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**ADVERTISING IN EARLY TWENTIETH-
CENTURY LITERATURE:**

crossing boundaries between literary categorizations

Anna Giulia Novero

A Thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The University of Huddersfield

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the role of advertising in literature from the mid-Nineteenth century until the 1930s. The aim is to identify the different approaches to advertising in the works of several and very different authors, to help reassess canonical literary categorizations. I start by analysing the negative representation of advertising in the works of Victorian and early Twentieth-century authors. I move on to examine the enthusiastic approach in the literature of the avant-garde and modernist authors, and conclude with a study of the ambivalent take from writers of the 1930s. My analysis of the different approaches towards advertising has revealed that traditional literary classifications are not absolute if one considers the treatment of popular culture, and that very different writers present strong similarities of thought on the subject. The findings also identify a gradual change in the perception of the relationship between advertising and literature in the time frame analysed, whereby from being deemed strictly separate and antagonistic, they were progressively identified as equals and interchangeable, and finally as separate but in a complementary relationship with each other.

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INTRODUCTION

My study concentrates on the treatment of advertising in early Twentieth-century literature by various authors, preceded by an analysis of two Victorian writers who anticipated some of the themes in the texts I analyse, showing striking resemblances of thought with later authors. I aim to show how thoughts and approaches to advertising changed over time in the period between the 1900s and the 1930s, and in particular how the relationship between advertising and literature interested a wide range of authors, breaking down literary differences and canonical groupings. If one considers their approach to advertising in fact, many authors who are usually regarded as antithetical or belonging to radically different movements, present surprising similarities and affinities of thought. The practice of advertising became increasingly relevant in the Nineteenth century, but it was not until the Twentieth century that it gained the considerable importance it has today. It was in fact during this time that it started to affect society and literature in unprecedented ways. While in the Nineteenth century it was rarely a matter for discussion by writers, the early Twentieth century saw a boom in the writing of literature which made increasingly prominent reference to advertising and which sometimes had advertising as its very subject matter. My study will be divided into three sections, each discussing between three and five authors. I mainly concentrate on text-based advertising such as print journalism and advertising posters, with mention to neon signs, billboards and skywriting; however, my study does not include examples of radio or cinema advertising which were also becoming increasingly popular at the time. It is not an attempt at a historical study, as that would require a deeper analysis of the advertising campaigns of the time, the rise of advertising agencies, and of historical events. Instead, here I concentrate exclusively on the representation of the phenomenon of advertising in literature through very diverse texts and authors. In this study, writers have been grouped by similarities of thought and approach to the practice of advertising, and this often goes against canonical distinctions. While the subject of advertising in literature has been written about before, my study is characterised by an extensive analysis of a large number of texts and authors across four decades with the aim to show

how thought and approaches to advertising changed and developed over time. My analysis illustrates how they shifted from a generally negative opinion regarding publicity in the late Victorian and early Modernist eras, which often verged on revulsion and the strict separation of it from literature, to an enthusiastic approach in the works of avant-garde authors, and ultimately a more moderate take by the writers of the late 1930s.

The first chapter of my study focuses on the Victorian writers Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope in its first part, and then moves on to the Edwardian Rupert Brooke, and the Modernists F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Virginia Woolf, to show how a negative opinion of advertising characterised their thoughts and writings. It is usually believed that the Modernists wrote in reaction to Victorian literature and its traditional and fixed form, but I will argue that as far as the theme of advertising goes their views are more similar than one would think. There are in fact similar points of view between late Victorian writers and Edwardian/Modernist writers, as they expose the negative aspects of advertising and its corruptive power. Advertising is mostly criticised in their novels, and the divide between high art and popular culture clearly defined and maintained. Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope anticipate many of the themes to be found in later works of literature about advertising, and from their works it is noticeable that the practice of advertising was starting to attract the attention of writers in the 1800s. Charles Dickens discusses advertising in *Household Words*, where he laments the trouble caused by advertising vans and bills all around Victorian London. Anthony Trollope's *The Struggles of Brown, Jones, and Robinson* is a satire on advertising which criticises the length to which some firms are willing to go and the risks they are willing to take in order to advertise their products and attract customers. Trollope condemns advertising professing instead the value of honesty and morals, and while this confirms him as a typical Victorian writer, the novel itself anticipates aspects of 'the modern' like the search for the 'new' and the idea of the spectacle formulated by the theorist Guy Debord, to whom I will be referring throughout the chapter. If Dickens laments the pervasiveness of advertising, Trollope anticipates the

