of the audience's presumed desire not to challenge advertising's verisimilitude, her conclusion would hold true in most cases. However, it is only partially true here. Rather than legitimating the *status quo*, American advertising presented Italians with a lifestyle model which was clearly identified as being different from their own way of life (although it usually incorporated such characteristics as personal attractiveness or health, which were already valorized within Italian culture). Thus, in this instance at least, advertising could be seen as a way of promoting certain types of change insofar as it necessarily induces consumers to emulate the lifestyles it represents, which in this case are clearly identified as

American. Hence, in addition to inspiring seemingly "foreign" behavior (the consumption of specific goods), the "American myth" operating in postwar Italy might also have represented a means of dealing with any or all of the several types of change (i.e., "conflict" between past and future) which were a result of Italy's transition from war to peace-time status and, perhaps more significantly, from a history of monolithically-structured government (first monarchy, then Fascism) to its new existence as a democratic republic. The first of these changes, and the most elementary given the perspective of this study, was from Fascist-imposed isolationism to participation in world trade and a resultant influx of American influences, the consequence of which was a need to understand American culture and all of its differences from Italian tradition. The second is a weakening of this tradition itself as a result of Italy's transformation from an agricultural to an industrially-based economy, the perceived desirability of which was itself at least partially attributable to American influences, as well as what Grazia Dore contends seemed to be both a recognized necessity and a national predisposition.

> Italian agriculture, which had appeared prosperous before the agrarian revolution overthrew the old rural economics, could no longer sustain the confrontation with more progressive nations. It had become conscious of its poverty and feared the future.... The classical traditions which dominated Italian culture maintained the necessity, considered perpetual, of sacrificing the farm areas to the power of the city, agriculture to industry. This theme, dominant in the works of the historians and Latin poets, was very much alive in the memory of those who governed and had been nurtured in these studies.[15]

Each for their own reasons, then, different segments of Italian society were convinced of the desirability of urbanization, industrialization or, to a certain extent, Americanization. In its mythic capacity, advertising

could then present consumption as a way of bridging the gap between past and future, where the past was represented by the pre-war Italian lifestyle and the future by the present American way of life, as illustrated in advertisements. Thus, in addition to providing models for coping with social change, advertising actually contributed to such changes, influencing consumer behavior and values as advertisers incorporated consumption into traditional values to make Italy a consumption-oriented culture which was, not coincidentally, dependent on American production. In so doing, it also built from the longstanding popular image of America as the home of opportunity or, indeed, even as a general instrument for self-improvement which had become idiomatic in a language in which "fare l'America" (literally, "to do America") meant "to become successful."

Illustrations

Fig. 2.1 (Epoca, 1955)

A Marvelous Harvest! Magnificent "plasticolor" photos can be found in each package of Star: the most famous movie, radio and TV actors and actresses, as well as athletes, etc. **FREE.** Ask your local merchant for the "Star Hunt" color album which is full of games and surprises. **STAR, the double broth.**

Fig. 2.2 (Epoca, 1955)

Know what you're eating...

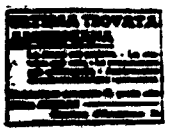
The pleasure of tasting an exquisite soup made from **STAR** is doubled by the certainty of having used an extraordinarily choice product. Only the purest ingredients, scientifically inspected, are used to make Star. It's manufactured with the most modern machinery, the only kind that preserves sanitary conditions. This is why even the most delicate, elderly or upset stomachs find STAR marvelously digestible.

Fig. 2.3 (Tempo, 1954)

Your waist measure goes with your height...
Only with well-balanced proportions can you be graceful, charming and youthful. Don't give up out of ignorance! Modern cosmetology has perfected a purely **external** treatment which, without taking anything by mouth, without strenuous diets, without tiresome exercises, will allow you to regain your figure in less than a month!
AN INNOVATION! We don't ask for your blind faith, but suggest that - with nothing to pay if you are not entirely satisfied - you try the Sveltor method that has renewed the joy of living for hundreds of thousands of women, in twelve countries on three continents, who have been liberated from the mountains of fat which had deformed and oppressed them. To take advantage of this offer, send in this coupon immediately. Have a free trial at our expense. Coupon no. 10.

Fig. 2.4 (Domenica del Corriere, 1948)

LATEST AMERICAN FINDING!



A more perfect figure, greater height, more developed musculature. Mechanotherapy device (guananteed). Ask for a free illustrated brochure at the house of HELLAS (Cortina d'Ampezzo 24).

Fig. 2.5 (Marie-Claire, 1955)

LOSE WEIGHT at the beach or in the mountains with a REDUCING SUIT ... but make sure it's a real one: the true, the first, the only Reducing Suit is the **Star of Detroit.** BEWARE OF IMITATIONS that either force you to spend much more or later prove to be ineffective or harmful, because none of them are made of OPALTEX, special heating and deodorizing material, the latest discovery of the American Chemical Laboratories at Star of Detroit. Our suit is not sewn, but vulcanized by a special procedure that helps to make it effective and sturdy. Wearing the suit for one hour per day results in a daily weight loss of 400 to 600 grams. Ask for a free illustrated brochure from the exclusive Italian distributor.

Fig. 2.6 (Epoca, 1955)

SUPERIORITY ISN'T DEBATED, IT'S MEASURED!

Scientific instruments demonstrate that floors of marble, ceramic tile and linoleum polished with OVERLAY achieve a higher degree of luminousity! For wood floors and furniture -- "Overlay Formula 2."

Fig. 2.7 (Domenica del Corriere, 1947)

The atomic bomb of the insect world!
Everyone can welcome a new product onto the market: newly perfected **Super-Faust with D.D.T.** Concentrated Clordane acts immediately on insects, protecting the environment for some time to come. It doesn't promise short-lived miracles, it assures definite results.
Super-Faust with D.D.T. doesn't put them to sleep, it "zaps" them to death!

Fig. 2.8 (Domenica del Corriere, 1946)

BOMBA AMERICANA ... 30 lire each.
Small Giolli bomb -- 10 lire.
Stick Bomby gum -- 15 lire.
The delightful candies that make bubbles. Try them and be satisfied!

Fig. 2.9 (Domenica del Corriere, 1948)

Here's the famous AMERICAN BOMB! The delightful candy that makes bubbles. Contains the illustrated adventures you can see in our movies. Directions with every bomb. Dealers, ask for a complete list. Try one and be satisfied!

Fig. 2.10 (Domenica del Corriere, 1948)

BOMBA AMERICANA ... is a delightful big candy. Chewing it makes so many bubbles. LASTS FOREVER. Ask for one in bakeries, drugstores, etc. BE SATISFIED! With illustrated adventures. A world of fun!

Fig. 2.11 (Domenica del Corriere, 1950)

BOMBA AMERICANA ... The "chewing gum" that also makes bubbles. Strengthens teeth and gums. Get a washable tattoo. A world of fun! Pirates, cowboys, redskins, etc. Prizes: Sheriff's badge, chicken that lays an egg, etc.

Fig. 2.12 (Domenica del Corriere, 1946)

BOMBA AMERICANA/BUB ...
The gumball that makes bubbles. Strengthens teeth and gums, improves digestion. Dispensed from automatic machines in bars, tobacco stores, etc. at 10 lire. Also gives you a 1-2-X prediction.

Fig. 2.13 (Domenica del Corriere, 1948)

BOMBA AMERICANA ... A world of fun! A delightful big candy. Chewing it makes so many bubbles. LASTS FOREVER. Ask for one in bakeries, drugstores, etc. BE SATISFIED!

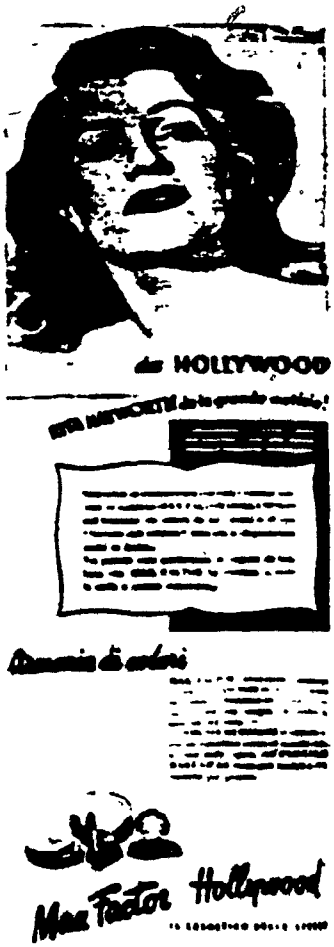


Fig. 2.14 (Domenica del Corriere, 1948)

From HOLLYWOOD,
RITA HAYWORTH gives the big news!

The charming "star" idolized by America sends Italian women the following message:

> "I am happy to inform you that all the famous MAX FACTOR HOLLYWOOD beauty products in Color Harmony, from which he has created his "Make-Up Service," are now also available in Italy. In this way, you can participate in the beauty secrets that MAX FACTOR has revealed to all the American Stars and women."

Color Harmony. Working continuously with the most beautiful movie stars, Max Factor has created "Color Harmony," heightening their natural beauty as if by magic. COLOR HARMONY strikes a balance between shades of powder, "PANCAKE MAKEUP," lipstick and rouge which is unique in all the world.
Max Factor Hollywood, the cosmetics of the Stars.

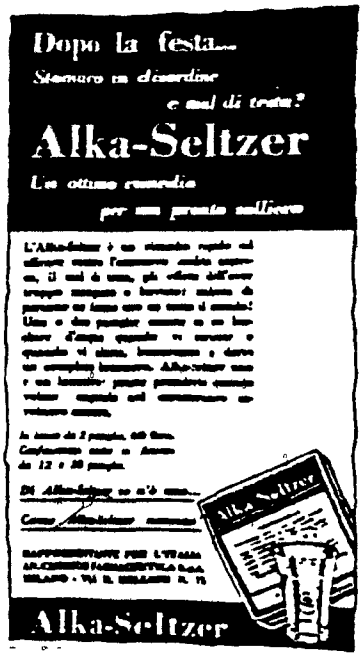


Fig. 2.15 (Domenica del Corriere, 1954)

After the party ...
Upset stomach and headache?
Alka-Seltzer. A perfect remedy for speedy relief, Alka-Seltzer is a quick and effective remedy for excess stomach acid, headache, the effects of over-eating or drinking. Millions of people use it all over the world! One or two tablets dissolved in a glass of water at bedtime and first thing in the morning are enough to give complete relief. Alka-Seltzer is not a laxative; it can be taken as often as you like. Ask for it in the familiar blue package.
In packets of two tablets, 60 lire.
Also available in bottles of 12 and 30 tablets.
There's only one Alka-Seltzer ... nothing else like it!

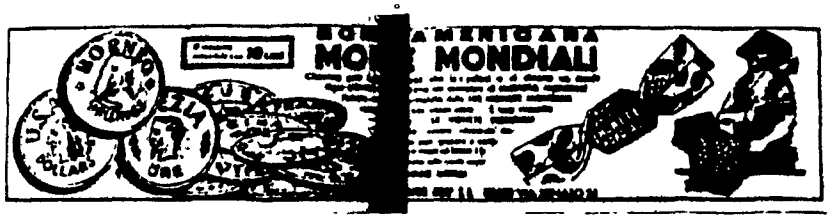


Fig. 2.16 (Domenica del Corriere, 1952)

BOMBA AMERICANA MONEY OF THE WORLD ... The most you can get for 10 lire. The chewing gum that makes bubbles and gives you a world of fun. Each BOMBA AMERICANA contains one reproduction. You can get the complete set of 100 coins of the world by trading with your friends. It's a useful collection to have, since the coins of the world can also be used as tokens in card games. Ask your local merchant for an illustration of the entire set.

Fig. 2.17 (Tempo, 1949)

Martini Dry ... The vermouth that's drunk all over the world. Don't ask for a vermouth, ask for a Martini.

Fig. 2.18 (Tempo, 1954)

The vermouth of 1816. One product, two sizes: the bottle for home use, miniatures for the bar. Cinzano. The progressive conquest of world-wide markets is not due to advertising, but results instead from an international esteem that can only be attained by the intrinsic quality of a product. Our reference is the world.

Fig. 2.19 (Epoca, 1951)

Champions of the World!

(New York, July 20, 1951) The fastest man in the world, Jessie Owens, four-time world recordholder (100 and 100 meter dash, broadjump and 100 meter relay) writes from New York:

> ... someday someone may beat my records, but no one will ever beat the record of Carpano's *"Punt e Mes,"* the world champion of vermouth.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Jessie Owens

Fig. 2.20 (Domenica del Corriere, 1952)

What a Flavor!

After a premiere at La Scala, Miss Barbara Barkley of New York was invited to finish the evening at the home of one of Milan's leading families. She was quickly offered the liqueur of her choice: Alberti Strega.

While in Italy, any foreigner is well pleased to savor the liqueur that is already the national favorite. Drink Alberti Strega yourself: throughout the world, the liqueur of the upper class is Alberti Strega!

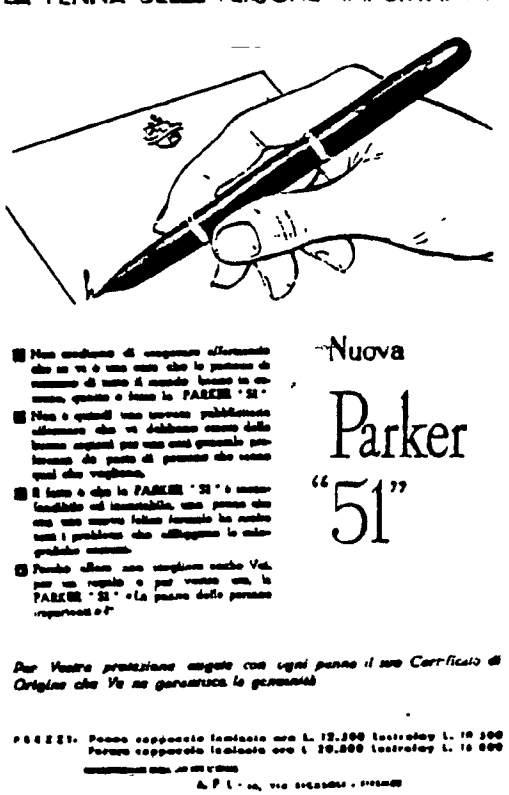


Fig. 2.21 (Tempo, 1954)

All over the world ... THE PEN OF IMPORTANT PEOPLE! ... THE NEW PARKER "51!"

-- We don't think we're exaggerating to claim that if there's one thing successful people all over the world have in common it might be the Parker "51."

-- Its not an advertising gimmick then to say that there have to be good reasons for such a widespread preference on the part of people who know what they want.

-- The fact is that the Parker "51" is immistakable and inimitable, a pen that with a fortuitous new formula has resolved all the problems that afflict ordinary pens.

-- So, for a gift or for your own use, why don't you choose the Parker "51," "the pen of important people," too?

For your protection, look for the Certificate of Origin with every pen to guarantee you of its authenticity.

Fig. 2.22 (Tempo, 1949)

In Service to the Nation

For 58 years, Standard Group companies have given life to a bustle of activity in the drilling, transporting, manufacturing and sales of petroleum products that offers thousands of Italian workers the chance to make a living, in addition to satisfying hundreds of thousands of consumers. Naval tankers, freight cars, tank trucks, 200 service and supply stations, 400 stands and 1400 other sales outlets with a total of 3700 pumps -- all bear the oval "Esso" symbol of protection and guarantee.

Fig. 2.23 (Epoca, 1955)

Slow down! Travel with Esso extra!

One of the Esso educational posters
for a return to the rules of the road

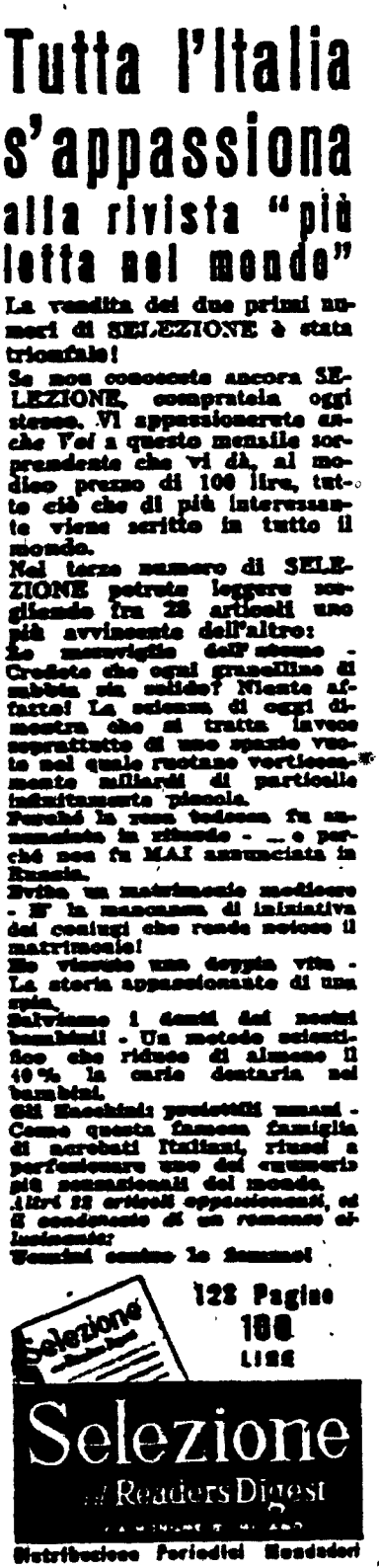


Fig. 2.24 (Tempo, 1948)

All of Italy is wild about "the most widely-read magazine in the world!"

