

The Value and Power of Gold Jewelry: Fetishizing Myths (a semiological study of global advertisements)

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Abstract:

Gold mining has positive and negative effects. Conflicts depend on jewelry demand. *In light of how (many) indigenous peoples don't want gold mining in their territories, why is it that (other) people desire and purchase gold jewelry?* Value is about living your life according to what you believe to be important. Humans seek the approval by others of how they live their lives. Circulating tokens of value confirm their philosophies and coordinate their actions, producing society in the process. The mythological process has myths taking possession of material forms. Soon the historical understanding comes to be identified with the object itself and the object prompts guidelines that effect the actions of its creator. As people are socialized by their surroundings and value is realized by being fashionable, gold jewelry can be approached as a fetishized token of value and its myths mapped. As marketing would reinforce consumer behavior, it also evidences myths. Instead of explaining the value of gold by referring to material properties, I stress the variable myths gold's materiality affords as motivating uses such as purchasing gold jewelry, mining and resistance to it. Contrasting myths with the effects of actions can result in transvaluations of life philosophies.

Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this product to my uncle and godfather, Erik Demol. He was an economist who wasn't awarded the PhD he and the family and friends who supported him worked for because of his own stubbornness. Yet he went on and devoted much of his life time and energies trying to help the marginalized. This wasn't an act of self-sacrifice: 'être moi-même et faire ma vie comme je l'ai vécu et comme je le vivrai, est le plus cadeau que celui ou celle qui se trouve quelque part autour de nous, m'ait donné' (quoted by his friend Djibo in condolences). We didn't see him much but he always brought me gifts and he was liked anywhere he went. He passed away long before we (I) could discuss politics. Yet his spirit of when he was my age embodied me whilst reading *his* graduate exposé of Marx's theory of labour alienation.

Never having talked politics, I wonder how it came to be that my own life trajectory resembles my uncle's, even writing similar theses! A major theme of my own thesis is the meaning of objects and how they seem able to make us do things. Did it all start with the post stamps he sent over from exotic places and which I collected and linked to maps and newspapers? But it's not so much about the 40 year old thesis, the stamps or even the gifts. It's other decent people who allowed him to become the decent guy he was and I've had the luck to share in his circumstances.

This brings me to you and all others who have taken an interest. Thank you. Yet some influenced me more than others and they deserve recognition for making this happen. My mom and dad, who helped my uncle, and who are also the decent people that have been there for me and without whose support I would never have written the text I wanted to write. My friends who have been way too nice to me when I was preoccupied by my studies and who therefore are becoming like family. The people at CATAPA vzw for the way they do things and for having me. The personalities constituting CPS batch 2 who made it the best learning experience I can remember. Anders Burman, my supervisor, for almost instantaneous and good "service". Special mention to Shuyan Qi for some translation from the Chinese (promise kept!).

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'Though originating in the earth and in hell, arriving first as ore or as nugget, gold is a substance more intellectual than symbolic; it holds a fascination only within certain mercantile economies; it has no, or very little, poetic reality; it is only ever mentioned so as to show how this most mediocre of substances (a dull, yellowy metal) clashes with the importance of its effects. But as a sign, what power it has! And it is precisely the sign par excellence, the sign of all the signs; it is absolute value, invested with all powers including those once held by magic: is it not able to appropriate *everything*, goods and virtues, lives and bodies? Is it not able to convert *everything* into its opposite, to lower and to elevate, to demean and to glorify? The gemstone has long participated in this power of gold. And this is not all: owing to the fact that gold very quickly stopped being convertible or useful and so removed itself from any practical application, pure gold, whose usefulness was almost entirely self-referential, became superlative gold, absolute richness – here the gemstone becomes the very concept of *price*; it is worn like an idea, that of a terrific power, for it is enough to be seen for this power to be demonstrated.'

(Barthes 2006, 60, italics not mine)

Introduction

Outline

I start by presenting some of the benefits and problems of gold mining and argue that it is in large part jewelry demand that makes conflicts possible. The research question becomes *In light of how (many¹) indigenous peoples don't want gold mining in their territories, why is it that (other) people desire and purchase gold jewelry?*

In the next section, theories of value are preferred over explanations by the gold lobby. Continuing, a dominant understanding of value as price and as utility is set aside in favor of David Graeber's articulating of the same concept with observations in marketless and stateless societies. Such societies challenge the role of gold in the art of living.

¹ Word added to prevent universalizing or essentializing interpretations of indigenous peoples as necessarily against gold mining. 'In fact, over the past few years, Nunavummiut have benefited significantly from mine development, exploration and gold production.' (GN 2001, 5) Their neighbours agree: 'Exploration for hard minerals (zinc, gold, iron, etc.) ... has been satisfactory, and many exploration projects have now come so far that it is realistic to expect applications for exploitation licences in 2012. If this turns out to be the case, it will mean new jobs, more tax revenues, and ultimately better welfare for everyone in Greenland.' (Greenland Bureau of Minerals and Petroleum 2012, 5) While it is also true that indigenous peoples who dislike gold mining are not the exception (see value section).

Next it is argued being too conscious or not conscious enough of the origins of things in human action equally makes for incapable humans. People are socialized by their surroundings and in turn change the ecologies of their descendants.

Then, I suggest Roland Barthes' mythological process allows for a specification of how stuff attains the power to make people act in specific ways. The guidelines of things can be mapped by looking at advertisements.

I synthesize Graeber's and Barthes' theories and show how it can be applied to gold jewelry. Rather than explaining the value of gold by referring to material properties, I stress the variable myths gold's materiality allows as motivating uses such as purchasing gold jewelry, mining and resistance to it. Above all else, the topic of this essay is the myths that give gold jewelry its value.

In the methodology section it is explained how I developed a systematically applicable semiological research instrument.

I sample global and powerful marketing by the gold industry.

Discussing the results, I found the cases to be part of a consistent and focused effort. I present myths of gold jewelry and apply key concepts.

In the conclusion, I answer the research question in the most simplest of terms, look back on my contributions and point toward further research.

Included as appendices are a glossary of key terms, the research instrument I applied and the data this generated for each of the cases.

Purpose of the study

The primary concern is to contribute to a de-naturalizing of the way gold is understood and the way things are more generally and help identify the dynamics that make possible this interpretation. Looking through databases for "jewelry" and "jewellery", I didn't encounter much in the way of what I do. I don't mean to impose my vision for how gold jewelry should be valued. There's little program here, only analysis and questions to consider. In fact, I've grown more sympathetic to jewelry (colorful gemstones in particular, but I digress). There is, however, an inescapable truth with the potential to either smash or embrace the gold jewelry economy: people power. I hope it's not disconcerting to anyone that I would like to see people more consciously direct their short, fragile lives to ends that make sense to them.

Why and how gold jewelry matters

The high stakes of gold mining

A distinction is often made between artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) and large-scale mining. Even while there's no universally accepted definition, let's accept for present purposes these can be ranked from the self-employment of artisanal mining over the larger but small-scale mining to the organized hierarchies of large scale mining, which can take the material form of either a tunneling workforce or mechanized open pit strip mining. Such a distinction is relevant here because there are different benefits and tragedies involved, which should be taken into account if a weighing operation assesses the pros and cons of gold mining and by extension gold demand. All I aim to do here is to sketch the situation in order to establish the relevance of the topic. ASGM employs 90% of the sector's labor force, generally at subsistence levels rather than the get-rich-quick and civilizing stories of old, while it would produce only 15% of the newly mined gold ((UNEP) and Artisanal Gold Council 2012). 10 million people depend on it directly for their livelihoods, and up to 100 million indirectly. ASGM, typically though not always an illegal and unregulated activity, is associated with accidents. In contrast, large scale mining is more mechanized and the workforce skilled and often imported. The average (pure) profit margin of gold mining companies in 2010 was slightly above 24%² in a \$79+³ billion business. The share of “mining and utilities” in the world economy ranged from 5% for 1995 to 6.8% for 2007, most “value added” goes to North America and Asia, yet “developing countries” depend much more on the sector than do the “industrialized” (UNIDO 2010).

ASGM typically employs mercury to amalgamate with gold and extract it from the ore. It is the largest source of both mercury demand and pollution ((UNEP) and Artisanal Gold Council 2012). Touching the substance or breathing in the fumes create health problems that have led to death, among other problems. Acid mine drainage, whereby it reacts with oxygen and (ground)water, from Roman time mines continues to pollute fisheries, land animals and plants globally – not just at the site. Large scale mining uses cyanide, famous because of the suicide pill in films, in order to bind gold to it. Mixed with water, it washes microscopic gold particles from crushed ore. Every kg of gold guzzles 260,000 liters of fresh water (Norgate and Haque 2012), which leads to water scarcity elsewhere, salinization, can change whole ecosystems and the lives of its dependents. Cyanide tailings kill and pollute (see

² The average cost of mining per ounce would have been \$928 in 2010 (http://www.gold.org/investment/why_how_and_where/faqs/#q019 (Last Accessed August 30, 2012). The average London PM price per ounce was \$1224.52 (WGC 2011a), $1224 - 928 = 296$ | $296 / 1224 = 0,2418300653594771$

³ Subtracting the 15% share awarded to ASGM, 2688.9 tons becomes 2016.675 or 64837606.83628783 Troy ounces at 31.1034768 gram/(Troy) | $64\,837\,606,83628783 * 1224.52$ dollar per ounce makes \$79 394 946 323.17118

Kelmah 2006). Although only an indicative result, every gram of gold requires 1,270,000 grams of (toxic) waste rock (Norgate and Haque 2012); that's more than 1000 tons for a gram. Arsenic can be released from the ore and can kill. Nor are the noise and dust pollution healthy. 'In 2010, the metal mining sector reported the largest disposal or other [toxic] releases representing about 41% of the total disposal or other releases for all industries.' (EPA 2010, 26) Strip mining being very energy-intensive⁴, 'it is estimated that mining is responsible for 20% of global CO2 emissions' (Norgate 2009 cited in Sibaud 2012, 35)⁵, relevant for global climate change. Of all metal mining, gold mining is the worst overall, 'by several orders of magnitude' (ibid, 58). Both types of gold mining imply (permanent) deforestation, erosion and ecosystem destruction as miners pull out when it is decided it no longer makes economic sense rather than staying for mine site reclamation/restoration.

The arrival of gold mining is a source of division within communities as well as between neighboring communities with social conflict to the point of murder. Loss of livelihood, dependency, unemployment, poverty, (labor) migration in and out of the locale: general proletarianization at the expense of subsistence activities. Indigenous peoples are especially at risk, in part because of their culturally different/closer relations to their ecologies. This implies the loss of more traditional knowledge and practices. Recourse curse, the Dutch disease phenomenon, worse access to basic public services are paradoxical effects. Income differentials increase, and inequality more generally as the powerful are able to reinforce their positions. All this goes hand in hand with physical force and the breaking of national law as well as international human and indigenous peoples' rights violations, also by state actors of signatories. Forced evictions, terror through rape, armed conflict, slavery, prostitution, alcoholism and other drug abuse, domestic violence, the list goes on.⁶

In 2010 mine production volume records were shattered; never before more gold was mined than today: 2688.9 tons (WGC 2011a). 166,600 tons would have been mined in world history⁷, with only roughly 24,000 mined before 1900⁸. Other indicators such as exploration expenditure (in 2010 51% of all metal exploration expenditure and worth \$5.4 billion), especially when "late-stage exploration" grows more than "grassroots budgets" (MEG 2011), point toward a bonanza. The externalized costs, to put it in such terms, will most likely boom as well, not just absolutely but also in intensity as miners

⁴ 200,000 – 304,000 GJ/t Au (Norgate and Haque 2012)

⁵ 18,000 – 27,000 t CO2e/t Au (Norgate and Haque 2012)

⁶ <http://catapa.be/> (last accessed August 24 2012); <http://goudeerlijk.be/> (last accessed August 30 2012); Kelmah (2006)

⁷ http://www.gold.org/investment/why_how_and_where/faqs#q023 (last accessed August 30 2012)

⁸ <http://www.numbersleuth.org/worlds-gold/> (last accessed August 30 2012)

dig deeper, invest and release more energy and poison, in more sensitive areas, with more people and other creatures affected. Not only due to the fact that lower ore-grades (which come with relatively more waste) have become technically feasible and also economically sensible to extract⁹, but also depending on things such as (neoliberal) government concession policy, the presence of alternative economic activities and so on.

Identifying jewelry at the heart of gold demand

The colonizers constituting Latin America were looking for gold.¹⁰ Genocide ensued. Now predominantly Western/ethnically European companies profit from gold extraction all over the globe.¹¹ That's a popular story, but things are more complex. Since Roman times, there had been a European appetite for Eastern luxuries for which the Romans paid in gold and later European merchants in silver (and opium a bit later) (Graeber 2011; Wolf 1982; Bernstein 2004). The Chinese never wanted anything Europe produced but the booming Ming economy demanded ever-more silver for monetary liquidity, soon becoming entirely reliant on imports. If it hadn't been for this profitable trade, Columbus would not have “discovered” the Americas/West Indies and the horrible American mines would not have been profitable for long. Nowadays, the giants of gold consumption are China and India (combining more than 52% of global demand in weight terms in 2010 (WGC 2011a)). Saleem Ali recognizes how there's reluctance to point out overconsumption in developing countries and how mining companies can shake off responsibility by pointing to those consumers. He addresses this by calling for a “golden rule” of having the same expectations from ourselves as we do from others' (Ali 2006, 456). Rather than experiencing complexity as disempowering, the interdependence can be disentangled and local points of intervention identified to weigh in on better mining practices.

⁹ In fact, the calculations above by Norgate and Haque, which depend on exponential and not linear functions, would understate the case, since they assume a 'base case ore grade of 3.5 g Au/t ore,' (201, 53) while the average head grade was less than half of that in 2010.

¹⁰ 'What the Iberians sought in the New World was, above all else, treasure in the form of bullion. At first this meant gold. Placer gold was found in the Antilles, but “the productive districts were few, of small extent, and slight depth” (Sauer 1966: 198). The native population was soon sacrificed in its extraction. The auriferous deposits of the Central American isthmus proved ephemeral. Only Colombia - “Castilla de oro,” as it was soon called - became a significant gold producer. It contributed most of the 185,000 kilograms of gold shipped to Seville between 1503 and 1660, an amount that increased European gold supplies by a fifth (Elliott 1966: 180). Yet it was silver production that finally became the mainstay of Spanish wealth, and thus the major indicator of the strength or debility of royal control.' (Wolf 1982, 135) Infamous is the quote in 1511 by King Ferdinand of Spain: 'Get gold, humanely if possible, but at all hazards - get gold.' (Bernstein 2004, 20).

¹¹ Of the top 10 producers of gold in 2004, accounting for 45.5% of all newly mined gold, only Buenaventura (#8) has Peruvian headquarters while the other 9 all have a more Anglophone imprint (USA, South Africa, Canada, UK) (WGC 2005b).

In 2001, more than 80% of demand was in the form of jewels (WGC 2011a). Less than 10% was accounted as investment. 2009, shortly “after” the 2008 banking crisis, saw investment demand rise past 38% of the total. Jewelry demand was affected, its share dipping to 50%. Technological demand remained rather constant throughout the decade but hovers around a tenth. The London Gold Fix (PM) price standard more than quintupled; going from averaging \$271 per ounce in 2001 to \$1571 in 2011.¹² The corrected for (U.S.) inflation price record of January 21, 1980 did not get broken, yet at the time the price dropped quickly and strongly. What's different this time around is that high prices are not going anywhere (not going down). Instead, prospects for the price are generally upwardly-oriented.¹³ Mine economics demand such a (stable and high-price) situation to increase production, to weigh expected benefits against expected costs (Meader 2010).

I focus on gold jewelry for a variety of reasons. Gold mostly gets recognized as historical money or, but less so, as *being* money (still one can purchase gold coins that are legal tender). This is somewhat of a myth, since few people in world history actually paid in gold coins preferring either tallying or other arrangements with other measures of value than gold (Graeber 2011). A tendency for things that become moneys to originally have been ornaments has been observed (Graeber 2001). Gold jewelry gave rise to gold coins. Gold's original use was for adornment (Graeber 2001; 2011; National Mining Association, 2004+). An emphasis on the supposed monetary qualities of gold as opposed to less real paper money is an investor motive to invest in gold. Today, Indian peasants would “save” in the absence of banks in rural areas by “consuming” gold jewelry and reselling it when in distress (melting and recasting doesn't come with a loss).¹⁴ From jewels to coins as well as from currency to jewelry. When times are good and other assets are more attractive investments than bullion (as in 2001), gold jewelry gets bought and keeps the gold fix price from falling. If gold is a hedge against bad times (as from 2008), jewelry demand is the hedge within the hedge that is gold, the hedge which allows it to also take advantage of good times since people purchase luxuries. The fix correlates positively with other assets when the economy booms but they tend to correlate negatively at other times (WGC 2010b). Furthermore, 'Intermediate-term investors cite higher demand for gold for jewelry and industrial applications combined with an inelastic supply that may take several years to catch up as their impetus for investment, resulting in a moderate interest.' (WGC 2006, 8) In other words, one can consider the global gold market in large part to be dependent upon consumer interest in gold jewelry!

¹² http://www.lbma.org.uk/pages/?page_id=53&title=gold_fixings&show=2011&type=monthly (last accessed September 24 2012)

¹³ http://www.lbma.org.uk/pages/?page_id=142&title=forecast_2012 (last accessed August 30 2012)

¹⁴ 'The rural agricultural sector, approximately 70% of the Indian population, has been the source of more than two thirds of gold demand (WGC 2011b, 2) 'The poor have very few assets; whatever they have they must keep in their possession 24 hours a day. Gold jewelry worn on the person is the only option and if these families are hit by crisis, it will be mortgaged or sold.' (ibid, 9)

While growth doesn't decouple fast enough from material resource use (Sibaud 2012), the gold commodity is counter-cyclical so that when stocks and GDPs fall, gold rises. A protracted crisis generates a mining boom and growth for this sector means more waste instead of less. However, this observed dilemma is undermined by my argument that puts jewelry consumption at the center: if gold rises in bad times in anticipation of better times (that will spark gold jewelry consumption), gold would ultimately yield to such (hypothetical) bad times. This obviously is a crude sketch far removed from the specifics of who actually buys gold and all this talk of bad times is shorthand for indicators such as GDP and standard of living while “bad” suggests it can't be fun in a degrowth economy or even outside monetary relations. So I want to get more specific and ask why do people want gold jewelry; what does it promise? This is the question of its value.

Value

Public relations (PR) and consumer marketing versus theories of value

A good first stop is to see how the World Gold Council (WGC), the gold industry lobby, explains gold's (not just jewelry) value. On www.goldfacts.org, the question is a frequently asked one and so it is also answered: ‘Gold has been prized throughout the history of mankind due to its appearance, ease of working, electrical and thermal conductivity, ductility and malleability and resistance to corrosion.’¹⁵ On the same website, value is (also) understood as price. Reconciling both, material properties explain why it is so pricey. The same question is posed on www.goldinspirations.com: ‘Why is gold so coveted? Since the beginning of time, the intrinsic beauty, warmth, sensuality and spiritual richness of gold has earned it the pride of place as the jewellers' favourite metal. Gold has inspired craftsman to create objects of desire that unite us with our emotions. In the middle Ages, alchemists attempted to use their magic to make gold from other metals. They believed that gold was a source of immortality, and so it was used in medicines to fight old age and prolong life.’¹⁶ Under the same heading but also with different web addresses, this appears to be expanded on. ‘Often described as sunshine you can touch, gold has been revered in almost every culture as the very essence of the sun. Today our need for the sun's warmth is reflected in our desire for the sensual pleasure of gold.’ It is also ‘incorruptible’.¹⁷ Magical powers are celebrated: ‘Its rarity and beauty have inspired numerous magical stories. Gold has been used in medicine for centuries – it was believed by some prehistoric cultures to be a magic cure. ... The primaeval Egyptians identified gold with power; the amount of

¹⁵ http://www.goldfacts.org/en/faqs/#q_why_is_gold_so_valuable (last accessed September 24 2012)

¹⁶ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-jewellery-history/#page/2> (last accessed September 24 2012)

¹⁷ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-jewellery-history/#page/3> (last accessed September 24 2012)

gold in a tomb indicated the importance of the person buried there'.¹⁸ Page 5 says 'Gold was originally used as currency' but coins presently minted are for 'investors'.¹⁹ Finally, the theme is 'modern technology. Experts soon realised the exclusive qualities gold has to offer and have applied it to many modern processes. For example, gold is an excellent conductor of heat and electricity, and so has been widely used in the electrical and electronics industries. Gold plating can be used in the circuitry of calculators, telephones, and even your own tape recorder. Gold has been used on artificial satellites and space vehicles. Indeed the first step onto the moon would not have been possible without gold. Astronauts going into space use gold on their helmet visors and space suits to reflect the intense radiation of the sun.'²⁰ Again, although to a lesser extent, the motives for desiring gold are presented as timeless, inhering in the element itself: as immutable. On the other hand and in contrast with the other website, not all is strictly "functional" but more "irrational".

We could leave it at that, but an organization that is constituted as a marketing apparatus²¹ can hardly be expected to arm critics with too much insight. Therefore, I'll consider what are called theories of value. All I will do here is contrast what is most probably the dominant understanding of value as utility and as price with David Graeber's transformation of Karl Marx's labor theory of value to take seriously the experiences of marketless *and* stateless societies. The relevance for doing so, we will see, lies in how the Western gold mining companies increasingly come into conflict with indigenous peoples who consider water, among other things, as more precious than gold.

Value as utility as price

The classicals Adam Smith and David Ricardo located the source of a product's value in the labor time required to produce it (Wilk and Cliggett 2007). The argument went that producing everything one needs by oneself is an inefficient way to do things. By bartering for what they themselves didn't produce, people found out that they could specialize in those things one could produce more efficiently than others and that others would accept, thereby saving labor as embodied in the products they accumulated. (To produce the same but work less was not really an option since it was assumed people's needs are endless.) Yet barter wasn't really efficient either if one needed shoes but the shoe seller doesn't accept the lemonade one has to offer. In that case, the lemonade man needs to find a

¹⁸ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-jewellery-history/#page/4> (last accessed September 24 2012)

¹⁹ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-jewellery-history/#page/5> (last accessed September 24 2012)

²⁰ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-jewellery-history/#page/6> (last accessed September 24 2012)

²¹ This is expanded on in the sampling section.

chap who both accepts lemonade and gives something in exchange the shoe seller wants. This quickly becomes incredibly complicated and the chances of getting them all at the same time in the same place are slim. Doing things so, a money commodity would arise spontaneously; a commodity people found that others accepted more than other things. Something that spoils or is otherwise inconvenient isn't really suited, but gold works and so gold became money. While before 2 gallons of lemonade bought shoes, such proportions could now be expressed in gold: lemonade sells as at a gram of gold, shoes at 2 (and a gram of gold purchases a gallon of lemonade or half a pair of shoes). Coinage, then, was a further rationalization as it would be a mark of quality, obviating the need to weigh lumps of gold and testing whether it really was gold. Market prices thus would be the expression of the perfect coordination of free and rational individuals maximizing the stuff they have (and minimizing their efforts). What the relative prices of commodities ultimately express are the respective labor times required to produce them. The exchange value of a product is the labor of others it can command, *expressed* in price but also existent in barter. This belief in the market led to the neglect of the sourcing the value of an object in labor time as this wouldn't add anything to analysis. It's a story that makes sense and it persists, yet Graeber (2011) recently pointed out anthropologists long know there's hardly any evidence to support it and things circulated on very different bases. The only times when barter is used is when people who are accustomed to monetary exchange find themselves in a situation in which no money is present and when trading with strangers/potential enemies.

Graeber (2001; see also Wilk and Cliggett 2007) also goes at the theory, which turns out to be circular or ends up not mattering at all. The price someone is willing to pay for a commodity, and thus the laboring one is willing to do, would express the utility it has for that individual, a utility relative to, say, not doing anything. Demand and supply would translate the specific preferences of various individuals into market prices and thus a group's aggregate preferences could be read off from the relative market prices. A growing GDP similarly would communicate more commodities, more labor time/employment, more overall utility. Here the problem is that it assumes what needs to be explained; this only makes sense in so far as that market dynamics don't distort the wishes of rational maximizers. Both have been strongly challenged. The same logic has been applied to societies without markets. If the assumption that humans are rational maximizers is an unquestionable premise, notions such as prestige have to be introduced to make it rational how people (the Baining) work their gardens only to give the produce away without reasonably expecting direct reciprocity. A peculiar operation is involved: the reduction of social relations to a thing not different than a car. One can dispose of a car as one pleases but prestige cannot exist but in the minds of others recognizing this. But even a car can be said to be a social relation. If someone takes your car this is considered theft. When one buys a car, one is buying the right to use it, a property relation barring others from access to it, which can only function efficiently by having these others recognize it really is your car. Or consider why in one place most people go out in the weekend to get hammered while in another having tea would be the

dominant past-time. It can be said that both are the rational thing to do in respective cultures and that people are maximizing feelings of belonging or earning their ticket into heaven yet then there's no explanatory power to the notion of the selfish individual as all that is needed is to study is what's important to a given culture.

Value as the existential question

Then there's Marx.²² Graeber (2001) argues that Marx provided an *internal* critique of what was then known as political economy, as evidenced in the title HET KAPITAAL Kritiek van de politieke economie DEEL I HET PRODUCTIEPROCEN VAN HET KAPITAAL. He would have aimed to show that *even if* the premises of the classical economists were accepted, the whole thing would tend towards monopoly rather than there is a generous hidden hand. If the means to satisfy necessities/wants are only available on the market and if he's deprived of assets, the worker must sell his labor power in order to stay alive. He's thus in an unequal position as opposed to those controlling the means of production rather than that people freely contract. Marx's calculations show the discrepancy between the price at which the factory owner sells a product and the wage a laborer receives for producing this commodity, assuming the source of value is labor time. The conclusion is that part of the working day, the wage earner works for free and thus for the benefit of another; for his boss. What those sourcing value in labor time failed to realize was the peculiar nature of the labor commodity: it is the only commodity capable of producing more commodities. What a worker sells is not so much his labor time but his productive powers. He is remunerated for his time in the factory but in that time he is made to produce more than that he receives as wage. Surplus value/profits are nothing but unpaid work.

This alienating doesn't only involve the appropriation of the products of his labor, but the organization of the production process itself so that producing something for a capitalist's profit means producing a different product (with different use-values) than if he were free to produce what he wants. Workers would not be free even if they were paid in full; for all the time invested in the making of products that were alienated/stolen from them. They would only be free if they controlled the means of production and could direct their own energies and the world as such to the pursuit of what really mattered to

²² Or rather, then there's Graeber's reading of Marx. The argument is not with what Marx really did mean but with what Graeber means. All I pretend to do here is to introduce Graeber and show where he comes from – even if (but not judging whether) his use of Marx is inappropriate. A classmate pointed out moral interpretations (as opposed to analytical uses) of Marx's labor theory of value would be very controversial. For what it's worth, I find Marx's Capital (2010) consistent with Graeber's reading – but I would have read it differently otherwise: not as some ironic critique but as sincerely accepting classical political economical categories. The Paris Manuscripts (quoted in Demol 1972), on the other hand, explicitly takes up such assumptions in order to show how workers are degraded as commodified "labour". Both internal critique as moral judgement are possible interpretations. Yet this is all that I say and can say at this moment.

them, thereby producing other products and another world. The implication being that it is possible to imagine value outside of capitalist production.

‘The only reason Marx felt one could make such calculations—however approximate—within a capitalist system was because of the existence of a market in labor. For labor—in effect, human capacities for action, since what you are selling to your boss is your ability to work—to be bought and sold, there had to be a system for calculating its price. This in turn meant an elaborate cultural apparatus involving such things as time cards, clock-punching, and weekly or biweekly paychecks, not to mention recognized standards about the pace and intensity of labor expected of any particular task (people are rarely, even in the most exploitative conditions, expected to work to the absolute limits of their physical and mental capacities), which enables Marx to refer to “socially necessary labor time.” There are cultural standards, then, by which labor can be reduced to units of time, which can then be counted, added, and compared to one another. It is important to stress the apparatus through which this is done is at the same time material and symbolic: there have to be real, physical clocks to punch, but also, symbolic media of representation, such as money and hours.’ (Graeber 2001, 56)

The calculations by Marx should thus not be read as determining the real value of human-made products. Or put more accurately, they would approximate the time and energy put into those products and these would be what made the use-values of those products possible, but these resources are to some extent wasted on products that are not directed to the needs of most humans. But if value is also and at the same time to be understood in the sense of valuable/important, as geared toward the good life and thus potentially part of a political project such as Marxist politics, then a conception of value that allows for more joyful and useful labor would be more in tune with Marx's politics.

Yet is free human labor even possible? Even without enforced private property barring most humans from organizing their productive activities for themselves, should we not take into account socialization and culture, human relations and society? Socially necessary labor time is a cultural construct that helps organize capitalist production. Graeber (2001) notes that work or labor are not universal constructs (but he doesn't expand on what this means). Marilyn Strathern (cited in Graeber 2001) criticizes a Western notion of individualism which makes it possible for liberals and Marxists alike to consider the products of human labor as belonging to the laborer. Not all cultures (the Melpa) have such a notion of the individual, recognizing instead the social relations that socialize humans. Parents take care of and feed their children, teach them, they play with others, they are part of groups that organize economic activity, ... and so the product of an individual's labor appears as subsidized but also impossible to calculate and repay. The gifts of nature individuals would freely dispose of can equally be seen as existing by the grace of those who came before. How one believes the world

functions and understands what one's place in it is, comes about through socialization. The world, then, does not exist out of atomized individuals and objects but these are deeply implicated in social relations. This doesn't make impossible the appropriation of productive labor of some by others yet this is not done by outright force but in agreement. 'Melanesians see work as an expression of one's commitment to a specific relationship. Wives, like husbands, help raise pigs to show their commitment to their marriage. The pig is an embodiment of that relation until it leaves the domestic sphere and enters the public sphere of male ceremonial exchange, where its value shifts, and it comes to embody the importance of relations between men. ... Strathern admits that the notion of the exploitation of female labor might be legitimate as an outside perspective.' (ibid, 41)

Graeber²³ (2001) aims to reformulate Marx's theory of value so that it would be able to account for observations in societies without either market or state²⁴; where people don't have to sell their labor power, where no surplus is forcibly extracted from one group for the benefit of another. Where, instead, people spend most of their time and energies not producing things but socializing people. Such actions are also guided by the pursuit of goals, as is the case under capitalism. Yet, if there's surplus extraction, this happens through means other than physical force. Key is widening the definition of labor or replacing it by creative action.