debate on the relationship between advertising and literature, two themes that characterize many Twentieth-century texts. In the second part of the chapter I move on to discuss three authors who effectively showed how impressive the transformation and intensification of advertising was from the 1800s to the early Twentieth century. With an emphasis on American advertising culture, themes like the idea of the spectacle, the obsession with novelty, and the excessiveness of advertising are again discussed, alongside more modern themes like the role of advertising in the formation of identity, and the cult-like character of publicity which almost transforms it into a substitute form of religion. Writers like Rupert Brooke, Virginia Woolf, and F. Scott Fitzgerald describe a type of advertising different from that of Victorian novels; if Dickens and Trollope wrote of advertising bills and posters, Modernist writers refer to the range of new media that the beginning of the Twentieth century offered. Rupert Brooke's letters from New York describe a city mesmerised by advertising and fascinated with its attractive power. Brooke describes people transformed into caricatures as they are mesmerised by the whirlwind of lights, sounds and images designed to attract their attention. He describes the passers-by as brought back to the status of children, their minds easily influenced by the city's neon signs and 'live' advertising enacted by paid staff. Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* introduces the new practice of sky writing as a fascinating spectacle which nevertheless hides a sinister side by hypnotising its viewers. Fitzgerald continues Rupert Brooke's account of the grandiose American advertising in *The Great Gatsby*, but takes it a step further by ridiculing the God-like function attributed to it and by introducing the concept of self-advertising expressed in the figure of Jay Gatsby.

In the second chapter I concentrate on authors who were writing roughly at the same time as Rupert Brooke, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Virginia Woolf, but who had radically opposing views on advertising. The modernist writers Allen Upward and Wyndham Lewis, together with the avant-gardist Fortunato Depero, abolished the high-low divide in the arts in favour of an enthusiastic inclusion of publicity in their work. Modernism and the Avant-garde are often seen as antithetical,

but I will show that these authors share in fact many underlying similarities of thought regarding advertising and the role of art in society. Wyndham Lewis said of the Vorticists that they were ‘mercenaries in the modern world’ (1914: 80), not only welcoming advertising but also using it to their own advantage in promoting their works, but this can also be said of the Imagists and the Futurists. Their belief that art must be practical and included in every-day life brought them to a celebration of popular culture visible in their works. The question of identity and the influence of advertising in its formation and manipulation is again present, but it is advertising’s expression of modernity that these authors celebrate. The imagist poet Allen Upward wrote ‘The Magic Carpet’ as a poem in the form of an advertisement, including in its verses many phrases usually found in publicity posters. Upward argues that advertising is an art equal to poetry and by presenting his poem as an advert he makes advertising an aspect inseparable from literature. Wyndham Lewis promoted the vorticist movement in his magazine *Blast* to which he gave the structure of a manifesto, and in his play ‘Enemy of the Stars’ he makes advertising an intrinsic part of the literary work by employing advertising language and depicting the characters as defined by the advertising culture, whereby it becomes almost a constituent of their persona. The futurist artist and writer Fortunato Depero was fascinated by advertising and he published the manifestos ‘Futurism and Advertising’ and ‘ABC of Italian Futurism’, where he asserted that publicity is an art with an immense power which should be explored as representative of modernity and freedom and, ultimately, to glorify artists and writers.