Sales of the first two issues of *Selections* were spectacular! If you're not already familiar with *Selections*, buy it today. You too will love this surprising monthly which gives gou, for the modest price of 100 lire, all the best new writing from around the world. In the third issue of *Selections*, you can choose from 28 articles, each more fascinating than the last:

-- The marvels of the atom - Do you believe that every grain of sand is completely solid? Not at all! Today's science shows that they're made up, instead, primarily of empty space around which millions of minute particles rotate.
-- Why the German surrender was announced late ... and why it was NEVER announced in Russia.
-- Avoid a mediocre marriage - lack of initiative is what makes marriage boring!
-- I lived a double life - the gripping story of a spy.
-- Save our children's teeth! - a scientific method to reduce children's cavities by at least 45%.
-- The Zacchinis: human projectiles - how this famous family of Italian acrobats perfected one of the most sensational acts in the world.
-- And 22 more fascinating articles as well as a dazzling condensed book: *Men Against the Flames*. 128 pages, 100 lire.

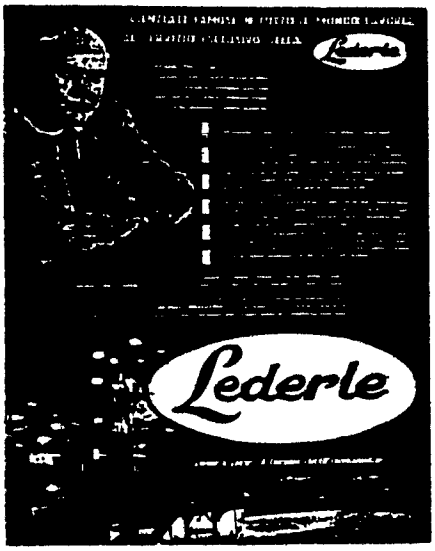


Fig. 2.25 (Epoca, 1955)

Scientists famous around the world work exclusively for LEDERLE.

Harold Rea Cox: discoverer of the typhus vaccine, Chief of Bacteriology at the U.S. Department of Public Health laboratories during the last war.

-- He discovered a vaccine against typhus known throughout the world as the Cox vaccine.
-- During the Second World War, this vaccine was administered to the American and Allied troops, as well as millions of civilians exposed to the typhus epidemic, with excellent results.
-- For this reason, the American government conferred the American Typhus Commission medal upon him at the end of the war. In 1941, he was also granted the Theobald Smith prize for Medical Science.
-- Beginning in 1942, he joined the staff at Lederle, where he occupies the positon of Director of Viral Research. He is currently studying human and animal viral diseases and, in particular, poliomyelitis.
-- In collaboration with his collegues, he has progressively advanced research on a new type of vaccine against poliomyelitis that will completely revolutionize the preventative treatment of this disease. He has also discovered a new type of rabies vaccine used all over the world.

The American Cyanamid Company, one of the most prominent chemical conglomerates in existence (of which Lederle laboratories is the pharmaceutical division), has committed the best-equipped laboratories in the world to these discoveries. The research section alone supports the work of 1400 scientists and assistants, requiring expenditures of **22 million dollars**, the equivalent of **14 billion lire** per year. Lederle laboratories: exclusive international producer of Aureomycin are also the first to introduce their powerful new antibiotic, Acromycin, on the international market.

LEDERLE ... works for the good of mankind.

Fig. 2.26 (Tempo, 1948)

You who no longer have the joy of HEARING ...

-- Would you like to know whether you can regain it?

-- Would you like to know about the advances made for you by American science during these last few years?

Ask for the publication, "Your Hearing," at MERCURY International Trading Company (Via Corridoni 11, Milan; tel: 71.705-71.397/8), exclusive Italian distributor of "a world-wide service by the world's first and oldest manufacturer of electrical hearing aids, **Acousticon International** (New York and London)," and it will be sent to you free of charge. The only device that permits direct reception of radio transmissions thanks to "Radio Wonder."

Fig. 2.27 (Tempo, 1951)

At the Sports Center!

Extraordinary performances of the American roller skating show.

THE REVUE THAT COST $1,000,000
Skating Vanities 1951
100 performers!

Notes

1. This rationale underlies the methodology of Varda Leymore's book, *Hidden Myth: Structures of Symbolism in Advertising* (London: Heinemann, 1975), which advocates an approach to advertising based on the construction of product-group paradigms.

2. This was especially true since social sciences and empirical research methods were still relatively unknown in Italian academic circles at the time.

3. However, it was sometimes difficult to determine exactly where these products were manufactured from the evidence afforded by this sample since it seemed to have become increasingly usual for American chemical or petroleum firms to license Italian companies to manufacture and/or distribute insecticides following their original formulas or for British products to be passed on to American-Italian joint ventures, who then manufactured and marketed them.

4. The word also enjoys other connotations which derive from its literal meaning. A *Bomba*, in Italian, is generally something new, exciting and different. In this case, it was undoubtedly also meant as a reference to the distinctive properties of bubble gum: its bubbles expand continuously until they explode.

5. The game is played on standardized score cards listing that week's matches for which the player is to predict an outcome, designating each team as a winner (1), a loser (2) or tied with its opponent (X). Hence, the gumballs were correspondingly marked 1, 2 or X.

6. Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982, p. 105.

7. Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media are American: Anglo-American Media in the World*, London: Constable, 1977, pp. 223-224.

8. Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 29.

9. Ewen and Ewen, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

10. *ibid.*, p. 46.

11. *ibid.*, p. 22.

12. Varda Leymore, *op. cit.*, p. x.

13. Stephen Kline and William Leiss, "Advertising, Needs and Commodity Fetishism," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2:1 (Winter 1980), p. 17.

14. See Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 68:270 (Oct.-Dec. 1955), pp. 428-44.

15. See Grazia Dore, "Some Social and Historical Aspects of Italian Emigration to America" (in Francesco Cordasco and Eugene Bucchioni, eds., *The Italians: Social Backgrounds of an American Group*, Clifton, NJ: A. M. Kelly, 1977), pp. 9-15.

THREE: Advertising and Social Change

The American Way of Life as an Ideology of Progress

From the belief in American science's success in measuring and even **creating** superiority (whether in beauty, health or efficiency) came a concurrent faith in its ability to improve upon itself. Products like American Atric Oil Method 6 depilatory (fig. 1.2), for example, although asserted to be "the newest, most amazing scientific treatment," are even further assisted in their pretentions toward the scientific by brand names: in this instance, "Method 6" implies the existence of at least five other preparations **superseded** by this one, all of which have presumably developed out of ongoing experimentation and **progress.** Likewise, progress was often connoted by the mere existence of certain products which were represented as revolutionary new ways to overcome previously insurmountable limitations (as Acousticon hearing aids certainly were) or the availability of things supposedly new only to Italians (like Air-Fresh air freshener). In the first case, it was a product's **development** that constituted its progressiveness, in the second it was its **distribution** and in both instances these services were foregrounded in advertisements as its specifically American component. As a consequence, innovation was doubtless perceived as an invariable condition of American life and its correlation with progress viewed as logical.

Therefore, inasmuch as belief in the promise of a future regulated by technology and American world leadership furthered American commercial

interests, it was actively encouraged by American business in the form of international advertising, commodity packaging and special public relations campaigns which, although extant for nearly seventy years, now were rendered more credible by the direction of political events and more timely by conspicuous demonstrations of an American scientific/technological prowess which had become increasingly relevant to non-Americans. This new "industrial"[1] ideology of progress depicted the world as a mechanical system: regular, planned and, above all, productive. By applying mechanical principles to social phenomena ("social engineering" having become a growing new discipline recognized as the hallmark of the era), it was hoped that they, too, would become as manageable as factory machinery, and as efficient in meeting social needs. This ideology of progress essentially supported the types of change which were becoming widespread and almost inevitable at the time, valorizing them with a rationale linking the conditions of "modernity" with science, mechanization and better living in a causal and self-perpetuating process.

Science and industry, therefore, were seen as an American contribution to the welfare of the rest of the world and, as such, its commercially-available products were viewed as a sort of "white magic" through which daily life was to be transformed to approximate the ideal depicted by advertising. In this instance, that ideal was referred to as "American," but was more than a national stereotype, since the same structures of beliefs underlay advertisements designed for American audiences, who consequently were likely to have shared Italian aspirations (although Italians, believing that this standard of living was already taken for granted in the United States, undoubtedly would have been surprised to learn this). The power of innovation, therefore, was not

unique to those compelled to think of it as a geographically or culturally-specific trait. It was, instead, both endemic to the circumstances of American ("new world") history, which had been distinguished first by exploration and then the immigration and migration of its early settlers, and the cornerstone of the advertising system, in which the claims of industry that any change in product specifications is made in the name of improvement and enhanced customer service were reinforced and reiterated to such an extent that they became the sort of taken-for-granted assumptions by which further need for new products was justified.[2] Given such circumstances of its origins and commercial perpetuation (on the American front, at least), the notion of innovation and progressive modernization, first, achieved credibility and, second, was publicized and integrated with daily life. When exported abroad, it contributed to forming a set of expectations favorable to a variety of American interests that, while seeming to provide fresh solutions to age-old problems, primarily proposed changes in the material circumstances incidental to such problems. In never being fully explored or explained, but consistently displayed in conjunction with images of well-being, the conditions of modernity took on a sort of mystical quality which Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner explain was probably sufficiently self-contained to support belief in the powers of urbanization and industrialization to ameliorate social conditions **even in the face of contrary personal experience**, which, after all, was the source of most of any anti-American feeling in Italy at the time.

> ... on the most elementary levels of human experience, modernity is associated with the expectation of being delivered from hunger, disease and early death. Thus modernity has about it a quality of miracle and magic which, in some instances, can link up with old religious

> expectations of delivery from the sufferings of the human condition.... Yet ... highly rational expectations are coupled with something that is almost mystical in character. This is the mystique of modernity.... The mystique ... tends to be stronger than ... rational expectation. *It survives the disappointment of the latter.*[3]

Thus, the specific promise of American-ness as a lifestyle model was derived from its link to consumer goods which, thanks to American interests, were being made available and certainly more accessible and immediate than any other means of experiencing it (i.e., emigration) could have been. Because consumer goods were themselves an embodiment of American-ness and its attendant commitment to innovation which was described as progress, they represented a convenient key to a more pleasant future. Through its representations of American-ness, therefore, advertising constructed an image dependent on the continuous production and consumption of specific types of goods and defined it as "modernity." Because this image was itself useful to its audience both as a means of interpreting American society and culture and because it provided models for individuals within it to "remake" their own lifestyles in order to become more compatible with this culture, whose merits it also highlighted, it was unlikely to be challenged and was even perceived as "helpful" by its audience.

Once again, then, the "ideology of progress" and its assumption that "newer is better" supported a utopic vision of America as a "newer and better" nation in which people lived in a "newer and better" way which, at least theoretically, was powerful enough to dispell doubts instilled by other sources of information. In citing the citizens of the United States as a user community, advertisements also credited their desirability to the use of industrially-created commodities which, in turn, were developed from

technological progress. Within the ads themselves, this was highlighted by the almost universal description of advertised goods as being the "latest discovery," "most recent creation of American scientific research," or, in short, just "new." A continual reference to "newness" as proof of a product's worth was then instrumental in enhancing the allure of the novel, or the progressive, in human experience. Conversely, the perceived desirability of such new experiences also worked to sell the products with which progress was thought to be linked, since consumption of goods was seen as "consumption" of, or participation in, change and a better way of life. As Ronald Berman puts it:

> The word *new* refers to commodities but applies to experience. There is always the suggestion, which is true enough, that the novelty of the product corresponds to some liberating change in personal life.... "New" commodities offer us equality in human progress. They do so by making each of us a consumer of social change.[4]

Since it is presented as purchasable, part of what is "better" about this new life, then, is its broad accessability. In contrast to any traditional social system (which, by definition, is fairly rigid, prescribed or "closed"), the one constructed by advertising is bound to seem new and "open:" that is, more egalitarian insofar as it denies the restrictions of hereditarily-based status by offering an alternative which, although arguably still not universally attainable, at least pretends to be. Insofar as few advertisements ever discussed money, they never allowed the possibility of financial need to enter into the profile they drew of either real or ideal consumers and, by providing lifestyle models to guide the aspirations of the former to become the latter, they further forestalled such considerations. Since advertisements each undertook to sell only one product, they weren't likely to be interpreted individually as dictating

heavy consumption as a pre-requisite to social recognition. Rather, by attributing every product with specific (and even well-documented) benefits, the onus seemed to be on the consumer to shape his/her own lifestyle by conscientious consumption: an undertaking presumably attractive in the opportunity it provided to control one's own destiny, but delusive in subsequently blaming the consumer for his/her own dissatisfaction. Accordingly, if the ideal of the user community was never reached, despite earnest attempts to consume responsibly in order to be furnished appropriately, the fault did not seem to lie in some intrinsic shortcoming of the goods consumed or the consumer's own lack of buying power, but in his/her inability to properly synthesize the information supplied by advertisements and to take advantage of it for his/her own benefit.

Predictably, the end result of this growing preference for innovation in the realms of both production and consumption might have been construed as threatening by some who were exposed to it, despite its appeal. If everything desirable was new, such individuals might have wondered what was to become of the old, since the term itself had come to designate nothing either tangible or admirable. Seemingly devoid of any value of its own, the function of tradition, history or even the familiar in advertising was to assuage the confusion brought about by the over-abundance of new, and ever newer, products. Thus, the new was lent the air of the familiar through its association with recognized priorities, personalities and periods of time. Once again, this strategy was by no means exclusive to advertisers of goods destined for foreign consumers, but was (and continues to be) used invariably to naturalize advertising's own commitment to

innovation, as Berman attests.

> ... the language of advertising is in some ways a language of concealment. It uses one word, *new*, more than any other in our hearing experience. But it moderates what is new or changing by applying it to the same commodity: Tide has been new annually for about a generation. Advertising insists on placing actually new products in a traditional context: commodities designed by computer and assembled by robots are sold by commercials placing them in quaint, wood-panelled stores. They are praised by leathery Norman Rockwell types who wouldn't know a chemical from a flat rock.[5]

In other words, inasmuch as the old has little commercial value of its own (especially in this case, where the consuming population was already overawed by a culture it perceived as both advanced and innovative), its presence in advertising functions primarily as an added feature or a distinguishing characteristic of the new, lending extra credibility to its claims of efficacity. The underlying message of such ads that "the old may have been good enough, but the new is even better," in fact, reinforces the power of "newness" in the marketplace and contributes to the predominance of certain goods over others within it as manufacturers respond to consumers attuned to an expectation of unabated technological progress presumably selected "new and improved" over once-popular goods. On the other hand, however, the need to acknowledge the old at all leads to a slightly paradoxical conception of newness: in order for it to be fully acceptable, its relationship to older ways must be clear. The new is no less new for being derived from the old, therefore, but it is markedly better than the old, itself, had ever been.

As a case in point, a Bomba Americana gum ad (fig. 3.1) that ran annually between 1948 and 1950 stressed the historical and even popular origins of its product. Linking the history of chewing gum with that of

the North American continent and chronicling their mutual development over five centuries, the ad concludes with the discovery of the medicinal value of gum and its commercial distribution in the early 1900's and ultimately idealizes it as an ancient folk remedy which was also a modern, mechanically processed and dispensed, scientific "therapy." Hence, the popular Italian stereotypes of America, Americans and American consumer goods were perpetuated: the consumption of a product whose use was inherently both novel and enjoyable to Italians was justified by Americans primarily because it was scientifically recognized as being healthful, American technology was responsible for its improvement and mass production and American beneficence for its widespread availability. The product itself was made more desirable by its history, as well as its exoticism: the Mayans undoubtedly would not have chewed gum without reason and could never have been accused of being swayed by outside influences (since they were so clearly cut off from them, ignorant even of things as familiar to Europeans as horses and guns). Their early use of chewing gum, therefore, was as much proof of its value as were the scientific pronouncements which came four centuries later. American contributions to the welfare of mankind around the world and a testimonial to the actual worth of the product came from their original interest in the substance, as well as their primary role in investigating and producing it in quantities sufficient for international distribution.