'Rather than having to choose between the desirability of objects and the importance of human relations, one can now see both as refractions of the same thing. Commodities have to be produced (and yes, they also have to be moved around, exchanged, consumed . . .), social relations have to be created and maintained; all of this requires an investment of human time and energy, intelligence, concern. If one sees value as a matter of the relative distribution of *that*, then one has a common denominator. One invests one's energies in those things one considers most important, or most meaningful.' (Graeber 2001, 45)

²³ Reading his 2001 book, it seems his contribution consists mainly of systematizing the work of others and Terence Turner in particular. Yet in an "update" he claims it as his own: 'The theory of value presented in the next essay was developed in the 1980s (largely by anthropologists in the University of Chicago) and '90s (largely by myself)' (Graeber 2005, 4). A shorter discussion by Graeber of his own theory can be found under the theses headings of a later article (2006).

²⁴ Graeber (2001) points to and critiques those (early 20th century) Marxists who hold on to an evolutionary scheme, in which all societies must pass through the same stages, for negating evidence to the contrary. The suggestion is that since the truth was considered already known no Marxist could be an anthropologist having anything new to say since anything new would be wrong. Louis Althusser, then, constituted a break by articulating a more flexible "mode of production" and thus also making possible Marxist anthropology. 'The problem with the whole "mode of production" approach, though, was that it was developed to analyze societies with a state: that is, in which there is a ruling class that maintains an apparatus of coercion to extract a surplus from the people who do most of the productive work.' (ibid, 24)

Humans have the capacity to act. The way they choose to act evidences what they consider important to do, more important than to do other things. This invisible power/content transforms into visible reality/form. Since humans are social beings, they seek the recognition of those whose opinion matters to them: they want some token that their energies are considered well-spent. This token of value requires some material form that is understood as the confirmation of this way of organizing one's life, be this form a performance in a village's communal space (the Kayapo), a banknote or coats of arms (Graeber 2001; Belting 2011; see also Berger 2008). Since all individuals seek the recognition of others as evidenced in material form, forms produced by one's actions (whether it's making shoes or picking lilies) are the forms that recognize the other's projects and vice versa. 'Everything depends on the point of view—and the intentions—of the actors. If I sell a commodity, my object is to acquire money—therefore, it is money that seems a concrete “form” to me; the goods I have to sell seem a formless abstraction. From the point of view of the purchaser, of course, it is the other way around. In other words, it is always the object of action—the object of desire—that is concrete and particular in the eyes of the person who is acting or desiring. The means have no particular features of their own. Instead, they tend to be identified with the user's own powers of action.' (Graeber 2001, 100) There must thus be a public sphere where material yet meaningful objects circulate, but this is not the source of the things produced.

It may seem like it does, though. Kula fame may seem to inhere in shells rather than in the ability of to convince his direct trading partners to trade in his name with yet others and thus have others recognize his name as important even though they've only seen his shell and precisely because they've only seen the shell it may seem to have a will of its own (Graeber 2001). Actions can be fetishized too, as with the Melpa it may seem it is the gifting by men of pigs and not the feeding by women that is recognized with names. In turn, one can try to translate these objects into power and personal gain. A king's crown demands recognition from others that the king is king and it may seem the crown is what makes a king rather than the ability to convince armies to fight for him and guide them to victory. It is all the more true for capitalist society. If money can make people labor and acquire commodities alike, one doesn't need to feed and raise laborers or make all things oneself. Therefore, one hardly is aware of how laborers or products come into being. Instead, there's a tendency for money to be seen as powerful in itself, manufactures are seen as doing things by themselves or as being the result of monetary investment rather than considering who it was that came up with the idea to put it together and who did so physically. People are objectified and objects are personified. Such an impersonal organization of society is particularly fertile ground for fetishism. In the consumer society, lawyers need to look successful to get clients but also in which achieving higher status is complicated since everyone is doing this (Schor 1999; see also Friedman 1991; see also Featherstone 1982)

Under capitalism, it could be said that people are recognized for their actions by their wages yet most people don't have much choice other than rent themselves out, don't have much say in what's being produced nor on what their place in the production process is. Can it be said, then, that an individual decided laboring in that factory was the best way to spend one's time or that he seeks the wage as a token of recognition by a boss with whom he can identify so much? Graeber argues that here the ultimate realization of value consists of and is limited to consumption choices as purchasing power is transformed into objects that are preferred over others because they are understood as essential to some reference group whose recognition is sought. A simpler way of putting it is that in the case of marketless societies, people are defined on the basis of what they did, while under capitalism people are defined by what stuff they chose to buy – which is also an activity that allows for some creativity. Jamal and Goode (2001), teachers marketing and in a study on precious jewelry, find “self-image product image congruity” as that which convinces consumers.

When people pursue certain goals, they do this guided by "totalities"; integrated understandings of the world, including what one is to do. It is here that culturally specific and shifting understandings of needs and wants can be located (Wilk 2006; Schor 1999). This involves contrasting preferred actions with lesser ones and it is this what needs to be confirmed by society in order to consider one's own actions as valuable. That is, by those whose opinions matter to the actor. If value needs to be "realized" by recognition by others, these therefore must at least share some of the actor's understanding. '[W]hen one recognizes value in an object, one becomes a sort of bridge across time. That is, one recognizes not only the existence of a history of past desires and intentions that have given shape to the present form of the object, but that history extends itself through one's own desires, wishes, and intentions, newly mobilized in that very act of recognition. In fetishizing an object, then, one is mistaking the power of a history internalized in one's own desires, for a power intrinsic to the object itself. Fetish objects become mirrors of the beholder's own manipulated intentions. And in a way, the very notion of desire—at least, as I have been developing it in this chapter—demands such fetishization.'²⁵ (Graeber 2001, 115) So then, how does Graeber define value? 'Value is the way actors represent the importance of *their own* actions to *themselves* as part of some larger whole (or 'concrete totality', as Marx liked to put it).' (2006, 73, italics mine)

Society can only continue to exist by this coordination of meaningful actions, producing both the means of existence and social cohesion. Yet, 'In any real social situation, there are likely to be any number of such imaginary totalities at play, organized around different conceptions of value. ... The ultimate stakes of politics, according to Turner, is not even the struggle to appropriate value; it is the struggle to establish what value *is* (Turner 1978; 1979c; see Myers and Brenneis 1991:4–5). Similarly,

²⁵ More on this in the fetish section.

the ultimate freedom is not the freedom to create or accumulate value, but the freedom to decide (collectively or individually) what it is that makes life worth living. In the end, then, politics is about the meaning of life. Any such project of constructing meanings necessarily involves imagining totalities (since this is the stuff of meaning), even if no such project can ever be completely translated into reality—reality being, by definition, that which is always more complicated than any construction we can put on it.' (Graeber 2001, 88)

He ends up giving some methodological pointers: 'If this is so, to understand the value attributed to any particular object means that one must understand the meaning of the various acts of creation, consecration, use and appropriation, and so on, that make up its [material] history [and the history ascribed to it by those who consider it valuable]. One must ask: Which of these actions determine which aspect of its value? Which among them are those that recognize the value being called on to repeat?' (Graeber 2001, 114-115) Yet a tension can be identified here. On the one hand, identifying values as that which guides action would obviate notions such as the self-interested accumulation of prestige since its predictive power is undermined. On the other hand, he admits people not always act consistently with their life philosophies (the Kayapo who continue to refer to moieties, although since 1936 no Kayapo village is organized that way) so that value must be determined by accounting how people act but which looks a lot like the circular logic of revealed preferences economists favor and he critiques. I'm inclined to define value more as that which is considered desirable or important rather than how people act since circumstances such as limited discretionary income or state force can distort away from what people really would like to do. To anticipate the reverse charge, that while official rhetoric may conflict with what people find important so that it could be argued that people follow their self-interest against their supposed values, I argue that any one person ultimately deliberates best on what matters to him and and, to be sure, this doesn't necessarily mean he's essentially selfish.

This resolution is able to withstand another critique, that Graeber's theory of value only recognizes human action as important. Thorstein Veblen's aristocrats sought recognition for their unproductive behavior as work was considered dirty, although ironically they did end up investing great effort trying to communicate this (1970). Are we all or should we be indifferent to whether animals live or die? Not all of what happens in the world can be reduced to human action and in fact much depends on us not blowing it all up. Those economists calling for the internalization of externalities also recognize that the natural resources, on which human action and humanity as a species are dependent, should be priced higher/valued more rather than being effectively free. An ecocentric perspective takes it even further, arguing that human life is not as important as it is made out to be, that humans are just one life-form living alongside and in interaction with other forms, all co-evolving rather than humans

being the necessary culmination of all that's good. Does it make sense to blow up mountains provided these are considered sacred?²⁶

Contesting gold's valuation

Increasingly, gold mining and exploration takes place within indigenous territories. Many resist and rather than reducing their claims to rhetoric that ultimately aims to get more money and thus which can be satisfied by money, Graeber's framework suggests we take these claims seriously in their own right since that what is considered valuable depends on imagined "totalities" (see also Hornborg 2005).

Centuries ago, Arabs on camels navigated southwestward into Africa in pursuit of gold (Bernstein 2004). Conquest failed and trade took the form of "silent barter" as the Africans didn't want to interact. The Arabs left stacks of gold in established spots, went away, upon which their counterparts placed the amount of gold deemed appropriate for the salt on offer, left again and if the Arabs agreed they picked up the gold and left. If not, there was more coming and leaving until the stacks were equivalent. 'Where is value? For the Europeans, the Byzantines, and the Arabs, gold was the magical focal point of their material desires. Not so for the Africans' (ibid, 75):

'Salt was so precious to the gold diggers that many of them would trade their gold only in return for salt. In many transactions, an ounce of gold exchanged for an ounce of salt. Bovill asserts that 'Salt was so infinitely the more important, that it is no overstatement to say that gold was valued by the Sudanese almost entirely for its purchasing power in salt.... It was the basis of their domestic, as it was of their foreign, trade, neither of which can be comprehended without an understanding of how starved they were of this essential to the well-being of man.' Look at it the other way, however. If an ounce of salt could acquire an ounce or more of gold, fetching the gold must have been an enormously profitable operation.' (Bernstein 2004, 74)

When the Gold Rush hit California, it also hit those already living there. It even has been suggested that the Maidu Indians have been treated as inferior simply *because they didn't value gold* (Trafzer, Hyer, and Castillo 1999).

²⁶ If this doesn't offend you, consider how Mi'kmaq opposing a gravite quarry argued that 'like any other spiritual beliefs we have certain sites that are more important than life itself.' (Hornborg 2005, 204) Kelly's Mountain is also home to Kluskap so that 'the degree of offense would be equal to that felt by Christians if a super quarry were placed at the the Holy Sepulcher, or by Hebrews in if the wailing wall were removed for a motel, or by Muslims if a casino were placed in Mecca.' (ibid)

The Grasberg mine, which holds incredible mineral wealth and which is located in the Indonesian part of New Guinea, was opposed by the Amungme tribe. One of its members, Tom Beanal, speeched at the Loyala University in New Orleans on May 23, 1996:

'These companies [Freeport McMoRan and Rio Tinto] have taken over and occupied our land . . . Even the sacred mountains we think of as our mother have been arbitrarily torn up, and they have not felt the least bit guilty . . . Our environment has been ruined, and our forests and rivers polluted by waste . . . We have not been silent. We protest and are angry. But we have been arrested, beaten and put into containers: we have been tortured and even killed.' (quoted in Martinez-Alier 2002, 65)

From 2 to 8 June 1999, in San Juan Ridge, California, over 100 people from 21 countries ('and many indigenous nations'); representatives from indigenous groups, non-governmental organizations and labor unions convened for 'The Peoples' Gold Summit', 'a meeting coordinated for people impacted by gold mining', and drafted a 'Statement of Unity' (Chatterjee and Baldi 1999). At top of this document, it says:

'Life, land, clean water and clean air are more precious than gold. All peoples depend on nature for life. The right to life is a guaranteed human right. It is, therefore, our responsibility to protect all of nature for present and future generations. Large-scale gold mining violently uproots and destroys the spiritual, cultural, political, social and economic lives of peoples as well as entire ecosystems. Historic and current destruction created by gold mining is greater than any value generated. Commercial gold mining projects are mainly on indigenous lands. By violating their land rights, mining companies are denying the right to life of those indigenous peoples, whose relationship to land is central to their spiritual identity and survival.'²⁷

Joan Martinez-Alier, in response to this quote, 'would myself frame the issue in terms of incommensurability of values, because from a chrematistic perspective the value of gold might indeed be higher than the value of the destruction.' (Martinez-Alier 2002, 101)

Incommensurability of values means that not all can be reduced to and expressed by a single criterion so that other concerns may take precedence. Martinez-Alier argues that 'The monetary values given by economists to negative externalities or to environmental services are a consequence of political decisions, patterns of property ownership and the distribution of income and power.' (2002, 150) Resisting drives up the price. What we have here is contest over

²⁷ <http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/gold/platform.htm> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

which value system applies.²⁸ This does not necessitate lack of insight on the part of indigenous peoples but may be a strategic position to secure their non-market livelihoods. And even if it is honestly believed water is life, this would serve not to pollute it. Martinez-Alier pleads for multi-criteria assessment, of which monetary measures would be only one part.

What I'm getting at is that any conception of what is important, whether including mother mountains or not, serves to explain how humans spend their time and that these value systems can be contrasted with their effects. Graeber would measure invested creative energies, much like Marx did, but he is at issue with how other cultures would measure it differently. Stephen Bunker (2007) emphasizes parts of Marx's argument that were not elaborated much on and argues that the forces producing natural use-values, and not just the labor that depends on these for survival and transforms them into manufactured use-values, need to be appreciated. Alf Hornborg (2007b, 7), on the other hand, is careful not to call the material inputs of production values, because he tends to stress the symbolic and culturally specific nature of consumption (Hornborg 2011a; 2011b) as opposed to embodied labor and land that are not immediately visible but need calculating (Hornborg 2007a). 'The driving forces of consumption are cultural, both in general terms and in specifics (Sahlins, 1976). Value' must pertain to what human beings perceive, rather than to physics. In fact, it is only by keeping human valuation and physical properties analytically separate that we can reveal the destructive logic of capitalist processes: the more people are willing to pay for a particular product, the faster will be the dissipation of resources required to produce it.' (Hornborg 2009b, 248) Value involves judgment, measurements hope not to. Serena Heckler discusses how Piaora local knowledge is either marginalized or celebrated depending on whom one listens to; (other) ethnobiologists or Hugo Chavez, concludes her 'basic point is simple: what is considered to be knowledge depends upon what is considered to be valuable.' (2009, 103; see also Belting 2011) Perhaps it would be best to at least monitor for the concerns of, and in terms of, other systems of valuation, e.g. determine whether a Kayapo is a young adult or an elder by the required children and grandchildren that determine this status (Graeber 2001). Martinez-Alier would also have it so, yet I'd like to insist on the distinction between value and monitoring. But this doesn't necessitate that gold will be used so, because that's the province of value. Rather than some distinction between functional and rational on the one hand as opposed to wasteful expenditure and loitering about, a distinction that has not yet proven to confuse one's own perspective with the truth is one which analytically distinguishes material properties with how objects are interpreted/the uses to which they are put (Hornborg 2009a). While it is humans who decide what matters to them, whatever the laws of nature are, these are not as plastic (although commonplace emphasis on selfish human

²⁸ Note that differing valuations are not necessarily undesirable as a heroin addict testifies the photos and obscure CDs he appreciates most and remind him of his past are those that survive episodes in which he strips his home of all that can be sold to fund his fix (Miller 2009). Similarly, a potential high price works against the lasting of gold jewelry in any present form as gold can be recast endlessly and scrap supply (next to newly mined gold) consists mostly of jewels.

nature and spontaneous markets and the popular unbridled optimism in technological progress may suggest the opposite). Our understanding of the material properties is also a factor: ‘The surprising discovery of gold’s catalytic properties in recent years and the development of its nanotechnology are leading to some exciting applications with enormous potential in industry and medicine.’(Corti and Holliday 2010, ix)

If current actions would lead to either or both the destruction of the capacity to value and thus the values themselves or other effects that are considered not very kosher, some modification of those values that guide action may be in order. In the past, gemstones (Anderson 1981) were grounded before taking them in orally on medical grounds. The effect was the opposite as was intended, revealing the desirability to measure effects and question understandings of the world. Bringing stories and other measures up for public deliberation has already had the effect that people reconsider what matters in life, what to do, on what (not) to spend money and what politics is or should be about (Klein 2001). From a humanistic point of view, medical uses are more desirable than adornment. The Voluntary Simplicity “movement” aims to live more consciously and its supposed members ‘Tend to lower their overall level of personal communication – buy less clothing (with more attention to what is functional, durable aesthetic, and less concern with passing fads, fashion, and seasonal styles), buy less jewelry and other forms of personal ornamentation, buy fewer cosmetic products and observe holidays in a less commercialized manner’ (Elgin 2006, 462). Calling for the banning of gold may not be the way if that would mean that Indian brides are treated as dirt in their new homes²⁹ or if artisanal miners have no other way to make a living. (Yet interpersonal relations can change and artisinals can be offered other livelihoods.) We will see that the uses of gold not only have effects in its place of origin but also as worn jewelry. Any transvaluation of values best considers both if it is not to be self-defeating.

Fetish

Navigating between the desirability and skepticism of fetishization

Having made the distinction between action-conscious value and action-unconscious fetishism, Graeber nonetheless sees some fetishization as necessary to value projects. ‘Money is in fact a representation of abstract labor – the worker’s capacity to produce, which is what his employer buys when he hires him. It is a kind of symbol. In the form of a wage, it becomes a very powerful sort of symbol: a representation which in fact plays a crucial role in bringing into being what it represents – since after all, laborers are only working in order to get paid. It’s also

²⁹ Gold dowry influences how an Indian bride is treated in her new family (see discussion of results). While dowry murders are also a phenomenon (Miller 2010).

in precisely this transaction that the actual sleight-of-hand on which exploitation is based takes place, since Marx argues that what the capitalist ends up paying for is simply the cost of abstract labor ... , which is always going to be less than the value of what the worker can actually produce' Perfect/ideal-type fetishism would not make people do anything as they would all be staring at objects, hoping for them to do all the work. The exact opposite would be the complete random acting of people as they would have no goals to pursue; no use-values to want, no wages to earn, no recognition from others to be gained as no two individuals would agree on anything. These may not be adequately described as poles since all meaningful practice is a *combination* of conscious action and seducing fetish, thus always involving a minimum of both.

Where does this leave us? One can dutifully perform all the tasks it is understood that the fetish requires, or one can be very conscious of the origins of the fetish in human action, changing them when desired, but always recognizing some order is necessary. This distinction is mirrored in his later notions of "human economies", those in which exchange was about human relations and which ultimately renegotiate obligations when things get out of hand, as opposed to "commercial" ones, those that cling on to notions such as that financial debts are inviolable - until this destroys society (Graeber 2011). In his most recent article, Graeber (2012) observes uncertainty about what will happen in the future contrasts with the inalterability of what has already happened. One can frame the past and the future as productions of human agency or as determined by structural forces. The first philosophy empowers, the second disempowers. The social science use of statistical probability, based on past measurements but also tainted by suspect assumptions, is a way of dealing with uncertainty that brings into being the future it pretends only to describe. The Malagasy way, magic as based in "mana", parallels this but is more explicit and reveals a "paradox of performativity" that defines politics and economics alike as 'making something true by saying so' (ibid, 30) but which must 'constantly insist that there is something else, something more real, lying behind one's claims. What that is does not much matter and can vary almost infinitely, from divine grace to popular will, national destiny, the right of conquest, or the inevitable unfolding of some historical dialectic.' (ibid, 29) An example is in order to show how fetishes and thus media of value can be consciously made, confirmed or altered by magic – a contradiction which nonetheless can be observed in practice:

'Under the Merina kingdom, the verb *manasina*[to endow with *hasina* or to make *masina*] was most commonly used for the act of presenting gifts of money to the sovereign. This was partly because unbroken silver coins, the kind that were given in such ceremonies, were themselves called *hasina*. *Hasina* had to be given every time the king made an official appearance, and during public assemblies or the annual Royal Bath ceremony it developed into an elaborate ritual in which representatives of each of the various ranks, orders, and geographical divisions of the kingdom offered tribute in turn.

But if one imagines the coins as a kind of *sorona*[object representing that which is requested from invisible spirits with generic/all-purpose powers], it is easy to see how, in presenting these coins to the king, subjects gave him *hasina* in the other sense as well[not as tribute but in the sense of magic/power to make others act]. When whole silver coins were used as *sorona* or elements in charms— which they occasionally were—it is usually said that the coin, being round and unbroken, stood for wholeness and perfection. I have already mentioned one instance in which a silver coin represented the integrity of the national army. More often coins used in royal ritual were said to represent the integrity of the kingdom, the hope that its unity remain intact. The act of giving a coin as a token of loyalty, then, can be seen as itself creating the king—or, at least, creating the power by which he unifies the kingdom: in a word, his *hasina*. This is stated almost explicitly when, at the high point of the Merina ritual year, the climax of the Royal Bath ceremony, the sovereign displayed himself before representatives of the people, who presented him with *hasina*. Immediately afterward, he hid behind a screen to bathe, crying out as he did so, “may I be *masina*.” After this he emerged to sprinkle his subjects with the water in which he had just bathed, in exactly the same way as *sampy*[object that protects larger social groups] keepers, on other occasions, sprinkled the people with water that had been used to bathe the national *sampy* (cf. Berg 1979; Bloch 1987). Here, compressed into a brief succession of ritual gestures, is the whole pattern of *sorona* and *ody*: an object, displayed to represent the desires of the kingdom, becomes an invisible charm regularly capable of bringing those desires to fruition.' (Graeber 2001, 114-115)

Magic involves skepticism and fear; disbelief, but no outright rejection. There's an element of doubt that makes people comply. How to be sure? And you don't want to offend someone with terrible powers. Stories are told, rituals performed, people comply, they observe each other comply and through this one somewhat believes or may expect others to believe and magic has its effects. These human powers require repeated confirmation for as long as they are to have effect. Reversely, magic can be used to negate evil witchcraft so that undesirable practices are made taboo. Such insights could serve democratic purposes if democracy is the collective creation by people of regulatory institutions such as parliaments and laws instead of these being immutable institutions that have a will of their own.

The dialectics of material forms and life philosophies

Such observations can be framed in social science notions of agency and structure. Graeber (2001) rejects a de Saussurean notion of structure/language for being an a priori conception standing outside of time, prior to action and determining action, even while real people are unaware such origins are regulating their actions/speech. Instead, he favors one deduced from

Piaget's dialectical understanding of child development. A child acts upon the world, thereby gaining a better understanding of the external object; changing the world but also changing himself. By acting again and again, more features of the object are revealed so that it is understood that features that may not be presently visible are yet part of that same object, to the point that his mind makes him see 3D objects while on the basis of present vision only 2D is justified.³⁰ The experiences of individual actions are linked up on a higher, abstract level of understanding, the level of the totality. Humans are born into worlds shaped by their ancestors and will in turn shape this world for their descendants. Bourdieu (cited in Miller 2010; Graeber 2001) argues that the material environments one passes through, the objects one encounters, handles, others handle, talk about, yield a certain understanding of what things are, do, should be handled. 'Objects don't shout at you like teachers, or throw chalk at you as mine did, but they help you gently to learn how to act appropriately. This theory also gives shape and form to the idea that objects make people. Before we can make things, we are ourselves grown up and matured in the light of things that come down to us from the previous generations. We walk around the rice terraces or road systems, the housing and gardens that are effectively ancestral. These unconsciously direct our footsteps, and are the landscapes of our imagination, as well as the cultural environment to which we adapt. Bourdieu called the underlying unconscious order our *habitus*. There is nature, but culture gives us our second-nature, that which we habitually do without thought. Things, not, mind you, individual things, but the whole system of things, with their internal order, make us the people we are.' (Miller 2010, 53, italics not mine; 2009) If humans change the objects constituting the life worlds of other people, they'd end up changing those people's understanding. (This is particularly relevant if we consider how mountain top removal mining can blow up sacred mountains.) I think we should consider seeing also material objects other than circulating tokens of value as confirming one's life philosophy, indeed as tokens of value themselves. The difference seems to be one of degree rather than kind.

In the process of value projects, pursuing tokens of value, societal structures are (re)produced as patterns of action as are the totalities that guide action. He exemplifies by citing Nancy Munn's understanding of the Gawa:

'The basic Gawan value template is the act of giving food (1986:11–12, 49–73). If you eat too much, Gawans say, all you do is lie down and sleep; it means inaction and hence the contraction of one's control over space and time. Giving the same food to someone else, on the other hand, creates alliances and obligations. It thus implies extension of one's

³⁰ I would like to point out some fun and interesting psychological experiments that can be performed by oneself that seem to reveal this principle and the cutting up of what is seen in separate objects on the basis of attained knowledge. (<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem08.html> (last accessed 25 August 2012))

control over space and time. If that someone else hails from overseas, giving food creates alliances that one can then activate so as to act on increasingly higher levels of exchange, enabling one to exchange more durable valuables like shell ornaments or canoes, and by doing so exercising even greater control of intersubjective spacetime. The ultimate achievement is to attach one's name to a famous heirloom kula shell (the most famous, remember, have their own unique names and histories) by passing it along the inter-island kula circle; the continual passing of which thus creates the most exalted level of all. Note that all this is not a matter of "entering into" higher spheres or even levels of exchange that already exist. It is these actions—or hospitality, travel, and exchange—that create the levels in the first place. And at their most basic this is all "levels"—indeed, all such abstract "structures"—are. They consist of human actions.' (Graeber 2001, 44-45)

"The market", then, is nothing but an understanding of patterns of action that yet guides these actions. "The state" abstracts a set of concrete relations. "The family" is just the same. "God" all the more so. We've also seen totality and society don't coincide. In the above example one can only imagine how the third island in the trading chain looks like as someone else is made to interact with the people there. People who interact are variously positioned and develop an understanding of society that works for their experiences and such diverse totalities come into contact with each other in acts of recognition and thus must overlap to reproduce society but remains that totalities and society don't coincide perfectly. Egocentrism or fetishism is confusing one's own partial and therefore false perspective with reality and this he identifies as another of the limits of human knowledge and as inevitable. 'It is one thing bearing in mind, when one looks at a house, that it has more than one side to it; quite another to be continually aware of how a family must seem to every member of it, or how each member of a group of people working on some common project would see what was going on.' (Graeber 2001, 64) Therefore, 'most historical change is not nearly so self-conscious: it is the fact that people are not, for the most part, self-consciously trying to reproduce their own societies but simply pursuing value that makes it so easy for them to end up transforming those same societies as a result.' (2001, 88) It is these life philosophies that are reflected in desired objects:

[T]otalities tend to end up inscribed in a series of objects that, insofar as they become media of value, also become objects of desire—largely, by representing the value of an actor's own actions to herself. The object in question might be almost anything: a ritual performance, an heirloom treasure, a game, a title with its associated regalia. The critical thing is that whatever it is, it can on some level be said to contain everything. Such objects imply within their own structure all those principles of motion that shape the field in which they take on meaning' (Graeber 2001, 259)

In the words of Gillian Dyer (1982, 104), 'Objects are cultural as well as physical. Their appearance, shape, size and colour are the intentional result of a series of conscious choices and decisions made by human beings. The look of things is rarely accidental.' Reversely, material forms allow for various uses. Graeber (2001) observes that objects that ended up as currencies typically served for adornment first. We've seen the standard account by economists above, to which he replies: 'True, beads do fit most of the standard criteria economists usually attribute to money. They may not be divisible, but they are roughly commensurable, highly portable, and they do not decay. But the same could be said of any number of other objects that have never been used as a means of exchange.' (ibid, 92) What made them suitable for one-off trade with strangers was that while within societies other arrangements would exist, various societies nonetheless accept it because they could be worn for adornment; gold was used in trade between societies that hammer out gold coins and use it for everyday money and those that make jewelry out of it. Gold would sit on the intersection of two kinds of power. The invisible and generic power of money/content to translate it into various visible and concrete commodities/forms is a power that acts on other. And, as concrete jewelry/form, the visible power to invite others to recognize your past actions that would have led to the displayed jewelry, a power that persuades others to act. '[A]t its simplest, aristocratic display calls on the viewer to deliver wealth or render homage to the displayer because others have already done so, the most elementary form of exchange value is just the opposite: it inspires one to try to acquire an object simply because others have tried to do so in the past. (ibid, 114) Such recognition of the material properties/materiality of things would often be framed as "affordance"; qualities that allow certain and disallow other (culturally specific) uses (Rose 2012). A reverse example is how commercial markets are enabled by money as a 'durable physical object that can be stored, moved about, kept on reserve, taken from one context to another' (Graeber 2001, 78) as opposed to performances.