Likewise, the New York-based E.R. Squibb pharmaceutical company ran a campaign throughout the early Fifties under the common theme, "Trust is born of experience" (fig. 3.2). Featuring a variety of sentimental photographs (a dog and a cat lying down together, small children helping each other learn to skate, a mother with her new child, a father teaching

his toddler to walk or a doctor reflecting upon the course of his life) above this heading, the ads all stressed the importance of personal experience (and a resultant capacity to trust) in dealing with these situations and, ultimately, in making the world a better place to live. Specifically, their intent was to inspire confidence in Squibb products not on the strength of their chemical properties, which might have been regarded as too esoteric and possibly not even unique enough to be used as a selling point, but by virtue of the company's own awareness of a basic moral principle: that people should be valued for their thoughts and actions, rather than for external appearances, and chosen as friends on the basis of such considerations. Such realizations, it maintains, result from experience, consequent increased knowledge, understanding, trust and even mistakes. Squibb, then, although committed to scientific research and the development of pharmaceuticals to treat medical problems in innovative ways, had presumably accumulated such knowledge during its nearly one hundred years of operation, as evidenced by its dedication to one of the most traditionally meaningful concerns imaginable, the preservation of human life. The corporate logo (three columns inscribed "uniformity," "purity" and "effectiveness" supporting another marked "trust") summarizes its priorities and emphasizes the ad's implicit message that drug consumers should have faith in Squibb products because of their **history** of quality. In other words, although the actual effects of the product were derived from scientific innovation, its chief selling point was the longevity of its manufacturer and the supposedly greater reliability which was its result.

As a variation on this theme, one of the BPD insecticide ads (fig. 3.3) featured a Red Cross nurse lecturing on the role of flies in the

transmission of disease with the aid of graphically represented statistics showing a correlation between insect control and falling death rates. Dressed in a manner which was either meant to be reminiscent of earlier (World War I) uniform styles or a nun's habit, this woman was not particularly intended as a spokesperson for the modern despite her concern for facts and figures. She is, instead, evocative of that timeless common-sense competence of her profession. It is not to be understood, therefore, that these notions about flies and disease are new ones, but merely that the empirical analysis and chemical treatment of this problem are. Once again, then, the principles underlying a product's development are cited as most important, while the intervention of science has made possible the resolution of longstanding problems. In short, the relationship constructed between old and new in these advertisements was transferable to the consumer: although the importance of long-standing values was re-affirmed, the mastery of new-found techniques as a means of mobilizing them was stressed correspondingly. In the realm of goods, this relationship manifested itself in the difference implied between the rationale underlying a commodity's manufacture and distribution (which was always founded in a seeming desire to benefit the consumer) and that specifying its performance characteristics (which were almost necessarily defined as "new"). On the human plane, it was seemingly asserted that the new order respected traditional values.

The other way advertising made the new seem more acceptable to the average consumer was by insisting that modernity was a learned skill, no more than a proficiency with goods. This, in addition to emphasizing the underlying kinship between Americans and Italians by implying that even the user community may have acquired some of its competence, offered a measure

of encouragement to those who wished to emulate it. In practical terms, the growing ideas that "newer is better" and that modernity could be learned in the marketplace were denoted in advertisements by an increase in the inherent prestige of the young. Advertising's idealized vision of the way life should be lived and, it maintained, supposedly **was** lived by a nebulous group of others formed its own definition of the modern and, as a lifestyle model, necessarily constituted a certain class of people as "more modern" than others. This class, of course, must necessarily have incorporated the American user community but, in some instances, also included younger members of the Italian consumer group, who were likely to have been perceived as less firmly entrenched in a supposedly outmoded way of life and more open to the upwardly-mobilising powers of goods. Some ads, like those of Colgate's "advice to the lovelorn" variety, were based on the supposed wisdom of youth. These ads, in particular, were structured so that it was children (or even babies) and their knowledge of the benefits of commodities who solved their elders' problems (fig. 3.4). Young people were either depicted solving their own new adult socio-sexual problems (as they had been in fig. 1.17, for instance) or framing adult situations by, first, **construing** them as problems (innocently asking "Why're you still an old maid, Auntie?, or "What's the matter, did another one of your boyfriends marry someone else?"), second, explaining them ("You see, no one wants to marry someone with bad breath.... Didn't you know that you're an old maid because you don't realize you've got it?"), third, offering a solution ("Go ask a dentist's advice and see what happens."), and, finally, smugly commenting on their own success, as well as the product's effectiveness ("Thanks to my advice, she quickly found a nice husband.... It took Colgate to make her happy."). Far from discouraging

the average adult consumer by prompting thoughts that he/she is too old to benefit from the possibilities of self-improvement that certain goods could offer, such advertisements held out hope that the rules of consumption could indeed be mastered. The fact that young people were in full possession of this knowledge, which could neither have been innate nor, seemingly, acquired from their parents or first-hand experience, emphasized the possibility of reaching new levels of taste and competence, and even the ease with which this could be done, presuming that goods themselves were accessible. As a 1954 ad put it, it was "never too early, never too late, to start shaving with a Remington 60." In other words, since goods could not discriminate among consumers on the basis of age any more than they apparently could by nationality, their benefits might be presumed to be universally attainable.

"Modernity:" Leisure, Efficiency and Thrift

This seeming egalitarianism was the real incentive for the adoption of modernity. Not only were its benefits and characteristics well-documented in American-ness but, because American-ness and therefore modernity were themselves dependent on consumption of consumer goods following the examples set forth by advertising, it seemed to represent a relatively systematic route to improved living by providing a formula, of sorts, to overcome existing limits to personal growth. This formula promised to be effective largely through its denial of recognized status

markers and their implied replacement by a seemingly more "manageable" index of its own.

Traditional class distinctions being thus obscured and replaced with consumption-related status, individuals began to derive their own sense of social "reality" and an imagined standing within it on the strength of, first, their understanding of the symbolic properties of goods as represented in advertisements and, second, a belief in their own acquisition of these properties through consumption. Given that this individually-constructed social order was one in which, by definition, mass production replaced self-sufficiency, the status markers within it were necessarily derived from consumption rather than production. Social position consequently became increasingly a factor of **appearances** (i.e., grooming and/or the possession of status goods) and not an accident of birth. Ultimately, such new expectations produce individuals who are primarily concerned with spending on themselves or, at most, on their own households as a means of proclaiming who they are to others. Furthermore, given a value system which encourages belief in goods as a means of personal and social transformation, making a person's standard of living an index of achievement, the level of individual consumption is bound to become the popular measure of social merit. By encouraging spending, this then benefitted the interests which had constructed such an ideology by providing the wherewithal for its perpetuation.

Advertisements like the ones in the 1950 Gillette razor series took it upon themselves to educate consumers about such developments, informing them that both social and professional success absolutely required projection of the "correct" personal image. One of these, in particular, (fig. 3.5) makes this exceptionally clear by claiming that a possession it

maintained had already been acknowledged as a pre-requisite for success (the automobile) was itself insufficient to the realization of one's goals. Although it contributed to the impression a man might hope to make, the ad reminded, "owning a car is a lot, but not everything." Personal advancement was virtually assured, on the other hand, by completing the picture with a daily shave, for which purpose Gillette razors were said to be superior.

Since one of advertising's primary aims is to thus convince the disgruntled that their stature in life may easily be raised by judiciously purchasing the goods endorsed by those who have already "made it" (or, at least, those whom it defines as successful), one of its immediate effects is to imply that social classes are relatively fluid. Hence, the inevitable shift in Italian aspirations to accommodate "idols of consumption," rather than "idols of production," resulted in an increased emphasis on the management of inter-personal relations as a status marker, just as Morris Janowitz maintains it has in the United States where the appeal of such a model derived from the fact that traditional indices of personal status, although not totally invalidated, had been re-defined to include a broader range of people.

> Themes of consumption still (exceed) those of production; the concern is to include excluded groups in the culture of consumption. The new element deals with the strategies human beings use to handle the personal and emotional problems which are rooted in religion, ethnicity, geography and family status. Occupation is at most a background dimension of tangential significance. ... The shift to consumption broadened the range of idols to include "ordinary people."[6]

This observation, in fact, echoes the tenets of the ideology of consumption, which venerates consumer goods precisely because of their

ability to "solve" social problems. The rise of consumer advertising in Italy during the postwar period, therefore, had an immediate effect on the average Italian's orientation to the world around him. Since previously accepted goals had been rendered obsolete and moral standards no longer offered an unequivocal sense of direction, individuals were presumably to be guided by a "functional" code which had as its first priority a mastery of the immediate environment. The importance of this need to control day-to-day situations and the existence of the possibility to do so therefore provided an alternative to a world-view defined by social restrictions, to which the more "optimistic" (i.e., manageable) perspective of interpersonal relations offered a means of escape and a source of hope.

However, such a re-definition of social status necessarily presupposed a certain number of corresponding changes in social practice. Advertising's inherent commitment to innovation and the merits of technology in bringing it about as a means of creating fresh needs and desires for a succession of new products directly advocates those values which are bound up with the process of change, often, as J.K. Galbraith would have it, to the neglect (or even detriment) of other, more established precepts.

> ... we find technological **advance**, as significantly it is called, solidly enshrined as a social good. It is progress. It is synonymous with social achievement. One would encounter less dispute, on the whole, by questioning the sanctity of the family or religion than the absolute merit of technological progress.[7]

Given that advertising must make an unqualified commitment to technological change in order to maintain a high level of sales and a steady turnover in products, it supports a simultaneous progression of new methods and standards. In short, it celebrates change within both broad and narrow

contexts: for the society which no longer accepts the co-habitation of its citizenry with insects, as well as for the woman who becomes more attractive to others through the use of breast development creams. Since social change, after all, can be simply explained as a cumulation of similar changes at the individual level, advertising's capacity to effect such widespread redefinitions of the social order is a direct result of its concern with influencing a consumer's self-image and encouraging his/her faith in the possibilities of improvement. Thus, widespread individual aspirations towards American-ness in Italy would necessarily have resulted in Italian society becoming increasingly similar to that of the United States. In addition, by establishing standards of individual behavior relative to people and property, advertising essentially acts as a sort of barometer of the social change to which it itself is instrumental. To the consumer, its advocacy of progress and contributory role in defining its terms make advertising seem even more informative than it otherwise might: both it and the products it represents are seen as a pathway into the realm of the modern, as well. Thus, a predominant concern with making the terms of "modernity" intelligible to a mass audience may be seen as advertising's single most effective characteristic.

The assumption that everything in life could be managed, or that the individual could be master of his/her own destiny with the help of consumer goods, was reflected in advertising's basic strategy of promoting any piece of merchandise as one of three things: something that will heighten its buyer's status, something to use during free time or something that saves time. Not surprisingly, these three factors were generally inter-related: status was directly correlated to American-ness or modernity, which, in turn, was signified by the acquisition of particular commodities described

as "modern" or "American," themselves. The specific characteristics of such products are representative of the attributes of American-ness deemed most necessary to a "modern" personal image and, consequently, indicative of the orientation of American advertising's impact on Italian society.

Like the usual description of Americans, themselves, the sales pitch adopted by most advertisers of household products and appliances characteristically described home and office machinery as "rational" or "efficient," qualities which improved performance insofar as time was saved or ordinary tasks were accomplished in the "modern" way. The desirability of conserving time, in addition to labor, was increasingly acknowledged as a product's "rationality" began to encompass the speed at which it performed. In the case of office machinery, the benefits of ease and speed of operation to effectiveness are apparent since, as a series of ads for Burroughs products which ran between 1951 and 1953 was quick to point out, these attributes really meant increased profits. Use of such machinery, thus, is represented as an "efficient" or "rational" means of improving the *status quo*, insofar as they allow their consumer to become a "modern" (successful) businessperson, overcoming the obstacles imposed by human limitations through the adoption of "modern" (mechanical) business procedures. The Burroughs ads recreate scenes from Roman and Biblical history, relate them to a contemporary business context and offer their line of adding machines as a means of changing two-thousand-year-old situations. The various models were therefore represented as possessing nearly miraculous powers. In one instance, their abilities were likened to those of Joshua in staying the course of the Sun (fig. 3.6) by declaring that "even today miracles can be performed." The "miracle" of Burroughs adding machines was none other than its capacity to bring "order,

exactitude and the maximum economy of time and money" to the workplace. In other words, people were said to be successful because they did things the "modern" way which, in turn, meant only that they consumed the fruits of progress. To make this point even more obvious, another of these ads essentially belittled businesspeople who didn't use Burroughs products by comparing their persistant use of supposedly outmoded business practices to the dogmatism of sixth-century nobility (fig. 3.7), claiming that no firm could ever be rationally organized unless it used Burroughs machines -- "real mechanical brains, indispensable to a modern business because they represent order, absolute precision and great economy of time and, therefore, money."

The notion that machines signified their users' intelligence and progressiveness, while also conserving both human labor and time (and consequently money), extended from business to the realms of domestic labor and even leisure, as well. Notably, mechanization was so important as a selling point that all kinds of products were promoted as "machines," whether they really were or not. The fact that B.P.D. insecticide, a chemical product, could be touted as "a machine for killing flies" in a 1951 advertisement (fig. 3.8), for instance, is evidence of a popularly-perceived identification between the mechanical and the progressive (which its first lines even point out when one of the depicted characters marvels about the modern age by identifying it with household appliances) as well as proof of its appeal as a ready-made means of improving upon the *status quo*.

From the business-oriented axiom that time is money easily developed an understanding of time as precious and worthy of being saved by the use of appliances such as electric razors and washing machines. In fact, it is

likely that the success of this inducement among homemakers and others was itself derived from the prestige of the business world in which it had originated. By imposing the standards of this world upon the rest of human endeavor, advertising implied its dominance of the social order and, because these standards were themselves American, reaffirmed the international superiority of the American way of life.

The American origins of time-saving technology also ultimately contributed to an image of the American lifestyle as fast-paced, efficient and even, as a result of time saved, leisured. The existence of "leisure technologies" designed solely for purposes of enjoyment further accentuated these beliefs: not only were Americans seemingly privileged with sufficient recreational time to warrant the development and use of such products, but the very nature of these goods themselves was such that their use conferred a certain mastery of time. This, in fact, was the basic appeal of products like Kodak photographic supplies and Scotch recording tape: their use was intended as a means to preserve specific moments of time for future reference. Thus, it was thought to be increasingly possible to control not only the present (by performing necessary tasks more quickly and thereby creating "spare" time in which to pursue individual interests), but the past as well (by making accessible audio or visual transcriptions of its most meaningful moments). The promise of manageability, therefore, extended from the social realm, where the control of interpersonal relations through the projection of the desired "modern," efficient, business-like or "American" personal image helped to create status, to the daily lives of individuals where this status, evident in the mastery of time-saving domestic technology, manifested itself as increased leisure or "spare" time.

One significant offshoot of this correlation between time and status is an emphasis on money: yet another maxim of American-ness would seem to have been "thrift for thrift's sake." By buying cheaper goods, or even changing tastes and habits in order to spend less, one would have more to spend elsewhere and, having the capacity to possess more merchandise, be able to live better and to enjoy a higher (e.g., more prestigious) standard of living by abandonning previous goals and taking up new ones whose merits and ease of attainment seemed more or less guaranteed by other people.

Since personal satisfaction and social status are represented as purchasable commodities, profound changes in the individual's perceptions of the roles of work and leisure are likely to occur. Whereas in a pre-industrial society, like Italy during the first half of the twentieth century or the United States a few decades earlier, both satisfaction and status had to have been derived from the act of production (work), in a consumption-oriented economy they might be seen as related almost exclusively to material possession (leisure). Consequently, time, effort and the money that they earned were to be saved in order to have more of all of these to spend on leisure. However, this necessarily implied a fundamental redefinition of that concept itself. In a society in which personal status is based on work, the characteristics of leisure are unequivocal: it is simply anything which is **not** work. But, when leisure becomes a unique moment of commodity-dependent self-gratification and the crucial source of personal identity, it is the focus of life itself. In advertisements, these priorities are conveyed in claims for the **necessity** of clinging to its manifestations by saving time and money as a matter of principle, even if such conservation entails a change in lifelong habits.

Corn Flakes, for instance, would seem to be an undeniably American

invention, suited to both American tastes and daily life. In a 1955 ad (fig. 3.9), however, Kellogg's easily and conveniently managed to conflate the two cultures in order to create reasons for cornflake consumption in Italy. Like so many American products, this breakfast food has "marvelous powers" (i.e., a high calorie content). In addition, its most exhalted qualities are its potential contribution to savings of time and money: a cornflakes breakfast is ready to eat in a matter of seconds, requiring little or nothing in the way of preparation or ingredients, costs less than a single cup of coffee and, furthermore, is scientifically certified superior to the continental breakfast with which most Italians were accustomed to starting each day. Faced with such evidence, it would seem reasonable for anyone wanting to improve their morning meal not to bother trying to improve their breakfasts by making them more delicious (by making better-tasting coffee, for instance). In the long run, according to the Kellogg's company, it would make more sense merely to make them **different** (or, in other words, more American) in order to reap the benefits of consequent savings in time and money.

Likewise, the Remington shaver company built from the precedents established by the Gillete ads, while stressing that its product enjoyed an advantage unique unto itself: speed. Whereas Gillette had had to launch a campaign to promote shaving **in general** in 1950, Remington could advocate not just shaving, but shaving **faster** and **electrically** a year later. Given the pre-established necessity of shaving to social success, advertisements for electric shavers had only to advance their most obvious difference from manual razors: their speed of operation. A 1951 ad (fig. 3.10) emphasized this feature in its headline, "Each shave a new record with Remington," while also implying that there was a standard against which such mundane

activities could be measured and even a **need** to measure them. The subsequent text underscores the importance of time in the modern world with references to alarm clocks and the prevalence of an obligation to arise at a precise, predetermined hour regardless of one's natural inclinations. The product's progressiveness is celebrated in the exclamation, "No more annoying waste of time with brush and blade!" and alluded to by a description of its functional parts as "diamond-cut blades," implying that this "shaving machine" was probably even made by another mechanical device. Furthermore, this is clearly a product made to serve the needs of a "progressive" clientele who not only is pressed for time but needs to be regularly and "presentably" shaved. Likewise, a later ad (fig. 3.11) contributed to the speed statistics and even adds that this model is "precise as a chronograph" and that the "modern world" has been waiting for a product like this one.

By 1955, then, even Gillette razors came out under the brand name *"Super-Rapido"* ("Super-Fast"), despite their manual operation (fig. 3.12). Apparently, one must conclude, the advantages of speedy shaving were perceived to be so great as to make other qualities seem negligible by comparison. If the attractiveness of time-saving had been less firmly entrenched, Gillette razors could have been advertised on the basis of some other features that might have **differentiated** it from its electric-shaver competition, in other words, rather than trying to compete in the one area where the superiority of electric shavers would seem least debatable.

Somewhat paradoxically, the pervasiveness of the "modern" ideal of speed and efficiency was apparently so great that ads for other types of products which had no operating speed whatsoever, and to which it was therefore immaterial, could actually invoke it as the *status quo* to be

overcome. One of a 1953 series of ads for Permaflex mattresses, for instance, is based upon such an appeal (fig. 3.13). Calling upon the common claim that Italy was less developed than most other countries of the world by saying that these countries not only met modern standards but lived the ideal with calm and contentment, it then both cited the mattress's progressiveness and offered it as a solution to the problems of a progressive world. Specifically, it maintained that Permaflex mattresses were uniquely suited to the particular requirements of the modern lifestyle which, hectic as it was, destroyed people's natural sense of well-being along with their ability to function adequately in society (i.e., to produce). Because it was offered as a means of "cleansing" the body with "scientific, rational, perfect relaxation," sleeping on such a mattress seemingly provided an appropriate antidote to the problems of modern living which was itself no less true to progressive ideals. The ad's message, in other words, was that the modern way of life was not to be abandonned if it proved less than gratifying but completed by the acquisition of missing commodities. Dissatisfaction, therefore, could not be viewed as a failure of the system itself, but as the result of an individual's failure to fully integrate with it.

Integration, Community and Control

The opportunity such products and the personal images they promised to convey offered to control one's own position in the social hierarchy was

an incentive to embrace the definitions of social status they provided. However, although the appeal of a social model based on the management of interpersonal relations was undeniable, there were also certain inevitable detractions. A rigidly prescribed class system, despite its denial of egalitarianism, at least had the advantage of predictability. With mobility and social change came uncertainty, as new acquaintances could not rely entirely upon traditional indices, now obscured or irrelevant, as means of recognizing or achieving social status. As Sebastian de Grazia comments:

> In the new world of cities there was danger of being lost as a person, as someone whom others knew something about and respected. Whatever shortcoming the villager suffered from, anonymity was not one of them. Aristocracy, where one's status is fairly well-known at a glance, had no such trouble either. These were worlds of position. In them one *is* somebody. What one is, or stands for, can be told not solely by house, field, shop or clothes but also by language, manners, and antecedents. Finding themselves in the city, farmers and villagers had no fields or shop, nor clothes or antecedents that made sense to neighbors themselves uprooted and from strange regions.[8]

Advertising's strategy of associating the goods it represents with the lifestyles of recognizably high-status individuals could and did become important only because of the anonymity of the city, where no one knew one another and also, and more fundamentally, because antecedents and land, long the marks of the aristocracy, had given way to new insignia -- production and money. In Italian society, social distinctions were obscured in the "more developed" (i.e., urban) regions and a new "technological elite" founded on skills rather than family ties emerged as increased use of a standardized language and mass marketing (especially by the clothing industry) made class and, not coincidentally, regional

differences less recognizable.[9]

Because of the increasing affinity of its external manifestations with those of everyday Italian life, the appeal of the American lifestyle models represented by advertisements (their "American-ness") was essentially re-conceptualized within a larger ideology of the urban upon which it was based: a way of thinking which characterized the United States as "metropolitan" and attributed the undisputed affluence of American society and the relative ease with which its citizens conducted their daily lives at least partially to the benefits of city dwelling. Such an explanation of the source of American power ultimately leads to a broader conceptualization of the world itself as comprised of an unequal balance of "rich, metropolitan" nations (centers of economic, political and cultural power) and "poorer, less developed" agrarian nations which look to the others for direction,[10] augmenting the American-dominated international hierarchy which had already been established by those advertisements claiming the superiority of so many American products because of their supposedly unique ability to provide solutions to seemingly universal problems. In other words, as Raymond Williams has pointed out, the popular impression of the relative merits of city and country was transposed to larger generalizations about the world itself.[11]

Within the "narrow," or individual, context, then, this glorification of the urban and valorization of change had profound implications in postwar Italy. First, as de Grazia argues, since it incorporates the ideology of progress into its own promise of commodity-derived personal benefits, advertising "plays an aggravating part" in overcoming concerns with geographical constraints:

> As the servant of industry it encourages the movement

> mentality: change and innovation, houses and consumer goods, progress and science, move and buy, buy and move.... Newness and difference are held to be good in themselves, yet as a result the American has had to cast himself in the role of a standardized nut that fits standardized bolts scattered anywhere the country over.[12]

At least in America, he seems to argue, the role advertising plays in promoting the new, encouraging the possession of novel commodities as a means of meeting the new standards generated by lifestyle changes, has induced citizens to wander about in search of progressively better ways of life. As a result, they have had to become increasingly tolerant of change, while regional differences have become less pronounced and more easily adapted to.

Likewise, in postwar Italy, economic development and the ideology of progress concurred with industrialization and urbanization, both of which in turn fostered integration by undermining regional loyalties and encouraging migrations from the poverty-ridden South to the developing industrial zone in the Northwest. After the war, the Italian domestic scene was bleak: two million workers permanently unemployed, large numbers of landless indigent farmers and standards of living far below those of the rest of Europe. The traditional remedy for such problems prior to the war had been emigration, a course of action temporarily restricted under the Fascist regime's prohibition of even internal relocation. When this situation changed during the 1950's, with the industrial boom and Italy's entry into the Common Market (opening new possibilities of employment in Northern Italy and Europe), Italians thronged to growing urban/industrial centers in search of improved living conditions. This transition (which has been described as an accelerated progression from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth centuries), and the difficulties which such an adjustment would

inevitably have entailed, were probably made more bearable (especially in the later years) by prior exposure to the urban ways of life which were undoubtedly best represented by the locally-distributed mass media.

Increased mobility was undoubtedly signified by a proliferation of travel-related advertisements, notably for petroleum products and airline companies. Both of these indicated relatively long-distance travel, since the air services advertised were offered by American airlines to destinations in the U.S. and the car travel implied by gasoline consumption would most likely have taken place in the countryside *en route* from city to city, since the streets of most communities would have been so ancient as to have been more suitable for pedestrian or horse-drawn vehicular traffic. In the late 40's and early 50's, TWA began to stress America's international role as a commercial center (fig. 3.14), advertising itself as "the only airline in the world that lets you travel from Italy to any of the important centers in the United States with only one ticket and without changing airlines." Despite the variety of non-U.S. destinations served by TWA referred to in its 1950 ad (fig. 3.15), the airline's stated purpose seemed to be ferrying passengers between the United States and various outposts around the world.

However, it should not be suggested that the "movement mentality" was as widespread in Italy as in the United States, or even that it was entirely unknown before the advent of American marketing: the long-standing tradition of fortune-hunting abroad indicates that it was not. It is significant, on the other hand, that this fortune-hunting was now increasingly to be done domestically (although the U.S. had lost none of its status as the "land of opportunity"), encouraging an intermingling of the natives of different regions and some degree of standardization of

language and customs. Like the rest of the mass media, in addition, it at least familiarized inhabitants of different regions (who communicated primarily in various dialects) with standard Italian. Even beyond this relative linguistic standardization, however, advertising worked to promote national integration in a variety of ways, further minimizing some regional differences by producing a uniform pool of knowledge about consumer goods and their use, similar expectations of their powers, and more homogeneous notions of what constituted an adequate standard of living. Only thus could a 1953 ad for Admiral refrigerators (fig. 3.16) proclaim, "A refrigerator isn't a luxury, it's a necessity!"

This trend towards standardization, in effect, went hand-in-hand with widespread urbanization. First, the fact that the most significant migration pattern was from rural to urban population centers (South to North) is itself sufficient as an indication of this phenomenon. However, this tendency must certainly have had implications even for those who resisted it: cities, in general, were now increasingly reputed (as America had been for at least a century) as centers of opportunity, heightening their prestige as well as the acceptability of the way life was lived there. Like the *Americani*, then, those who returned to small villages or farm communities from urban centers brought with them new standards and habits which they doubtless defended to their friends. This intermingling of people from various regions who previously had enjoyed little or no contact with each other was therefore a strong socializing force, promoting cultural solidarity through the increased fraternization of these groups among themselves, but moreover worked in such a way that what was most common to all of them was something they had never known before: the urban experience. Equally importantly, this experience itself now enjoyed a

connotation different from that of earlier days. The city was no longer merely a local population center, a meeting ground for farmers and merchants, but a link in a chain of similar cities extending across the ocean and around the world. To live there was almost to live abroad, in terms of social and material norms, since it was in such centers that foreign tastes and products were first introduced and used by the local elite. The difference between city and country life would then initially have been perceived as a growing one. Advertising, however, as a sort of "survival guide" to the urban lifestyle identified as American, or American-inspired, made the changes it championed in promoting the new over the old seem universally and easily accessible. The fact that the advertising system promulgated a fairly homogeneous, technologically-derived world view across an audience with diverse ethnic and/or class origins ultimately acted as a unifying force, reducing the importance of factors which had previously distinguished people from each other and supplanting them with a common set of aspirations, expectations, or values. Ellul calls these "psychological collectives."

> Advertising goes about its task of creating a psychological collectivism by mobilizing certain human tendencies in order to introduce the individual into the world of technique. Advertising also carries these tendencies to the ideal, absolute limits. It accomplishes this by playing down all other human tendencies.... In addition, advertising offers man the means for realizing material desires which hitherto had the tiresome propensity of not being realized. In these three ways, psychological collectivism is brought into being.[13]

In postwar Italy the "psychological collective" being formed by American advertising and the changes it provoked was clearly that of a growing urban consciousness which had its roots in any number of concurrent

phenomena associated with widely-recognized trends toward "modernization:" urbanization, industrialization, economic development, cultural integration and education. Essentially, in this instance, "psychological collective" is a concept which serves to explain a changed definition of community. Whereas communities had once been constructed as closed social systems and, as such, were the sole source of civic authority, they were now construed as a small part of a larger entity composed of many such fractions. Consequently, their authority was effectively usurped by other, more geographically disparate forces: the government, the agencies of literacy and, more importantly here, foreign interests.

The urban "psychological collective" which was beginning to encroach upon rural tradition created new concepts of community in which urban values and indicators of social standing were increasingly respected. Given the technical bias of foreign-influenced urban centers and the emphasis placed upon "business-like" characteristics as a pre-requisite to modernity, the human qualities which most tended to be valorized there were those which could be loosely termed "professional." In advertisements, this emphasis tended to manifest itself in a frequent citation of supposedly "expert" advice: they were peopled by a growing cast of characters identifiable primarily by virtue of their occupations (maids, nurses, doctors, dentists and scientists), who characteristically counselled consumers (either directly or through a depicted Everyman) about the necessity of effecting some sort of change on their environment and the efficacity of a particular branded commodity for that purpose. In addition to the medical and dental professionals who so epitomized the authority of American science and the film celebrities who represented the national ideal of beauty, many were called forth as representatives of a more

accessible echelon of American-supplied technical and commercial competence. Hoover washing machines and Overlay floor polish both used maids as spokespeople for their products. Hoover (fig. 3.17) even added the incentive of the mechanical to its appeal by expecting its product to quickly, economically and effortlessly "solve" the laundry "problem" once and for all.

In the aggregate, then, such advertisements formed their own community comprised of a set of self-proclaimed experts on all aspects of daily life. These individuals, no doubt representative of an **American** community, essentially served to reinvent it within the Italian context where, for want of its equivalent, it was then felt to be lacking. In other words, evidence was provided (in the form of advertisements) to indicate that such a community indeed existed **somewhere** and that its members actively judged others on the basis of particular criteria they themselves established. Not having an autonomous congregation of such experts within their own circle of friends and acquaintances, the Italian audience would have ultimately been led to realize that consumption offered unique access to the gratuitous advice offered by established authorities and, perhaps, that it might eventually be a means of incorporating themselves within a class of the expert (if not the professionally qualified) which, if undertaken on a broad enough scale, could even contribute to the creation of such a group within the realm of their own lived experience.

Once again, the *status quo* being promoted was popularly perceived as **someone else's** commonplace, but a personal aspiration to be dreamed of and striven toward. As the changes necessary to the realization of these goals began to take place, traditions were likely to have been found

categorically "archaic," while imported culture became correspondingly more attractive.[14] With respect to the developing "consumer culture" in postwar Italy, then, there are obvious links to be made between the seemingly pervasive impression that former beliefs were now outmoded and the operational ideology of advertising.[15] If advertisements were effective through their message that a particular group's minimum standards of acceptability were widely ignored by other consumers, they also contributed to a larger-scale interpretation of that same feeling and, ultimately, the demise of more longstanding conventions. Once again, it was a case of the new displacing the old, just as it did among goods in the marketplace.

In short, a major reason for American excellence seemed to be the incorporation of particular goods and services into daily life and a corresponding rejection of materials and methods which characterized life in those nations farther down in the international hierarchy. The Waldorf Astoria, credited as being "the most luxurious hotel in the world" in a 1954 Formica ad (fig. 3.18), apparently could be described in such a manner primarily because it had laminated this plastic to most of its interior surfaces. The specific merits of Formica indicated its modernity: it saved both maintenance and installation time, was used in the United States and around the world (especially in commercial and industrial settings), was immune to the effects of time and met with the approval of "experts." It was, therefore, "a better *substitute* for other materials" on its own terms. Likewise, the merits of the hotel itself derived from its complete "American-ness:" its urban location, which in turn had dictated a particular architectural style (allowing it to "rise into the sky like a castle of dreams"), as well as extensive use of internationally-appreciated Formica throughout its interior.

However, despite the apparent necessity of discarding the old for the new in order to rise in the international hierarchy, the displacement phenomenon was not necessarily operative at the level of nations. Although the psychological collective built from consumption practices and celebrated by advertising was an international one, its growth was not inevitably at the expense of the national identity, particularly since advertising made a point of representing the roots of change in tradition. It served, rather, to contextualize a sense of nation within the world perspective while at least partially obscuring the then less readily identifiable regional characteristics. This, as Morris Janowitz contends, could ultimately have facilitated the development of a network of social control in which individual and national autonomy alike were replaced by external authority.

> ... The growth of a world community perspective does not necessarily require the atrophying of national sentiments but rather a modification of their content and scope ... it would be more appropriate to assert that the maturation of personal and social control increases a person's capacity to relate himself to more and more encompassing systems of authority.... A sense of nationality reflects inner feelings which through socialization become externalized attitudes. In this process, the person for better or for worse, manifests an acceptance of external authority and even of submission to external authority.[16]

Such a construction of authority relations is integral to what we now know as modern, industrial society, in which cottage industry is subordinated to mass production, single-family units to housing developments, isolated farms to municipalities and, in short, self-sufficiency to inter-dependence and the resultant submission to enforced norms and standards set forth for the common good. Advertising, like the mass media in general, supports this system by consistently surveying the environment, defining it, posing

personal, social and political alternatives and, through its judgments of these various possibilities, inculcating certain standards of behavior.

A pluralization of "life-worlds," or "broadening of horizons," and the subsequent weakening of local traditions or even of a locally-based dominant hegemony would appear to be an inevitable characteristic of such a process. Because of its mythic, didactic function, advertising's role in bringing about these changes in perceptions, beliefs and experience was significant. Through its presentation of lifestyle models acknowledged to be different from that of its audience members, in other words, it served to heighten their awareness of diversity and to provide for the resolution of any resultant confusion or conflict in the form of the commodity. In Italy, then, the effect of American advertisements on a foreign audience was potentially two-fold: at the level of institutions, it was useful in facilitating a replication of the American consumption economy and, at the individual level, it became an important new force of socialization, promoting national unity (and, consequently, more uniform beliefs) while reinforcing broader definitions of community, since modernity was a concept equally appreciated by both Americans and Italians (although arguably manifested to different degrees by each culture).