As goal-oriented action and the reproduction of society require confirmation of guiding totalities through material forms that are understood to reflect these totalities, social change becomes a matter of literally smashing things; iconoclasm. Burning debt records would be a popular example (Graeber 2011). Reversely, instituting new arrangement comes about through the positing of new material forms (things but also theatrical performances) (Graeber 2001). Designing flags comes to mind. Hans Belting agrees: 'In situations of iconoclasm, pictures are prohibited from taking material form (from being given a visible medium) in an effort to protect people from what are deemed false images. Magical practice operates in the opposite direction, consecrating pictures in order to overcome dead matter and put the material substance of the picture to work. In other words, iconoclasm tries to render the medium powerless, while magic endows the medium with power.' (Belting 2011, 11) He also provides the perfect quote to introduce the next section: 'As we are beginning to see, images in ancient Mesopotamia did, quite literally, begin to speak. In the inscriptions that cover their surfaces, dialogues are carried on, commands are issued, and names and events are ritually recalled. To be sure, images

always did speak, just as they were always spoken to by the beholder, but there they do so more explicitly, employing the new medium of written language, which they use to explain themselves, to provide a kind of instruction manual for interacting with them.' (ibid, 104-105)

Myth

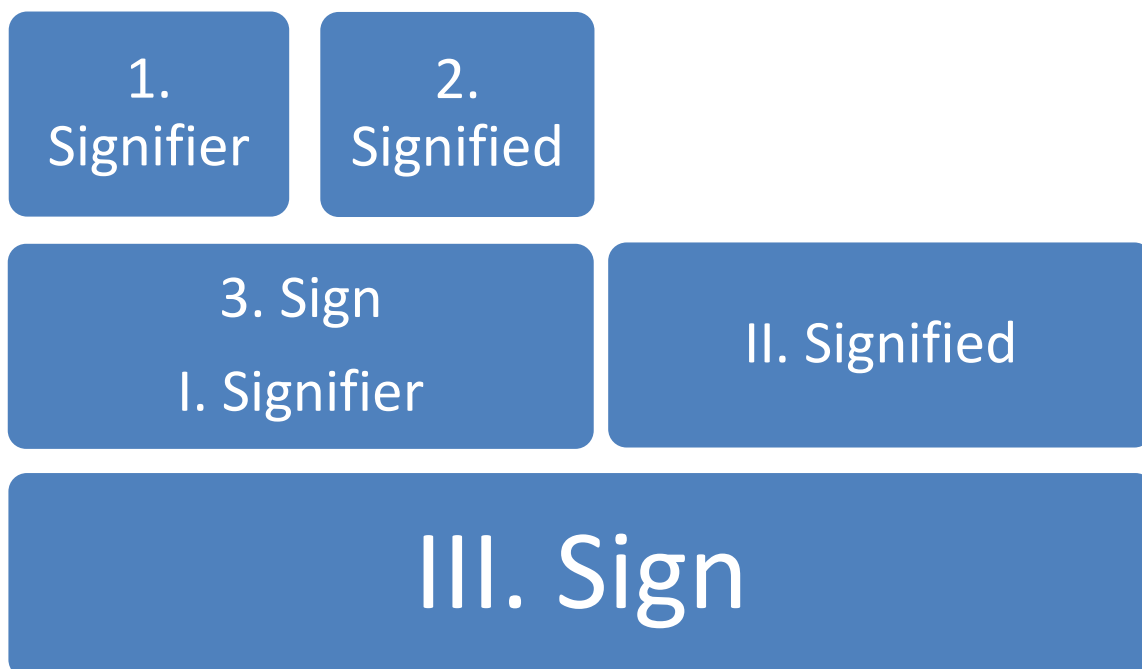
Operationalizing Barthes

According to Ferdinand de Saussure, there's no transparent/truthful/objective relation between a sign/knowledge and a referent, that selection of reality intended by a sign. 'In order to account for the double phenomenon of signification and value³¹, de Saussure used the analogy of a sheet of paper if we cut shapes in it, on the one hand we get various pieces (A, B, C), each of which has a *value* in relation to its neighbors, and, on the other, each of these pieces has a recto and a verso which have been *cut out at the same time* (A-A', B-B', C-C'): this is the signification. This comparison is useful because it leads us to an original conception of the production of meaning: no longer as the mere correlation of a signifier and a signified, but perhaps more essentially *as an act of simultaneously cutting out* two amorphous masses, two 'floating kingdoms' as de Saussure says. For de Saussure imagines that at the (entirely theoretical) origin of meaning, ideas and sounds form two floating, labile, continuous and parallel masses of substances; meaning intervenes when one cuts at the same time and at a single stroke into these two masses. The signs (thus produced) are therefore *articuli*; meaning is therefore an order with chaos on either side, but this order is essentially a *division*.' (Barthes 1967, 36-37, italics not mine) If an idea (a signified only analytically separable from signifier, their relation constituting a sign) depends on its place within a particular language system, this means there's no object "out there" before language. 'Nor is it the case that each language has an arbitrary sound/image (signifier) for a concept in universal existence (the signified 'dog') but that the system of distinctions is entirely specific to each social institution of language (*la langue*). An underlying code or set of distinctions between dead/living, cooked/raw operate in English, then, to distinguish between the signifiers mutton and sheep, whereas the French signifier *mouton* cuts out only one conceptual unit. It is not the case that there is pure, positive content, which is then 'clothed in the form of a signifier'. In this way semiotics unsettles hallowed divisions between 'form' and 'content' operative in those branches of the sociology of culture and art history which have not reconstructed these categories via the 'linguistic turn' (...).' (Evans 1999, 12, italics not mine) While this doesn't deny that there's matter outside language against which we can bump our toes, it does mean objects as named things don't exist before the naming since the naming constitute objects as objects. Even if our everyday experience is very different.

³¹ Understood as meaning.

In his *Mythologies* (1972), Roland Barthes described everyday objects as meaningful, thus found the insignificant significant, and approached their meaning as historically produced rather than natural. De Saussure already opened the possibility to do so³², but Barthes claims in the 1970 preface to his *Mythologies* to have been the first to actually do it. He modifies de Saussure's theory of the sign by adding a second-order sign that takes possession of the basic sign by using it as a signifier for another signified (figure. 1). A dominant thinking distorts the actual thing or sign so that it becomes an instance (of many) of this thinking; this myth. The supposed example, then, functions as an "alibi" for the myth; legitimizing it by its existence. The second level is that of connotation and it is here that myth roams.

Figure 1. The structure of mythological signification (based on Barthes 1972, 113).



I myself found this example enlightening for understanding the theory:

I am at the barber's, and a copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the [real] *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I

³² It is... possible to conceive of a science *which studies the role of signs as part of social life*. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *semeïon*, 'sign'). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist, one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist, a place ready for it in advance. Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge.' (Saussure 1983, 15-16; 1974, 16 quoted in <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem01.html>, italics not mine (last accessed 30 August 2012))

see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier.' (Barthes 1972, 115, italics not mine)

Myth thus not only refers to content but is also a structured process. 'The mythical signification is never arbitrary; it is always in part motivated, and unavoidably contains some analogy.' (Barthes 1972, 124); there must be an element which the myth can take hold of: it selects and disregards other, contradictory, elements. He implies that there's no moment in which all real meaning/denotation gets processed before myth-experience. '[M]yth essentially aims at causing an immediate impression - it does not matter if one is later allowed to see through the myth, its action is assumed to be stronger than the rational explanations which may later belie it.' (ibid, 129) Framing this in Althusser's terms, once an object is understood a certain way, the object functions as a prompt and interpellates us to spontaneously act in the manner the object's myth prescribes (Althusser 1999; see also Williamson 1978): 'Most people 'recognize' the existing state of affairs (*das Bestehende*), that 'it really is true that it is so and not otherwise', and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt 'love thy neighbour as thyself', etc. Their concrete, material behaviour is simply the inscription in life of the admirable words of the prayer: 'Amen - So be it.' (Althusser 1999, 323) This looks a lot like the fetish but it implies that not just circulating gold coins or voodoo dolls effect specific behavior in humans but that *all* objects may be called fetishes.

We have to distinguish early Barthes from later Barthes, another analytical distinction.³³ The relevant difference revolves around the question whether an objective description of reality is possible. Early Barthes believed denotation/truth came about through "labor"; interaction with real things, while connotation would be confined to bourgeois society (Barthes 1972). Later Barthes repositions himself: denotation becomes a "trace" (Barthes 1977c) of its former self or even a mere analytical "syntagm" (Barthes 1977d)³⁴ and all meaning connotation. '[T]he writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such

³³ For a more complex understanding of Barthes' development and the experience of reading his work, see Stafford's application of the spiral metaphor (2006).

³⁴ Discussed further down.

a way as never to rest on any one of them.' (Barthes 1977b, 146) A text thus refers to other texts and knowledge of the texts referred to (and others one associates with it) determines the interpretation of the text at hand. We may chuckle when we understand a text to be parodied, and this allows for a somewhat different conception of connotation: connotation as association. This fits with the common sense understanding of the term connotation: you must have heard people speak of “sexual” or “racist connotations” (reading Barthes, an anti-imperialist and sympathizer with the Algerian revolution to be sure, use the term “negro” in the above example will probably make readers well-acquainted with Anglo-American culture note and pause because of such connotations.) Any sign always involved connotation, indeed all meaning is connotative since it depends on previous knowledge³⁵, but we may retain the terms denotation and connotation for analytical purposes. Stuart Hall (1997) distinguishes between denotation and association on the basis of consensus (which is not the same as truth). This is not necessarily at odds with the previous: more people have knowledge of, say, Basic English, than there are who understand obscure references. That connotation means association is pretty well established/denotative, but that it constitutes theory by Barthes is a connotation only few of us experience. This shifts the problem to what it is that what people agree upon and by what mark consensus is achieved. Impossible to answer, but as ideal types denotation/consensus and connotation/personal are useful - even though it ultimately depends on my judgment and, the argument goes, my own social position/experiences in Europe and not elsewhere. Likewise, the idea of myth as a second-order/connotation phenomenon taking possession of a first-order sign, although ultimately wrong, can be retained.

The term myth, for me, invokes/connotes Greek or Norse myths, which are elaborate stories of Gods and events helping to make sense of the world and imparting wisdom on how to live in it (Lévi-Strauss cited in Williamson 1978). Barthes' general concepts of French imperialism, “Italianicity”³⁶ and so on are close to it. However, the later Barthes doesn't require referrals to whole cosmologies for myths to be myths; a (proverbial) phrase would do. 'Contemporary myth is discontinuous. It is no longer

³⁵ Note that with this new conception of connotation, which disallows a second-order sign to take possession of a first-order sign (which is by definition already linguistic, thus not existing with meaning of its own), comes to fit with how de Saussure saw language: we understand things only on the basis of a language system. In what way would an objective understanding be isolated in our brains from incorrect ones? This does not deny Barthes' application of it to non-linguistic phenomena, but it does detract from the idea that Barthes expanded de Saussure's theory in a strictly linguistic sense.

³⁶ Discussing an advertisement for pasta, Barthes notes 'A second sign is more or less equally evident; its signifier is the bringing together of the tomato, the pepper and the tricoloured hues (yellow, green, red) of the poster; its signified is Italy or rather *Italianicity*. This sign stands in a relation of redundancy with the connoted sign of the linguistic message (the Italian assonance of the name *Panzani*) and the knowledge it draws upon is already more particular; it is a specifically 'French' knowledge (an Italian would barely perceive the connotation of the name, no more probably than he would the Italianicity of tomato and pepper), based on a familiarity with certain tourist stereotypes.' (Barthes 1977, 34); '*Italianicity* is not Italy, it is the condensed essence of everything that could be Italian, from spaghetti to painting.' (ibid, 48)

expressed in long fixed narratives but only in 'discourse'; at most, it is a *phraseology*, a corpus of phrases (of stereotypes); myth disappears, but leaving - so much the more insidious - the *mythical*' (Barthes 1977a, 165, italics not mine). As critical theorists (in the sense of the Frankfurt School) point out, advertisements not only try to sell commodities or politicians, they provide a suspect wisdom of how one can improve one's life (by buying the commodity) and thus also sell one or rather multiple and contradictory ways of life; a set of (consumerist) values (Dyer 1982; Featherstone 1982; Marcuse 1968). Myth is not a thing of the past nor only of "primitive" peoples; our daily lives are just as primitive in that they are thoroughly suffused by myths. While connotation and myth are not the same, they imply one another: every concept has a place in and is associated with a logic/myth and no myth/logic is possible without constituting elements. 'A concept is assuredly not a thing, but neither is it merely the consciousness of a concept. A concept is an instrument and a history, that is, a bundle of possibilities and obstacles involved in the world as experienced.' (Granger, 23 quoted in Barthes 1967, 99). All logics are myths, even when helpful.

Observing consumer behaviour through advertising

The above spatialization (figure 1.) of the mythological process can become very complex when applied. Helpfully, Barthes tried to elaborate a method studying the system/langue/language of fashion. While "clothing" as the language of fashion would be transparently represented (Barthes 1967), indeed established by its inclusion in the fashion magazine, "dress" as the clothing as worn would agree with speech (Barthes 1985). The language of fashion can be seen as a second system taking possession of actual garments and thereby establishing a "real vestimentary code" (ibid) and making clothes speak, which means that written fashion is 'a systematized set of signs and rules: it is a language in its pure state' (Barthes 1967). '[T]he abstraction inherent in any language is here materialized as written language: fashion clothes (as written about) are the language at the level of vestimentary communication and speech at the level of verbal communication.' (ibid, 26) Fashion photography equally strives to establish a language but owes its simultaneous and prerequisite speech existence to another language. The relations between image and text are categorized here, in *The Fashion System*, as '*Immobilization of levels of perception*' (1985, 13, italics not mine); selection by the text from the possible interpretations of the image, the adding of information not clear in the image including what something means/what is fashionable and thirdly as emphasis/selection of elements in the accompanying photo.

By no means would I pretend to establish *the* language of gold jewelry (rather than constituting its own language, it is part of the fashion system (Barthes 2006b)). Yet a similar approach should yield *some* (whether that's a lot or not) of the meanings given to gold jewelry. Through looking at the phraseology of fashion magazines, Barthes (1985) hoped to isolate from the phrases the meaning of various garments as fashionable or unfashionable. One way for a garment to be fashionable was

simply to be noted in or excluded from the fashion magazine (which logically considers and thus, if this authority is accepted, makes it fashion³⁷). Or when the garment was described more “worldly”, this worldly meaning, again, was only elaborated in function of establishing something as fashion; e.g. 'Prints win at the races' (ibid, 36) becomes 'This year, prints are the sign of the races. In both cases the signified as fashion is hidden. Important to note is that also ideology as false relations between things is presented in the phraseology (prints would "win" at the races, which in turn makes one want to have and thus typically purchase prints if one desires to "win" at the races). Ideology thus corresponds with myth as I've defined it above.

In *The Fashion System*, Barthes only considers words. In *Rhetoric of the Image* (Barthes 1977d) he considers an advertisement, consisting of words and a picture. The approach is an echo of his treatment of fashion. First he expands the possible relations between image and text from just anchorage (the caption selects the desired of all possible interpretations of the image) to include relay ('complementary relationship; the words, in the same way as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realized at a higher level, that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis', 'meanings that are not to be found in the image itself' (ibid, 41). While in "The Photographic Message" (Barthes 1977c) illustration was noted (the reverse anchor; the image selects the right interpretation of the text³⁸). '[A] system which takes over the signs of another system in order to make them its signifiers is a system of connotation' (Barthes 1977d, 37) and thus it would be possible to read off connotation from captions, provided the relation with the image is one of anchorage. The relations between scenes in a film would be relay.

Paraphrasing Jacques Durand (1983), who claims ancient wisdom, rhetorical figures (e.g. metaphor) allow/force a connotation to speak and obscure the literal interpretation. Barthes' discussion of rhetoric as “connotators”, as the signifiers of ideology, allows texts and sound to be connotators just as much as elements of an image can be (Barthes 1977d). Yet he applies the theory only to (sets of) image-

³⁷ 'A fashion is recorded at the very moment it is announced, the very moment it is prescribed. The whole of Fashion rhetoric is contained in this shortcut: *stating that which is being imposed*; producing Fashion and then seeing in it nothing but an *effect without a named cause*; then retaining from this effect only the phenomenon; and finally leaving this phenomenon to develop as if its life depended solely upon itself: such is the trajectory that fashion follows so as to convert its cause, its law and its signs all at once into fact.' (Barthes 2006c, 116, italics not mine)

³⁸ 'Firstly, the text constitutes a parasitic message designed to connote the image, to 'quicken' it with one or more second-order signifieds. In other words, and this is an important historical reversal, the image no longer *illustrates* the words; it is now the words which, structurally, are parasitic on the image. The reversal is at a cost: in the traditional modes of illustration the image functioned as an episodic return to denotation from a principal message (the text) which was experienced as connoted since, precisely, it needed an illustration; in the relationship that now holds, it is not the image which comes to elucidate or 'realize' the text, but the latter which comes to sublimate, patheticize or rationalize the image.' (Barthes 1977c, 25, italics not mine)

signs and discusses text as a different "type" of message.³⁹ In other words, he contradicts himself. To make things worse, both Williamson (1978) and Burgin (1999) provide examples whereby an image and text are in contradiction with one another, but then turn out to be paradoxes. Barthes' relay (a possible relation between text and image) looks very similar to the paradox (which is a rhetorical figure) in their ternary structure; by requiring a third sign. The point here is that it makes little sense to reserve for text such a privileged position. Rhetorical figures can be applied to an image, and obviously text as well. But such relations also appear possible between image and text, and between the various posters of an overarching commercial campaign (equally allowing for an interpretation that is only present at that level (Durand 1983)). In other words, rhetoric doesn't seem to care for the substance of its signifiers. Is all covered by rhetoric, then? 'It is even probable that there exists a single rhetorical form, common for instance to dreams, literature and images' (Barthes 1977d, 49). Durand goes even further and makes rhetoric encompass all that is possible: 'rhetoric is in fact the repertoire of the different ways in which one can be 'original' (1983).

We've seen how existing texts are mixed to produce a new text. The same applies to advertisements: 'connotation is only system, can only be defined in paradigmatic terms; iconic denotation is only syntagm, associates elements without any system: the discontinuous connotators are connected, actualized, 'spoken' through the syntagm of the denotation, the discontinuous world of symbols plunges into the story of the denoted scene as though into a lustral bath of innocence.' (Barthes 1977d, 51)⁴⁰ While association refers to a myth as defined above; able to withstand empirical testing or not, elements that belong to different myths/referent systems are placed together in the advertisement. These various myths had their own logic; their own relations between elements; their own way of explaining things; their own syntagms. Yet signs of these systems, to which they refer by association, are placed together in 'a syntagm *which is not theirs and which is that of the denotation.*' (ibid, 50-51, italics not mine)

Standing on the shoulders of Barthes⁴¹ and in interaction with a collection of advertisements, Judith Williamson (1978) elaborated a theory of "transference" which would account for the process by which commodities attain their curious meanings. An advertisement brings elements of various "referent systems"/myths together so that the commodity appears together with a celebrity or so. Similar if not physically identical products appear with their respective messages. By contrasting these

³⁹ Which would explain why illustration as a text-image relation is excluded from the essay: an image is no longer able to select from a text's connotations; it can no longer be an anchor like text can be in relation to an image.

⁴⁰ The orthodoxy is to point out the apparent truthfulness of photography.

⁴¹ Williamson exemplifies her theory by means of contrasting multiple Chanel ads. While she doesn't reference Barthes' study of Chanel (Barthes 2006a) in which he anticipates her "transference" theory.

advertisements, the composition of the advertisement is accepted as premise, the products differentiated and ultimately meaning transferred to the signifier of the commodity. The result is remembered; the opposing with other advertisements/previously attained knowledge gets skipped in the future; the commodity becomes inter(ex)changeable with its new signified; they become "Objective Correlatives", to the point that the signified (an ideal, a feeling) seems unattainable without the commodity. Since the commodities appear with different celebrities, it goes that the commodities "must" be different too.

All of this ultimately stands or falls, of course, with empirical testing. The reason for Fashion, according to Barthes, is to sell beyond what people require. 'It is ... the advertiser's task to try to persuade rather than inform.' (Dyer 1982, 6) The current orthodoxy in media effect studies is that the effects of media are negotiated (Verstraeten 2004). We have seen that for myth to take hold of something, the individual must hold the required knowledge. Advertisers wouldn't be able to impose whatever they desire. To endow a previously unknown signifier with a new signified they are limited by the signified of the "originating" signifier. In *A Passion For Gold* (WGC 2005a), the World Gold Council states that, instead of imposing something new, its marketing responds to attitudes already present. 'Brands ... translate the particular use-values created by the labor of consumers (through and outside interactions with firms) into a more general and comparable value form.' (Foster 2005, 717) This appears to be marketing orthodoxy. Not surprising, then, that the effect marketing has would be a confirming, reinforcing one (Frith, Shaw, and Cheng 2005; Schroeder and Zwick 2004). Looking at advertisements, then, is also a window to study more systematically those attitudes which inspire real-life interactions between people. Cultural products are produced by a culture. '[A] central part of ideology: the constant *re*-production of ideas which are denied a historical beginning or end, which are used or referred to 'because' they 'already' exist in society, and continue to exist in society 'because' they are used and referred to; and which therefore take on the nature of a timeless, synchronic structure, 'out of history' (Williamson 1978, 99). On the other hand, images can be misrepresentations and themselves in turn "misinterpreted"; they can manipulate and create "false" needs (Williamson 1978; Marazzi 1999; Schor 1999; Marcuse 1968; Dyer 1982; Featherstone 1982). In either case, advertisements would be a window on actual consumer behavior. In sum, the literature I consulted on the topic is consistent with the theory.

Synthesizing value, fetish and myth

Graeber criticized de Saussurean frameworks for a number of reasons but it seems that the framework that Barthes developed from de Saussure allows for a specification of Graeber's argument. He critiques that de Saussurean theories are detached from reality, something he resolves by locating meaning within actions and replacing de Saussure with Piaget to account for the development of higher-level understandings of the world. His own Piagetian framework has people looking for the principles that

underlie their actions, and so experiences are linked up on a more abstract level to constitute totalities. There's some truth to it as that while Barthes was clear that he saw (verbal) language/langue arising from speech/parole, he also saw little possibility for human agency to change “artificial” languages such as that of fashion (Barthes 1967). And all an author could do nowadays was to mix already existing texts. The model of language was one in which people are only conscious of the content of the language they speak and not of its form; the unconscious relations/differences between the elements that determine their conscious contents. Yet David Sutton (2004) already pointed out something very similar to what Graeber critiques crops up in his notion of totalities that guide human action. Graeber also accepts de Saussure's core insight that meaning exists only in relation with other elements of an understanding.⁴² Also: 'Saussure's approach was more about vocabulary than grammar, more about nouns and adjectives than verbs. It was concerned with the objects of human action more than with the actions themselves.' (Graeber 2001, 14) Yet he claims 'no logical system (such as, say, mathematics) could demonstrate its own internal consistency; in order to do so, one has to generate a more sophisticated, higher level that presumes it. Since that level will not be able to demonstrate its own principles either, one then has to go on to generate another level after that, and so on ad infinitum.' (ibid, 61) Especially when you challenge them, people don't evidence life philosophies that are perfectly coherent at any one time. Taking up his own concerns, it is hard to maintain such integrated totalities. Here Barthes' notion of mythology as phraseology may offer a way out as the study of fragmented sets of phrases/myths that guide human action. The phraseology in *The Fashion System* dealt with elements and their relations so that the element “prints” has the relation of “winning” in the context of “the races”.

We have seen that the circulating tokens of value would be understood as the confirmation of the life philosophies that guide human action. Barthes' mythological process allows for a more detailed consideration of how these objects attain such meaning that points to a whole understanding of the world. The mythological process present in fashion advertising applies English language phrases to clothing pictures, thereby constituting real clothing as fashion. But humans reading *Paris Match* or watching a wrestling match do just the same. On the basis of the knowledge they have, they make

⁴² 'First of all, there is a difference between totalities the analyst is claiming exist in some kind of empirical sense—i.e., a pristine text, a clearly bounded “society,” a mythological “system”—and totalities that exist in the actors' imaginations. Social science has long since realized that the former do not really exist, at least not in any pristine form; any closed system is just a construct, and not necessarily a very useful one; nothing in real life is really so cut and dried. Social processes are complex and overlapping in an endless variety of ways. On the other hand, if there's one thing that almost all the classic traditions of the study of meaning agree on—dialectical, hermeneutic, and structuralist alike—it is that for human beings, meaning is a matter of comparison. Parts take on meaning in relation to each other, and that process always involves reference to some sort of whole: whether it be a matter of words in a language, episodes in a story, or “goods and services” on the market. So too for value. The realization of value is always, necessarily, a process of comparison; for this reason it always, necessarily, implies an at least imagined audience. As I've already suggested, for the actor, that's all that “society” usually is.' (Graeber 2001, 86-87)

sense of things. Once an object is understood in this way, this interpretation comes spontaneously and seems to inhere in the thing itself instead of depending on human imagination and this obscures other possible uses. Connotations present themselves as denotation. The understanding of an object, including how one should treat it, thus having effects on humans – this understanding really originates in and depends on human action and is not part of the object itself. The qualification that the material properties must afford this interpretation/use doesn't deny that things are used variably. At times, gold coins were used as money, but not most of the times. This affordance corresponds to the required element of analogy that allows a myth to take possession of an object and use it as an alibi legitimating the use to which it is put. Graeber's tokens of value/fetishes as meaningful objects can thus be approached by the concepts of myth and connotation.

We have seen that in capitalist society, value would be realized by having one's consumption choices recognized by others one cares about. For Barthes, gold jewelry would be part of the language of fashion and you're either fashionable or unfashionable. This ordering of jewelry and other clothes, the whole performance, is judged by what those others consider to be the right order of things. Inviting the interpretation of “chic” (style) by wearing a gold ring shaped in the form of the Chanel flower may help others to recognize your class. But if these others don't know the imagery or if Chanel is considered “nouveau-riche”, the desired effect may not be obtained. Marketing would reinforce and thus evidence consumer behavior. Therefore, myths that give gold jewelry its effects can be mapped by looking at advertisements. Then, it can be considered whether the myths point toward agreeable effects or not. What actions are prescribed? What's the relation to others? Is it true that jewelry is about patriarchy and other inequalities?⁴³ Or does it comfort us (Miller 2009)? Tokens of value are material forms that confirm life philosophies; ‘they are measures of value, as they serve to mark a contrast between greater or lesser degrees of dominance, beauty, honor, prestige, or whatever the particular valued quality may be.’ (Graeber 2001, 75) One of the forms this measurement can take is the one of ‘presence/absence. Even if one is dealing with unique and incommensurable values, there is still the difference between having them (or otherwise being identified with them) and not. Kayapo “beautiful names” and their associated regalia, for example, are not ranked—each is a value only unto itself—but every name-giving ceremony is organized around the distinction between “those with wealth,” who have them, “those with nothing,” who do not—even if all other social distinctions are effectively dissolved (Turner 1987:28).’ (ibid) By these criteria, fashionable gold jewelry is a token of value.

⁴³ http://www.pennabilli.org/testi/Kingsley_EN.htm (last accessed 30 August 2012)

The charge by Graeber that structuralism/semiology/semiotics fails to evaluate which things are considered more desirable than others (and preferably by how much)⁴⁴ holds to a large extent. While theories of value hardly concerned Barthes, the evaluative criteria in Barthes' fashion system seem to limit themselves to fashionable and unfashionable on the basis of inclusion by the current edition of *Elle* or *Vogue*. Reading Miller (2010) and his doctorate students on how people get dressed for the day in various places, however, it quickly becomes clear how simplistic Barthes' belief in the authority of fashion mags is. It is observed how the performances of such magazines contradict one another, creating uncertainty and anxiety and somehow generating the phenomenon of uniformed grey Londoners. Also notable is how 'Styles that deliberately repudiate respectability are often the vanguard of fashion' (ibid, 34). Or consider the popular fashion shows by Trinidadians, who select pieces from magazines and the dustbin alike and try to pull it all off, with no judging of where it came from but only of the "style" of the amateur designers/models. Graeber requires to study particular orders of things and not just any one object and it is true there are more thorough methods but since marketing reinforces consumer behavior it would also evidence the meaning of actions. I won't consider objects other than gold jewelry so perhaps I'm not looking at value *per se* as this involves an evaluation *vis-a-vis* other objects but the myths of objects do provide the reasons for trying to acquire it.

Methodology

While the deductive testing of hypotheses ("falsification") should guard better against prejudices, is there not also a danger of distorting the data to fit with your hopes? Is not each particular instance of coding in "content analysis" a positivistic and conservative act? Herbert Marcuse (1968) employed Barthes to argue against this mythological signification employed in advertising just as much as in an "operationalist"/positivist brand of science: a one-dimensional thought characteristic of as well as contributing to a one-dimensional/consumerist/bourgeois society and ditto man. My main concern is staying close to what's empirically observable so that I don't make unfounded claims. Reverse, working systematically makes one confront elements that don't fit what was thought before and forces to reevaluate. The ideal of induction thus serves the logic of deductive testing best. To return to the

⁴⁴ 'when one observes that a loaf of bread costs five francs, and a steak-frites costs twenty, one is not simply observing that the bread and steak-frites are *different*. One is more likely to be emphasizing the fact that one is worth *more*. This is why one can say an element of evaluation is involved. This is also precisely what makes money unique—that it can indicate exactly how much more one is worth than the other—and precisely what Saussurean models cannot account for. The latter provides a way to understand how the world is divided up, how objects are grouped into categories based on their differences with other sorts of object—and Sahlins is of course right when he says that in a consumer society, marketing is often a matter of creating symbolic distinctions between products that are otherwise virtually identical, like two different brands of corn flake or detergent—but this in itself does not explain why people are willing to spend money on them. People do not buy things simply because they recognize them as being different than other things in *some* way. Even if they did, this would do nothing to explain why they are willing to spend more on certain things than others.' (Graeber 2001, 15-16)

benefit of deductive testing: while I don't formulate hypotheses, I reflect on my own opinions with regards to each particular case.⁴⁵

I translate the previous concerns into my method by taking a multi-step approach, to separate from interpretation an earlier moment of description (Cope 2003) guided by an ideal of 'vision'; what there physically is to see (Rose 2012, 2). Prompted by reading Schroeder and Zwick's descriptions (2004), I realized describing what I see is better than to start interpreting an image right away. While what there is to see appears as obvious, this is only a semblance. Being explicit about what I do makes clear, to others viewing the same image, what I don't see. Extending this concern for experience, a moment is taken to consider what the material form of the object is, what technologies are apparent in this form, as well as the context in which it was encountered.

One hardly can stay closer to an image than by taking an art approach. And marketers appropriate the history of art for their own purposes, a history that served as pornography and status display for the nobles and early bourgeoisie (Berger 2008; Belting 2011) - just like marketers seem to directly apply the insights of semiology.⁴⁶ Rose (2012), following Bourdieu (2010), finds that art critics rely on a socialization process through experience rather than sharing their ways with others in introductory texts. So she tries to fill the gap by explicating a "compositional interpretation", which I, low on such "cultural capital" but willing to take the image seriously, rely on. Bartram (2003) vouches for her by making clear that Rose is *the* authority on the how of interpreting visual imagery.