At the first level of analysis, these advertisements encouraged particular beliefs about technology, industrialization, innovation and even consumption itself. The most important messages they conveyed about the merits of that way of life most generally describable as "modern," or, in this case, "American," were that the technology developed and popularized in urban or American centers represented an improved standard of living for the majority of people, that innovation (categorically defined as progress) was a natural consequence of "modern" life and that American goods were

developed, distributed and consumed in answer to the consumer's own pre-existing needs and desires. This last point of view was explicitly encouraged by the way advertisements are constructed.

By emphasizing the reasons underlying the production of particular goods and the way they fit into the lives of some of the people they were supposedly designed to benefit, advertising reassured the consumer that he/she was the original reason for the production and distribution of these goods and the real beneficiary of the process. It was ultimately such apparent altruism on the parts of manufacturers and advertisers which would have facilitated the acceptance of personal or social change as desirable. In the long run, then, advertising could be effective in producing change only slowly and methodically: rather than inciting cataclysmic revolutions, it built from daily experience of a marketplace in which changes of status and self were put up for sale to shape a culture which increasingly valued people and things described as "young," "business-like," "urban" or, as a combination of these, "American."

Illustrations

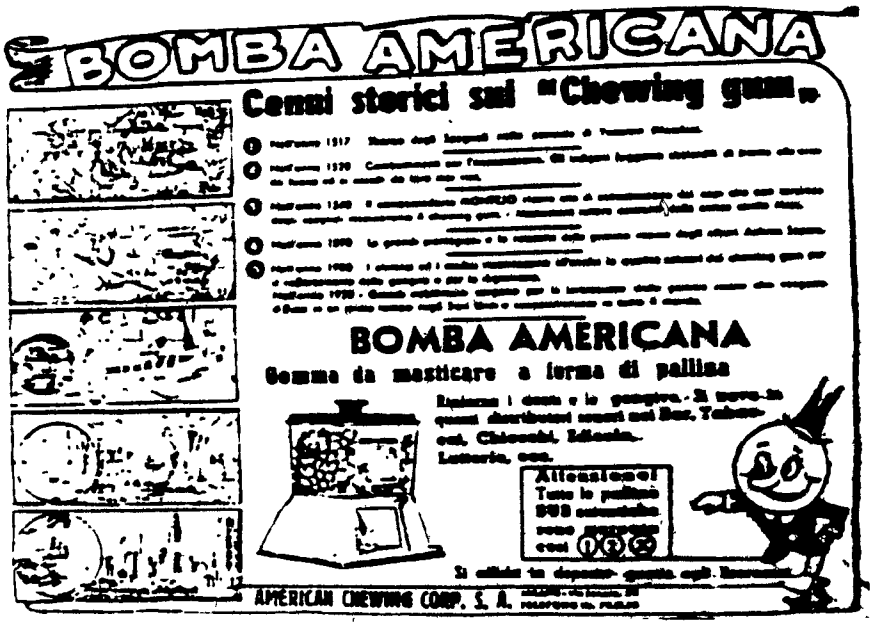


Fig. 3.1 (Domenica del Corriere, 1950)

BOMBA AMERICANA
Historical scenes of "Chewing Gum"

-- In the year 1517: Spaniards land on the Yucatan peninsula (Mexico).
-- In the year 1520: Battles for sovereignty. The Indians flee in astonishment before enemy forces bearing firearms and mounted on horses, neither of which they had ever seen before.
-- In the year 1540: Montejo conquistadores accept the Indian chiefs' surrender and are surprised to notice that they chew gum, a lingering monument to the ancient Mayan civilization.
-- In the year 1890: The resinous gum of the *Achras Sapote* tree is harvested on great plantations.
-- In the year 1900: Chemists and doctors recognize the healthful properties of chewing gum in strengthening the gums and improving digestion.
-- In the year 1920: Large plants spring up to process the natural gum which is first distributed in the United States and then in the rest of the world.

Fig. 3.2 (Epoca, 1951)

Trust is born of experience ...

-- A blind man walks down the street, trusting and without fear. This trust comes from experience. In this way, trust is born and grows, solid and sure. In a world as uncertain as ours, trust is one of the things that serves as the best guide, giving us the possibility of measuring spiritual values, of discerning those things that count the most in our walk through life.

-- The Priceless Ingredient of every product is the honor and integrity of its maker.

Fig. 3.3 (Epoca, 1953)

-- It's been proven that flies carry the most dangerous of infectuous diseases.
-- One of these insects has only to land on your plate to infect you.
-- A fly can give your baby the worst childhood illnesses.
-- In addition, exact statistics show a significant reduction in deaths caused by infectuous diseases in areas where efforts to control flies have been most intense.
-- Destroys these dangerous insects with D.D.T. Extra, which kills even the hardiest of flies.

Fig. 3.4 (Marie-Claire, 1954)

These parents, what babies!

-- Now everybody can see how you treat me. A fine example for our daughter ...
-- If she were old enough, she'd act like this, too!
-- Poor Daddy!
-- But, why? You can't give a guy the cold shoulder without telling him your reasons!
-- Dear, the more you care about someone the harder it is to talk to them about something like ... bad breath. That's a dentist's job, don't you think?

(at the dentist's)

-- I recommend Colgate toothpaste to fight bad breath. By brushing right after eating with Colgate toothpaste, your mouth stays clean and your breath fresh **for the whole day.**

-- -- --

Conclusive proof exists that brushing immediately after eating with Colgate toothpaste is the best way known to stop cavities. In fact, the Colgate method has stopped **more** cavities in **more** people than ever before recorded in dental history. **Colgate. The Most Widely Sold Toothpaste in the World.**

(Later - Thanks to Colgate toothpaste)

-- Now things have really changed between Mom and Dad!

Use Colgate toothpaste. It gives breath lasting freshness while it thoroughly cleans the teeth and helps stop cavities.

Fig. 3.5 (Tempo, 1950)

A Car isn't Enough!

Owning a car is a lot, but not everything. You must have respect for both yourself and others. A slovenly or unshaven man will never be judged favorably. Gillette makes your job easier. Shave every morning with Gillette Blue.

"Dispenser:" a modern plastic container holding 20 Gillette Blue blades. 600 lire.

Gillette razors from 200 lire to 3500 lire.

GILLETTE. The sharpest blade in the world.

Gillette bids you good day!

Fig. 3.6 (Epoca, 1953)

The Bible tells that the prophet Joshua, a skillful commander, seeing sunset approaching before his troops could vanquish the enemy in battle, issued the famous imperative: "Halt, O Sun!" and stopped the sun in its course. How many company presidents, how many clerical workers, at the end of a long day during which they've been able to complete only part of the work that they should have finished, would like to repeat Joshua's order. But the sun can't be stopped and overdue work just piles higher on the desk. Yet even today miracles can be performed. Isn't the work that a Burroughs adding machine accomplishes in the briefest moment of time with the most absolute perfection in fact a miracle? In the modern firm, a Burroughs machine is indispensable because it represents order, exactitude and the maximum economy of time and money. Adapt your firm to modern standards!

Fig. 3.7 (Epoca, 1951)

There is a story about a gentleman who fought all of fifteen duels to defend the superiority of Dante over Tasso and, mortally wounded by his fifteenth opponent, confessed at his death never to have read a single verse of Dante. How many businessmen and industrialists claim to have organized their firms in the most rational manner without even having tried a Burroughs Machine? Burroughs Machines are real mechanical brains, indispensable to a modern business because they represent order, absolute precision and great economy of time and, therefore, of money. Tens of thousands of offices all over the world are using Burroughs Machines. Adapt your firm to modern standards!

Fig. 3.8 (Tempo, 1951)

-- These days are really something else! The vacuum cleaner, a machine for laundry, a machine for dishes, a machine for killing flies ...
-- A machine for flies?
-- Sure, **B.P.D. Aerosol.** It comes from all sides, like a fog, to get rid of flies, mosquitos and any other insects in the area.

Fig. 3.9 (Epoca, 1955)

The Marvelous Power of Corn Flakes!

-- A good breakfast in a few seconds.

"Corn Flakes" are ready immediately: it's enough to pour them straight from the box into a bowl, and add a little bit of milk and sugar to have a delicious calorie-rich, high energy breakfast.

-- In America and Scandinavia, dietary specialists give breakfast a great deal of importance. They maintain that the body must be supplied with energy before starting a hard day of work or study, which is why a breakfast as rich in calories as "Corn Flakes" provides much more energy than a cup of coffee, tea or *café au lait* when eaten with buttered toast or bread.

-- One box contains eight generous portions for only 170 lire.

Kellogg's. **A Kellogg's breakfast costs less than a cup of coffee.**

Ogni radersi un nuovo record

con il Remington

Semplice da adoperarsi, il Remington vi rade meglio in poco tempo. Innestate la spina e fatelo scivolare sul viso. Non più il fastidioso perditempo del rasoio e pennello! Rade la barba più tenace netta mente e completamente al livello della pelle e senza gli strappi e i raschiamenti di un comune rasoio. Centinaia di lame affilate al diamante fanno l'operazione con precisione e in modo perfetto! Il vostro viso rimane liscio e fresco. Siete perfettamente presentabile in un tempo record!

Godete del beneficio e del vantaggio di radervi a secco. Radetevi con il Remington!

RASOIO ELETTRICO REMINGTON

UN PRODOTTO Remington Rand

Fig. 3.10 (Tempo, 1951)

Each Shave a New Record with REMINGTON

-- The alarm clock, once a punishment for the man who had to get up early, now has become but a faint annoyance with the use of a speedy electric razor.

-- Simple to use, the Remington shaves you better in a short time. Just plug it in and glide it across your face. No more annoying waste of time with brush and blade! Shaves the most stubborn beard neatly and completely at "skin level" without the scraping and pulling of an ordinary razor. Hundreds of diamond-sharpened blades do the job with precision and perfection! Your face stays soft and fresh. You're perfectly presentable in record time!

-- Enjoy the benefits and advantages of dry shaving. Shave with a Remington!

Fig. 3.11 (Tempo, 1953)

Precise as a chronograph, shaves you in 60 seconds!

-- The NEW Remington "60 D.V." universal voltage shaves you in 60 seconds!

-- The modern world was **waiting** for an electric razor like this one: the latest Remington "60 D.V." with universal voltage. Plug it in anywhere and turn it on: 264 diamond-sharpened blades making 16 million cuts a minute beneath an exceptionally long, precision-cut shaving head will give you the smoothest, fastest shave you ever dreamed of! One single trial with the Remington "60 D.V." will persuade you that it's the best possible solution to the shaving problem, next to the ideal of not having to shave at all.

Remington - the champion razor of the world.

Fig. 3.12 (Epoca, 1955)

There's a good idea! I'll give him a Gillette *SUPER-FAST* razor!

A most appreciated and attractive gift for only 850 lire. Don't worry if he already has a razor! The one-piece Gillette SUPER-FAST razor and the fast-loading "Dispenser" full of Gillette Blue Blades will make his shaves faster. An elegant blue case with a transparent cover make this razor an exceptional gift.

Other Gillette razors from 150 to 3800 lire.

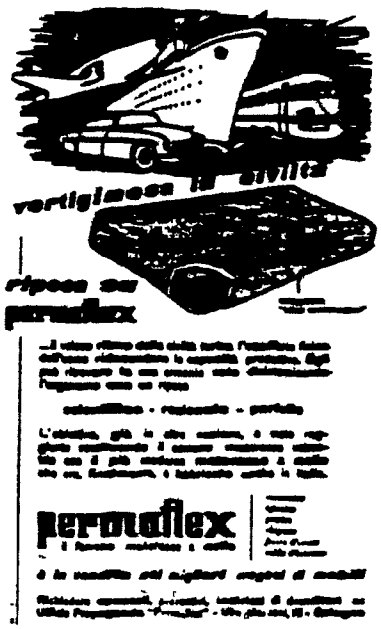


Fig. 3.13 (Tempo, 1953)

Civilization is maddening.... Rest on a Permaflex!

... the fast pace of civilization disturbs man's physical equilibrium, reducing his productive capacity. Harmony can be recovered only by cleansing the body with **scientific, rational, perfect** relaxation. In other nations, this goal has already been attained by replacing the ordinary cotton mattress with a more modern *spring mattress* that now, finally, is also made in Italy.
PERMAFLEX - the famous spring mattress. Economic, hygienic, practical, elegant, cool in summer, warm in winter. On sale in the finest furniture stores.

Fig. 3.14 (Tempo, 1947)

Businessmen!

Ten times each week a TWA "Constellation" or "Skymaster" leaves Rome for New York. Travelling rapidly and luxuriously, you'll reach the great metropolises of business in twenty-nine hours.

For reservations, consult your travel agent or TWA.

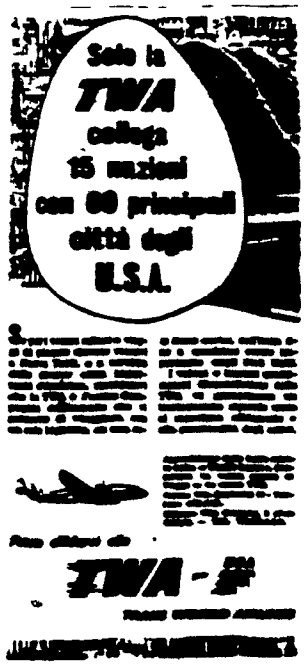


Fig. 3.15 (Epoca, 1950)

Only TWA links fifteen nations with sixty major American cities. If you must go to New York or any one of the many important cities in America, whether for business or pleasure, remember that TWA is the only airline in the world that lets you travel from Italy to any of the important centers in the United States with only one ticket and without changing airlines. The rapid and luxurious four-engine TWA Constellations guarantee you lavish service with the utmost in security and punctuality.

-- Take advantage of the reduced rates of "Thrift Season." Consult your travel agent or TWA itself.

-- You can trust TWA to the **U.S.A.** - Europe - Africa - Asia.

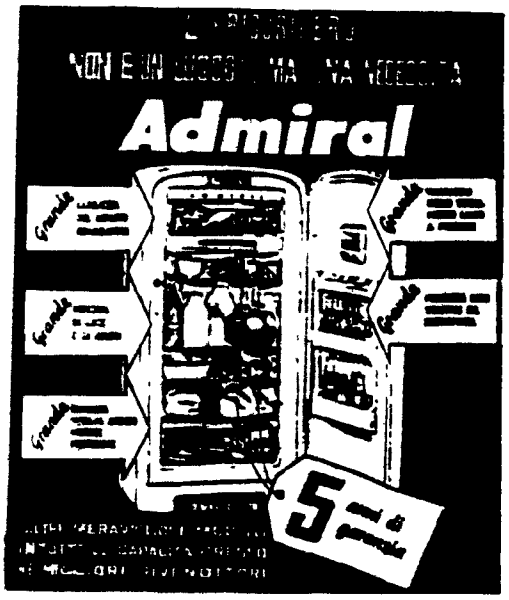


Fig. 3.16 (Tempo, 1953)

A refrigerator isn't a luxury! It's a necessity.

ADMIRAL

-- LARGE freezer compartment

-- LARGE number of styles and colors

-- LARGE capacity with rear motor

-- GREAT advantage of instant pushbutton defrosting

-- GREAT practicality of in-door compartments

Five year guarantee!

Other marvelous models in all sizes available from the best merchants.

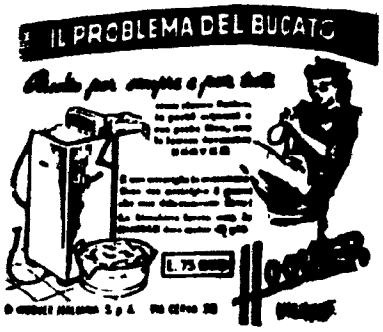


Fig. 3.17 (Domenica del Corriere, 1950)

THE PROBLEM OF LAUNDRY ... solved once and for all without effort, in a few minutes and at low cost with the HOOVER washing machine.

The machine is a marvel! Clothing washed so delicately is a marvel, too! Linens washed by the HOOVER last much longer.

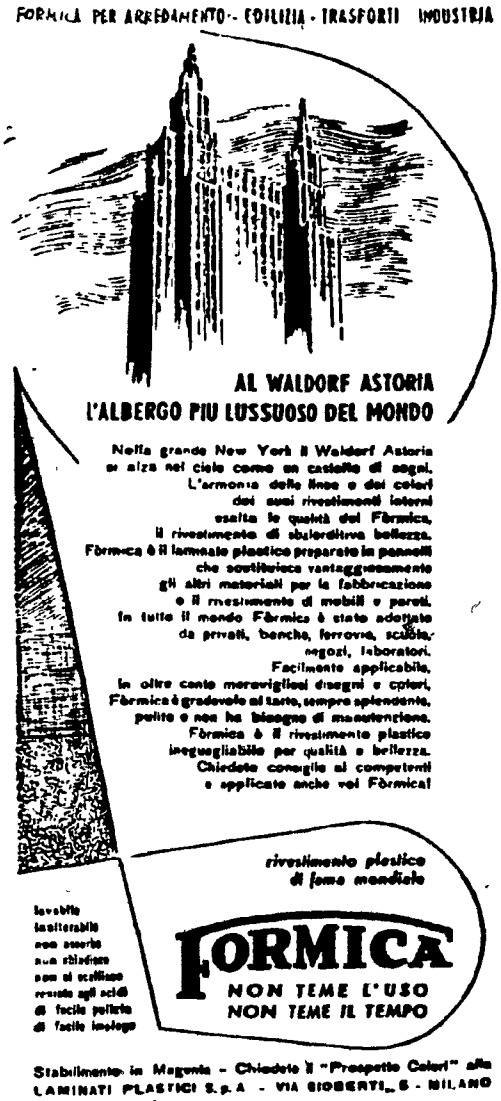


Fig. 3.18 (Tempo, 1954)

At the Waldorf Astoria, the most luxurious hotel in the world.

In the big city of New York, the Waldorf Astoria rises into the sky like a castle of dreams. The harmony of the lines and colors of its interior surfaces proclaim the quality of Formica, the surface of amazing beauty. Formica plastic laminate comes in panels and is a better substitute for other materials in building or covering furniture and walls. All over the world, Formica is being used in private homes, banks, railroad stations, schools, stores and laboratories. Easy to apply in more than 100 marvelous designs and colors, Formica is pleasing to the touch, always shining, clean and needs no maintainance. Formica is a plastic surface unparallelled for quality and beauty. Ask the experts and apply Formica yourself!

Plastic surfaces famous around the world - Formica - Stands up to use, stands up to time. Washable, permanent, non-absorbent, colorfast, scratch and acid resistant, easy to clean and apply.

Notes

1. See Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), chap. 2.

2. Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1964, pp. 217-218.

3. Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, New York: Random House, 1973, pp. 139 and 142.

4. Ronald Berman, *Advertising and Social Change*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981, p. 125.

5. *ibid.*, p. 124.

6. Morris Janovitz, *The Last Half Century*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1978, p. 339.

7. John K. Galbraith, *The New Industrial Society*, New York: New American Library, 1979, p. 160.

8. de Grazia, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

9. See Raphael Zarisky, *Italy: The Politics of Uneven Development*, Hinsdale, IL: Dryden, 1972, p. 110.

10. This bifurcation of the world order somehow accords with the many connotations the word "America" seems to have in Italian. Not only does it mean "success," as in "fare l'America," but this success is seen as realizable on two fronts, "the rich America" (the established, industrialized United States) or "the poor America," characterized by a sense of "frontier spirit" and a potential for industrial growth (Australia).

11. Raymond Williams, "The New Metropolis," in *Introduction to the Sociology of "Developing Societies,"* Hamza Alavi and Teodor Shanin, eds., New York: Monthly Review, 1982, p. 363.

12. See de Grazia, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

13. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, New York: New American Library, 1979, p. 407.

14. There would appear to be concrete reason for such beliefs, beyond the self-created attraction of foreign media depicting unfamilar lifestyles. Specifically, according to one critic (Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media are American*, London: Constable, 1977), the responsability lies with indiginous social inequalities which are hoped to be

resolvable in a new social order. In other words, if the existing system is seen as condoning social and economic inequality, especially in the new light of contemporary ideals, founded on religious beliefs which no longer seem as relevant or necessary as they once were, or are propagated by an elite of scholars and priests in a language unintelligible to many, then the fact of widespread dissatisfaction would necessarily seem as obvious as it is inevitable, especially among the dispossessed: women, the young, the poor and the unskilled. The system itself provided for significant change only by its own demise (i.e., revolution or civil war), a not wholly desirable remedy, whereas the alternative (foreign) conception of the world seemed to provide a number of yet untried options.

15. As a case in point, the very beliefs about the regenerative powers of America and American goods which have been discussed to this point are themselves antithetical to Christian theology which holds as a primary tenet that such new beginnings can not be achieved by human effort alone.

16. Janowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

CONCLUSION: Advertising as Propaganda

Demonstrably, the appeal of American goods in postwar Italy was due to a universal exchange value (American-ness) which promised to remake consumers in the image of supposedly typical members of an idealized user community comprised of the citizens of the United States. By intimating that such transformations were even possible, it created a social hierarchy of its own in which any distinctions were based on material possession, rather than other, less controllable, phenomena. This, then, was the basic attraction of the lifestyle described to Italians as the American way of life and justification for the new needs and standards advertising referred to.

Given the perceived advantages of emulating the American lifestyle, there would have been reason for Italians to attend to its various characteristics and details. Insofar as these could be gleaned from advertisements, the positive images also put forth by other sources were further supported and clarified. Specifically, Italians wishing to improve their lot in life were led to follow the example set by a user community which, since it was originally comprised primarily of film stars (who were later implied to be more or less representative of other Americans) was also to be observed at the movies. However, if film helped to make advertising intelligible as a representation of the American way of life by filling in its missing elements and defining members of its user community, it also contributed more directly toward its primary message: that consumer goods were inextricably bound to American-ness, which in turn translated as prestige. Accordingly, Italians learning the details of American life from advertising would have been led to conclude that the advantages Americans seemed to enjoy were an exclusive result of their priviledged access to the latest scientific discoveries and possession of superior knowledge, which

enabled them to live their own lives in a more or less scientific way, consuming "rationally" and "efficiently." Thus, the ownership and correct use of certain uniquely American products were seen as related to, if not responsible for, the American position of world leadership -- whose legitimacy was underscored by advertising's almost constant reminder that these goods were in greater demand than were any of their international competitors.

By continually stressing (or even manufacturing) positive aspects of American life, such representations eventually contributed to the creation of a particular stereotype which held that because access to such products was universal, everyone living in the United States was able to reap the benefits of their use, a fact which contributed to America's reputation as "the land of opportunity:" in a nation where it was said that the highest standard of living in the world was enjoyed, it was seemingly possible for any inhabitant to **buy** health and happiness. Correspondingly, since American corporations were willing and able to distribute their goods abroad, they offered equal opportunity to citizens of other nations to participate in "the good life," too. However, since this line of reasoning was necessarily based on an understanding of the United States as internationally dominant, it tended to naturalize the existence of American models in advertising and make the notion of change, in general, more acceptable. Advertisements were thus also instrumental as a means to legitimate the conditions of modernity and to usher in the ideology of progress.

As a result, "progress" was thenceforth to be defined by innovation. By crediting the desirability of the user community to the use of "the latest," "scientific" commodities, advertisements also sold "new-ness" (new

experiences and social change) as the key to a better way of life which had already been defined as American. In valorizing the new, the immediate effect of these beliefs was to devalorize the old: older product-types became less prominent in the market as they either disappeared or were advertised as new. Tradition's only commercial value, its only popularly-perceived desirability, then, lay in its ability to modify the innovative in order to make it seem less threatening. This model was attractive not only because of widespread admiration for its user community, but because of its seeming manageability. Theoretically, it was "democratic" in its accessibility and offered the individual virtual control of his/her own destiny, since all were given the chance to better their own situation based on the information made available to them in advertisements.

Because this "democratic" model denied traditional class markers, it substituted its own which were derived from the properties of goods. Consequently, status became dependent on appearances: the acquisition of those qualities advertisements defined as desirable through the consumption of commodities which embodied them. In proposing social alternatives, advertising also advocated other, more fundamental changes which it represented as bound to them through the goods which brought them both about. The progressive promise of a manageable "modern" or "American" lifestyle dictated the management of life itself with products designed to help regulate time or money, a requirement which favored the adoption of a commodity-derived personal image best described as "efficient" or "rational" whose prototypes were identified in the American-dominated business community. The ultimate goal of this life management was seemingly the creation of increased leisure -- which was also categorized

by the use of particular consumer goods -- and a priority given to those activities which encouraged saving time from other activities to be spent in such pursuits.

In the face of significant changes in the way life was lived, shifting values would have contributed to the formation of new social structures: a new elite or even new peer groupings. These new structures and groupings, being based on American values, necessarily were patterned after the American, establishing an international hierarchy led by the United States. The common denominator between the United States, as model, and the other nations of the world who imitated it was the urban experience which the United States epitomized. Hence, the traditional community was displaced by a non-geographically-specific "psychological collective" whose authority was no longer represented by clergy and civic leaders, but the "professional" and business-like personae depicted in advertisements. This change in both values and those responsible for setting and upholding them essentially amounted to a "broadening of horizons:" people were directed to look outside of their immediate environment for role models resulting, in this case, in a general tendancy to emulate Americans.

In propagating this structure of beliefs, advertising for American goods was clearly beneficial to the interests of the USIS's propaganda campaign by, first, supporting a positive image of life in the United States, second, inducing Italians to admire and imitate Americans and, third, contributing to goals and expectations of the future which were bound to American ones. In formal terms, it remains to be seen, however, exactly how these two campaigns related to each other and in what way commercial functions were related to the political.

Selling the American Lifestyle

One of the more relevant aspects of propaganda theory with respect to advertising was systematically formulated by Jacques Ellul, who makes a distinction between two primary, mutually reinforcing types of propaganda: "direct" or "political," the generally-acknowledged variety aimed at modifying opinions and attitudes for some specific purpose, and the more diffuse "sociological" which must precede it to slowly create an atmosphere of favorable preliminary attitudes and accompany it to reinforce its legitimacy. Specifying that sociological propaganda, in general, comprehends "the group of manifestations by which any society seeks to integrate the maximum number of individuals into itself, to unify its members' behavior according to a pattern, to spread its style of life abroad and thus impose itself on other groups,"[1] he maintains that an effective propaganda campaign combines both of these types, sociological propaganda being used either to pave the way for political propaganda (acting as "pre-propaganda"), to maintain hegemony ("post-propaganda") or both. By standardizing social practices which are actually based in the ideology it wishes to support, in other words, a propaganda campaign tends to focus beliefs: direct political assertions are already put into practice by the time they become recognizable as such and the ideology they manifest correspondingly has become ultimately essential to the preservation of a

state of being which then seems natural. Thus:

> ... sociological propaganda will appear to be the medium that has prepared the ground for direct propaganda: it becomes identified with sub-propaganda. Nothing is easier than to graft a direct propaganda onto a setting prepared by sociological propaganda; besides, sociological propaganda may itself be transformed into direct propaganda. Then, by a series of intermediate stages, we not only see one turn into the other, but also a smooth transition from what was merely a spontaneous affirmation of a way of life to the deliberate affirmation of the truth.[2]

Direct and sociological propaganda, then, differ in terms of content and means of dissemination, direct propaganda being an overt affirmation of beliefs and values conceived for the purpose of effecting explicit ideological changes on its environment and sociological propaganda being a seemingly less deliberate network of ideologically-meaningful phenomena whose relationship to political propaganda necessarily appears coincidental. In their inter-relationship they are, however, occasionally indistinguishable, as was the case with American advertising in Italy during the postwar period.

Even at the most superficial level of analysis, these advertising campaigns clearly could be characterized as a type of direct propaganda, serving an end of product sales by associating the possession of particular goods with desirable lifestyle models, implicitly promising consumption as a means of acquiring individual identity and offering itself as a key to understanding the social order in which this identity would be contextualized. Furthermore, since differences between competing product brands are essentially manufactured within advertisements themselves and based in their perceived indispensability to various consumer lifestyles, it has often been argued that advertising also creates the very needs their

products are conceived to fulfill[3] and (within the propaganda literature, at least) that this constitutes it as a direct, commercial propaganda. Ellul, for instance, apparently sees the creation of needs as advertising's primary propagandistic function. In his opinion,

> Propaganda ... arouses in us an increase of certain desires, prejudices, and needs which were by no means imperative to begin with. They become so only as a result of propaganda, which here plays the same role as advertising.[4] ... every month new products appear for which there is no prior need, but which take their place in the market without much resistance. That is exclusively the result of propaganda. New needs are created from the day a new product appears. After a few months of getting used to a product, its absence will be felt because an effective need will have been created. But the need was created exclusively by advertising.[5]

It is no doubt true that advertising contributes to the realization of needs, especially given the fact that, in practice, they can seldom really be justified in any absolute sense, but only in terms of the symbolic properties of goods. Realistically speaking, in other words, goods are considered necessary to members of a given society if they are thought to be in general use by others of the same social class. Advertising, by representing a user community which nominally includes the consumer while calling attention to his/her shortcomings relative to its other members, constructs a class system from its own criteria within which it can continually support the necessity of a changing variety of goods. In addition, however, when advertising is distributed widely enough so that the lifestyles it represents seem even more than normally unattainable to the consumer (as in this case, where they are perceived as being part of another culture), these lifestyles themselves are part of the promotion and not pre-ordained as desirable. In this respect, advertising works as sociological propaganda.

Underlying the findings of the foregoing chapters has been a belief that advertisements are effective primarily because they are constructed in such a way as to ally the goods they are trying to sell with an appealing and attractive lifestyle image. If advertisements can be seen to have political significance, it is because, in such circumstances, the attractiveness of idealized lifestyles is created within the advertising system itself and, in fact, that promotion of what it terms "the good life" is the primary function of the advertising industry as a whole.[6] Stuart Ewen, for instance, maintains that:

> Only in the instance of an individual ad was consumption a question of *what to buy*. In the broader context of a burgeoning commercial culture, the foremost political imperative was *what to dream* and consequently, *how to live*.[7]

In addition to enhancing the desirability of advertised products through their association with a particular lifestyle, then, advertising actually "sells" such lifestyles by alluding to the benefits they convey in terms of social acceptability, success and prestige: allusions which seem believable largely because they are so taken for granted within advertisements where they appear as neutral background against which only the merits of goods may be debated. In this respect, advertising is clearly compatible with the objectives of a propaganda campaign like the one launched by the USIS in postwar Italy, whose goal was to favorably represent the characteristics of American life. In likewise serving to document its merits, commercial advertising reinforced many of the government-sponsored campaign's claims of American superiority while significantly influencing Italian society in other ways unique unto itself.

It is important to note that Italian ads for American products, in

addition to complementing widespread impressions about the quality of life in the United States in a way that seemed removed from political interests, fulfilled a more personal need for many who read them. Indeed, it was because ads' depiction of seemingly accessible and prefabricated lifestyles met the desires of an audience which was apparently unable to form goals it could believe would be both satisfying and socially acceptable that they were ultimately successful in achieving their primary goal of product sales. Advertising, in other words, took a specific form because of the particular social configuration which existed in the United States and was ultimately successful in selling goods to Italians inasmuch as it was also appropriate to the Italian environment. Furthermore, by mirroring American society, its priorities, concerns and solutions to Italians, it served to legitimate the existence of similar conditions in their own country and to naturalize a given course of action relative to them. In Italy as in the United States, then, advertising might be presumed to have sprung from and reinforce a similar set of assumptions on the parts of advertisers and consumers alike about the world as it then existed, the direction of progress and the role of advertising and advertised goods relative to both.

In addition to serving a "sociological" function in support of an organized political campaign, therefore, insofar as it resembles descriptive definitions of propaganda, advertising has both "direct" and "sociological" traits unique unto itself: it is "direct" in meeting its primary objective of advancing the superiority of one particular brand or product over others for purposes of increasing its sales and "sociological" inasmuch as it must first establish the merits of consumption itself. These "sociological" aspects, in turn, have two manifestations, each of which would have been significant with regard to the political propaganda

campaign also in force during the postwar era in Italy. Following Ellul's definition, the first of these sociological functions (pre-propaganda) is one of support for the direct propaganda whose assertions it echoes, while the second (integration propaganda) is more autonomous and crucial to the process of naturalizing any given ideology: whereas the importance of pre-propaganda lies in its creation of an information environment in which direct propaganda's messages appear almost taken-for-granted, that of integration propaganda is to foster a sort of community of belief in which its assertions are already integral to daily life. Thus, integration propaganda is the sort of post-propaganda through which hegemony is maintained by reaffirming beliefs which have already become incorporated with social patterns. As Ellul specifies:

> Propaganda of integration ... aims at making the individual participate in society in every way. It is a long-term propaganda, a self-reproducing propaganda that seeks to obtain stable behavior, to adapt the individual to his everyday life, to reshape his thoughts and behavior in terms of the permanent social setting.[8]

In postwar Italy, in other words, advertising's attractive representations of everyday America did not only facilitate the USIS's mandate to project a "full and fair" (i.e., positive) picture of the United States and make the promise of the "Letters From America" campaign that anti-American (Communist) voters would be denied entrance to the United States seem all the more forbidding. If these were its pre-propagandistic functions, then its integrative capacities were even more interesting and, at least potentially, more significant. Because of the way advertising "works" to sell goods (linking the consumer's own identity to the ideology it represents, expanding the boundaries of community, standardizing norms and allying the expectations of the various individuals who comprise its

audience -- in this case, both Italians and Americans -- with those attributed to the user community), it ultimately could only have served to further expectations of American superiority since the invariably American norms it directed Italians to model themselves after were not to be regarded as bound to foreign ways but characteristic of the shape of things to come around the world. In constructing such a world-view, integrating Italians within a larger configuration from which the adoption of American values and aspirations seemed both logical and desirable, advertising was able to effect a sort of control from a position of consent: by making the emulation of Americans seem desirable, useful or even necessary, it prepared for a compatibility of ambitions and outlooks which had definite implications relative to the United States' political objectives in postwar Italy. In both its pre-propagandistic and integrative capacities, therefore, advertising was as politically influential in its own right as it was supportive of the officially-constituted propaganda campaign.