'Other than as 'the study of signs' there is relatively little agreement amongst semioticians themselves as to the scope and methodology of semiotics.'⁴⁷ Among other concerns, there's a lack of systematicity (Rose 2012; Dyer 1982). Since to my knowledge no systematically applicable semiological instrument exists, I follow Rose's example and address all encountered concerns while devising my own (in appendix), aimed at yielding meanings of gold. This includes synthesizing⁴⁸ but also excluding

⁴⁵ While I'm not entirely comfortable with it, this is the exact opposite of tooting one's own horn. And this is not some unsubstantiated token gesture or cying my heart out over generalities but is shown to be relevant since it is done in interaction with particular data.

⁴⁶ Especially with regards to gold, which is not so much the product endowed with meaning as that it is the prop that rubs off its conventionalized understanding on other commodities (Dyer 1982).

⁴⁷ <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem11.html> (last accessed 26 August 2012)

⁴⁸ Sources include: both 1996 and 2012 editions of a list of questions by Rose which I first expand to become most inclusive and then select from. "The good eye" and "Semiology" chapters in Rose (2012). Finding tools on the Internet to guide me in distinguishing between hue, saturation and value (http://www.ncsu.edu/scivis/lessons/colormodels/color_models2.html (last accessed 16 July 2012), checking and expanding Rose's (2012) paraphrasing of Dyer by checking Dyer (1982). Checking the "D.I.Y. Semiotic Analysis" list at the end of Chandler's book/website (<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem12.html> (last accessed 26 August 2012). Elements

Charles Sanders Peirce's schema of icon, index and symbol, believing checking for these would not have yielded information not covered by included methods and also remaining within the de Saussurean tradition/assumptions (that there's no transparent knowledge of reality). Also notable is how I follow the popular position that all rhetorical tropes are reducible to just four dominant ones⁴⁹, checking for these. Checking for all (sub) tropes probably would have yielded more (detailed)/better data yet the task seemed too practically daunting to be feasible in time. Whether or not I classify the results under the right trope doesn't matter here as the typology is only used to get to figurative meaning and is not an end in itself. It all comes down to asking 'What does this mean?'

It does not make sense to clinically separate denotation from connotation if this is not how advertisements are experienced. When ideas pop into my mind, by association/connotation, I write them down – even when I'm checking for compositional features. Yet the resultant data is messy while their presentation needs to be clear, and so the data needs to be organized. Panofsky's iconographic method (cited in Rose 2012; Dyer 1982) conforms strikingly to what I've set out above and distinguishes three levels of interpretation: a primary/natural/pre-iconographic level that parallels compositional interpretation, a secondary/conventional/iconographic level that conforms with my use of denotation as interpretation I believe most would agree on, and a third/intrinsic/symbolic/iconological level for connotation and myth. I try and tear the data apart and group them under such headings. The results for each case are presented in appendix.

Note that this organizing/presenting is just one step in my analysis and represents an improvement on the (even) messier pages the application of the research instrument yielded. I include this fairly unedited in a spirit of transparency; this *is* the data I built the rest of the analysis on. I've included much info in footnotes. Consider this a visualization of intertextuality. Most of the times these pieces of text come from a case's location within the WGC online world. If I couldn't make sense of things, I couldn't pick up a dictionary but I could search in that context. I think I'm not alone in doing this.

Still, there's a problem of 'Intercoder Reliability' (Bernard 2006, 512). Who would come up with exactly the same results as I; do I pick up on the "preferred reading"? Working systematically and explicating the methods used serves both to guide anyone using them as well as to allow replicability at every step. Remains that I bring my own particular situation to this endeavor. I've never been interested in gold jewelry until now and, as a male, I'm hardly the intended audience.⁵⁰ Therefore, in a

scattered in Barthes (1972) and Williamson (1978). Coding was largely guided by Bernard (2006) and Cope (2003).

⁴⁹ <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem07.html> (last accessed 26 August 2012)

⁵⁰ A Passion for Gold (WGC 2005a), a consumer research summary, not once mentions men; it's always about "women".

final step, I triangulate⁵¹ the findings by going back to the market research that inspired the advertisements⁵² (and thus I also check whether their intended messages come through and who the intended audiences are) as well as a later report on trends.⁵³ But before that final step, I first, by a practice of “grounded theory” coding⁵⁴, compare the results of the various cases as a step up to this triangulation.⁵⁵ Cope (2003) requires the eventual codes to be relevant. The results are reported on below.

Totaling at 5(!) rounds of processing: context and form, compositional interpretation, semiology, re-organizing/presenting the data each case yielded, and coding and triangulation.

It could prove a better approach to study how actual jewels are handled and interpreted by approaching jewelers' clientele or ringing peoples' doors. Preferably, I had conducted a series of ethnographies *in combination* with what I'm actually about to do. Much like Anna Tsing (2005), I'd track the travels and transformations of meaningful messages and practices by studying both the production of an advert as well as how people deal with the resultant image in another locale (etc.). Such an effort could take on a semiological taste and fall under a "social semiotics" (Rose 2012). Which is of particular significance since marketing does not limit itself to TV commercials and posters, but also includes the retail environment, the setting up of festivities, the tweaking of the actual product sold. Practical constraints,

⁵¹ In the process of research design it is important not to view each of these methods as an either/or choice. Rather, it is possible (and often desirable) to mix methods. This process of drawing on different sources or perspectives is known as triangulation. The term comes from surveying, where it describes using different bearings to give the correct position.' (Clifford 2003, 8-9)

⁵² Here I intend A Passion for Gold (WGC 2005a). It is true that I've read it before and so that I'm probably primed to note that which later triangulation should confirm or falsify, but this is a different kind of reading than the focused one of triangulation (one much like “content analysis”). Also (and as noted before), the systematic specificity of the research instrument anchors the results it yields. And so this triangulation also serves as a test of the instrument. Forget purity.

⁵³ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/1> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁵⁴ The mechanics of grounded theory are deceptively simple: (1) Produce transcripts of interviews and read through a small sample of text. (2) Identify potential analytic categories - that is, potential themes - that arise. (3) As the categories emerge, pull all the data from those categories together and compare them. (4) Think about how categories are linked together. (5) Use the relations among categories to build theoretical models, constantly checking the models against the data - particularly against negative cases. (6) Present the results of the analysis using exemplars, that is, quotes from interviews that illuminate the theory. (Bernard 2006, 492)

⁵⁵ While this has been complicated by previous choices and could be done better (but that would be unpractical), the organization/presentation of the results of each individual case corresponds to *in vivo* codes – that is, they appear in the text and we use respondents own words as codes.' (Cope 2003, 452, italics not mine) While comparing the cases, including WGC triangulation, would be the analytic stage: 'Analytic codes emerge from a second level of coding that comes after much reflection on descriptive codes and a return to the theoretical literature.' (Cope 2003, 452)

however, never made me take such an endeavor seriously. The best I can do, and as set out above, is triangulating with World Gold Council (WGC) consumer research reports.

Sampling

While not representative in the sense of random sampling, on the level of sampling World Gold Council (WGC) marketing, the choice is justified by the direct link between mining and marketing since its members are gold mining companies, the association's self-declared power, the global scope of its campaigns and the partnering with major retailers. WGC companies cover 'approximately 60% of global corporate gold production'⁵⁶ and the WGC has as its explicit goal 'to stimulate and sustain demand for gold'⁵⁷. The lobby claims to have turned around a declining trend in jewelry demand⁵⁸, even being defined by it.⁵⁹ It is an abstraction to call the campaigns global but there's no other term to describe it: the WGC conducted campaigns in China, India, Italy, Saudi Arabia, USA, Turkey and online as <http://gold.com/>, <http://www.gold.org/>, <http://www.facebook.com/gold> and other websites show its mark. Its 'strategy is to focus on integrated strategic partnerships with leading gold jewelry retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers' to 'integrate advertising and promotional materials and retail environments' (WGC 2005a, 8), extending its presence to the micro level.

⁵⁶ http://www.gold.org/about_us/members/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁵⁷ http://www.gold.org/about_us/who_we_are/vision_and_mission/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁵⁸ Before: 'In 2002 the gold jewellery market was performing poorly. Gold jewellery demand, which accounts for around 70% of total gold demand, was in sustained decline in both tonnage and in value terms. Gold jewellery had lost desirability and relevance to the consumer, resulting in loss of market share to diamonds and platinum in the jewellery market. At the same time gold was competing against an ever increasing pool of luxury goods, such as leisure, electronics, fashion and luxury accessories, all of which had stronger marketing platforms than gold. As a result, new supply was higher than jewellery demand for the first time in eight years, the gold price was stagnant and gold jewellery was experiencing market erosion in all territories.' (WGC 2005a, 8) After: 'The initial results of our efforts to revitalise the gold jewelry market have been very successful. With overall jewelry demand in 2005 five per cent higher than 2004 in tonnage terms, and a substantial 14 per cent higher in dollar terms, we have now successfully reversed a period of declining demand and indeed, in value terms, have seen record demand at around US\$39 billion at primary gold value, approximately US\$80 billion at retail value, making it one of the biggest brands globally. Over the past two years, countries where the World Gold Council has been conducting jewelry promotion campaigns have outperformed the rest of the world. In 2005, gold jewellery demand rose 17 per cent in value terms in those markets compared to only 7 per cent in non-promoted regions, leading the market in attaining record levels of demand in value terms and improving gold jewellery's market share. The World Gold Council's efforts have contributed to this growth, and the clear measures of success that the WGC now has in place demonstrate that it is making an impact. The markets where the WGC is active are the largest markets for gold which were all in decline prior to 2003, but are now showing growth. Gold jewellery sales also outperformed GDP growth, retail sales indices, and diamond and platinum jewellery sales in all these focus markets.' (ibid, 18)

⁵⁹ 'In response to this [the poorly performing gold jewellery market in 2002, competing against other luxury goods that had stronger marketing platforms than gold], the World Gold Council changed the focus of the organisation from a disseminator of information and a general advocate for gold promotion, to a commercially driven marketing function for the gold industry. We have established ourselves as the primary catalyst in transforming the global gold jewellery category and driving increased consumer demand.' (WGC 2005a, 8)

<http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/> (last accessed 30 August 2012) identifies three key markets: India ('India is the largest market for gold jewelry in the world, representing a staggering 746 tons of gold in 2010.'), China ('China is the fastest-growing market for gold jewelry in the world, accounting for 400 tons of demand in 2010.'), and the US ('The US accounted for 129 tons of gold in jewelry during 2010.'). Italian manufacturing is promoted for exports. The overarching jewelry section also points to <http://www.goldinspirations.com/> and the more specialized <http://www.k-gold.org.cn/> (China) and <http://www.facebook.com/gold> (US), and <http://www.goldexpressions.com/> (Italy) websites.

<http://marketing.gold.org/> points to <http://www.goldinspirations.com/>. There, it says: 'Modesty aside Gold Inspirations is unique. It is the only online magazine devoted to bringing you the very best in gold jewelry design.'⁶⁰ And 'This is a huge subject covering many different countries and cultures and our team of renowned experts present to you the best innovative, trend setting and stylist designs on the planet. Our list of international accolades has also helped our visitor numbers to increase and attracted some of the most important designers to share their views exclusively with our readers.' The website also won many awards from communications professionals.⁶¹ These are quite the claims and make it ideal for sampling. All that's on <http://www.marketing.gold.org/> itself deals with the US. All aforementioned sites seem to form a relatively closed whole, on the basis of (asymmetrical) hyperlinking.

The whole experience of a webpage could be significant and therefore I don't just consider what seems to be the advertisement but also text next to it, the layout it shares with other cases, the whole concept of a website or even cluster of sites. E.g., there's a promising section in the 'Gold guide' on how to wear it.⁶²

On the level of sampling within this website set, I set as a condition to include the identified 'key markets': India, China, US as well as Italy. (Even if I have little to no understanding of the Chinese site since a friend only translated an advertisement.) Another condition was that they need to depict

⁶⁰ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/about/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁶¹ 'Gold Inspirations has not only captured the imagination of gold jewellery visitors but it has also established an enviable reputation among the internet community, winning awards every year since its inception from both the League of American Communications Professionals (LACP) and the International Academy of Communications Arts and Sciences (IACAS). iNova Gold Award for online consumer publication (IACAS) iNova Grand award for 'best-of-show' among entries of all categories (IACAS) Spotlight Award 'Platinum' in the general category (LACP) Spotlight Award Silver in the 'Most inspirational' category (LACP) Spotlight Top 100 Gold Inspirations was ranked 39th in the 100 best publicity competition Spotlight Award Gold iNova Silver Awards – Best Magazine category' (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/about/> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

⁶² <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-jewellery-wardrobe/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

people, since these would be most telling. Within these conditions, I selected the most interesting/diverse ones. I also processed a Chanel case out of theoretical interest. That this last step raises eye brows is understandable: it opens the possibility to charge me with selecting those cases which confirm my prejudices; that I would have my myths take possession of things. There's some truth to it in that I prefer cases which I can work on and have something to say at the end of it, but the conditions set firstly already established the relevance of the subgroup out of which I finally pick the most interesting one and, secondly, limited the number of possible choices to very few.

I advise you, the reader, to look at/read the included images for yourself first so that you are not primed by my interpretations and are more able to judge them (you can enlarge the pictures). Next I would have a look at the research instrument I utilized (in appendix), or at least have it on hand so that you can better understand what I mean and how I came to these results. Since most of my reading and so is rather academically, I should stress that my connotations in the cases are not to be considered as actual analysis, but as the intertextuality that I bring to the endeavor. But even if you disagree with the content of my interpretations, it would still be possible to agree with the theory underlying it (indeed, differing interpretations are central to my argument).

Discussion of results

A consistent and focused marketing strategy

Since the codes need to be relevant, what follows is a selection once more. There are continuities between the cases discussed and the example posters that appear in *A Passion for Gold* (WGC 2005a). Under the encompassing banner "speak gold", very similar themes and compositions appeared. The document suggests a single global strategy was translated to differing targets, a strategy based on rather coherent (and large scale) market research.⁶³ Themes that appear in this document serve to organize this exercise even if other relevant things can and will be said. Secondly, coherence would

⁶³ 'The findings of our research programmes have given us significant insight, resources and information to develop globally appropriate messages about why, when and where to buy gold jewellery. Building on gold's core values, we have focused on key messages as to how it makes consumers feel, a prime motivator for women to wear gold.' (WGC 2005a, 8) And the section called "Voices of the World: Local Market Implementation", which presents differing marketing campaigns in multiple countries, follows 'Impact of Findings for World Gold Council', in which it is stated 'The research has provided the WGC with a wealth of knowledge and insight that has been used to develop a marketing platform which encompasses the core values and connectivity associated with gold, together with the wide and powerful vocabulary that consumers use about the yellow metal and its role in their lives. The marketing platform communicates relevant, cotemporary and powerful messages with a strong emotional hook. We have developed messages that are both relevant and flexible enough to work for different markets, to target different segments of consumers. These messages seek to address the reasons for buying gold, as well as the reasons and occasions to purchase gold.' (ibid, 15)

not be so much me pigeonholing what are not pigeons as that the cases evidence a shared understanding of things.

We can say a little about the intended audiences/consumers. First, since the campaigns are multi-channelled, access to the Internet is no precondition for exposure to it. The research populations were female⁶⁴, mostly urbanites but nationals in the US and Italy (WGC 2005a). The address in some of the cases appears to be male-oriented, yet Mulvey (1999) says women are only offered the spectator position of identifying with the object of identifying with the desiring gazes of males and so women may identify even when they are not addressed. Age-wise, respondents to the market research varied from 15 to 65 years. "Core target groups" (for marketing campaigning) were (1) 'Women who are traditional and status conscious in their outlook'⁶⁵, (2) 'Women passionate about their appearance and accessories'⁶⁶ and (3) 'Self-confident, creative women'⁶⁷. Profiles for each of these are presented, which include in what country they are a 'key segment', their (life) attitudes, their interpretations of owned gold jewelry, consumer usage, consumer motivations as well as the gold products they prefer: their lifestyle in short and holistically. In 2005, these groups (taken as one) made up between 53 and

⁶⁴ Men are not mentioned in "A Passion for Gold" (WGC 2005a) nor in the new 'Quarterly trends report, January 2012' (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/1> (last accessed 30 August 2012); it's always about 'women'. (A most extreme position is that 'Gold jewelry is an important part of a woman's psyche' according to former WGC CEO James Burton (quoted in Kingsley 2004).

⁶⁵ 'A key segment in India. These women embrace tradition by following customary norms and culture. They use traditional symbolism to communicate to others and gold plays a strong role in this. These women have little desire to be 'modern' in their culture. Their role as a wife and mother is critical to them. Gold jewellery, especially yellow gold, is extremely important to these women. It is an expression of tradition and wealth, it enhances their appearance and symbolises the importance of marriage. They are slightly more rational than some women in their selection of jewellery, but still appreciate the emotional benefits that wearing gold can bring. Gold has the added bonus of being seen as a wise financial investment.' (WGC 2005a, 9)

⁶⁶ 'A key segment in all six countries. They desire to portray a positive appearance that enhances their feeling of self-confidence. These women dress to 'lift' their mood, paying particular attention to how they are perceived by others, they always need to look their best. In some eastern markets these women are aiming to be more modern and progressive, but are conscious of the boundaries of tradition. Through design, gold jewellery enables these women to express their modern self without conflict, since gold is traditionally endorsed. Overall, gold is extremely important to this group; they own many pieces, but still have the desire to own more. Their gold jewellery communicates beauty and status to others through visible or noticeable designs. Family and heritage are very important to these women and the role of gold in gifting and sentimental value is critical.' (WGC 2005a, 10)

⁶⁷ 'A key segment in WGC, Saudi Arabia, Italy and the USA. These women have the desire to express their feelings and individual personality through their clothes, jewellery and accessories. These are creative, unique women for whom self-expression, albeit in a more discrete way, is a key motivator. They follow their own feelings and desires rather than conform to what is expected of them. These women are the most progressive of all the key targets. They are confident, well balanced, serene and slightly irreverent. They have a passion for exploring a wide range of social and cultural experiences. Life out of the home is key for them. Gold jewellery is valued for its design and colour, with white gold popular amongst these women. Originality of design is important.' (WGC 2005a, 10)

81% of the research population, making up 150+ million ladies in 4⁶⁸ of these markets. A rise from 56 million in 3 years, explained by both rising wealth and changing attitudes and behavior (notably modernization/Westernization⁶⁹).

Myths of gold jewelry

The three 'core target groups' can be placed on a scale from traditional/ethnic (1) over ambiguous (2) to modern/Western (3). Just like all cases fit under (2), all equally deal creatively with modern-traditional tensions. While India would undergo modernization in opposition to Indian traditions⁷⁰, which are then reconciled in a fusion that emphasizes East over West, these may be Western traditions rather than Western modernity.⁷¹ The Christian white dress we see appear in China, more a Buddhist-oriented site. The oxymoron "modern tradition" in the US case is an exemplary quote. Similarly, this campaign's mythology makes coincide both tradition and individual freedom in gold wedding rings; it is "both trendy and timeless". The "Expressions" lady similarly mastered culturally accepted practices and uses these for personal gain, even while they constitute a femininity that only exists in function of traditional masculinity while also an "Italianity" is mobilized. Chanel, a bit more radically, has a tradition of combining normativity and transgression in "chic".

The Indian lady wears clothes ill-fit for manual labor. The Chinese lady is naked, the American bride wears a huge dress on which dirt would be conspicuous, the Italian lady wears a little red dress suited for parties and according to Barthes Chanel is about aristocratic leisure as opposed to work. All are

⁶⁸ China, India, Saudi Arabia and the USA. Italy and Turkey absent from the graph for methodological reasons (WGC 2005a, 9)

⁶⁹ To be clear, my use of categories such as modern, western, rational, ... merely mirrors widespread use, including by the WGC. This is not to say I ultimately agree with this use, analytically or morally.

⁷⁰ 'The trend amongst urban consumers is for a fusion of western designs intertwined with Indian motifs.' (WGC 2011b, 9) This Westernization not only concerns the design but also the material used: 'Material girl - Jewellery isn't just about gold this year. One of the biggest trends in India was combining heritage with modern sparkle. Local fashion magazines advocated platinum and crystal weaved into traditional sari designs. (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/8> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁷¹ In 'Quarterly trends report, January 2012' one can read there's 'East West exchange - As the Chinese increasingly invest in high-end jewellery from top Western brands, Chinese designers are determined to make it in the West, *in order to raise credibility and increase sales on their home turf*. They include Qeelin, Fei Liu, SHO, Youmna, Sandrine Clayton, and Carnet by Michelle Ong. Meanwhile, Birmingham-based Fei Liu is showcasing hot British designers in his Beijing store.' (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/10> (last accessed 30 August 2012, emphasis/italics mine)) This is not unidirectional Western imperialism nor is it in perfect balance: it's more complex. While entrepreneurs from both West and East are globally oriented and active, the West or Western consumers are a cultural authority whose blessing Chinese designers need to attract Chinese consumers. If brands were just a mark of quality assessing the gold content of pieces, there would hardly be a need for Western brands. A synergy between designer/branded fashion and gold jewelry, which is already both investment and adornment, is suggested.

skinny, except the Chanel lady whose body is not photographed. Veblen (quoted in the US/Marriage case) said such beauty ideal was one in which women communicate leisure, even disability to work, all so that it would be clear to the onlooker that a male must provide for her, thereby making her an accessory of him rather than that women would be more materialistic than men. This would go for the 3 first cases, but not the latter, more modern ones. The Indian lady's happiness is presented as a function of the male's insight, that giving her jewelry wins her love. The Chinese lady can expect to be shown off as a trophy to the friends of her lover (number 2 in the enumeration in the ad) and must wait and wait until she receives the pendant that confirms she's loved. The Marriage case fits less clearly since although the bride can only wear a wedding ring as wedding ring if it's put on her finger by the groom, to marry she must also put a ring on his finger. Expressions expresses herself and not someone else just as Chanel is an independent woman. In the Diwali/Indian case, stereotyped dichotomies are organized as feminine or masculine; the lady beautiful/passive/receiving/emotional with material stuff as opposed to such things as ugly/active/providing/rationality. Such actions are also expected from boys in the Sign/Chinese case, while the lady must wait and go along with it - although she can expect the boy to put up with her bad temper (since she is a woman she is allowed to be emotional). The male as the groom is present in the form of a ring in the Marriage case. The masculine ring lifts up his feminine counterpart, an action which the other undergoes. The last two cases show active women, although Expressions is active within the bounds of masculine desire and Chanel similarly transposes some of men's values to women's dress.

In all cases, there's an element of sensuality to be found with the ladies. There's a skinny Indian lady wearing her slick hair loose, dressed in non-traditional cut-out dress, lipsticked and eyebrow plucked: made-up, and a man's touching her. There's a naked Chinese lady touching herself. There's many signifiers in the Marriage case which could be taken up sexually although this can also be denied (which makes them alibis in Barthes' terms). The list: the virgin white dress, the flowers and the green/untouched leaf in them, the center stance of the bride in the half-circle, the pointing by the bridesmaids to where her genitalia must be, the pyramid shapes of the bride's dress against the background of a yet-unopened door. Expressions is all about desire: open mouth, her direct glazy eyes a little shut, playing with her hair, the necklace attracts the attention to her bosom, and so this is how gold jewelry serves to express her "self". Surrounded by smothering red, she cannot be but a fantasy. The only figures (as opposed to plains) in the Chanel shot are the advertised commodity and sensual lips, while the shot-distance is intimate and her eyes are covered so that onlookers can observe what they want. There's also that joy of transgression, of doing what you're not supposed to do: a possibly married woman may be attractive to some for that very reason.

While the first 3 cases point to occasions (all in relation to weddings, marriage and love), the last 2 cases don't. In the Diwali case, the occasion is the Diwali festival, certainly, but this festival is also an

auspicious time to get married and the gift probably is, on balance, dowry. The Sign case gift is a first step that communicates commitment on a road which also promises wedding jewelry. The Marriage case is about the wedding rings couples exchange to start a married life. Such occasions are identified as an obstacle to purchasing and so the WGC responds by putting shopping for gold on the traditional calendar next to inventing new (corporate) festivities.⁷² Yet there's also mention of spontaneous gifting in the Sign case or (modern) women rewarding themselves⁷³ after having worked long hours, rather than having to wait until a (male) breadwinner gifts them. This is how Barthes framed Chanel, and the Expressions lady making use of the necklace to seduce therefore must have had it *before* interaction with the male intended in the ad.

To deal with competition from other products, the WGC aimed to reinforce gold's supposedly unique 'depth of emotional benefits [delivered by] that special or favorite piece of gold jewelry that makes a woman feel good.' (WGC 2005a, 11) Based on the use in paragraphs of the words next to (and thus differentiated from) others, it's possible to categorize consumer motivations as rational or emotional. Rationality is understood as I've understood it (in the cases) and both can coincide. While emotional benefits would be its main selling point, 'the rising price of gold has led to an increased interest in the investment potential, intrinsic value and financial security gold offers; far from detracting from its appeal, this is universally recognized and adds to the desirability of gold jewelry. It allows women a strong justification to buy gold rather than competitive products whose value may fall over time.' (ibid, 10) Such benefits are seen as playing 'important and complementary roles for women around the world. (ibid, 11)

While motivations may coincide in gold jewelry interpretations (and thus still exist analytically distinguishable), they are considered part of the same logic in the Diwali and Marriage cases (elsewhere the theme of investment is absent). In all cases, however, emotional themes are very present. The Diwali lady is happy with the jewelry, expresses her thanks and the man benefits from his "investment". Only upon receiving a gold pendant would a Chinese girl know/feel she's really loved. "Wedding bands are now being made from a variety of non-precious metals. But shouldn't your wedding band be made from something as precious as your relationship? Titanium and tungsten carbide are low-cost industrial metals, while gold is a precious metal with high intrinsic value." Looking back and laughing at the way her bridesmaids were dressed at the wedding stands opposed to

⁷² In the U.S. May became gold month. To remind people of gold, rather than that they think of other goods, in Dubai a 'Shopping Festival' was summoned into life. (WGC 2005a)

⁷³ Interestingly the greatest increase in demand has been from women buying gold for themselves, which ties in with the changing characteristics of modern day women who are becoming increasingly independent. Women are no longer waiting to be given gold although that still remains highly desirable and pleasurable. Gold as a gift still has a strong presence.' (WGC 2005a, 6)

the idea of gold rings lasting a lifetime, even transcending time by passing it on to descendants. "Gold has also proven to hold its value over time - gold purchased 25 years ago is now worth ten times as much. This makes it even more significant for those who will one day inherit your bands." If the Expressions lady expresses herself, thus brings an inner self to the surface, and she has made herself more attractive, indeed is flirting with the spectator, the emotion is one of desire on her part. Gold, for them at Chanel, is "about love and happiness" - although the model is hardly smiling. The ring makes her attractive, there's also the joy of transgression.

Ambiguity may be a conscious strategy, one consistent with Barthes' observation of the immediate impression a single sign can make, as it also reappears in that trends report (which appears under "Gold guide" on the Gold Inspirations site): on the first page gold is 'pure luxury'⁷⁴, while on the next 'Jewelry is an essential, not a luxury'⁷⁵. 'More is more' in the UK, while 'Pure and simple' (the next bullet point) would also be a trend there.⁷⁶ In the earlier report, it said: 'We have developed messages that are both relevant and *flexible* enough to work for different markets, to target different segments of consumers.' (WGC 2005a, 15, emphasis mine) And I've had a hard time making sense of the advertisements as they point in all sorts of directions.

Wealth as a message gold jewelry would communicate is, to my surprise, only clearly present in the Diwali case. Indian brides assert their status, the way they will be treated, by the amount of gold they bring with them to their husband's home. While wealth would be a widespread Chinese interpretation, it's conspicuously absent in the Sign ad. Bombastically present in the Marriage case at first sight, the joke then denies it, while traces of it remain in a monetary logic: "shouldn't your wedding band be made from something as precious as your relationship?" The costly expenditures make the dream wedding stand opposed to the investment logic of a gold ring. Since timelessness and trendiness are combinable, being fashionable is an issue. Expressions involves luxury products, but the emphasis is on knowledge and skill: how to wear it, what design. While Barthes and Benjamin Comar note the status origins of Chanel, which are important its image, the corporation denies it's about power nowadays. Fashion, how to wear something, "Italianic" design and the Chanel brand recall the earlier mentioned connoisseurship (with regards to art that was). Having established this, such trends can also

⁷⁴ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/1> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁷⁵ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/2> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁷⁶ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/5> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

be distinguished for India⁷⁷ and China⁷⁸ in that 2012 trends report. In the same source it says under 'JEWELLERY IMITATING ART' 'Jewelry, often viewed as a commodity tied to the value of a metal or gem or at most a decorative art, is gaining the status of investment art. Rare jewels are increasingly being installed in international art galleries, like Dior's jewels at the Gagosian Gallery in Paris.'⁷⁹

Connotations are the names of all the things associated with the ads, ads which involve gold jewelry, and thus gold jewelry gets associated with these names that constitute discrete objects. Myth we have defined as the relations between objects, making stories. Gold jewelry has a (varying) place within the various ways of understanding (parts of) the world the cases present. Just like with science or religion, the scattered phrases don't readily cohere, within each case or across the cases. In Barthes terms, mythology is phraseology. The WGC and Chanel don't perfectly control the associations people will make. They emphasize some key messages by anchorage and repetition and don't make sure all things are understood as intended. Ambiguity allows more people recognize their concerns in advertisement. Rather than to mutilate the ways of understanding things to fit with my concerns, I want to list the key logic for each of the cases here. In the Diwali case, it's that fathers who buy gold jewelry, gift it to their daughters as dowry at the time of the wedding period of Diwali, which will make them happy and which will remind them of you, thereby invest in the bond with their daughters. In the Sign case, girls can only know and feel they're really loved if they receive from a boy such a gold pendant as is depicted. In the Marriage case, the dresses of bridesmaids and the cakes will not last past the wedding day and slip from memory while the gold wedding bands communicate love for the rest of married life. In the Expressions case, a lady makes use of gold jewelry to express her sensual desire for a man. Finally, in the Chanel case, we are invited to understand the gold ring in terms of Coco Chanel: how she transgressed the norms by moving away from costume jewelry and was successful. It is thus not so that wealth display or other rather antagonistic messages are dominant. Instead, the key messages seem like helpful advice for positive ends.

Other key terms: affordance, value, fetish

⁷⁷ 'Gold jewellery increasingly about aesthetics - Ad agency JWT's first study on luxury brands in India confirmed that while investing in jewellery is still seen as a store of value, consumers increasingly consider aesthetics, design and expressing their personality when choosing new pieces.'⁷⁹ (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/8> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

⁷⁸ 'Less flash, more understatement - A proliferation of luxury stores, magazines and websites in China means consumers are becoming savvier. 41%* now see showing off luxury goods as poor taste, which seems to explain why refined, elegant and romantic jewellery styles are now proving popular.'⁷⁹ (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/7> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

⁷⁹ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/2> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

Then there's the product itself. The argument here is that the material form of gold jewelry testifies to its uses, the way it is used and thus its interpretations, which differ from setting to setting. The Diwali case doesn't say anything of the caratage, but elsewhere⁸⁰ we find that 22K is 'Popular in India'. This is a high caratage, pointing to investment purposes⁸¹ ("Don't Just Spend. Invest") but not as 'fragile'⁸² as 24K so it's more suitable for daily wear ("An Indian woman is rarely seen without gold jewelry."). Only yellow gold can refer to "the colour of the sun, of the powerful tiger, of nutritious banana and antiseptic turmeric, and of crops ready for harvest." The fact that gold can be melted down and recast endlessly explains how it can be seen as signifying the reincarnation of souls. The combination makes it ideal to communicate wealth to family-in-law or others. In China, "[E]arlier on in a relationship a gift of gold communicates love in a different, more spontaneous way. Here gold testifies to the strength and depth of feeling that a couple have for each other; gold suggests that this relationship is important, valued, full of possibility. In other words, gold signifies that this is "for real."'" The tree design in the Sign case may refer to that earlier moment of confirmation, the start of a serious relationship; how plants can grow and bloom. Chinese brides must marry wearing yellow gold. 24K is pure gold and its natural color, we have seen, is yellow. In contrast, 'Most wedding rings in the US are white'. 18K and below, different colors are possible and 14K is the standard in the US⁸³, allowing for white. In the context of the ad, it says "pure white", a metaphor fitting for a Christian white bride. The joke the advertisement makes is consistent with how 'white gold is characterized by a more playful and youthful image, but is not only for the young.' (WGC 2005a, 11) Since from 24 downwards, the jewel gains strength (although depending on which metal it's alloyed with), it fits the purpose of actually wearing it for the rest of their lives/marriage. While nothing reminds you of the cake consumed on the wedding day, a gold wedding ring constantly reminds the wearer. Even more, "Gold is so malleable that it can be welded, hammered and bent without shattering, so your wedding bands will last forever.", making it ideal to pass on to descendants, making it "an everlasting gift." These qualities also make it possible to communicate the masculine message to grooms that this makes it "the ultimate high-performance metal" (the only jewel for males present in the cases is the simple wedding ring in the Marriage case). There's also mention of customization through engraving or (gem) stone setting and "a truly individual piece is always the most stylish choice." Expressions would be Italianic design

⁸⁰ http://www.gold.org/jewellery/about_gold_jewellery/caratage/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁸¹ For a refinery and the gold bars it produces to be certified as 'Good Delivery' by the LBMA, 99, 5% purity is required (http://www.lbma.org.uk/pages/index.cfm?page_id=27&title=specifications (last accessed 30 August 2012)) Such bars serve no use other than to be held as investment (this is not the end-form as gold gets melted down and recast endlessly without loss to serve the purpose of the day). The certification reduces the need to test every single bar, as long as the bar is not taken home (which would throw doubts over its purity upon attempts at reselling).

⁸² http://www.gold.org/jewellery/about_gold_jewellery/caratage/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁸³ http://www.gold.org/jewellery/about_gold_jewellery/caratage/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

and indeed, the design stands out, holding our attention and serving its seducing purpose to bring our/my eyes down to the top of her dress and holding them there for a moment. '18 carat gold has become an international standard for jewelry, containing 75% pure gold. Combining purity with performance, 18 carat gold has, for example, been adopted as the caratage of choice for the world's leading watch brands.⁸⁴ Chanel is 18K. The color known as gold color glitters in the sun, "summery" and "shiny" indeed. Flowers and gold (the color) are rather "baroque". In the Chanel cosmology, the Camélia Ajoure gold ring under scrutiny doesn't involve white gold or diamonds since that would make it part of the Bridal series instead. Part of a series dating back to Coco Chanel, the ring refers to her. The things themselves are subject to change, change of society: "Innovative products such as K-gold, 18 carat gold with Italian inspired design, launched in 2003 by the WGC and its partners, has been a success in attracting younger, urban cosmopolitan consumers to gold jewelry."

With the information presented so far it can be supported that the consumer profiles of the 'core target groups' (designated as (1), (2) and (3) and defined in footnote 65, 66, 67) are consistent with the cases (yet without arguing every point). While ambiguous, the Diwali case fits the profiles: India is a key segment of (1) and (2), the ad is consistent with these profiles, while contradicting (3). Sign case fits with (2), one of the two profiles it should be consistent with. At first sight, Marriage fits with (1) but rather than confirming these traditions they are presented as being rather silly and so it shifts to (2) and so avoids the problem that the US isn't mentioned as key segment in (1). Expressions is quintessential (3), but can also be said to fit (2), consistent again. While not located in a specific country and thus no triangulation is possible, Chanel fits (3) best but (2) would work as well.' The strategy was to respond to and reinforce attitudes already present (WGC 2005a), which is consistent both with both my theoretical framework as with the observation that the cases fit with the profiled groups.

In the first 3 cases (including context), the term "value" is used.⁸⁵ On the one hand, there's an equation with price present in the Diwali and Marriage cases. In both cases, there's also a suggestion its value is

⁸⁴ http://www.gold.org/jewellery/about_gold_jewellery/caratage/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁸⁵ Since I've mentioned him a lot, note that this is a similar approach to Daniel Miller's method in "The Uses of Value" (Miller 2008) to establish what value is and its relation to values. In a way, Miller's approach is consistent with the approach adopted here since the value concept may not exist in other cosmologies. Yet on the other hand, his approach would be blind for instances in which practices are present that seem to involve value but don't speak its name, especially instances in which value isn't about price and the opposition with values is hard to maintain. The de Saussurian framework doesn't deny there's a shared humanity (rather, it assumes there is), just that ideas and by extension things and practices need to be understood in the context of specific ways of understandings things (including experiences, canonical texts, vocabulary, grammar). Rather than that concepts transfer/translate easily across cultures because they would just be isolated names of things, things equally isolated from concepts. Rather than giving up, it means trying to understand things from the viewpoint of the other, trying to recognize patterns that occur in multiple cultures. This, at least, is my use of the concept value rather than some neoclassical, Marxian (Miller says) or, in the case of Miller, Hegelian bottom-line a-priori way of thinking to which all must be reduced. The same goes for concepts such as the fetish and myth, to the extent that the approaches employing them are prepared to really listen to

intrinsic rather than people decide its worth, paralleling the two motivations of rational and emotional recognized earlier (in *A Passion for Gold*). The dichotomies can be recognized and organized in two camps, but they also get mixed as the logic of monetary value is something which is deemed applicable to relationships. In the outside text, "precious gold binds and strengthens relationships" is differentiated from "its enduring value" while this is repeated in how "deep personal and cultural meanings" is followed by "intrinsic worth". While in the ad itself it says "When you buy gold jewellery you don't spend. You invest. In love, the future and happiness. You invest in the worth of that relationship. You invest in a permanent physical memory. In the belief that like gold jewellery, the value of the bond you share will also increase with time" On the other hand, what fits my theoretical framework really well is the statement that "The value of gold to society stems from jewellery as an adornment as well as a major vehicle of wealth accumulation (asset demand) by a large number of low- and middle-income households in rural and urban areas." The Marriage can also be so understood: "The US market is dominated by gifting where over 50% of the total value of gold jewellery at retail is created by pieces over \$1,000." "Gold has also proven to hold its value over time - gold purchased 25 years ago is now worth ten times as much."⁸⁶ "Wedding bands are now being made from a variety of non-precious metals. But shouldn't your wedding band be made from something as precious as your relationship? Titanium and tungsten carbide are low-cost industrial metals, while gold is a precious metal with high intrinsic value." The dichotomy is stricter in the Sign case. "[I]investment" stands opposed to "personal style", "value" opposed to wearing it and feeling wonderful because of it: "in China, the logic of gold seems to be perfectly complemented by its magic". The tree pendant is associated with dripping honey grate earrings and both can be linked to wealth. Also, 24K gold is as pure as investment bars. If giving such pendants signifies a boy loves a girl, it can be framed (in game theory terms) as a costly signal to the girl, expressing love in terms of money. But again, this is making the data fit the theory by looking for a way to align them, even if the link constitutes a popular economics way of thinking. Rather, value is seen as the importance of relations in ad: "earlier on in a relationship a gift of gold communicates love in a different, more spontaneous way. Here gold testifies to the strength and depth of feeling that a couple have for each other; gold suggests that this relationship is important, valued, full of possibility. In other words, gold signifies that this is "for real." In Expressions, value is not present. The values professed by Chanel don't point to price either: "the new Camélia all-gold collection is fresh, summery, light and easy and comfortable to wear, another of Chanel's original characteristics. Gold, for us at Chanel, is the material

people who frame things differently (as opposed to circumvented theoretical imperialism), recognizing the equal humanity of all people, scientists included.

⁸⁶ Although comparing the 1986 (http://www.lbma.org.uk/pages/?page_id=53&title=gold_fixings&show=1986&type=monthly (last accessed 30 August 2012) and 2011 (http://www.lbma.org.uk/pages/?page_id=53&title=gold_fixings&show=2011&type=monthly (last accessed 30 August 2012) months of June only yields a factor of almost 4.5.

of love and happiness, shiny and smiley, and totally linked to our values.'" In sum, there are many understandings of gold's value present. The Indian and US cases both establish two dichotomous camps, one of which then colonizes the other; values framed as intrinsic monetary value. While a recognition of the opposite can be found in recognition of its value in specific and external uses by specific people. The sign case can also be understood in investment terms but this is not conspicuous in the case itself, value there being more about the importance of human relations. Chanel's' expressed values are leisurely rather than economic activity.

That the symbolic is important is also recognized by the WGC, although the earlier mentioned distinction between intrinsic worth/price/investment and diverse meanings/adornment is maintained (although, we have seen discussing theory, that such distinction is hardly tenable but serves to inflate the price of gold). WGC campaigns have such titles as "speak gold", Sign of Love, and Gold Expressions. Gold has "deep personal and cultural meanings" in the Diwali case. In the Sign case, gold is seen as a token of love, as the conformation that it is for real. The text appears consecutively, as if someone is speaking. The tree pendant is the third element in a (linguistic) enumeration. '[T]he calligram tries to unite referent and sign, again giving the impression of producing 'transparent' meaning, ... The *thing*, the product, signified by language in the ad, is made to *be* the language of the ad' (Williamson 1978, 91, italics not mine). According to the Marriage case, "gold rings have been synonymous with marriage." It's the "ultimate symbol of love". "[G]old jewellery combines a public statement with a tender, private message." "American brides say "I do" with a ring of gold" At bottom of Marriage, there's 2 (cartoon) text balloons, one emanating from the left and one from the right. These balloons encompass 2 rings, hooking into one another. It must be that the people who will exchange I do's and rings, thereby intertwining their lives in marriage, are the ones who are speaking here in words and rings too. The gold color is present in the WGC text balloon at the poster's top. If the lady Expresses herself by means of gold, gold speaks. We encounter gold most of times in non-physical/non-Au form, by which I mean that its symbolic power is invoked to transfer splendor to other commodities or so, thereby confirming/cultivating existing interpretations:

'Gold perceptions - Telltale signs yellow gold remains on a pedestal range from talk of gold as investment to magazine photo shoots swathed in gold accessories and lighting effects; London's Victoria and Albert Museum unveiling the first naturally golden textile – a silk scarf spun by one million spiders over five years; Goldsmith Hall's summer 2012 exhibit Gold, 4500 years of gold treasures from across Britain and Dior infusing its Les Rouges lipsticks with gold dust.'⁸⁷

⁸⁷ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/trends-report-january-2012/#page/10> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

Gold is seen as speaking, a human characteristic, and as people (not speaking). In *A Passion for Gold* 'Respondents were observed 'humanizing its characteristics' (WGC 2005a, 11). Gold "has a special story to tell" at the time of Diwali, a clear anthropomorphism (only people tell stories), and the depicted rings suggestively hook, paralleling the people. In Marriage, gendered metaphors are used in presentation, so that the male ring lifts the female ring up in the air, the man standing firm, the lady more up in the skies and possibly referring to an impressive wedding dance for which they have practiced. If the Expressions lady expresses herself with gold, the jewelry is understood anthropomorphically. Large part of Chanel's myth depends on its originator's public life and it so we have to understand the jewelry. To go further, gold jewelry is presented as having magical powers, as fetishes. In the Diwali case, the glow of gold makes her smile, making her love the male. The Diwali festival is, it is believed, an auspicious day to get married; if the bride enters the groom's household after marriage adorned in gold a list of good things would follow ("prosperity, peace, joy, health, luck, wisdom and significantly, the code of civilization"). While it is recognized gold is only a Sign of the boy's love, it is presented as the *only* sign of a boy's love; nothing else will do, while what's it ultimately about is two people that want to spend their days together. Similarly, exchanging rings makes a groom a husband, a bride a wife, evidencing the love one feels for the other but fetishes nonetheless. Whether God or Gold makes it a Marriage, both are fetishes. The Chanel ring on the wedding finger must have the effect that wanting onlookers understand she's already with another male, even if they don't know anything about her love life. In Expressions, the necklace helps to create a sensual fantasy effect.

Discussing the ads' uses of value and their fetishization of things, it's clear it's all rather specific, depending on concrete knowledge. Meaning is given to things, at times evidenced in the material form of things, forms which then function as prompts for spontaneous interpretations that seem to be "natural" since their origins in human creativity is something economists, anthropologists and everyone else most of the times/through the day, are not aware of. In so far as a fetish is desired, it is valuable. If gold is treated as more valuable/important than other things because of culturally specific ways of understanding, of using it, this is the effect of a fetish. Such interpretations have the effect of making miners use unimaginable quantities of potable water, mixing it with some of the most poisonous substances on earth, to ultimately fabricate jewels. Or reversely, for gold and its uses, including the property regimes that protect Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), to be fetishized so that it makes people kill another rather than negotiate, this must involve a devaluation of other things, in this case of humans. Valued objects/fetishes require differentiation from and lesser evaluation of other objects: they depend on myth.

Things don't only attain peculiar significance within bodies of knowledge (knowledge held by individual bodies), these bodies of knowledge regulate the relations between its constituting units. For

each case, my connotations seem to expand on the denotative interpretation (as might have been expected). Expanding so, it becomes clear that various knowledges have been mixed to produce a new “syntagm”; a new and different logic/myth. The order of things differs, according to the situation at hand (wedding with dress versus a day in the sun), yes, but also “cross culturally” as Indians know 16 types of adornment while the “Gold guide” (on a predominantly in English website) only recognizes ‘five essential pieces’⁸⁸. We have seen, as East and West interact in terms of wedding dress; such orders are subject to change. But in every case, there *is* an order of things. The absence of the sari is conspicuous, because it is expected an Indian woman comes with a sari. Similarly, a Chinese bride in white strikes me as odd while she doesn't wear a gold ring but bangles. An American bride does wear a ring and also poses in white next to her bridesmaids, who cannot wear the same as the bride but must wear the same as the other maids. Skinny, pale, the little red dress, windy hair, playing with it, make-up on, open mouth, the way she looks, the necklace pointing downwards, ... all serve to express sexual attraction. To make the point of order, let's reverse the roles and only replace the male for the model and institute female-spectatorship: would he also signal attraction? Chanel distinguishes costume jewelry from fine jewelry on the basis that the latter uses gold; they are thus 2 distinct types of object, only the latter of which fits within Chanel's cosmology. What does fit Chanel is wearing an untraditional ring on the wedding finger so that it's not clear whether it means marriage. The instances in which what is depicted and said in an ad conflicts with the order of things I know are the instances in which the past order is most visible before a new order is imposed, one in which Chinese brides marry in Christian and aristocratic white or consider a Chanel logic of consistent transgression of the norms of others.

As could have been expected, there were also moments in which the knowledge I held or that could be found in the context reached its limits so that I could not or hardly make sense of things. In the Diwali case it was unclear to me who was interacting with who how, since I hardly know anything about how Indian lovers or (future) family members typically dress and interact. Whether the Chinese model with short hair signals beauty or cute in her country of origin I don't know. I don't even know what makes a marriage in my country nor what does in the US. Also, I fear expectations of sexism make me see elements that could be interpreted as so but that are not meant nor widely interpreted so. I try to make sense of the little red dress in Expressions but find my real-life experience or at least memory of women in little red dresses to be non-existing. That there was a category of fine jewelry as opposed to costume jewelry again confronted me with a knowledge that is not my own. Not to mention that there's that theoretical possibility (in which I don't actually believe since my interpretations are rather consistent with what's depicted) that I've misunderstood everything in all cases. The relevance of this

⁸⁸ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-jewellery-wardrobe/#page/3> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

thesis doesn't, however, depend on the specific knowledge I hold. Regardless of their specific content (although impossible without *any* meaning), patterns such as the fetish, value, and myth can be distinguished in *both* “primitive” and “developed” societies (rather than that fetishes and myth belong to the primitives while to decide what is valuable the preserve of the developed): they are part of the human condition. We have now come full circle: primary data consistent with the theoretical framework, yielding a particular way of understanding the gold market as ultimately in the largest part dependent upon myth *rather* than inherent properties.

Conclusion

In light of how (many) indigenous peoples don't want gold mining in their territories, why is it that (other) people desire and purchase gold jewelry? Simply put, people come up with stories in which gold attains significance.

Contributions of the study

I've identified jewelry demand as being central to the gold market. Much investment demand constitutes stockpiling in anticipation of jewelry consumption and the persistent belief that gold is money originates in trade between societies that used it to make jewelry while it was only seldom used as everyday currency.

I've employed Barthes to specify how fetishes are produced. His mythological process has myth take possession of a material form, an understanding that then seems to be or inhere in the object itself. Such a fetishized object functions as a prompt for guidelines that activate and direct the individual who gave the object meaning in the first place. According to Graeber, fetishes are essential both for acting in ways you consider valuable and for the reproduction of society. As humans are social beings, we desire those objects that are fetishized as necessary for the confirmation of our life philosophies by others whose opinions we care about. When gold jewelry is in fashion, we work in order to pay for it. People coordinate to spend the rest of their lives together by exchanging the prescribed rings.

As marketing would reinforce consumer behavior, it must (logically) evidence consumer behavior and the myths that are inscribed into habituated acts. I've developed a systematically applicable semiological research instrument to map those of gold jewelry. On the consumption side, gold jewelry comes with messages that can be seen as either helpful or antagonistic. I want to avoid speaking in the name of women, as they are the targeted consumers. Instead, I offer points for consideration. Often the advantage of the myth has a shadow side: Being allowed to be emotional because you're a woman can mean you're not as rational as men. While gold can signal a boy's love, it is presented as the only

sign of a boy's love; nothing else will do, while what's it ultimately about two people that want to spend their days together.

Myths are often evidenced in their material forms as investment demand takes the form of 24K gold bars while such a caratage is too fragile for wedding bands that have too last your own marriage and even that of your child if it is to be a heirloom. The colour known as gold allows for analogy with the sun and a unique design is by definition more stylish. Reversely, material forms affords various uses and materiality alone doesn't explain whether its electric conductivity is activated in technological uses or the possibility to recast it endlessly without loss that makes stockpiling possible. While the gold lobby insists that value as price inheres in the object, this is a rhetorical performance that aims to bring into being that which it pretends only to describe.

Instead of explaining the value of gold by referring to material properties, I stress the variable myths gold's materiality affords as motivating uses such as purchasing gold jewelry, mining and resistance to it. I've thus provided a particular way of understanding the gold market as largely dependent upon the myths of gold jewelry. I've suggested comparing life philosophies that guide human action with the effects of this acting to reconsider the role of gold in the art of living.

A suggestion for further research is to investigate whether it is true that with modernization/Westernization (seemingly defined by the monetary rationality of investment) comes with a displacement of meanings as wealth and passive women and is replaced with taste as a social differentiator. Others noted how the rise of the consumer society, in which people have more disposable income and are able to buy luxuries that used to be the preserve of the few, comes with a displacement towards *how* objects are used. (Schor 1999)

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Appendix A: glossary of key terms

Affordance: the multiple interpretations and uses the same materiality allows/affords, including neglecting it.

Denotation: simple, uncontroversial understanding that seems to be or inhere in the object referred to; consensus. See mythological process.

Connotation: association. This includes the original term that conjures up associations since positive meaning (what something means) is only made possible through opposition with other terms of a language system. When A is spoken, B is silent but present. Reversely, B comes with A. Therefore no transparent understanding of the world is possible and objects are constituted on the basis of previously acquired knowledge rather than a pre-existing object is given a name that translates perfectly across differing languages.

Fetish: ‘In fetishizing an object, then, one is mistaking the power of a history internalized in one’s own desires, for a power intrinsic to the object itself.’ (Graeber 2001, 115) First, the mythological process has myths take possession of a material form. In turn, immediate recognition of the object within a set of connotations and myths, thereby obscuring other possible interpretations but also effecting prescribed actions in humans. Seemingly insignificant, everyday objects are significant fetishes.

Magic: ritual that pretends to inspire action in humans other than oneself and that has this effect, even while there’s skepticism over any human’s capacity to do so, because of an element of doubt that it might be true after all and fear of being affected. These human powers require repeated confirmation for as long as they are to have effect. Magic can fetishize material forms and have its effect by means of such objects in a way that combines recognition of human agency with the observance of the instituted guidelines. This mirrors a social science understanding of how societal structures are patterns of human agency.

Materiality: the physical properties of an object. See affordance.

Media/tokens of circulation/exchange/value: material forms (things but also theatrical performances) that are fetishized and understood in terms of and as confirming totalities, thereby inspiring action as value projects. Circulating some public sphere, they coordinate the actions of interacting people and produce society in the process. Since people are socialized by interacting with their ecologies, all material objects can be seen as circulating tokens of value.

Myth: the relations between objects/connotations, making stories or at least phrases.

Mythological process: a second-order sign takes possession of the basic sign by using it as a signifier for another signified. There must be an element which the myth can take hold of: it selects and disregards other, contradictory, elements. A dominant thinking distorts the actual thing or sign so that it becomes an instance (of many) of this thinking; this myth. The supposed example, then, functions as an "alibi" for the myth; legitimizing it by its existence. There's no moment in which the host object gets processed before myth-experience; once an object, or element thereof, is understood a certain way, the object functions as a prompt that interpellates people to spontaneously act in the manner the object's myth prescribes.

Semiology: 'It is... possible to conceive of a science *which studies the role of signs as part of social life*. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *semêion*, 'sign'). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist, one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist, a place ready for it in advance. Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge.' (Saussure 1983, 15-16; 1974, 16 quoted in <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem01.html> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* (1972) mothered the approach.

Totality: integrated understanding of the world that includes what one is to do; life philosophy. Replaced by the notion of fragmented set of phrases/myths since life philosophies are not perfectly coherent at any one time.

Value: 'Value is the way actors represent the importance of *their own* actions to *themselves* as part of some larger whole (or 'concrete totality', as Marx liked to put it).' (Graeber 2006, 73, italics mine) Since humans are social beings, they seek the recognition of those whose opinion matters to them: they want some token that their energies are considered well-spent. This token of value requires some material form that is understood as the confirmation of this way of organizing one's life. Yet, since action and desire can conflict due to circumstances and since what is considered more important is not always what is done, I define value more as that which is considered desirable or important rather than how people act.

Appendix B: research instrument

The following instrument was designed for my own use, so that I can easily apply it but others may need a word of guidance first. This is also a disclaimer; I believe the overall approach can be of help to others yet further development of the details is encouraged. What follows is a selection of passages from a variety of sources organized according to the logic to be found in the methodology section of the actual essay (and where it is said in a footnote what author I used for what). These passages don't order you to do exactly this or that but rather point out themes and approaches the researcher is invited to consider. In the logic of connotation, these sentences can be included in a case one at a time so that they anchor the interpretation of that case. Put differently, they force the researcher to access his knowledge, certain regions of thought really, and have him or her find "alibis" in the case to support *elements* of those regions. This requires discipline but, even so, not all sentences/paragraphs for all cases yielded information when I applied them. Especially the step of coding may feel like trying to pick up on what's going on in a movie that's already halfway through, but this *is* how I did it and this because I want to stay close to what other/more experienced authors suggest.

At times, the passages are slightly edited to point something out to myself. Bold text within a passage serves to indicate a theme that may organize a couple of paragraphs with related questions or a theme can be supported by just a couple of words, a practice I've borrowed and expanded from Rose (2012). Similarly, I've expanded the original enumerating/bullet pointing a bit when it would be confusing otherwise. The italics, however, were not my doing and from now on only reflect the author's (not mine) intention to stress something. There's much pointing to authors, figures and sections going on but you shouldn't have to check the original sources as I aimed to include all that's needed. You may also wonder about those strange figures (fig 2., fig 3.) I've included. Since I don't know much about art and have a hard time grasping the difference between hue, saturation and value, I surfed the net and found a university website by 2 academics who allowed me to use these figures that visualize the difference in exchange for formulaic referencing.

Step 1: context and form

Briefly describe ... the **context** in which it was found.

Is the image one of a series, and how do the preceding and subsequent images affect its meanings?

What is its **material form**?

How has its technology affected the text?

Step 2: compositional interpretation

Where is the viewer's eye **drawn** to in the image, and why?

When looking at an image for itself, a starting point could be its **[simple] content**. What does the image actually show?

A related term is diegesis. Diegesis is the sum of the denoted meanings of an image. My description of the t-shirt reproduced as Figure 6.3 as showing 'a sleeping baby with a raised fist, and the text "la rivoluzione non russ"' is a diegesis of that image. The term is often used in film studies to offer a relatively straightforward account of a film before a more complex analysis begins.

This may lead you to consider its **genre**. A painting with a nude as its main subject refers to the genre of female nude painting that John Berger (1972) discusses [...] the genres of documentary and street photography. The 'portrait' is also a particular genre of painting.

Does this image comment critically on the characteristics of its genre?

Colour is another crucial component of an image's compositionality. Taylor (1957) offers three ways of describing the colours of a painting:

Hue. This refers to the actual colours in a painting. Thus the dominant hues used in the Rembrandt portraits reproduced for Searle's review are browns, blues, and flesh.

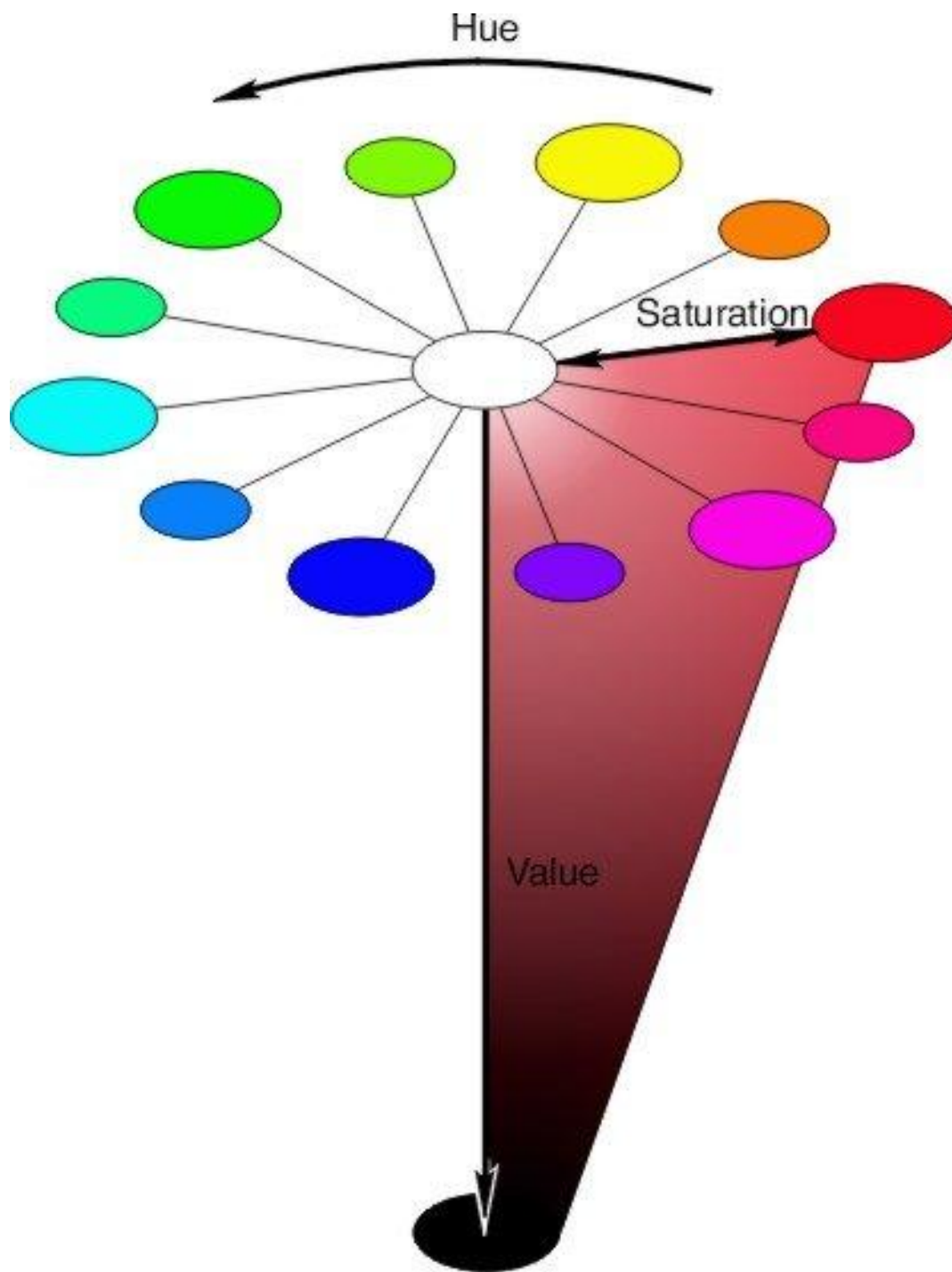


Figure 2.