Advertising as Pre-Propaganda: Credibility

Traditionally, theories of propaganda have been founded on efforts to distinguish it from information which, in turn, is generally characterized by rational discourse: a presentation of differing points of view which allows the audience to form a composite from which to make independent judgements. Propaganda, on the other hand, is supposedly distinguished by one basic feature: the range of interpretations individual messages may

have is limited, either by avoiding argument (not mentioning conflicting points of view) or by appealing to the emotions.

Given the recognition of only two possible modes of communication, one of which was to be accepted as "true" and the other "false," it would seem that the credibility of both advertising and propaganda is primarily a function of their **appearing not to be** persuasive, representative of the interests or opinions of an identifiable person or group or attributable to a single source, but somehow objective or informative. In other words, in order to be credible, they must be accepted by their audience as "non-propaganda." In practical terms, therefore, the information conveyed by persuasive texts must be supported by data already known to their audiences, making it appear to be part of a generalized "knowledge," in order to be believable. Descriptive studies of both advertising and propaganda alike therefore agree that one of the most important features of a good campaign is an appearance of diffuseness. In seeming to come from a variety of sources over an extended period of time, such messages become part of a seemingly intuitive knowledge whose source is no longer recognized and thus may be instrumental in forming a climate of opinion upon which subsequent ones advancing similar claims may be founded.

Technically, the authors of most propaganda studies' maintain that propaganda messages must be designed to recall pre-existing emotions, whether positive (love, hope, desire) or negative (hate, fear, guilt, anger), and to suggest a course of action to maximize the former or eliminate the latter. To augment recommendations for the arousal of emotions, the "tips for propagandists" section which typically highlights such discussions may assert that people are more suggestible if they can be made to feel some sort of group allegiance and that they more easily give

credence to anything endorsed by recognized authority or prestige. Therefore, it is suggested that aspiring propagandists would be well advised to manipulate information (by selecting facts, asserting -- rather than arguing -- or even lying), using particular rhetorical strategies (recalling stereotypes, substituting desired names, places and/or objects within them and being repetitious) and idealizing extra-textual entities (pin-pointing an enemy who is subverting the will of the audience or appealing to an authority who is favorable to whatever cause it is hoped to advance). Hence, the propagandist's primary function is seen as one of covert concealment: hiding his own aims, alternative views, the actual means of the message's production and, consequently, suppressing the notion that it may be false -- while appearing not to do so.

These features, ultimately, are all visible in the advertising campaigns used in Italy after the mid-1940's, when American products and increasingly sophisticated marketing techniques began to prevail. Structurally, such advertisements strictly complied with the requirements prescribed for propaganda texts. Like the hypothetical propaganda campaigns detailed within propaganda theory, much of the appeal of these commercial messages rested in their incorporation of incentives which were basically emotional: the ideology of consumption itself was, after all, predicated upon advertising's invocation of the consumer's own fears and insecurities, which were then legitimized, and offer of consumption as a course of action to allieviate them. The recommendation that hopes for the promised results of this course of action be linked to notions of group membership and the authority of prestige, in turn, are clearly embodied in the user community. Furthermore, putting claims of product performance characteristics aside, advertisements for American goods were credible

inasmuch as they were built primarily from ideas about the merits of the American Way of Life which were already widespread in Italy and supported by other sources. The appearance of diffuseness was also heightened by the fact that the American stereotype put forth by advertising was necessarily constructed by the entire system of advertisements taken as a composite, leaving the consumer the task of piecing it together at will. In addition, since the merits of the American way of life were not questioned within advertisements, but accepted as a premise from which other claims could be made, that component of the message they conveyed was probably less subject to scrutiny than it might have been in a different context. In other words, if advertising was persuasive of the desirability of the American lifestyle, the superiority of American knowledge and achievement and the necessity of adapting to American standards, it was largely because it appeared to be trying to persuade its audience of something else.

The dominant model of persuasive communications has been challenged in recent years, however, because of its unrealistic conception of the audience's role in the process of communication. Whereas its proponents credit the effects of an advertising or propaganda campaign to a unique emotional power which enables it to impose a particular point of view on an audience which is forced to accept it without thought or consideration, its detractors insist that verisimilitude is necessarily a product of reflection and consideration and thus can be effected by constructing propaganda messages which acknowledge more than one point of view, seeming to remain open to interpretation, but privilege one of them over the others, thereby encouraging a preferred reading. Rather than crediting the propagandist's deliberate concealment of facts and manipulation of the audience's emotions, they postulate a concept of propaganda in which

perceived truthfulness is based on adherence to particular conventions of representation which customarily describe events and phenomena as real. In other words, as Steve Neale maintains, the "rules" for creating effective propaganda may be no more mysterious or complex than an observance of the principles of realism, in which information is offered from a number of different perspectives and the reader assigned a seemingly active role in interpreting them or putting the pieces together to form a continuous narrative. In his opinion:

> If propaganda is conceived purely as a single mode of addressor-addressee relationship, it can be juxtaposed ... against the realist text with its complexity of points of view and its apparent appeal to a spectator who freely makes up his or her own mind such that directly and specifically "political" or "ideological" criteria of evaluation are irrelevant.[10]

Because these conventions are popularly perceived as a transcription of reality and do not limit the number of perspectives represented, seeming to leave the reader free to selectively interpret them, they may be more useful as a persuasive "tool" than other, more apparently manipulative, methods.

Although these developments in propaganda theory indicate two completely different ways of understanding the relationship between propagandist and audience which are represented in two equally different ways of conceiving the role of the text, itself, there is nonetheless a point of intersection between them. Whereas the traditional theorist ignores the problem of representation entirely by almost taking it for granted and concentrates instead on extra-textual factors like peer pressure, alienation and pre-conceived notions about the reliability of various sources and the consistency of the information they present to

explain propaganda's verisimilitude and consequent persuasiveness as a deliberate and formulaic manipulation of the thought processes of its audience,[11] the alternative is to assume that the audience's powers of reason are not so easily subverted by their emotional needs and that credibility is primarily a factor of consistency with other sources and conformity to a set of conventions the audience is familiar with as a means of interpreting events it accepts as real. Clearly, these two formulations of propaganda are not completely contradictory: each of them, instead, focusses on different aspects of what may be a much more pervasive process. In other words, while the emotional factors cited by traditional theory may be influential in an audience member's desire to believe the propagandist's message and an illusion of autonomy instrumental in his/her ability to justify doing so, if the individual messages within a propaganda campaign are not constructed in a way familiar to audience members as "realistic," they will not be believed. The audience, therefore, is active in interpreting propaganda and must feel itself to be so in order for any such message to be accepted. Although traditional theorists do not explicitly recognize this necessity (actually characterizing the audience as passive and malleable),[12] their insistance that propaganda be disseminated through a variety of channels and supported by a number of sources is an implicit acknowledgement of a belief that audience members routinely compare information made available to them, contrasting what they feel are different points of view to arrive at a synthesis that they will accept as truth. The common point of reference between the two theoretical orientations, then, is an insistance that credibility derives from the audience's illusion of having freely chosen what to believe from a position of omniscience. By infusing traditional propaganda theory with a more

particular expectation of the way credible and persuasive propaganda messages should be formulated, this principle can be extended from campaign to text to arrive at an understanding of persuasiveness in which credibility is universally achieved by the articulation of different "voices" which must be ordered to make sense.

Since advertising is part of a diffuse, self-reinforcing system of connotations, drawing from and contributing to popular culture, it is therefore made to seem "natural" or realistic by incorporating a view of the world that elsewhere had been constructed as real, as the representations of successive texts naturalized each other. In postwar Italy, American advertising delineated an American image and lifestyle model which seemed both authentic and viable largely because it was presented in fragments, with the various advertisements for different products supporting essentially similar visions of the United States and the way consumption fit into the American way of life. Furthermore, these were not the only such representations available to the Italian audience, nor were American images the only ones to be employed by advertisers. Thus, whether advertisements were constructed around the ephemera of daily life (like games of *totocalcio* or popular movies), world history, timeless values and priorities (like trust, love, health or personal safety) or the prestige of the unexperienced (science, the United States or progress), they appropriated the authenticity of these things and only seemed to embellish them with the addition of their actual, commercial message. Much of what was believable about advertising's depiction of American life must have been accepted as such primarily because of its familiarity, as Rosalind Coward and John Ellis have confirmed.

> ... realness is constructed precisely by the constant

> re-presentation of the same relations in a different guise, the constant cross-echoing of texts, of writing ... this is precisely the inter-text. Each text is suspended in the network of all others, from which it derives its intelligibility.[13]

However, this process is not merely an additive one, with successive texts progressively elaborating more precise accounts of the "real," but one of displacement and revision. Each new text not only is influenced by, but influences readings of those which have gone before by creating new frameworks for their interpretation. Thus, both advertising and propaganda could be said to build from and reinforce each other in a continuous inter-reflexive cycle based on shared ideological themes.

Thus, political propaganda and commercial advertising could conceivably have functioned complementarily in postwar Italy: each serving as a sort of "pre-propaganda," a common point of reference from which a "pro-American" ideology could then be based. For instance, the feature most stressed by American advertisers, and the reason for the ultimate popularity of goods advertised as American, was their relationship to an already-admired American lifestyle. On the other hand, however, the incorporation of this lifestyle into advertisements where it functioned as an "American" exchange value also served the objectives of political propaganda by providing specific details of "the American Way of Life" in a way that was likely to seem non-political (and, thus, potentially more credible) while nonetheless supporting or partially constructing a particular, politically relevant ideology. Thus, in this instance, both advertising and propaganda were characterized by a certain degree of mutual integration as they each essentially based their claims upon the other's, thereby implying a sort of popular concensus (which need not necessarily have existed) on the truthfulness of the other campaign. While political

propaganda aimed to establish the superiority of the American Way of Life through such efforts as the "Letters from America" campaign, the conspicuous displays of affluence and beneficence of the direct relief and academic exchange programs and the documentation offered by the media through entertainment (movies, books and magazines circulated by USIS libraries or published by the agency itself) or more direct information supplied to the Italian press and "opinion leaders," advertising campaigns used this supposed superiority as a **premise** in promoting the desirability of individual products, thereby supporting the propaganda campaign's original claims.

Therefore, if American interests had any impact whatsoever on Italian public opinion, it was certainly because of their variety: advertising's images of the American Way of Life were consonant with those offered by USIS propaganda, the Hollywood film industry, Italian intellectuals and, to a certain extent, the popular folklore perpetuated by the presence and status of the *Americani*. However, their representation in a context in which they were cited as unequivocal proof of something else, as the desirability of the American Way of Life was used to support the merits of specific goods which were supposedly integral to it, served only to accentuate their verisimilitude by seeming to "officially" sanction it or even by diverting critical attention elsewhere. What remains to be elucidated, however, is the extent to which the very desirability of this lifestyle was itself meaningful.

Americanization as Integration

During the postwar period, in particular, people of all nationalities were required to adapt to a changing environment and, at least according to the social theorists of the time, these changes and the extent to which they penetrated all levels of society and spheres of social interaction pre-disposed them to actively seek out and accept others' opinions and interpretations of the world around them to guide them through their daily lives.[14] Most studies of persuasion written since the mid-fifties are based on the then-popular idea of the "mass man" or "lonely crowd" which treats the individual as being strongly influenced by a sense of group identity while simultaneously suffering alienation from the social environment. This isolation is presumed to make him/her particularly vulnerable to persuasive powers in a search for self-definition and explanations of social phenomena. Denis McQuail, for instance, describing the climate of postwar industrial society, observed that:

> Men are more estranged from each other and the ties of family and community are weaker; the authority of educated elites and moral leaders has been eroded along with the decay of traditional religious faiths; in a society dominated by status-seeking and anxiety, new leaders and new faiths are sought out.[15]

Thus, the new model of an emergent society was widely characterized as a mass existential crisis, in which individuals were driven to search for meaning in the face of alienation and the breakdown of established ways of

life, standards and authority. Given such conditions, advertising or propaganda was assumed to doubly benefit the troubled "mass man" by forming a sort of "information community," and a common bond with its other members, while providing this information in the form of neat, unequivocal messages from which a single conclusion could easily be drawn. In a society which was conceived as rootless, fragmented and constantly shifting, such a service would indeed have been welcomed.

However, despite feelings of personal inadequacy and a consequent receptiveness to anything that would seem to close the perceived gap between the individual and his/her peers, deliberately-constituted propaganda could hardly have been assumed to fulfill such functions alone. Other forums also usually exist for this purpose, dividing individuals, however arbitrarily from the propagandist's point of view, into primary groups which are likely to influence interpretations of a propagandist's basic message. Once again, David Reisman describes postwar society in just such terms:

> Political propaganda and campaigns did not have an easy, conscienceless victory over the isolated and helpless members of an anonymous mass, but ... groups and "cells" mediated between the messages coming from the centers of diffusion and the individual, guiding the latter's interpretation and selection.... For example ... the mass media operated in the socialization of young people, by providing an agenda for the peer group as well as ephemeral materials for it to "consume."[16]

Specifically, then, political propagandists working within such an environment would have been aware of the mass media's potential influence on the public they were trying to reach and categorized its impact as one of agenda-setting: establishing precisely the same type of relations that advertising depends upon, setting standards and legitimating certain types

of behavior, although it seems unlikely that they actually thought of advertising in these terms.

Especially in the period immediately following the end of the Second World War, Italy has been viewed as exemplary of such a conception of industrial society. Although the nation experienced significant economic progress during that era, this growth was not accompanied by a corresponding change in traditional media of socialization. These media (directed by the established religious, educational and political systems) were increasingly criticised as conflicting or even irrelevant to the conditions of everyday life. As late as 1972, Raphael Zarisky could still write with regard to Italian political life:

> Italy is composed of several mutually antagonistic subcultures. Italians do not agree on basic values or attitudes with regard to their political system. Consequently, the individual Italian citizen is subjected to conflicting socializing tendencies.... Such cross-pressures create debilitating confusion in the minds of those who find themselves thus exposed to a chorus of discordant voices. Their response may be political apathy, or outright alienation from the political system. In short, the malfunction of the socialization process may seriously threaten the survival of the Italian political system.[17]

Despite increased industrialization and urbanization, in other words, economic development alone could not produce hoped-for solutions to longstanding problems.

> ... economic and social transition have apparently failed to generate significant political change. According to some observers, Italian political culture is still characterized by widespread attitudes of profound alienation -- of distrust of the government and of the politicians who direct it.... Such media of political socialization as the family, the schools, and the universities are said to be failing to perform their function of transmitting the values and attitudes of the system to the young people who are entering upon their

responsibilities as citizens and voters.[18]

Indeed, the alienation said to be experienced by members of this fragmented society was sufficiently widespread to warrant comparison to the American "lonely crowd" model. During the height of the movement decrying the social consequences of industrialization, increased reliance upon technological developments to the conduct of daily life and dependence upon the marketplace to provide them in the United States, Italian novelists often described characters and conditions which could equally well have figured in the work of their contemporaries across the ocean.[19] The prevalence of books dealing with the hidden failings of urban industrialism and their attendant feelings of indifference, futility, suspicion and desperation, so familiar in American popular culture, are now even cited as an index of Italian economic progress by social historians like Zarisky who apparently accept social malaise as so unquestionably symptomatic of industrial development that they feel confident in concluding that its presence was actually indicative of industrialization.[20] Assuming that such observations and the premises of propaganda theory are well-founded, therefore, Italians would have been at least as much in need of solutions to widespread alienation as were their American counterparts, possibly more bereft of appropriate socializing experiences and, consequently, receptive to various types of persuasion, whether political or commercial.

American efforts to influence public opinion, comprised of massive economic aid and information disseminated through the communications media, both contributed to the creation of the postwar Italian's perception of inconsistency between past and future ways of life and replaced the inadequacies of traditional structures in resolving new problems with particular solutions (while simultaneously opening new markets to American

commerce). These alternatives were offered by both political and commercial information campaigns: the first by projecting the United States as a model wherein such problems had been overcome, and the second by illustrating the details of this model and suggesting consumption as a means of participating in or at least emulating it.