Reproduced from Wiebe, E. N., Hasse, E. E., & Clark, A. C. (1997).
Scientific Visualization: Resources for integrating graphics with
science and technology education. Last updated May 5, 2000. Last
accessed July 16, 2012 at
http://www.ncsu.edu/scivis/lessons/colormodels/color_models2.html

Saturation. Saturation refers to the purity of a colour in relation to its appearance in the colour spectrum. Thus saturation is high if a colour is used in a vivid form of its hue, and low if it is nearly neutral. The blues and flesh colours in the review's illustrations are low, but the browns are high: rich and dense.

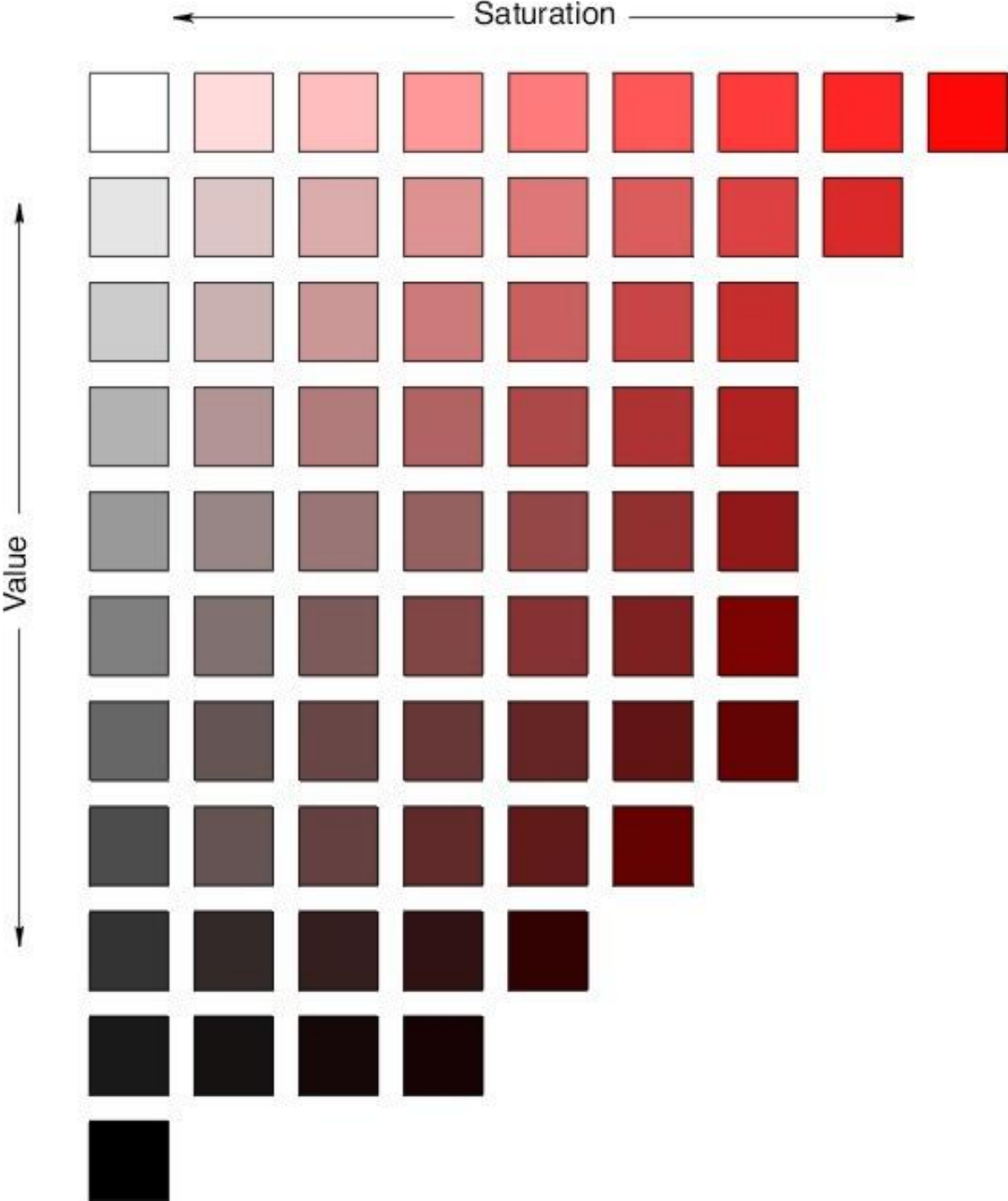


Figure 3.

Reproduced from Wiebe, E. N., Hasse, E. E., & Clark, A. C. (1997).

Scientific Visualization: Resources for integrating graphics with science and technology education. Last updated May 5, 2000. Last accessed July 16, 2012 at

http://www.ncsu.edu/scivis/lessons/colormodels/color_models2.html

Value. This refers to the lightness or darkness of a colour. If a colour is in its near-white form, then its value is high; if in its near black form, its value is low. The browns, blacks and some of the blues in the illustrations have low value: they are all dark. But other blues, and flesh colours, seem to have quite high value.

These terms can describe the colours used in a painting, or any other kind of visual image. But it is also necessary to describe the **effects of the colours** in an image. Colour can be used to *stress* certain elements of an image, for example. The flesh colours in particular in the illustrations to Searle's essay seem to have quite high value, because they are often where the light falls in the painting; but of course since these are portraits, the high value of the face colours serves to draw our attention to the point of portrait paintings, the face.

There is also the question of **how harmonious the colour combination** of a painting is. There have been many theories about what colours combine most harmoniously with each other, [...]. For our purposes here, however, it is sufficient to consider whether the colours of a painting rely on contrasts or on the blending of similar value or saturation hues. The Rembrandt illustrations appear very harmonious since they have a limited range of colours that blend into each other; even the blue is muted contrast to the brown since, like the browns, it is mostly of low saturation. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006: 229-35) also suggest that the combination of hues, values and saturations of an image affect how realistic audiences will imagine that image to be. If the colours look the same as a colour photograph of the same subject would, then our sense of its realism is heightened, they suggest.

Colour can also work to suggest an effect of distance in a painting, or other image, especially in landscape paintings. In that genre, the hues used often become more bluish as a means of suggesting the way a landscape recedes. This is known as **atmospheric perspective** (see Figure 4.3).

All images have their space organized in some way, and there are two related aspects of this organization to consider: the organization of space 'within' an image, and the way the spatial organization of an image offers a particular viewing position to its spectator. This offer is part of an image's way of seeing.

Monaco (2009: 210-12) discusses the screen planes. There are three of these, and they intersect. **The frame plane** is how forms are distributed across the screen; **the geographical plane** is how forms are distributed in three-dimensional space; and *the depth plane* is how the apparent depth of the images is perceived.

Take a look at the *volumes* of an image. How are these arranged in relation to each other? Are some volumes connected in some way to others by vectors, while others are left isolated? How? What about the *lines* of the volumes and their connections? Which directions do they follow? Are they fluid curves or jagged fragments? What sort of *rhythm* do they have: static or dynamic? What are the effects of these things?

A useful way to explore these aspects of the spatial organization within an image is to try a summary diagram of the image you are looking at [see Taylor 1957] and Kress and van Leeuwen [2006: 135, 137] for some examples). Look for lines that show the edges of things; extend them, and see where and how they intersect. [...] Try extending the lines of the floorboards, the windowsill and the bedstead, for example. James Elkins (1991) has explored the use of perspective in this painting through just such a diagram of its converging and diverging lines.

Then consider the space in which these volumes are placed.

Think about width, depth, interval and distance. Is this space simple, or complicated? In answering this question, it is important to understand something about perspective, which is the method used in Western art to make a two-dimensional image look as if it shows three-dimensional space.

This section considers geometrical perspective, and this too has its variations. However, there are some basic principles that provide starting points for thinking about the space represented by an image. Perspective depends on a geometry of rays of vision, and your eye is central to this geometry (several perspective systems assume that the viewer of a scene is a single point and thus that you have only one eye). The level of your eye is always the same as the horizon of a painting. It is also the level at which the rays of vision converge at what is called the vanishing point. Figure 4.4 shows what difference your eye level makes to the representation of a paved area if you were sitting, first, on the ground and then on a high wall, according to this kind of perspective. Now let's see what happens if some basic building blocks appear in this scene, one close to use and one further apart (Figure 4.5). Finally, Figure 4.6 shows what happens if there are two different eye levels and two different vanishing points in an image of blocks.

Paintings can have different effects depending on their manipulation of this kind of perspective. In relation to Figure 4.6, for example, since one eye is assumed to be normal in this geometrical system,

the space constructed with two eye levels seems strange and incoherent. Other paintings try to shift the spectator's point of view through their use of perspective. For example, using a very low eye level might represent the way a child sees the world, and Pollock (1988: 65) suggests that Mary Cassatt painted some of her canvases with this effect in mind (see Figure 4.7). Or a low eye level might suggest that the painting was made to be seen from below, and this is the case with, for example, Masaccio's crucifixion, painted in about 1427 as a fresco on the wall of the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, where the congregation would sit beneath it (Edgerton 1975) (Figure 4.8).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 124-49) also explore the effects of the spatial organization of visual images on the position of the viewer. They examine the effects of geometrical perspective in some detail. They suggest, for example, that the *angle* between the spectator and what is pictured produces particular effects, with frontal angles engaging the viewer more with what is pictured than oblique angles. They also explore the effects of apparent differences in *height* between the spectator of an image and what is pictured: if the viewer is positioned by the image's perspective to look down on it, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 140-9) argue, they are given some sort of power over its subject matter; if they look up to it, then they are positioned as in some way inferior to it; and if they look at it at the same level, then a relationship of equality between spectator and pictured is suggested. They also look at other aspects of the spatial organization of images: *distance*, for example, suggesting that pictures of people in close-up usually offer a relation of intimacy between the person pictured and the spectator (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 124-9).

The second aspect of moving images' mise-en-scène is their shots. Shots distance refers to how much of a figure is shown by a particular shot and a shot can be an extreme long shot (where the figure is in the far distance), a long shot, or a full, three-quarters, medium, head and shoulders or close-up shot. Monaco (2009: 221-3) tentatively suggests some of the effects that the frequent use of one or other of these sorts of shots might produce in a particular film. The repeated use of close-ups, for example, may produce a sense of claustrophobic intensity, while long shots may imply alienation and emptiness.

Close-ups are used frequently in advertisements to show objects in all their appealing detail or to give them a larger-than-life appearance. *Blow-ups* are also used to exaggerate the sensuousness of their physical characteristics.

Cropping is the device of cutting up a picture, often to draw attention to certain parts of the body - isolated legs, eyes, lips or hands. Women are more frequently represented in this fragmented way than men, as if their bodies were made up of spare parts.

Mieke Bal (1001: 158-60), on the other hand, advocates concentrating less on the *spatial* organization of an image, and more on the *visual organization* of looks and gazes in her notion of the **focalisers** of

an image. She points out that all paintings have a range of viewers: addressed, implied and represented. Each focalises – or looks – in their own way (see also Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 116-24). They look in a particular way at specific things. The relation of looks between them – who can see what and how – can tell us much about how the image works to catch our gaze. This is in part how the discussion of the site of the image itself in Chapter 2 approached the photograph by Robert Doisneau reproduced as Figure 2.2. If an external focaliser – a spectator – can look in the same way at the same things as a focaliser in the picture, then the spectator's identification will be strong, says Bal.

The **light** shown in both still and moving images is clearly related to both its colours and its spaces. What *type* of light an image shows – candlelight, daylight, electric light – will clearly affect the saturation and value of its hues. And the illusion that geometrical perspective realistically represents three-dimensional space can be enhanced or called into question by the use of light *sources*. The apparent realism of the Arnolfini portrait (see Figure 8.1) is increased, for example, by the dominant source of light coming from the window and the way all the shadows in the painting are consistent with this. Light can also be used to *highlight* certain elements of a painting, as we have seen in the case of the Rembrandt portraits. Light is also central to creating the mood or atmosphere of an image [...].

The **focus** of shots is also important. *Deep focus* is when the foreground, middle ground and background of a shot – all of the frame's geographical plane – are in focus. *Shallow focus* is when one of these grounds is more in focus than others. Shallow focus is sometimes used to direct attention to a particular character or event in a scene; for example, in *Ocean's Eleven*, again, there is a dialogue scene between the two main characters in which the focus repeatedly shifts from one to the other as they talk with each other. Focus can also be *sharp* or *soft*. Monaco comments that certain kinds of focusing may have particular effects. Soft focus may be used to create a romantic or nostalgic feel to a scene, for example.

Special effects or *montage* are some of the devices which give moving film greater opportunities for special technical effects. Scenes and shots can be spliced together, and although we don't usually notice 'realistic **editing** or 'montage', it can be used to great effect, e.g. to give the impression of dynamism and excitement. For instance, Welsh *et al.* (1979) have shown that TV ads for boys' toys have far more 'edits' per 30 seconds than do ads for girls' toys. They conclude that this style of editing reinforces society's belief that boys are more active than girls. Images can be superimposed on top of another in both still and moving photography, and trick effects are now widely used in TV commercials.

Step 3: semiology

The first stage of a semiological analysis, then, is to identify the basic building blocks of an image: its signs ([...]). Bal and Bryson (1991:193-4) point out that it is often quite difficult to differentiate between visual signs, because often there are no clear boundaries between different parts of an image. However, once certain elements of an image have been at least tentatively identified as its signs, their **meanings** can be explored.[-> ask what the elements identified in 'step 2: compositional interpretation' may signify]

- decide what the signs are;
- decide what they signify 'in themselves';
- then explore their connections to wider systems of meaning, from codes to ideologies;

! Again, it is important to stress that any one sign may be working in one or more of these ways.

Gillian Dyer's book *Advertising as Communication* (1982) points out that the photographs of many adverts depend on signs of humans that symbolise particular qualities to their audience. These qualities – these signifieds – are shifted in the advertisement from the human signifiers and onto the product the advert is trying to sell. She has a useful checklist for exploring what signs of humans might symbolise (Dyer 1982: 96-104):

- *3.1.2.1 Representations of bodies:*

1. **Age.** What is the age of the figures in the photograph meant to convey? Innocence? Wisdom? Senility?
2. **Gender.** Dyer argued in 1982 that adverts still very often rely on stereotyped images of masculinity and femininity. Men are active and rational, women are passive and emotional; men go out into the world, women are more associated with the domestic. This is less true now, but gendered differences are still crucial to advertising, as Figure 6.2 suggests.
3. Analysis of ads suggests that gender is routinely portrayed according to traditional cultural stereotypes: women are shown as very feminine, as 'sex objects', as housewives, mothers, homemakers; and men in situations of authority and dominance over women.
4. **National and racial.** Again, adverts often depend on stereotypes. To what extent does an advert do this (Johnson 2008)? Or does it normalise whiteness by making it invisible (see Dyer 1997)?
5. **Hair.** Women's hair is often used to signify seductive beauty[object of love] or narcissism[self-love].

6. The colour, length, texture and style of a person's hair are important qualifiers of their overall appearance. Sometimes young women in ads are shown with their hair mysteriously hiding their face or their eyes.
7. **Body.** Which bodies are fat (and therefore often represented as undesirable and unattractive) and which are thin? Are we shown whole bodies, or does the photo show only parts of bodies (women's bodies are often treated in this way in cosmetic ads)?
8. *Body.* This can be thin, fat, short, tall, clothed or partially clothed. The naked body is, of course, not value-free, carrying meanings according to a particular society's norms. Advertising has been quick to exploit the potential meaning of human, particularly female bodies. The body may be presented in such a way as to convey exhibitionism, narcissism, incongruity or daring. In some ads it is pictorially dissected or presented in a fragmented way, or as Trevor Millum describes it, photographically 'cropped' (1975, p.83). Lips, eyes, legs, finger nails or hands are shown divorced from the body. Men are less often dismembered in this way, although the Flora magazine ads, which show only a man's torso, are an exception.
9. **Size.** Adverts often indicate what is more important by making it big.
10. Size is an important signifier of meaning. Relative size can convey social weight and superior status, power, authority, rank, etc. Men usually take precedence over women in this respect, although as Goffman notes there are a few exceptions that prove the rule - women are sometimes pictures taller than men when the men are inferior in social class and 'thoroughly costumed as craft-bound servitors' (1975, p. 28)
11. **Looks.** Again, adverts often trade on conventional notions of male and female beauty. Susan Bordo's book *Unbearable Weight* (1993) is an excellent discussion of, among other things, how adverts picture bodies in ways that depend on cultural constructions of race, gender and beauty.
12. Looks are related to the overall class, age, style and impression created by a character. Looks, needless to say, are conventionally 'good looks' - handsome men, beautiful women, cherubic children, kindly old folk. Ads generally confirm conventions of 'ideal type'. Although sophistication is a prevalent 'look' in ads, the plain, straightforward kind of person also appears - there is some advantage to be gained in a studied naturalness or simplicity. In recent years and particularly on television, some ads have tried to capture a type of 'ordinary' person in everyday surroundings. The 'normal', 'average' people in Players Number 6 ads are an example of this. The captions read 'people like you are changing to No. 6', directly addressing the smoker so that he or she becomes a part of the message.

- *3.1.2.2 Representations of manner*

1. **Expression.** Who is shown as happy, haughty, sad and so on? What facial and other expressions are used to convey this?
2. Other typical expressions in ads may be seductive, alluring, coy, kittenish, inward-looking, pensive, carefree, out-going, comic, maternal or mature.
3. **Eye contact.** Who is looking at whom (including you) and how? Are those looks submissive, coy, confrontational?
4. Covering the face or mouth with the hands is one way of hiding an emotion like remorse, fear, shyness or laughter
5. Women are sometimes seen with a dreamy luxuriating look in their eyes (see plate 11).
6. **Pose.** Who is standing and who is prone? What does that convey about their social position?
7. This can be static or active and sometimes corresponds to expression. Poses can be composed, relaxed, leisurely, passive, leaning, seductive, snuffling.
8. **Clothes.** These are obviously extremely important carriers of meaning in ads, even when they are not the object being sold. They can range from the formal (regimental or work costume), to the informal (leisure, relaxation, sportswear), and can be smart, sophisticated, glamorous, elegant, trendy or comfortable and casual. They can of course sum up a 'look', e.g. the 'twenties' look.

- *3.1.2.3 Representations of activity*

- Body gestures, movement and posture can be related to what the actor is doing.
1. **Touch.** Who is touching what, with what effects?
 2. Women more than men are pictured touching, or delicately fingering objects, tracing their outline, caressing their surfaces. This ritualistic touching is different from functional touching like grasping or holding. Hand-holding can be a significant gesture in ads and often is used to allow the man to protect or direct the woman. Self-touching is again something that women do more than men; it conveys the impression of narcissism, admiring one's own body and displaying it to others, so that everyone can share the admiration of this delicate and precious thing. Sometimes the act of touching is displaced onto things - sun, wind or water on the naked body when sunbathing or swimming. The feel of clothes against the skin - satins, silks, furs - is conveyed as a pleasurable thing.

3. **Body movement.** Who is active and who passive?
4. This might be quite functional, i.e. simply related to what the actor is doing - cleaning the kitchen floor, making beds, filling up the car with petrol, playing football, gardening. These movements may be exaggerated, ridiculous or child-like, calling into question the competence of the performer. Bodies, particularly women's, are often not treated seriously, either through what Goffman calls 'ritual subordination' (that is lowering the body in front of others more superior, lying or sitting down, ritually bending the knee or lowering the head)
5. **Positional communication.** What is the spatial arrangement of the figures? Who is positioned as superior and who inferior? Who is intimate with whom and how? Hodge and Kress (1988: 52-63) have a useful discussion of positional communication.

- *3.1.2.4 Props and settings*

1. **Props and commodity.** Objects in adverts can be used in a way unique to a particular advert, but many ads rely on objects that have particular cultural significance. For example, spectacles often connote intelligence, golden light indicates tranquility, and so on.
2. **Settings.** Settings range from the apparently 'normal' to the supposedly 'exotic', and can also seem to be fantasies. What effects does its setting have on an advert?
3. In some ads several backgrounds/settings are shown in order to show off the product's versatility or to provide some kind of juxtaposition of meaning - the mundane versus the exotic.
4. *Millum suggests a useful categorization of interiors:*
5. 1. The familiar, known, real, that which we can experience or have experienced for ourselves.
6. 2. The wishful, slightly unusual, imaginative, at one remove from direct experience: a wishful-thinking interpretation of reality.
7. 3. The fantastic, exotic, very strange, improbable, dreamlike: far from daily, conscious experience.
8. To look at them in a slightly different way: a fantastic setting is one which the reader would never rationally expect to inhabit, a familiar one he or she would expect to inhabit, and a wishful one he or she might hope to inhabit. (1975, p. 93)

But signs can also be connotive. Connotive signs carry range of higher level meanings. For example, that t-shirt uses a picture of a baby as a connotive sign, because that baby connotes the future when the revolution will happen. Connotive signs themselves can be divided into two kinds;

1. **Metonymic.** This kind of sign is something associated with something else, that then represents that something else. Thus in the t-shirt, for example, babies are associated with notions of the future, and the baby is thus also a metonymic sign.
2. **Synecdochal.** This sign is either a part of something standing in for a whole, or a whole representing a part. Thus the city of Paris is often represented by a picture of one part of it, the Eiffel Tower: the image of the tower is a synecdochal sign of Paris as a whole.

Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) is usually credited with being the first to identify metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony as the four basic tropes (to which all others are reducible).

Each of these four tropes represents a different relationship between the signifier and the signified; Hayden White suggests that these relationships consist of: resemblance (metaphor), adjacency (metonymy), essentiality (synecdoche) and 'doubling' (irony) ([White 1979, 97](#)).

1. 3. **Metaphor** Lakoff and Johnson argue that 'the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' ([Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 5](#)). In semiotic terms, a metaphor involves one signified acting as a signifier referring to a different signified.
2. 4. **Irony** is the most radical of the four main tropes. As with metaphor, the signifier of the ironic sign seems to signify one thing but we know from another signifier that it actually signifies something very different

Languages are more or less *thick*; certain amongst them, the most social, the most mythical, present an unshakeable homogeneity (there is a real force of meaning, a war of meanings): woven with habits and repetitions, with stereotypes, obligatory final clauses and key-words, each constitutes an *idiolect*, or more exactly a *sociolect* (a notion to which twenty years ago I gave the name of *writing*). Thus, rather than myths, it is sociolects which must today be distinguished and described; which means that mythologies would be succeeded by an idiolectology - more formal and thereby, I believe, more penetrating - whose operational concepts would no longer be sign, signifier, signified and connotation but citation, reference, stereotype. This way, thick languages (such as the discourse of myth) could be taken up in the line of a trans-writing of which the text (that we still refer to as 'literary'), the antidote of myth, would be the extreme pole or rather the region - airy, light, spaced, open, uncentred, noble and free - where writing spreads itself against the idiolect, at its limit and fighting it.

How direct is the **mode of address** and what is the significance of this?

Modes of address can be defined as the ways in which relations between addresser and addressee are constructed in a text. In order to communicate, a producer of any text must make some assumptions about an intended audience; reflections of such assumptions may be discerned in the text (advertisements offer particularly clear examples of this).

- think about **how they[signs] relate** to other signs 'in themselves' (here the vocabulary of section 6.3.2 is useful, and making a diagram of the movement of signifieds between the signifiers may also help);

Signs work in relation to other signs, it might also be useful to distinguish between two further kinds of signs, paradigmatic and syntagmatic signs. Syntagmatic signs gain their meaning from the signs that surround them in a still image, or come before or after them in sequence in a moving image, or come before or after them in sequence in a moving image. Syntagmatic signs are often very important for semiologies of film, since film is a sequence of signs. Thus certain signs in a film may gain extra meaning because they have occurred in a previous scene ([...]).

It is often the text that provides what Barthes (1977: 38- 41) called **anchorage**. It allows the reader to choose between what could be a confusing number of possible [...] meanings of a card showing a baby. Text in adverts often works as anchorage.

In other media, however (television is an example), the text is much more important in relation to the image; they are complementary and in this case Barthes (1977: 38-41) described the written or spoken text as having a **relay**-function.

- *calligraphy*. This is when the product is transformed into a word. The word then becomes a referent of a real object, the product.

and finally they use graphic framing devices to make certain visual links between these components. ([...] Goldman [...].) Williamson (1978) suggests that one of the most subtle ways in which signifieds are transferred by images is in their use of colour. The use of similar colours in different signs in an advert work to **connect** those signs and and to effect a transfer of their signifieds.

The transfers of meaning within an image – which operate between and within both text and image – can be very complex. Goldman (1992: 77) suggests that one way to begin to unravel that complexity is to map the transfers. He offers an example of this technique in which he reduces an advert to its basic spatial organization by **sketching** its compositional structure (see section 4.3.3 for another example of this technique); he then annotates that sketch to show the advert's signs, signifieds and how they are

transferred. Figure 6.7 does this on the Alfa Romeo advertisement. He suggests this is rather a schematic and crude way to represent a process as complex and fluid as the advert's meaning-making, and in this he is correct. But it is also a useful way to begin to think carefully about the relationships between signs in an advert.

Figure 6.7 (a) shows how I initially divided the advert in Figure 6.1 into four signs. (b) shows how I then thought meanings are transferred between those signs. Note how the second diagram works with much smaller elements of the advertisement than the first. This is certainly not the only way to analyse this advert, though. How do the fonts work, for example? What is the effect of the diagonal red line behind the car, apart from its colour linking the car to the star?

Is this a **contradictory** image?

Are the relations between the components of this image unstable?

- Many adverts rely on textual and visual *puns* or puzzles that make us stop and look at them in order to work out 'what's going on'. Ads can show incongruity, or use no words at all, again to attract our attention and involvement.
- adverts contain or imply *visual absences* that the viewer is invited to fill
- What signifiers from the same paradigm set are noticeably absent?

What seems to be the **preferred reading**?

Is there any evidence that a particular audience produced a meaning for an image that differed from the meanings made at the site of its production or by the image itself?

What knowledges are being deployed?

Whose knowledges are excluded from this representation?

Are the codes broadcast or narrowcast?

- and then return to the signs via their codes to explore the precise articulation of ideology and mythology.

Your purposes may **reflect** your values: how does the text relate to your own values?

Step 4: re-organizing/presenting the data each case yielded

As I've said in the methodology section, Panofsky's iconographic method (cited in Rose 2012; Dyer 1982) conforms strikingly to what I've set out above and distinguishes three levels of interpretation: a primary/natural/pre-iconographic level that parallels compositional interpretation, a secondary/conventional/iconographic level that conforms with my use of denotation as interpretation I believe most would agree on, and a third/intrinsic/symbolic/iconological level for connotation and myth. I will try and tear the data apart and group them under such headings.

Step 5: coding and relevant coding/triangulation

If you are comparing several texts within a genre look for a **shared** syntagm.

The heart of grounded theory is identifying themes in texts and coding the texts for the presence or **absence** of those themes.

The most common way to construct the first set of codes is to start by reading through your first text document, marking important sections, phrases or individual words and assigning those a code. After reading through all your materials with a critical eye, you should have a list of codes you think are important, along with your notes about them (keeping notes or 'memos' on your coding process is very valuable). If you are using a qualitative software package, the codes are typically kept in one location and their notes are linked to them automatically (see Chapter 26). Recall that the initial set of codes will be changing: there will be some things you find you don't use and others that should be added. Strauss calls this process 'open coding'. He says open coding 'is unrestricted coding of the data. This open coding is done by scrutinizing the fieldnote, interview, or other document very closely: line by line or even word by word. The aim is to produce **concepts that seem to fit the data**' (1987: 28). The purpose of this stage is to 'open up' the data, fracturing them along the way if necessary, and breaking the data down so that conceptual implications can emerge in the later steps.

The key to making all this work is called memoing. Throughout the grounded-theory process, you keep running notes about the coding and about potential hypotheses and new directions for the research.

Look for repetitions. "Anyone who has listened to long stretches of talk," says Roy D'Andrade, knows how frequently people circle through the same network of ideas" (1991: 287)

Strauss (1987) also recommends two other kinds of coding. One is called 'axial coding' because it proceeds along an *axis* or key category. Axial coding can be part of the open coding process but it allows the researcher to follow a particular category for a while as a way of testing its relevance.

Look for unusual terms or common words that are used in unusual ways.

And, said Spradley (1979: 199-201), look for evidence of social conflict, cultural contradictions, informal methods of social control, things that people do in managing impersonal social relationships, methods by which people acquire and maintain achieved and ascribed status, and information about how people solve problems. Each of these arenas is likely to yield major themes in cultures.

[Strauss (1987)] suggests that beginning analysts consider four types of themes in the data: *conditions*, *interaction among the actors*, *strategies and tactics* and *consequences*. Many of these are indicated to the researcher directly by the subject. 'Conditions' can be indicated by such phrases as 'because' or 'on account of' (Strauss, 1987: 28) or passages like 'when I was in XYZ situation ...' For example, if a low-income mother referred to a time when she lost her housing and had to live with her sister, we would code it as a particular type of housing 'condition'. Similarly, interaction among the actors' means looking for how the informants engage with others, what they think of others, what others do to them. So we might be interested in how low-income mothers interact with their children, their partners, their case workers, their employers and so on. 'Strategies and tactics' refers to what people do in certain situations or how they handle particular events. For example, poor women with children often exchange favours with friends and neighbours as a strategy to survive on low wages and/or state benefits (Gilbert, 1998). Again, there will usually be subcategories of strategies that become relevant, and these are very likely to be tied together with both 'condition' and 'interaction' with others. Finally, 'consequences' are often easy to identify because the informant makes the connection for us: a woman says 'My child was sick so I missed work too many times and lost my job. Then I couldn't pay the rent so we got evicted and had to move in with my sister.' These are the *consequences* of certain *conditions*, but also indicate *interactions* and *strategies*. The idea, then, is to use these special types of categories to start analysing the data and pulling out new themes.

Coding enables the researcher to make new connections. For example, the connection between a child getting sick and the family losing housing may not be immediately apparent, but when it is considered in the context of the fragile balance low-income women must achieve the relationship becomes more clear. The researcher is then sensitized to such connections and seeks to identify other similar relationships within the data, and may look for related connections from other informants.

Coding is basically a way of evaluating and organizing data in an effort to understand meanings in the text. First, coding helps the researcher identify *categories* and *patterns*. For example, in studying interviews with low-income mothers, a researcher might see a pattern of daily challenges poor mothers face (she misses the bus, her child is sick, her caregiver shows up late) and code these as 'daily challenges', keeping a memo on what has so far been included in that category, and perhaps constructing subcategories (those related to transportation, those related to childcare, etc.) By identifying categories and patterns, we can begin to make more sense of the data and start to ask new questions. Following on the example of low-income mothers, we might find several subcategories of

daily challenges (housing, transportation, childcare) but then also several bigger-picture categories of challenges they face (children's future, discrimination, violence, personal and financial security, self-esteem). Coding for these can help identify how these challenges intersect and may produce new codes, new research questions and new understandings of meaning in the data.

Strauss's third type of coding is called 'selective coding'. This is a more systematic approach to coding that is done when a central or 'core' category is identified and followed. For example, after some open coding and axial coding of the interviews from low-income mothers, we might decide that the core theme emerging is the struggle for a better future for their children. We say it is 'core' because we have found that most of what the mothers talk about is related in some way to this theme. From that point on other themes become secondary and the main lens through which the data are viewed is based on the core category (i.e. we are being 'selective').

The mechanics of grounded theory are deceptively simple: (1) Produce transcripts of interviews and read through a small sample of text. (2) Identify potential analytic categories - that is, potential themes - that arise. (3) As the categories emerge, pull all the data from those categories together and compare them. (4) Think about how categories are linked together. (5) Use the relations among categories to build theoretical models, constantly checking the models against the data - particularly against negative cases. (6) Present the results of the analysis using exemplars, that is, quotes from interviews that illuminate the theory.

Another way to think of different stages of coding is to consider the first level as 'descriptive' and the next level as 'analytic'. Descriptive codes contain mainly what we call *in vivo* codes – that is, they appear in the text and we use respondents' own words as codes. Analytic codes emerge from a second level of coding that comes after much reflection on descriptive codes and a **return to the theoretical literature**.

Kearney et al. coded the data first for the general topics they used to guide the interviews. Later, they would use these codes to search for and retrieve examples of text related to various interview topics. Next, team members reread each transcript searching for examples of social psychological themes in the women's narratives. Each time they found an example, they asked: "What is this an example of?" The answers suggested substantive categories that were refined with each new transcript.

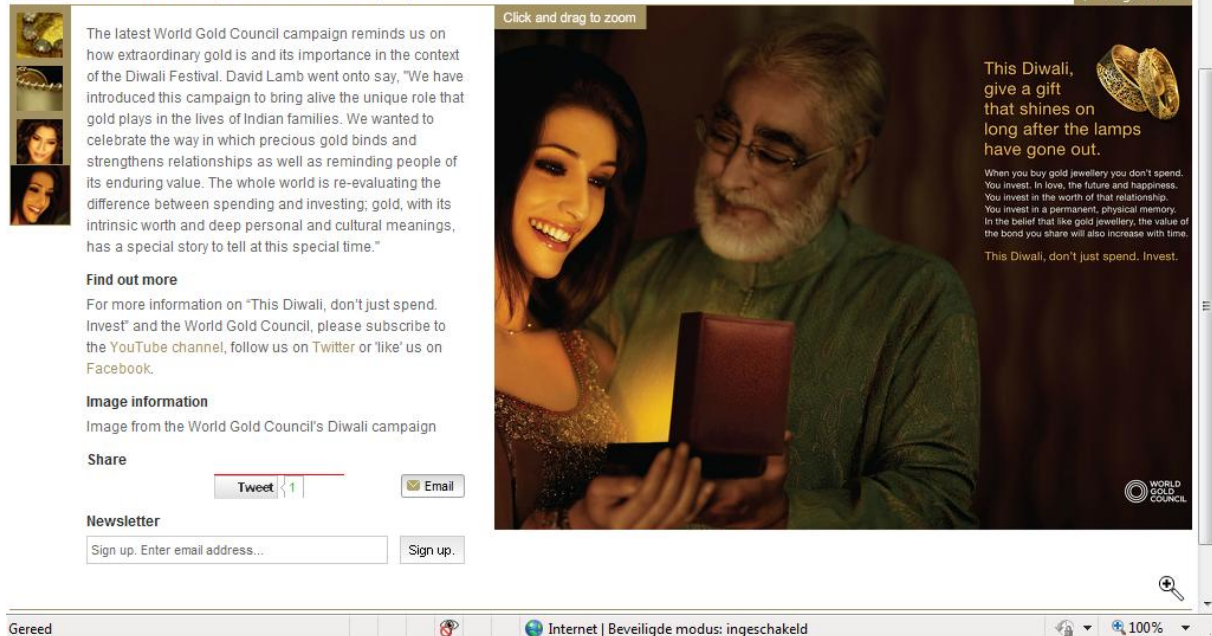
you may need to **eliminate** some codes as the project progresses.

Appendix C: organization/presentation of the data each case yielded

Case 1: “This Diwali, Don't Just Spend. Invest” - Campaign [India]

Fashion

"This Diwali, Don't Just Spend. Invest" - Campaign



The latest World Gold Council campaign reminds us on how extraordinary gold is and its importance in the context of the Diwali Festival. David Lamb went on to say, "We have introduced this campaign to bring alive the unique role that gold plays in the lives of Indian families. We wanted to celebrate the way in which precious gold binds and strengthens relationships as well as reminding people of its enduring value. The whole world is re-evaluating the difference between spending and investing; gold, with its intrinsic worth and deep personal and cultural meanings, has a special story to tell at this special time."

Find out more
For more information on "This Diwali, don't just spend. Invest" and the World Gold Council, please subscribe to the YouTube channel, follow us on Twitter or 'like' us on Facebook.

Image information
Image from the World Gold Council's Diwali campaign

Share

Newsletter

Click and drag to zoom

This Diwali, give a gift that shines on long after the lamps have gone out.

When you buy gold jewellery you don't spend. You invest. In love, the future and happiness. You invest in the worth of that relationship. You invest in a permanent, physical memory. In the belief that like gold jewellery, the value of the bond you share will also increase with time.

This Diwali, don't just spend. Invest.

WORLD GOLD COUNCIL

www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/10/diwali/index.html#page/4 (last accessed 23 December 2011)

- compositional interpretation

The viewer is drawn to the high value/lighted parts: the box, the glowing lady, and then the rings in the top right corner. These stand against a lot of darker brown. The (gold and white) texts equally stand out. As does the high value green shirt plain demand attention. The red box, the gold, the lady's hair, the man's shirt are more highly saturated, while the golden glow, the man's flesh and hair and the background less so. Most of the figures are on the left side of the image. Only the foreground is in focus, the background blurry which also means they're not standing against the wall. The man watches the lady, the lady watches what's in the box. We watch both: the lady is both seen by the spectator as by the man, the man is only seen by the audience. 'If an external focaliser – a spectator – can look in the same way at the same things as a focaliser in the picture, then the spectator's identification will be strong' (Bal cited in Rose 2012, 67) Their heads are slightly turned away and the angle is also slightly upwardly. They stand next to each other but if the man stands – than the woman stands like | . The woman's left arm must touch the man's back, what the man's right arm does is not so sure. This also means that the jewelry box is supported by only one of each their hands. Unless she just received a

brand new lamp (which would be absurd), the light's not very realistically but rather magical. I'd say the lines are rather curvy and static.

- denotation

A lady receiving a box with jewelry in from her father. Giving this ring will make her love you (the male addressee/father) and the relationship will only improve.

- connotation and myth

There's ambiguity, possibly to target multiple audiences or, perhaps, to not transgress any laws. An alternative interpretation is that they're lovers. Yet all depends on the knowledge you have/who you are. I know dowry is illegal in India, that it yet endures⁹⁰, that it often takes the form of gold jewelry, that this can be a factor in determining the bride's status in her new family, indeed that it is considered a prerequisite for marriage.⁹¹ Who touches who how differs across cultures (Chandler⁹²) yet I only know lovers in India can't even hold hands in public (Miller 2010). The advert/website does *not* make us choose between the father-daughter and lover-lover interpretations. Instead of anchoring, the text is just as ambiguous as the image on this issue: 'love, the future and happiness' is equally applicable to both scenarios, as are 'relationship', 'bond', 'family'. In an accompanying commercial video⁹³, an elderly lady gifts what she received from her husband for their 'tenth Diwali together' to her to-be daughter-*in-law*, contradicting the logic of dowry as protecting *your own* daughter⁹⁴ in her new environment – but thereby the theme of dowry is also raised.

Here's what seems to have happened: he gave her a gift (the text confirms it's a gift, she put her hand on top of his so he must have been holding the box first, the magic glow mainly falls on her, her smile is that of a pleasant surprise while his is more a knowing one), which she likes and then embraced the man in thanks (the arms not under the box disappear behind each other's and this includes their upper

⁹⁰ "The gold (and other gifts) the bride receives are called her "Streedhan" ("Stree" meaning woman and "dhan" meaning wealth) and are a means of passing on some inheritance to daughters, as Hindu tradition dictates that the family's assets are only passed down to sons. The Streedhan will remain the property of the bride, allowing her parents to ensure she is financially secure. Gold is especially important in this respect as it remains directly under a wife's control, whereas she may not be privy to the family's other financial affairs.' (WGC 2010c, 5)

⁹¹ http://www.gold.org/video/play/cbs_news_60_minutes_indias_love_affair_with_gold/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁹² <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem08.html> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁹³ http://www.gold.org/video/play/diwali_dont_just_spend/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁹⁴ It is suggested mothers and not fathers are who gift gold jewellery to daughters (WGC 2011b).

arms; their bodies are close). So the imperative 'give', making us givers, is more specifically us fathers or male lovers and so all of the superimposed text is addressed to them. The identification is with the male. In the outside text, the address is 'us': you as part of a group who knows ('reminds us') 'how extraordinary gold is and its importance in the context of the Diwali festival'.

There's a whole lot of intersecting circles to be distinguished: the golden shine, intermediated by equally golden text and its proximity to the superimposed rings⁹⁵ ('This Diwali' next to intersecting rings, defining the rings as Diwali), suggests such rings are what's in the box. The rings hook as do these people. Metaphor is understanding one thing in terms of another on the basis of similarity so that we both understand the rings as binding people together and the people as being bonded by the rings. It's the rings that make her shine golden. The intensity of light near the box compared to the lesser intensity of the light on the lady suggests dilatation: a force that loses in strength, but a force: a magic box. Geographically they also form a circle: the woman standing against the man and both holding their hands out to present the box, as when looking at them vertically, and given that the picture just includes their upper bodies, these same hands, shoulders, heads do too. At the center of this whole, a characteristic of the formed unity of 2, is the glow of gold. 'the unique role that gold plays in the lives of Indian families.' is 'the way in which precious gold binds and strengthens relationships' Man and woman made one by rings gifted by the male (magic indeed)!

It is implied in the text next to the photograph that what is depicted is an Indian family (in the making). Other than perhaps the male's shirt this would not have been clear to me as that treacherous signifier tone of skin is covered by either golden glow or shade. The man's hair is short, grey, he has a beard, wears spectacles, is therefore older and in conjunction with the language of investment all this can be interpreted as wisdom or at least rationality/functionality. He's taller and fatter. She's skinny. I'd say the lady's 25-30. The lady's eyebrows are plucked, her lips painted red, her hair loose and slick, she wears a cut-out dress and not the sari women traditionally wear after marriage (Miller 2010) as well as a necklace⁹⁶. These are not the clothes for heavy manual labor. While both seem to wear costly dress or at least signify this⁹⁷ (shiny silvery grains on her and such sewings on his shirt), it's more the

⁹⁵ Actually, it is unclear whether they're finger rings or bracelets. 'India is one of the only countries where gold ornaments are made for practically every part of the body this is called "Solah Shringar" which is the 16 types of body adornment comprising maang tikka (an ornament that rests on the centre part of the hair with the tikka or pendant dangled onto the forehead), earrings, nose rings, necklaces, chains, brooches, armlets, bangles, bracelets, rings, haathphools (a bridal jewellery worn on the wrist), waist bands, anklets and toe rings.' (WGC 2011b, 8)

⁹⁶ 'An Indian woman is rarely seen without gold jewellery.' (WGC 2011b, 8)

⁹⁷ Interestingly, though, 'At higher income levels one may notice some substitution between gold and other high-priced metals like platinum.' so that 'The value of gold to society stems from jewellery as an adornment as

woman who receives (and displays herself to receive) and the man that gives (doesn't display to receive). She's happy with shiny things/trinkets (irrational), he makes a rational calculation (buy her gold jewelry now, benefit later: investment).

'Whilst over 50% of gold jewelry is bought for weddings, the wedding anniversary has now become the most aspirational occasion for receiving gold today, extending a couple's relationship with gold beyond the marriage ceremony.'⁹⁸ If dowry is something solely between women, interpreting it as dowry does not make sense unless it is to evade regulation. Gifts by the groom's family to the bride would occur in different circumstances so that she would not be as surprised.⁹⁹ They may have broken with Indian tradition, chucked the sari (a defining feature of Indian womanhood (Miller 2010) and celebrate their anniversary but still it all seems traditionally Indian for the most part¹⁰⁰, not to say paternalistic. (There are other reasons to gift at Diwali, it is true, but these make even less sense.¹⁰¹)' Fusion of West and East could explain it, but the emphasis is placed on the East. 'The Indian population's affinity to gold is deep rooted, particularly in rural areas, but young middle class Indians are becoming more international in their tastes and their values and aspirations differ from their parents.' To deal with this Westernisation of tastes, 'Gold's narrative must continue to evolve with India's changing demographic. It is likely that stability and confidence will be key elements in this.' (? , 4) On balance, then (after trying to fit in such data), I swing toward the interpretation father gifting dowry to his daughter but as 'myth essentially aims at causing an immediate impression - it does not matter if one is later allowed to see through the myth, its action is assumed to be stronger than the rational explanations which may later belie it.' (Barthes 1972, 129)

That wealth which is not spent is, by definition, saved. Investing is not considered spending/consuming in that it is done in hope of later higher returns instead of being considered dissipated after the spending act. Consumption and investment thus would be mutually exclusive.

well as a major vehicle of wealth accumulation (asset demand) by a large number of *low- and middle-income* households in rural and urban areas.' (WGC 2011b, 16, emphasis mine)

⁹⁸ <http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/india> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

⁹⁹ 'The buying of wedding jewellery is a ritual involving both the bride's and the groom's families who often accompany the bride-to-be for the wedding jewellery purchase. A fixed amount of gold is given or gold for a fixed sum of money is gifted to the bride, depending on the customs of each community.' (WGC 2011b, 8)

¹⁰⁰ As we've seen, while in a sense it's pick and choose, in another it isn't; while ultimately arbitrary even if historical, it's about the order of things and not just one object.

¹⁰¹ Phases of life such as birth, birthdays, at coming of age, upon becoming a mother or as an offering to Indian deities on auspicious days. There are also inauspicious days, on which it's ill-advised to purchase gold (WGC 2011b).

Gold jewelry is understood here as an investment¹⁰². What's more, love is understood in terms of investment. And so purchasing gold jewelry would be both an economic investment and one in your relationship. 'Long after the lamps have gone out' doesn't (only) refer to bed activities but to the religious 'Diwali [Light] Festival'¹⁰³ and these kinds of investment¹⁰⁴. To support the theme of value, there's the prop of the jeweler/treasure box, a way to (ritually) present it more impressively and to safe-keep, and the text: 'like gold jewellery, the value ... will increase with time', 'precious gold', 'its enduring value'. Note how 'intrinsic worth' doesn't conflict with 'deep personal and cultural'¹⁰⁵ meanings' for David Lamb while that gold 'has a special story to tell' is a clear anthropomorphism (only people tell stories).

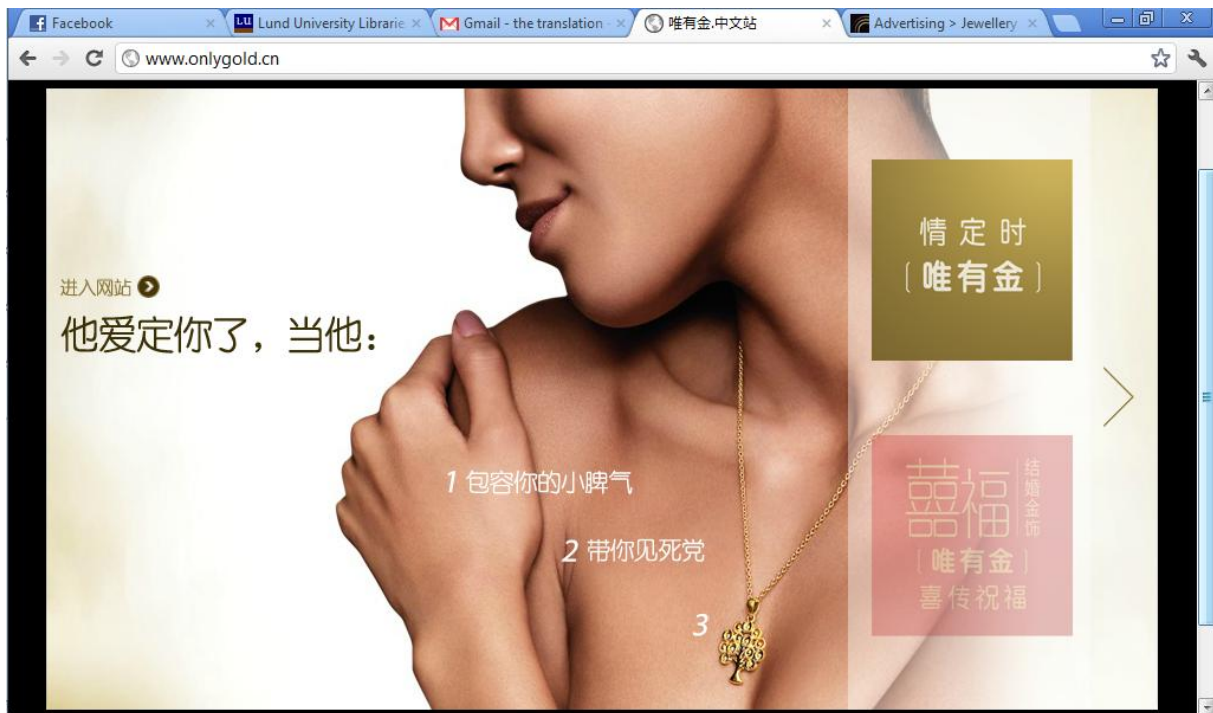
Case 2 Sign of Love [China]

¹⁰² Recognition of a coincidence of ornamentation and investment in gold jewelry would distinguish Indians from other markets; that 'traditional perceptions of the division between jewellery and investment demand and demand drivers do not apply.' (WGC 2010c, 2) This helps explain why Indians tend to keep purchasing gold.

¹⁰³ The coincidence of reasons to purchase gold jewelry is mirrored, and this makes sense, by a coincidence of culturally and economic important times on Diwali. 'Based on our observation of historic trends, the most active gold jewelry buying period is during the winter wedding season, from beginning of September to March., (Council 2010b, 16), Diwali, the festival of light, which falls around October or November, is the largest gold buying festival in India and coincides with the harvest season. (ibid, 9) 'The festival of Dhanteras, the most auspicious day in the calendar just before Diwali, has traditionally created a strong seasonal surge in sales.' (<http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/india> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

¹⁰⁴ 'gold remains an auspicious metal for all [communities of India], one that must adorn the bride when she enters her husband's house so it brings in its wake auspiciousness, which is a combination of prosperity, peace, joy, health, luck, wisdom and significantly, the code of civilisation' (WGC 2011b, 15)

¹⁰⁵ Perhaps most strikingly, the world as only an ephemeral world of form would emanate from a permanent golden womb just as the soul is considered permanent across various incarnations and gold, that can be melted down and recast endlessly, symbolizes this. (WGC 2011b) Much as in Christianity (Barthes 2006b), (mineral) wealth comes from the earth, which is also a place of demons, while the divine is also associated with gold. (WGC 2011b) Indeed, the dialectics between materialism as good and as bad, resolved in Hinduism in favor of conquering nature according to Pattanaik (ibid), is mirrored in how most such philosophical traditions 'are full of this kind of ambivalence. On the one hand they are outcries against the market; on the other, they tend to frame their objections in commercial terms - as if to argue that turning human life into a series of transactions is not a very good deal.' (Graeber, 2011, 84) In Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Hindus, gold is called su-varna, which literally means good-complexion. This is the colour of the sun, of the powerful tiger, of nutritious banana and antiseptic turmeric, and of crops ready for harvest.' (WGC 2011b)



<http://www.onlygold.cn/> (last accessed 14/04/2012)

- compositional interpretation

The enumeration at the top of the photo is animated; number 1 appears first and then all are added until eyes rest upon the necklace. This is repeated endlessly in loop and the movement grabs the attention invariably. The large number of (slightly) different elements and their organization are a lot to take in. Framed by black, the light advertisement in turn provides a field so that high saturation flesh contrasts with the pure white background (a fictive space therefore), and ultimately shaded flesh stands out; shade does the highlighting. Saturated gold contrasts starkly with fading flesh on the right and the red box below. Moving your cursor over either of the boxes makes a “glance”/“shine” travel over it, and moving it over the red one instantaneously yields a higher saturation red (which links to a website that seems to form the complement to this one). The tree necklace stands out a little because of its darker value stem, darker than the surrounding skin plain. The necklace's color contradicts the gold color of the superimposed gold square (even if the chain connects them). The reds vary in both saturation and value. Upper and lower lips differ in value. Superimposed shapes and text conflict with what's underneath (intersecting lines, what's clearly editing rather than naturally occurring). The many lines/curves are jagged; their rhythm dynamic; so much of what's started is missing/implied and completion requires movement. Not harmonious thus far! In addition, we can draw a line through '1' '2' and '3' so that you can see a vector pointing to the pendant starting from the top left word/sign. The chain of the necklace and the way she holds her arms (if we extend the lines) point downwards (to the necklace). While no eyes are visible, her position constrains her possible field of vision downwardly

and to her right. It's her placing her head/chin on her shoulder that creates the shades. The camera angle's frontal, intimate and slightly upwards-looking. All's in focus.

- denotation

Apart from a necklace, a naked lady holding her shoulder and placing her head/chin on top of it, emulating/remembering the touch of a lover.

- connotation and myth

The animated text says, in translation, 'when he is sure in love with you, he will: 1. tolerate your bad temper; 2, show you to his friends; 3, (the gold pendant)'. The characters in the gold square on the right say: 'to token the love, there is only gold.' '3' crosses over from the text to the image and thus it can be argued the addressee ('you') is constructed as the depicted girl. The suggestion then is that if a guy truly loves a girl, he will give her gold jewelry. The ad thus makes promises but also sets a standard for any lover or provides a formula to boys how to win girls. The advertisement as a manual also constructs identities.

All that is depicted are her right shoulder that she touches with both hand and chin and also included is her upper body with the necklace. Her body is pointing to an absent lover whose touch she is emulating (the rest of her clothing's missing, her fingers, the warmth by placing her chin on her shoulder, the hugging of her upper body by placing her left arm on her right side, the smile, and the white void/dream she's in). Other lines, we have seen, are pointing to the necklace. She's skinny, her cheek bones signal cute to me rather than femininity as does the short hair, yet this is clearly a Chinese ad and so such things may understood very differently than I do. There are other elements that contradict the stereotypes I hold of what's Chinese such as the Arabic numbers mingled with the Chinese characters and the familiar dress in the complementary website.

The complementary website/image depicts a lady seemingly dressed in a white wedding dress intensely and happily hugging a man in suit and thereby displaying two gold bracelets. We learn from the context¹⁰⁶ that 'Whilst gold owns the tradition of weddings in China, present at the very centre of the formal ceremony, earlier on in a relationship a gift of gold communicates love in a different, more spontaneous way. Here gold testifies to the strength and depth of feeling that a couple have for each other; gold suggests that this relationship is important, valued, full of possibility. In other words, gold signifies that this is "for real."' So if the complementary website depicts wedding gold, the one under scrutiny must be about that earlier moment of confirmation. Two clicks removed, we find a video in

¹⁰⁶ http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/china/sign_of_love_campaign/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

which Chinese couples first speak emotively about love and then a guy gives the exact same necklace as in the discussed ad to his girlfriend, to which she responds with a kiss – all accompanied by xylophone-like music.¹⁰⁷

Gold is seen as a token of love, as the conformation that it is for real. The text appears consecutively, as if someone is speaking. The tree pendant is the third element in a (linguistic) enumeration. '[T]he calligram tries to unite referent and sign, again giving the impression of producing 'transparent' meaning, ... The *thing*, the product, signified by language in the ad, is made to *be* the language of the ad' (Williamson, 1978, 91, italics not mine) A tree grows, lives, is organic. Zooming in¹⁰⁸, we can see that this is not a dead tree but a blooming one and is associated with earrings that resemble a honey grate dripping with affluence. Perhaps, the idea that giving costly gold signifies a boy is committed to a relationship/girl could signify wealth but only at one remove. Rather, the theme of wealth is noticeably absent.¹⁰⁹

Case 3: “Gold Makes it a Marriage” - US campaign

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.onlygold.cn/elite/Video.aspx> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.onlygold.cn/elite/productbrand.aspx?timeperiod=2011ss> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹⁰⁹ Although the 'Only Gold Elite Product Campaign' aimed to establish 'an elite product category among 24 carat pure gold market.' (WGC 2010a, 23), that 24 carat gold is dominant in China and 'has always been regarded as an investment by the Chinese' (23). If 'Innovative products such as K-gold, 18 carat gold with Italian inspired design, launched in 2003 by the WGC and its partners, has been a success in attracting younger, urban cosmopolitan consumers to gold jewellery.' (23) then the gold under discussion should have a more traditional signature. 'Today, gold is regarded as a sign of prosperity, an ornament, a currency and an integral part of Chinese religion' (3) Similarly, themes present in the context are hard to identify in the ad: 'Two thirds of Chinese women regard gold jewellery to be as much an investment as a statement of personal style; consumers are keenly aware of the value of what they own. But the same majority also state that wearing gold jewellery every day makes them feel wonderful; in China, the logic of gold seems to be perfectly complemented by its magic.' (<http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/china/> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

"For centuries, gold rings have been synonymous with marriage. We believe 'Gold Makes it a Marriage' is a ground-breaking campaign that will reinforce gold's role as the original and authentic metal of love", said David Lamb, Managing Director, Jewelry, World Gold Council. "We need to remind couples that the wedding day may be special with all its intricately-planned details, but it is still just one day. Long after the cakes has been eaten, the 'I do's are said and done and the details begin to fade from your memory, it is the gold marriage rings that will remain with you as the ultimate symbol of love."

Find out more
For more information on how "Gold Makes it a Marriage" and the World Gold Council, log on to www.facebook.com/gold or www.gold.org

Image information
Advertisement from the campaign

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CONVINCING your bridesmaids
they'll be able to **WEAR THE DRESS AGAIN**
makes it a **WEDDING**

GOLD *makes it a* **MARRIAGE**

THEY MAY ONLY WEAR THOSE DRESSES ONCE
but the rings you'll wear forever

HONOR YOUR LOVE WITH THE METAL
that's made marriage what marriage began.

EXPLORE WHITE, YELLOW, AND ROSE GOLD AT FACEBOOK.COM/GOLD

<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-makes-it-a-marriage/#page/1> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

- compositional

The (non-white) hues make the eye center on the photograph. Yet once focusing on this picture, the eye is drawn to the shiny white bride. More telling, she stands out against all the lowly saturated orange. Most have black hair, she has a darker orange-brown. Worn loose and supplemented by cloth, her head shapes differently as does her cone dress. The bridesmaids' arms point toward the bride's waist). The bride herself puts her hands together under the flowers, which also differ in color. They stand in a half circle with the bride in the middle. All look out to the camera. The bridesmaids' positions help the spectator toward the bride. Instead of a close-up, this is a long-shot, allowing for many possibly spectators. The values are generally high, only some shades in the back. This both serves to emphasize what's in front as that this gives a realistic impression. Equally, that the photograph shows things on the right side of the photo's frame that are not present on the left, asymmetry indicating amateurism, serves realism. Camera focus is also realistically. There's a confusing variety of fonts, font sizes, italics and boldness used in the surrounding poster. There's also the gold-colored WGC text balloon and the non-gold colored (white gold) rings intersecting at the bottom.

- Denotation

It's a postcard as part of a larger poster. The bride and her bridesmaids are posing for a pre-arranged, set-up, even ritualized, picture moment (marriage photography genre). It took me some time to organize everything sensibly. The text makes a joke out of what's depicted: 'your bridesmaids' (the addressee would be the bride) will be deceived in the lasting value of their (uniform orange classic-cut) dresses, although they'll only really wear it for 'a wedding'. In contrast, a gold ring will last 'a marriage'. Confirmation is to be found at the bottom in small print: 'THEY MAY ONLY WEAR THOSE DRESSES ONCE *but the rings you'll wear forever*'. The postcard suggests it's a memory, a joke to look back on and laugh at.