By virtue of its wide distribution, advertising therefore eventually acted as a social integrator as vast numbers of people perceived identical problems and acted similarly to solve them. In fact, the American advertising industry has often been described by critics and supporters alike as an instrument of national integration equally capable of serving political, social and commercial ends for this reason. As an "Americanization Agency," advertisements have been seen as "a bond which would insure that the American point of view will prevail"[21] by selling the American way of life to immigrants and dissidents in the United States, spawning a proliferation of peroxided attempts to achieve the "all-American" standard of beauty in the imagined need to be perceived as American in order to have a serious chance of either success or happiness in American society. Robert Park, for instance, specifically advocated advertising to immigrants in the United States during the 1920's, not only in order to improve the national economy, but to promote American habits, values, institutions and, in short, the superiority of American culture and industrial achievement by maintaining:

> National advertising is the great Americanizer. It tells the story of American business, pluck, enterprise, and achievement in discovering and mining the treasures of the earth, in manufacturing, in trade, in literature, in science and invention, and in art. American ideals and institutions, law, order and prosperity, have not yet been sold to all of our immigrants. American products and standards of living have not yet been bought by the foreign born in America.... If Americans want to combine

> business and patriotism, they should advertise products, industry and American institutions in the American Foreign-Language Press.[22]

More recently, others have condemned the industry for these effects, most frequently in international contexts in conjunction with allegations of American cultural imperialism. From this perspective, advertising is accepted as a propaganda of political and social, as well as commercial, consequence since its primary function is seen as the promotion of the American way of life. Raphael Silva, discussing the socio-cultural impact of American advertising on Peru in the early Seventies, bases his critique on such an assumption in order to argue that, if advertising is an essential link between the spheres of production and consumption in the modern, industrial economy, then international advertising is instrumental in constructing a larger economic system in which these two spheres are defined by nationality. In his words,

> Advertising "sells" forms of economic behaviour as well as social and political forms of behavior.... The person who sees a soap commercial will not only aspire and desire the soap, but will also desire the context in which the soap is advertised, to be like the model (the image of the dominant group).... Thus, simultaneously, the imperialist center and the local bourgeoisie become the ideal models for the dominated social group in the dependent countries, reinforcing their dependency and domination.... In this way, propaganda alludes to models of behavior in which commodities play an indispensable basic role -- "clothes make the man" -- yet they do so without alluding explicitly and directly to a specific commodity.[23]

This is certainly compatible with the Italian experience of American advertising detailed here: by setting its own (American) standards, it managed to create a larger conception of community in which the United States was necessarily dominant, prompting non-Americans to attempt to

bridge the gap by becoming more like Americans, or behaving as Americans had been described to them (consuming). In short, they were led to believe that the supposed American advantage was largely a result of the fact that people in the United States were nearly perfect consumers, invariably knowing how to regulate their own lives with the appropriate commodities.

If advertising sells socio-political behavior, or lifestyles, therefore, then it also tends to reproduce a social, or political, hierarchy of emulators and the emulated. Hence, an advertisement's socio-political integrative capacities serve several ends: increasing a product's sales through its association with a lifestyle which encompasses values perceived as "positive" (in this case, American) by implying that participation in such a lifestyle is necessarily accomplished through consumption, standardizing attitudes and behavior and, in so doing, helping to make advertised products appear to be somehow "democratic," a common bond between consumers of many class and ethnic backgrounds. Ewen points out that champions of industry have historically justified the principles of mass production for such reasons:

> One business theorist contended that freedom and equality could be translated into the ability of each person to emulate or aspire to emulate the tastes of the upper classes; "and what could be a better method of doing this (proving equality) than by consumption." The "fashion cycle," he contended, was an expression of the tastes and values of the wealthy, yet through the mass production of low-priced goods which imitated "high-priced merchandise," upper-class values might be internalized within the culture of the poor.[24]

Thus, in a manner of speaking, advertising offers commodities as means of escaping the reality of the consumer's daily existence, providing an idealized universe within which he/she need not suffer the stigmata of race, class, sex, ethnicity or political affiliation. In contrast to the

unpleasantness of his/her lived experience, which advertisements accentuate, the commodity is presented as a liberator, a consumer-elected intervention into an otherwise pre-determined order. Insofar as consumption determines social identity, taking precedence over biology, geography and history, the consumer is left to feel that he/she has considerable control and the ability to supersede an unpredictable, and perhaps harsh, environment through the acquisition of products which seemingly exist independently of it. Assuming that the "lonely crowd" model was an accurate description of life in postwar Italy, therefore, the "therapeutic" properties of commodities already recognized by Americans would have been especially appealing to Italians in the possibilities they offered for **self-sufficient** self-gratification. Thus, the allure of the American Way of Life: the disintegration of previously-accepted standards and modes of behavior had less potential to traumatize if one had recourse to such an alternative.

Change as Progress

In advancing the superiority of the American Way of Life and the American solution to life's problems (consumption), all of these advertisements essentially shared the same conception of "the good life" as a way of life which necessarily encompassed technological progress, since it was that progress which ultimately had permitted the development of "new" consumer goods in the first place. Advertising, then, as Jacques

Ellul insists, is important as a means of "putting across" the technical way of life, especially if that way of life can be perceived as synonymous with pre-conceived ideals:

> Any man who buys a given object participates in this way of life and, by falling prey to the compulsive power of advertising, enters involuntarily and unconsciously into its psychological framework. One of the great designs of advertising is to create needs; but this is possible only if these needs correspond to an ideal of life that man accepts. The way of life offered by advertising is all the more compelling in that it corresponds to certain easy and simple tendancies of man and refers to a world in which there are no spiritual values to form and inform life. When men feel and respond to the needs advertising creates, they are adhering to its ideal of life.[28]

Once again, the displacement of one "psychological framework" by another (social change) and the corresponding absence of direction or guidance in individual life is credited as the basis of advertising's appeal and the driving force behind the model it cites as an alternative. That ideal, here identified as American, was never explicitly explained or justified to those Italians who learned of it through advertisements. In Italy, implicit maxims (like "cleanliness for cleanliness' sake" or "modernity for modernity's sake," for instance) sponsored by advertising merited no further explanation than their American endorsement. In other words, there was no concrete reason given for these exigencies; it was merely stated that Americans lived by them. For that matter, no rationale needed ever be offered for the validity of this desire to emulate Americans, since this had been, after all, a pre-existing variable exploited for the sake of sales and subsequently reinforced by frequent and widespread reiteration.

American advertising, then, could be seen in this instance as more than just a "public information" supplement to U.S. political propaganda

supporting its claims about the attractiveness of life in the United States: seemingly, it was also a type of propaganda in its own right, promoting technology, in general, and the technologization of Italy, in particular. As such, it served to rationalize the American *status quo* and legitimate the motives of American manufacturers, while seeming to the Italian public at large to be the vanguard of a social revolution of sorts. This "revolution" would have been known in other terms to both Italians and Americans alike as "modernity:" that ideal of innovation, egalitarianism, material well-being and technological *savoir faire* that the United States seemed to approximate but was offered as an Italian ambition. "Modernity," thus, is constituted in such an instance by a paradoxical set of relations: the traditions of a particular group are distilled, embellished and presented to another as "change," or "progress." Advertising clearly has a place of its own within this tautology, since its own efficacity is derived precisely from its valorization or naturalization of these relations.

Equally clear, therefore, is the fact that such an apparently hierarchical relationship of progressiveness is **not** a phenomenon exclusive to international advertising, but one of the foundations of advertising theory, with its "trickle down" philosophy. The difference here is merely that the emulated group, the user community, was given a name and a geographical specificity which distinguished it from co-members of the Italian consumer's immediate environment. To an American audience of the same era, however, this community had to remain un-named (unless it was comprised of celebrities), since "American-ness" was a condition of their everyday life and hence could not be invested with the same mythical properties.

Significantly, then, the cumulative effect of the trend towards

modernization would not have been merely additive, augmenting regional customs with new practices, but must actually have been one of displacement: the old was supplanted by the new, which in turn was described and made desirable by inter-personal contact and the mass media,[26] as the boundaries of community became more far-flung and the bases of authority correspondingly ceased to be strictly local. Especially given the apparent failure of other, more established socialization processes to transmit and reinforce longstanding values, it hardly seems surprising that alternative influences (supporting different values) would be welcome and given credence, further undermining already declining traditions. Greater numbers of information sources and heightened contact between people of different habits and experiences would then merely have accelerated the process, as Berger, *et al.*, maintain:

> This urbanization of consciousness has been brought about especially through the modern media of mass communication. The process probably began earlier with the spread of literacy as a result of modern school systems pushing outward from the city to the remotest rural hinterlands.... This process has been vastly accelerated, however, by technological communications media. Through mass publications, motion pictures, radio and television the cognitive and normative definitions of reality invented in the city are rapidly diffused throughout the entire society.... The individual, wherever he may be, is bombarded with a multiplicity of information and communication. In terms of information, this process proverbially "broadens the mind." By the same token, however, it weakens the integrity and plausibility of his "home world."[27]

Ultimately, then, advertising's integrative capacities were such that its depiction of an American user community to an audience of postwar Italians not only made American habits, priorities and beliefs seem "natural" (or even superior) to them, but would have conditioned both nationalities equally to strive for and expect a future characterized by increasing

leisure and greater ease -- which, in turn, was to be secured by purchasable technology.

Because advertising's primary intent is to promote consumption, the perpetuation of a world-view it has itself constructed, in which consumption is the primary source of an individual's sense of self-worth and esteem within the community is clearly critical to its own enduring viability. Inasmuch as this system is a closed one, however, the solutions, goals and models it offers only make sense from the perspective of its own values, as Sebastian de Grazia has remarked:

> Time and place mark a man's position; position presupposes a stability of intercourse which we call a community; that stability expresses a way of life, and an idea of what life is worth living for. If leisure is the answer, or even part of it, then we must know what leisure is before we can tell anyone how to make life worth living.... Advertising can play on the things that men miss in their lives, but being itself within the system, it cannot give them back time and space. It cannot suggest a way of life, even if it knows of one, that goes against the system. It has to offer money-costing ideas for free time and all else because that's the only way it can live.[28]

Thus, since advertising defines its own universe within which individual fulfillment is defined as the acquisition of goods which convey their consumer's identity and consumption, in turn, is defined as leisure, it ultimately constructs a self-perpetuating system in which the leisurely "good life" must be bought with the proceeds of labor and self-improvement necessitates ever-greater levels of exertion. Furthermore, by definition, any leisure commodities seem to create (or time they seem to save) increases the amount of time available to be devoted to work. Because work is the key to the increased buying power popularly perceived as a requisite to leisure, this new "free" time is likely to be channelled back into

labor, further strengthening the desirability of a then increasingly elusive leisure. More importantly, however, since the entire system necessarily presumes a reliance upon American leadership, this quality of self-perpetuation would also have maintained beliefs which were ultimately likely to have found expression elsewhere.

In general, therefore, advertising should be considered to be comprised of three distinct, potential levels of persuasion. The first of these, promoting sales of a particular product on the strength of a particular product on the strength of its demonstrable characteristics (use value), and the second, advancing the general merits of being identified as a product user (exchange value), serve the identical goal of increased sales; it is only at the third level, at which exchange values themselves have political significance, that advertising actually **becomes** propaganda or contributes to a deliberately-constituted propaganda campaign. Thus, the decisive factor in determining advertising's political significance has very much to do with the context in which it is put forth. It is not propagandistic by virtue of its structural similarity to the persuasive characteristics attributed to political propaganda, therefore, but the way it fits into the "information environment," as Steve Neale maintains:

> Propaganda cannot simply be identified with one particular mode of address -- dogmatism -- and thus dismissed as such ... the identification of any one text as propaganda can never simply be a matter of the reading of a set of textual characteristics. What has to be identified is the *use* to which a particular text is put, to its function within a particular situation, to its place within ... a *social practice*.[11]

In postwar Italy, then, the American exchange value offered by advertisements for American goods derived meaning from the reputation the United States already enjoyed, the new strength of the American presence

internationally and Italians' resultant increased contact with Americans and American culture, coupled with the fact that Italy, itself, was entering a period of economic and social transition. Advertising's representation of the American Way of Life as a sort of pre-fabricated, purchasable and essentially problem-free lifestyle implied that many of the timeless difficulties of everyday life had been rendered almost meaningless through the intervention of American manufactured products and that Americans, in fact, no longer needed be concerned with them. In so doing, it encouraged the adoption of American standards as a first step towards living the complete lifestyle and eventually would have been instrumental in overcoming general resistance to change as new problems were seen as uniquely resolvable by novel, American methods (consumption) and old problems regarded as existing only for the lack of their commodity solutions. Failure to achieve the ideal immediately only indicated the need to adapt more completely, therefore, since the system was constructed in such way that those who seemed to live it were invariably represented as more advanced, more able to regulate their own lives and, ultimately, better-equipped to live it. Similarly, once American guidance had been established as desirable at this level, its presence at another would have seemed more natural as, almost inevitably, an analogy was drawn between the micro-practices of daily decision-making and broader political judgements.

Notes

1. Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, New York: Random House, 1964, p. 62.

2. *ibid.*, p. 66.

3. See, for instance, William Leiss, "Needs, Exchanges and the Fetishism of Objects," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2:3 (Fall 1978), pp. 27-47; Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976; and Stephen Kline and William Leiss, "Advertising, Needs and Commodity Fetishism," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 2:1, pp. 5-36.

4. Ellul, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

5. *ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

6. This, in fact, has been the basis of most contemporary critiques of consumerism and "the consumer society." Some of the more exhaustive of these are Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976); William Leiss, *The Limits to Satisfaction* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1979); and Tibor Scitovsky, *The Joyless Economy* (New York: Oxford Univ., 1976). Most Marxist and materialist advertising theorists also share this point of view. See, for example, any of Stuart Ewen's work or Raphael Drinot Silva, "Advertising: The Production and Consumption of Daily Life" (in *Communication and Class Struggle*, vol. 1, Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub, eds., New York: International General, 1979, pp. 353-359), Janis Winship, "Advertising in Women's Magazines, 1956-74" (Stencilled occasional paper, Birmingham: Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1980), Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements* (London: Marian Boyars, 1978) or Michèle Mattelart, "Notes on 'Modernity:' A Way of Reading Women's Magazines" (in Mattelart and Siegelaub, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 158-170). Obviously, propaganda theorists who treat advertising also share this point of view.

7. Ewen, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

8. Ellul, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

9. See, for instance, Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Random House, 1964), especially pp. 3-24, George

N. Gordon, *Persuasion: The Theory and Practice of Manipulative Communication*, (New York: Hastings House, 1971), Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (Montreal: Pocket Books, 1958) and Stanley M. Ulanoff, *Advertising in America: An Introduction to Persuasive Communication* (New York: Hastings House, 1977).

10. Steve Neale, "Propaganda," *Screen* 18:3 (Fall 1979), p. 15.

11. As an example, Jacques Ellul, probably one of the most systematic proponents of this point of view, maintains that in order to accomplish the attack on its audience's powers of reason propaganda is necessarily characterized by the observance of an established formula which is the primary cause of its success. Accordingly, his description of propaganda as "scientific" rests on an elaboration of a series of "vigorous, precise and tested" mandatory "rules" which he alleges "can be applied by anybody with the proper training" (See Ellul, *op. cit.*, p. 4). The audience, faced by such deliberately and predictably structured messages, is presumed to be not only incapable of discerning in them some sort of manipulative intent, but convinced that it is in a position of control, given the proliferation of similar messages an effective propaganda campaign is supposed to contain. Propaganda, then, is to be perceived as information by the individual audience member who supposedly feels he/she is in a position to make rational judgements about the information received and that it, in turn, is founded on familiar concepts. Thus, ideology becomes invisible or, at most, has the status of "ideas." This, then, has been the paradox of most propaganda theory: whereas the audience is presumed to be "free," able to make its own judgements when faced with "informational," "educational" or "artistic" "non-propaganda" messages, it is nonetheless unable to recognize "propaganda," despite the identification of deliberate and predictable strategies and structures which are claimed to characterize the genre.

12. See Neale, *op. cit.*

13. Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 52.

14. See J. A. C. Brown, *Techniques of Persuasion: From Propaganda to Brainwashing* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), Ellul, *op. cit.*, Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Warner, 1979), T. J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930" (in Richard W. Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980*, New York: Pantheon, 1983), Morris Janowitz, *The Last Half-Century: Societal Change and Politics in America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1978) and David Reisman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1961).

15. Denis McQuail, *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications*, London: Collier-MacMillan, 1968, p. 19.

16. Reisman, *op. cit.*, pp. xl-xli.

17. Raphael Zarisky, *Italy: The Politics of Uneven Development*, Hinsdale, IL: Dryden, 1972, p. 53.

18. *ibid.*, p. 3.

19. One might, for instance, consult Luciano Bianciarde's work of the early Sixties or Italo Calvino's series of vignettes on the urban experience in Italy during the Fifties (*Marcovaldo, or the Seasons in the City*, William Weaver, trans., New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).

20. Zarisky also maintains, however questionably, that the social fragmentation/personal alienation problem was exacerbated by yet another factor: an Italian "personality-type" based on a particular and widespread perceived need for social acceptance, even at the expense of individual autonomy (see *op. cit.*, p. 96).

21. Frances A. Kellor, *Immigration and the Future*, New York: 1920, p. 101.

22. Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, New York: Harper Bros., 1922, p. 381.

23. Silva, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

24. Ewen, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

25. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, New York: New American Library, 1979, pp. 406-407.

26. See Zarisky, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66, for a discussion of the Italian mass media's role in the socialization and integration of rural sub-groups in that nation as being determined by the dissemination of "those ideals of technological progress and mass consumption which are indispensable in a modern, expanding industrial system."

27. Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, New York: Random House, 1973, p. 67.

28. Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work and Leisure*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, p. 226.

29. Neale, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

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