- Connotation and myth

I really don't know much about wedding (attended more of them when I was younger) and I'm not even sure if there even is such a thing as bridesmaids where I'm from. However, I would have recognized the bride even without the surrounding text, because of the dress. In opposition to the others, the bride's centered, displays her whole body frontally, and is taller and thinner (a traditional beauty ideal¹¹⁰). She outshines the others, who are uniformed, turned towards her and pointing unreciprocated, stand in function of her wedding ('your bridesmaids'). The maids all have their hair tucked up with some rather clumsy curls to the side. The bride's the only one who displays her hair next to her face, which is an as feminine gendered sight. The hues of the maids have something clown-like (not many people walking the streets in orange, even less in offices). Orange is not such a classic color. Same could be said for the flowers over their shoulders. The typically white wedding dress probably originated as a Christian metaphor for virginity/purity (The Virgin Mary's immaculate/no-stain conception, no sex before marriage). The less classic orange of bridesmaids' dresses, then, can be seen as signaling youth before marriage. Flowers can be a metaphor for either or both life, beauty, women, virginity (which can be plucked). The green leaf in the bride's bouquet could signify youth, innocence, virginity. The bride signals beauty, the maids are functional (maids as servants). It's important that the bride's a virgin, the others are just kids (maids as maidens). They are posing in front

¹¹⁰ 'In the conventional scheme of those days [chivalric times] ladies of high degree were conceived to be in perpetual tutelage, and to be scrupulously exempt from all useful work. The resulting chivalric or romantic ideal of beauty takes cognizance chiefly of the face, and dwells on its delicacy, and on the delicacy of the hands and feet, the slender figure, and especially the slender waist. In the pictured representations of the women of that time, and in modern romantic imitators of the chivalric thought and feeling, the waist is attenuated to a degree that implies extreme debility. The same ideal is still extant among a considerable portion of the population of modern industrial communities; but it is to be said that it has retained its hold most tenaciously in those modern communities which are least advanced in point of economic and civil development, and which show the most considerable survivals of status and of predatory institutions. That is to say, the chivalric ideal is best preserved in those existing communities which are substantially least modern. Survivals of this lackadaisical or romantic ideal occur freely in the tastes of the well-to-do classes of Continental countries.' (Veblen and MILLS 1970, 106)

of an elaborate portal, which in turns points to an estate mansion (unnecessary¹¹¹ Greek pillars, metal statues, brown door, and bricks instead of paint): “white” European¹¹² bourgeois classicism/renaissance. The bride fits in, the maids don't. It is important to note that while abundance is present, this standard of living won't be retained; it's a lavish wedding feast. '[T]he wedding day may be special with all its intricately-planned details, but it's still just one day. Long after the caked has been eaten, the 'I do's are said and done and the details begin to fade from your memory, it is the gold marriage rings that will remain with you as the ultimate symbol of love.’¹¹³

¹¹¹ This process of selective adaptation of designs to the end of conspicuous waste, and the substitution of pecuniary beauty for aesthetic beauty, has been especially effective in the development of architecture. It would be extremely difficult to find a modern civilised residence or public building which can claim anything better than relative inoffensiveness in the eyes of any one who will dissociate the elements of beauty from those of honorific waste. The endless variety of fronts presented by the better class of tenements and apartment houses in our cities is an endless variety of architectural distress and of suggestions of expensive discomfort.' (Veblen and MILLS 1970, 110-11) Elsewhere with regards to buildings for charitable ends, the same logic applies and the description is apt 'An appreciable share of the funds is spent in the construction of an edifice faced with some aesthetically objectionable but expensive stone, covered with grotesque and incongruous details, and designed, in its battlemented walls and turrets and its massive portals and strategic approaches, to suggest certain barbaric methods of warfare. The interior of the structure shows the same pervasive guidance of the canons of conspicuous waste and predatory exploit. The windows, for instance, to go no farther into detail, are placed with a view to impress their pecuniary excellence upon the chance beholder from the outside, rather than with a view to effectiveness for their ostensible end in the convenience or comfort of the beneficiaries within; and the detail of interior arrangement is required to conform itself as best it may to this alien but imperious requirement of pecuniary beauty.' (226-227) [Although such “uselessness” needs an alibi: 'The canons of beauty must be circumvented by some contrivance which will give evidence of a reputedly wasteful expenditure, at the same time that it meets the demands of our critical sense of the useful and the beautiful, or at least meets the demand of some habit which has come to do duty in place of that sense.' (109)

¹¹² While this is an ad for the US, the occupants and definitely the builders (or the people having it built) of such a home would have been immigrated Europeans rather than the (slaughtered) native Americans.

¹¹³ This needs to be understood in its context. Language of love, investment, tradition, fashion is all mixed. Expensive-looking/large settings, mentioning great uncles and third cousins suggests many people present, expenditures on details such as a professional 'flower concierge' or multiple alternative meals to accommodate various dietary choices, ... across the (other) posters of the campaign (http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/us/bridal_campaign/advertising/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)). On a two-sided card with on the one hand a (customer) question and on the other a (retailer) answer, 'Today, research suggests that the average cost of both the bride and groom's wedding bands is between \$1,500 and \$2,000.* What you actually choose to spend is entirely up to you, but considering the fact that you will both wear them for the rest of your lives together, it's worth making an investment. Above all, think about the cost of your wedding bands in the context of your total wedding budget. The average wedding cake costs \$540 and the average spent on flowers is \$1,988** - neither of which will lasts longer than the wedding day itself. Your rings, on the other hand, will last a lifetime. *The Knot Market Intelligence, 2011 ** *Brides Magazine*, American Wedding Study, 2011' (<http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/training/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) on another: "Wedding bands are now being made from a variety of non-precious metals. But shouldn't your wedding band be made from something as precious as your relationship? Titanium and tungsten carbide are low-cost industrial metals, while gold is a precious metal with high intrinsic value After centuries of symbolizing commitment; gold still remains the ultimate emblem of marriage. Gold has also proven to hold its value over time - gold purchased 25 years ago is now worth ten times as much. This makes it even more significant for those who will one day inherit your bands.' (<http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/training/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) Tradition and fashion, then: “Are gold wedding bands a popular choice?” Absolutely. Almost 78% of US brides, and most men

Sex and family-forming are regulated by societies since the physical production and socialization of people are the reproduction of society (Foucault's bio power, so much anthropology, China's one-kid policy). The poster is framed by the website, the poster frames the photo, the photo has a white band at the edges as postcards do, and even within the photo there's framing: they stand in front of a portal. The ladies clearly pose (the effort it takes to stand as they are and their uniform attention to the camera – even if we disregard everything else), thereby recognizing the importance of the picture. Their whole bodies are included in the shot. Their expressions are barely distinguishable and also regulated. What is clear, however, are the cultural markers set out above: the from top to toe white wedding dress, the costly and traditional things setting in terms of which we are invited to understand them, ... If close-up means intimacy, then long shot means something more public/alienating.¹¹⁴ The outdoor space contrasted with the intimacy of the house/home the background door promises is consistent with this. Christian marriage is something “in the eyes of God”, but (bourgeois) marriage is also something in the eyes of society: there's a contract (!), official witnesses, the meeting of 2 families and sets of friends. Is it God or does 'Gold Makes it a Marriage'?¹¹⁵

While I'm starting to feel I want to read sex and sexism into the picture too much, the classic choice of virgin white for the dress, the flowers and the green/untouched leaf in them, the center stance of the bride in the half-circle, extending the arms of the bridesmaids makes them point to where the bride's genitalia must be, the pyramid shapes of the bride's dress against the background of an yet-unopened door (quite the metaphor!), ... do allow for such an interpretation. The bride plays by the rules of society and still has her hands folded solemnly, but sex is in the air. An alternative, perhaps more

prefer a gold wedding band.* Some of the world's most famous brides have also chosen gold, like Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, and generations of royals before her.' (<http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/training/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)- 'If you choose gold, you can have a band that's both trendy and timeless. Not only is gold steeped in history; it has the creative potential to allow for thousands of fresh new designs every year. You can also choose from a wide range of options for customization, from engraving to stone setting. With gold, you'll not only create a ring to your specifications but also have a wedding band that's symbolic and meaningful for the rest of your life.' (<http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/training/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) Complemented by 'After all, a truly individual piece is always the most stylish choice.' (<http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/training/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) 'The US market is dominated by gifting where over 50% of the total value of gold jewellery at retail is created by pieces over \$1,000. Unsurprisingly, two thirds of American women say they think of their gold jewellery as an investment, but one to be treasured and handed down to future generations. 72% of US women feel that gold is an everlasting gift.' (<http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/us/> (last accessed 30 August 2012) That gold is all these things at once is confirmed by Amsale Aberra, 'World Gold Council spokesperson, bridal couture designer (<http://www.facebook.com/gold/videos> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹¹⁴ 'increasingly, the intimate, personal nature of gold jewellery combines a public statement with a tender, private message.' <http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/us/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹¹⁵ 'The rituals and traditions of gold are still very much alive in America. Over three quarters of American brides say “I do” with a ring of gold.' (<http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/us/> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

plausible, explanation is that the door represents her new life/home with her husband (although the place was probably rented for the day).

While it's a public spectacle, the addressee of the text is you ('your bridesmaids'). You are invited to see the photo as a picture that will remind you of your wedding once you've gotten married (note the tense). Of when then groom was absent and so one referring to times when it was just the girls. Also one in which you looked better than them. If the joke is on the bridesmaids and their dresses, the lower saturation of their dresses can be seen as a metaphor for the fading of their purchases in time. There's a sharp humor present in the campaign's series of advertisements.¹¹⁶ A video in which married couples try to remember the features of their wedding but can't and this in opposition to the rings exemplifies the campaign best.¹¹⁷ 'We need to remind couples that the wedding day may be special with all its intricately-planned details, but it is still just one day. Long after the cakes has been eaten, the 'I do's are said and done and details begin to fade from your memory, it is the gold marriage rings that will remain with you as the ultimate symbol of love'. The dream wedding can even be said to be portrayed as naive while what will turn out to last is gold.¹¹⁸ The poster can be divided in two parts; reflecting the opposition between one-time dresses (including the one of the bride; the dream dress, then) and all-time gold. Most room is for the joke. Yet there's a positive footnote: you can count on gold. You can laugh, because the joke doesn't affect you. 'THEY MAY ONLY WEAR THOSE DRESSES ONCE *but the rings you'll wear forever*'.

It's easy to dismiss the fonts as only being playful (which it also is), but it's actually made use of in a really clever way. 'CONVINCING' is in caps, interpreted as yelling online, but italics are also used for emphasis in academic texts as if to say "yeah, I've really said convincing". 'your bridesmaids', all in the same regular style (not in caps, not in italics, not in bald) and consecutively, forms a whole while it's also more formal. 'they'll be able to', in lower cases than before, therefore doesn't appear as important. 'WEAR THE DRESS', in caps and not in bald, stands out from its surroundings and could refer to a desire to (finally) wear a wedding dress (if it were to solely refer to the bridesmaids' dresses, dress would be in plural and 'THE' would possibly be 'THEIR'). 'AGAIN' is in the same font as 'WEAR THE DRESS' yet is in bald as to emphasize it (it's very important to the joke). Then, *'makes it*

¹¹⁶ Not knowing where to put a "weirdo" 'third cousin' resolved in the picture with him (a grown-up) eating on a table surrounded only by kids. Or the idea of an uncle breaking a hip to a song that emphasizes dancing to impress ladies, with illustrating picture.
http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/us/bridal_campaign/advertising (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹¹⁷ http://www.gold.org/video/play/gold_makes_it_a_marriage/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹¹⁸ 'Weddings can turn into massive productions. But most of the details you plan for months disappear in a moment, like Cinderella's coach, whereas your marriage will last a lifetime. Just like the rings of gold that symbolise, on that day and every day, the time when "I will" becomes "I do".'
[\(http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/us/bridal_campaign/](http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/us/bridal_campaign/) (last accessed 30 August 2012))

a' is in italics but stands out for having both above and below it lines such as the one of hypertext linking to internet addresses. It's a whole, but also a formula as the formula is repeated under the picture. In light of all the (not so significant) things that make up a 'WEDDING', the mess of caps, italics, cases, baldness and hypertext seem to refer to it and define what a wedding is. In opposition to it, there's just 'GOLD' that *'makes it a'* 'MARRIAGE'. 'WEDDING', 'GOLD' and 'MARRIAGE' all are in higher cases and in bald, therefore capture the attention, are not in italics but standing strongly and classically upright: rather traditional. These three words, due to their shared style, can be said to be in the same denomination, as money is, and money being about equivalences, 'GOLD' has the same value as and is interexchangeable with 'WEDDING' or 'MARRIAGE' (while a 'WEDDING' may (also) make or formalize a 'MARRIAGE', wedding and marriage are somewhat in opposition in the joke made). In the text outside the poster, it confirms 'gold rings' as being 'synonymous with marriage.'

At bottom, separated from the rest of the text, there are two text balloons, one emanating from the left and one from the right. These encompass 2 rings, hooking into one another. It must be that the people who will exchange rings and I do's, thereby intertwining their lives in marriage, are the ones who are speaking here in words and rings.¹¹⁹ Perhaps the exchange is also incorporated (and otherwise it's an inconsistency in my interpretation) that the bigger ring, that makes it possible for the smaller one to challenge gravity, and which therefore signals masculinity possibly lifting his love in the air during a dance at the wedding, is to the side of the more effeminate words. Since the joke's addressed to a woman spectator as convincing her bridesmaids they'll be able to wear their dresses again, then pointing to those who wear those dresses only once must be from the position of the bride. 'HONOR' is quintessential manliness. 'HONOR YOUR LOVE WITH THE METAL *that's meant marriage since marriage began*'¹²⁰ These rings have the stereotypical color of metal (although there's such a variety of

¹¹⁹ Newspaper templates offered to retailers refer to selected material properties to explain some of the messages that rings would communicate so that 'gold is such a strong metal that it can never be destroyed' make it ideal to pass it on to descendants ('A gold ring to be admired by your children's children's (children's, children's) children.') http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/creative/newspaper_templates/ or how such properties parallel the tribulations of marriage: 'unlike the China on your registry, your gold ring will never break. Gold makes it a marriage. Gold is so malleable that it can be welded, hammered and bent without shattering, so your wedding bands will last forever.' that same property makes sure the symbol of your love keeps existing ('your wedding bands will last forever'), never threatening the love itself. http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/creative/newspaper_templates/

¹²⁰ Note the similarities in that sentence with "'Is gold right for the groom's band?'" More men choose gold for their wedding band than any other metal.* Gold is strong and durable, yet flexible, making it the ultimate high-performance metal. The US has a strong cultural heritage with gold and men's wedding bands. The modern tradition began during WWII when our soldiers wore gold bands to remind them of their loved ones back home. *The Knot Market Intelligence, 2011 (<http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/training/>). While for grooms marriage then only began in the mid-20th century, elsewhere marriage would have begun since 'the Byzantines'; 'since 200AD' (http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/creative/newspaper_templates/start/9), contradicting 'Byzantine Marriage ring 6th to 7th century AD' (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-jewellery->

metals) and not the color known as gold, but they must be in in white gold¹²¹ (explore white, yellow, and rose gold at facebook.com/gold'). The gold color is present in the WGC text balloon at the poster's top.

Case 4: Gold Expressions 2011 [Italy]

GOLD
EXPRESSIONS
2011

Home
About
Gallery
Film
Themes
Participants
Media



Sponsors: World Gold Council Vicenza Fair

Gallery images: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

© 2011 World Gold Council

<http://goldexpressions.com/english/gallery/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

- compositional interpretation

My eyes are drawn to the photograph first-most, then the eyes, but immediately shift attention to the red dress, the red lips, and then I spend some time taking in the necklace line with the purple and green stones. Only then I notice the similar bracelet and earrings. The low value hair and red dress harmonize with the surroundings. The very white skin shines in contrasts with the engulfing dark red

[history/](#)), but more importantly hereby discounting all marriages before and since that didn't involve gold rings as not being or being lesser marriages.

¹²¹ 'Gold is naturally yellow but can be alloyed with other metals to create a variety of colours, from a pure white to a sophisticated rose. Designs that incorporate both white and yellow gold in the same band are increasingly popular. 70% of brides choose white gold for their wedding bands, outnumbering those who choose platinum by over four to one.* The Knot Market Intelligence, 2011' (<http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/training/> last accessed 30 August 2012)). While 'Almost 78% of US brides, and most men, prefer a gold wedding band.' (The Knot Market Intelligence, 2011 cited <http://www.marketing.gold.org/resources/training/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) Based on other posters of the same campaign (http://www.gold.org/jewellery/markets/us/bridal_campaign/advertising/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)), the wedding bands that do the lifting of the female band tend to be in yellow gold and never the other way around.

background, hair and very red/highly saturated dress. The large plains (instead of interruption by different hue, value or saturation) are easy on the eye. The jewelry is also high value/light but stand out against the skin plain, shades and the lines of the jewelry transverse to the horizontal plain of upper-body, long arm and egging-down face. She's the only figure in the picture, centered and from the waist up. If we'd be close in front of her and looking her in the eyes, we wouldn't note her feet. She looks the (generic) spectator straight in the eyes and tends to hold my eyes. The volumes of her arms intersect with the extended lines of her hair: she is holding her hair. Wind takes up parts of her hair. Saturated hair and shade also encroach on her body, touching the necklace. Extend the necklace and it's right between her breasts. Her shining so in red surroundings: she must either be a fantasy in a fantasy world, even if the focus is sharp – or she's standing against a painted red wall (she is¹²²). An intimate interpersonal space, the fantasy suggestion and the space of the photo-shoot: all these perspectives are allowed.

- denotation

A sultry yet classy lady playing with her hair, over-the-top seducing the spectator - and therefore I can hardly take it seriously: a model at a photo-shoot.

- connotation and myth

The title 'Gold Expressions' and the video that goes with it, in which this lady in various outfits is constantly moving in tandem with jazzy or classical music and with differing effect¹²³, make clear the message is that gold helps express yourself, communicate with others.

She signifies beauty: skinny, pale skin, a young body, the long hair loose and in the wind, dressed up, make-up on. Not only that, she also appears to be flirting with the camera/spectator: open mouth, the way she looks directly at the spectator with glazy eyes a little shut, playing with her hair at the same time, the way the variously colored gems of the necklace hold the attention and bring our eyes down to the top of her dress, a red dress and not some other color. This is not what people wear on the streets where I'm from, but at parties or so. Yet no such setting is present, only a dark red fantasy space which she strongly contrasts with/shines against. There can hardly be more than one intended spectator given the shot distance, the angle, the height. If she active and seducing us, it's a typically feminine power; that which must accept the desires of the man as non-negotiable limits. While it's more likely she's looking at a male, females can benefit by understanding that males understand the poster girl to be attractive.

¹²² <http://goldexpressions.com/english/video/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹²³ <http://goldexpressions.com/english/video/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

The red cocktail dress is classic feminine wear. So much gold jewelry, beset with gemstones¹²⁴, with gold being expensive (not to mention always having understood gold as meaning wealth) also points to class. Knowing how to combine jewelry, dress, expression and so on indicate she knows *how* to strut it (Veblen, Bourdieu, Schor). She's wearing 3 types of jewelry, 3 of the five 'essential pieces, which are: necklaces/pendants, bracelets/bangles, earrings, rings and brooches.'¹²⁵ We can learn that 'The 'Dall' Avo' brand is marketed in Italy, the United States and Europe.'¹²⁶ In Barthes' terms, an "Italianicity"¹²⁷ is mobilized: 'In Italy - a center of creativity and manufacturing excellence for so many luxury products - we created a leading annual showcase for the industry's best, most inspirational design. *Gold Expressions 2011* launches the next bravura concepts from internationally important Italian manufacturers.'¹²⁸

Case 5: Benjamin Comar – Chanel Fine Jewelry

(No picture due to copyright issues.)

<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/1> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

1. compositional interpretation

The viewer is drawn to the ring, because it's more in focus. The ring and the lips stand out: each has both high saturation and value, a lower saturated flesh color provides the plain pink and gold contrast strongly with. The part lower value flesh indicates shade, the high value indicates sun. Since the light

¹²⁴ http://goldexpressions.com/english/theme/soft_gothic/#piece/eggs/14/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹²⁵ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2011/06/gold-jewellery-wardrobe/#page/3> (last accessed 30 August 2012). Note that the so-called 'Gold guide' is consistently illustrated by means of Gold Expressions designs. Only when the history of gold or international trends are at issue this is not the case.

¹²⁶ <http://goldexpressions.com/english/participant/dallavo/> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹²⁷ Discussing an advertisement for pasta, Barthes notes 'A second sign is more or less equally evident; its signifier is the bringing together of the tomato, the pepper and the tricoloured hues (yellow, green, red) of the poster; its signified is Italy or rather *Italianicity*. This sign stands in a relation of redundancy with the connoted sign of the linguistic message (the Italian assonance of the name *Panzani*) and the knowledge it draws upon is already more particular; it is a specifically 'French' knowledge (an Italian would barely perceive the connotation of the name, no more probably than he would the Italianicity of tomato and pepper), based on a familiarity with certain tourist stereotypes.' (Barthes 1977, 34); '*Italianicity* is not Italy, it is the condensed essence of everything that could be Italian, from spaghetti to painting.' (48)

¹²⁸ http://www.gold.org/jewellery/what_we_do/ (last accessed 30 August 2012)

comes from (our) left-above (and presuming she'd turn off the light were she inside) she must be at least somewhat upwardly. Her hands form a web in front of her eyes. Instead of her eyes, we must look at her ring. If the camera would be an eye, we'd be very close to her and we'd be looking up (into her nose). With her hands a bit from her face to allow shade, she must be looking down yet not meeting our eyes only our bodies and what we wear. The lines are jagged, the rhythm dynamic, there's little symmetry in her face, there's a (natural) dot underneath her nose that is conspicuously left untouched by either make-up or "Photoshop" and the camera's focus is "hard": she's active and imperfect; also known as real.

- denotation

A lady shielding her eyes with her hands, a finger of which sports a flowery ring.

- connotation and myth

She's a she, given the plains of soft pink and flesh hues, the flower shape, the fragile fingers, the features selected for emphasis: (sensual) lips. She's not or hardly smiling¹²⁹ nor is her mouth open (commonly interpreted as sexy), the expression is neutral. Her nails are short: functional rather than stereotypically long/feminine. There was a problem (too much light) and she deals with it (covers her eyes). Functional, rational, active. We're even slightly looking up to her. Chanel still reflects, consciously makes use of, its origins (the text by 'International Jewelry Director of Chanel Fine Jewelry' Benjamin Comer next to the 6 images under <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/>¹³⁰, the style on www.chanel.com) and these were a time in which 'a minority of women went out to work and had

¹²⁹ Smiling is the odd one out in the description 'We wanted to create a gold collection for a while, and the new Camélia all-gold collection is fresh, summery, light and easy and comfortable to wear, another of Chanel's original characteristics. Gold, for us at Chanel, is the material of love and happiness, shiny and smiley, and totally linked to our values.'<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/6> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

¹³⁰ 'Chanel Fine Jewellery was launched in 1993, the first major fashion brand in modern times to move into fine jewellery, just as Mademoiselle Chanel was the first to launch a diamond jewellery collection, against the prevailing trend towards costume jewellery, in 1932.'<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/1> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) 'Mademoiselle Chanel herself had a personal passion for jewellery and has given us so many themes, Byzantine, Black and White, Comet, Stars and Camélia for example. We work within these strong themes so that there is an authenticity to our jewellery collections.'<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/2> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) 'Gold is a key feature for Chanel, very powerful for us as Mademoiselle loved golden Byzantine and gilt baroque richness, expressed in many ways, including her iconic gold chain.'<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/5> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) 'the new Camélia all-gold collection is fresh, summery, light and easy and comfortable to wear, another of Chanel's original characteristics.'<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/6> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

social independence and therefore [the Chanel style] had to transpose into clothing something of men's values, beginning with this famous 'distinction', the only luxury option open to men now that work had standardized them. The Chanel woman is not the idle young girl but the young woman confronting the world of work which is itself kept discreet, evasive; of this world of work she allows to be read from her clothing, from her supple suit that is both practical and distinguished, not its content (it is not a uniform), but work's compensation, a higher form of leisure, cruises, yachts, sleeper carriages, in short modern, aristocratic travel' (Barthes 2006a, 107).

So the message may be more subtle. We can unashamedly/voyeuristically gaze at her lips and jewelry yet the eyes remain mysteriously hidden, indeed the move on her part may testify to great skill. A rather annoying situation (sunlight) with a rather clumsy solution (screen of hands) is transformed in a moment of meaningful display. She manipulates the sunlight to negate her eyes and lets the gold glitter instead, a flower blooming in the sun. She creates a situation in which we can inspect one another (she can look at us in similar manner) without either the cultural norms that dictate how to look at what or in which something is left to discover, thereby heightening desire for it. Yet abuse can't be excluded: things may remain superficial even if not so intended. The worldly/fashionable/unfashionable¹³¹ dress and body, consisting of signs no less, of the other communicate while eyes and lips remain silent. We as spectators know anybody with hands can hold them so as to block out the sun. However, not all of us wear Chanel gold rings.¹³² The magnifying glass function (move your cursor over the picture and you'll get a zoomed perspective) attains particular significance in this light: inspecting. There's a relation of equality between two subjects but

¹³¹ While Barthes defines fashion as changing yearly, he also recognized that Chanel's classicism (as opposed to fashion (Barthes 2006a) also slightly changed. Perhaps not surprisingly, such complexity is what we find trying to make sense of the text in the context of the ad discussed here. First it is recognized Chanel is a 'fashion brand' moving into 'fine jewellery' yet this is not 'diamond jewellery' nor 'costume jewellery' (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/1> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) Then the categories are reconciled 'At Chanel, there is a natural symbiosis between fashion and jewellery' (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/2> (last accessed 30 August 2012)), before being torn apart again: "We have a strong fashion heritage of course but we treat jewellery differently. We play by the rules of the jewellery world, we sell only through our own retail stores and we make long- term products – our Coco ring was launched in 1993 - not fashion or fashionable jewellery." (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/3> (last accessed 30 August 2012)) Note how fashion as opposed to long-term is balanced with fashion heritage. In the following page, 'creativity' is emphasized and gold must be subject to fashion as yellow gold is seen 'coming back' (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/4> (last accessed 30 August 2012)). Exemplified: 'In the 80s gold was power-oriented, but today gold in fashion is joyful and unpretentious, about happiness and warmth.' (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/5> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

¹³² On the one hand, it is denied gold communicates power nowadays. On the other, it is present due to the fetishizing of Mademoiselle Chanel, who did enjoy the theme of wealth: 'Gold is a key feature for Chanel, very powerful for us as Mademoiselle loved golden Byzantine and gilt baroque richness, expressed in many ways, including her iconic gold chain. In the 80s gold was power-oriented, but today gold in fashion is joyful and unpretentious, about happiness and warmth.'" (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/5> (last accessed 30 August 2012))

both would only recognize the other as object, as a collection of body objects and non-body objects, and not as more than the packaging. A self-imposed or self-enforced limited consumer-hedonistic-individualistic outlook at the world this is. There are three layers here: the alibi that's one just trying to deal with the sun, a moment of sensual display, and a personality that is hidden away. If our eyes are where the camera is (no zoom), then all action is loaded with meaning, and her shielding herself from the sun becomes a less likely interpretation.¹³³

The fingers web to form the sun screen and, more so, display the ring. Equally, the leaves of the flower make clear it's a flower and marriage – the ring is worn on that finger, a strong sign - is the coming together of 2 people to produce a new entity. Yet it's not a traditional wedding ring, which is fairly simple products with less decoration, less fashionable but more enduring in their less extravagant character. Therefore less likely to be wedding ring. In fact, the sign of a flower is associated with virginity. Ambiguous indeed and ambiguity is what Barthes found to be central to Chanel! Barthes (2006a) noted how Coco's public life was one in which “class” and scandal mixed, and how this is also how the products need to be interpreted (great marketing!). Chanel's classicism is of a particular kind: 'in the aesthetics of clothing there is a very particular, even paradoxical value which ties seduction to long life: that is 'chic' (Barthes 2006a, 106); 'the unchanging 'chic' of Chanel tells us that the woman has already lived (and has known how to)' (107). Forbidden fruits are attractive and Mademoiselle Chanel transgressed the bounds of (another's) marriage. (movie: Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky). The concept of the alibi, of deniability, is apt.

Coco's myth transcends her death as the Chanel empire refers to her for 'authenticity'.¹³⁴ The reference, even explicit analogy ('just as'), to the 1932 campaign creates expectations of how the current campaign will fare, what's it about, creates continuity. In 1932 'Mademoiselle Chanel' went in against the trend ('against the prevailing trend towards costume jewelry') – suggesting strong character or even troublemaker status – and 'the first' suggests that other 'major fashion brand[s]' will follow.

¹³³ This goes for all other images including women (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/2> (last accessed 30 August 2012), <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/6> (last accessed 30 August 2012), <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/6> (last accessed 30 August 2012); all are high value/sunny, close-ups, and, while the eyes/personality are consistently hidden, contain a sensual element: In 2, there's a complicated, to be disentangled, necklace presented on the skin of the lady, and this quite a far way down, in between breasts. Other than that, only the bottom lip is visible. 5: again lips but now a bracelet. Hands held so that the most sensitive places (fingertips) are on the warmer skin of a hand's palm. 6: the eyes are invisible by means of a hat, which also shades most of her face. The shade is so that it points to the open mouth. She's tilting her head as to look from under the hat. Doing so, she also presents her lips. Here the product included is earrings.

¹³⁴ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/2> (last accessed 30 August 2012). The gold jewelry line was only launched in 1993, long after Coco's death, is managed by insisting that Coco had an 'iconic gold chain' (<http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/5> (last accessed 30 August 2012)).

Intertextuality is needed – for me, at least. Without the information of the 4th website in the series¹³⁵, I wouldn't have gotten it. 4 distinguishes between costume jewelry and fine jewelry on the basis that fine jewelry uses gold and costume jewelry doesn't. According to the Chanel website 'Camellia Agoura ring in 18k yellow gold' would reflect 'a timeless baroque spirit.'¹³⁶ The same ring but in white gold and with diamonds with diamonds is classified as 'Bridal'¹³⁷ while both versions are to be found under Camélia.¹³⁸ It is therefore *not* a wedding ring in the Chanel cosmology! Of the same series, there are also bracelets, necklaces, earrings and brooches.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ <http://www.goldinspirations.com/article/2008/06/chanel-fine-jewellery/#page/4> (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹³⁶ http://www.chanel.com/en_GB/Jewellery/the_chanel_glossary/les_metaux (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹³⁷ http://www.chanel.com/en_GB/Jewellery/promise#ring_in_18K_white_gold_and_diamonds_medium_version-J2579 (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹³⁸ http://www.chanel.com/en_GB/Jewellery/camelia-rings (last accessed 30 August 2012)

¹³⁹ http://www.chanel.com/en_GB/Jewellery/camelia (last accessed 30 August 2012)