In the third and final chapter I focus on writings by authors of the late 1930s, anticipated by the modernist James Joyce, who showed a more ambivalent tendency towards publicity. While they strongly disapproved of it, they nevertheless recognised the growing importance of advertising in the modern world and the impossibility of ignoring its influence on society. I will bring together James Joyce, Dorothy Sayers, and George Orwell to show that, even though Orwell strongly disapproved of modernist writing, he shares similarities of thought with James Joyce on the matter

of advertising. In *Ulysses*, Joyce shows advertising as being pervasive and mind-conditioning, but at the same time as helping define personal identity and being a true expression of modernity (as maintained by avant-garde writers). Joyce makes advertising an intrinsic aspect of the novel, inseparable from the story, as it is a significant part of the characters' thoughts and lives. Dorothy Sayers condemns advertising for its immorality and corruptive nature, but she also deems the public responsible for its negative influence. In *Murder Must Advertise* she gives her readers an insight into the life in an advertising agency, and portrays it as an insidious and unethical place where gossip is people's main concern. However, in the essay 'The Psychology of Advertising', Sayers takes the part of the advertising agents: she maintains that the public has the type of advertising it deserves, and that its acceptance is vital for man's survival in modern society. George Orwell also considers advertising to be corruptive due to its close relationship to money, but like Sayers he sees it as an element of modern society impossible to ignore, and believes a compromise is the only solution for modern man. In *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, the protagonist Gordon Comstock despises advertising as inferior to literature, and leaves his career in advertising to pursue his passion for poetry. Nevertheless, Orwell shows that the system cannot be fought and that advertising is part of modern life, as Gordon is forced to resume his old job when his career in poetry fails.

I begin my discussion with an introduction to modern advertising and an analysis of Charles Dickens' and Anthony Trollope's accounts of it as a matter of social concern, moving on to discuss Twentieth-century authors and their views.

CHAPTER 1

SECTION 1: DICKENS AND TROLLOPE ON VICTORIAN ADVERTISING

In the first chapter I am going to examine the continuity of thought between Victorian writers and early Twentieth-century writers on the subject of advertising, situating my argument as part of recent debates about the Victorians, the Edwardians and the Modernists, and the similarities and connections between them. On this subject, a conference was organised by the British Association for Modernist Studies in Rouen last year, entitled ‘Beyond the Victorian and Modernist Divide’, which interrogated traditional periodisations and reassessed the idea of a ‘break’ between the literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, based in particular on ideas like the ‘modern’ and the ‘new’, which characterize both. My thesis contributes to this debate by showing the similarities between Victorian and early Twentieth-century authors regarding their approach to the emerging practice of advertising. As in the turn of the century advertising techniques gradually evolved, the negative beliefs of Victorian authors such as Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope continued nevertheless to characterize the literary production of Twentieth-century writers like Rupert Brooke, Virginia Woolf, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Even though they were writing in reaction to Victorian values and genres, on the theme of advertising they seem in fact to share the same views. In the first section of the chapter I start with a brief exposition of Victorian advertising and an analysis of its treatment in the writings of Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope, two of the most successful and prolific Victorian authors who wrote extensively about it with a satiric tone. As social critic, Dickens talked of it in relation to the urban landscape, while Trollope was interested in its relationship to modern trade and the changes in society. Both authors anticipate themes to be found in the writings I analyse after, and it is interesting to look at their commentaries together as they show an increasing anxiety towards advertising emerging in the second half on the Nineteenth century, in particular for its invasive character and corruptive nature. In the second part of the chapter I move on to discuss early-Twentieth-century advertising and some of its most ardent critics: Rupert Brooke, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Virginia Woolf. The anxiety towards advertising

shown by the Victorians is still present in their works, and so are some of the themes like the relationship between advertising and literature, the cult of the ‘new’, and the fascination with the spectacle of advertising, for which I will be referring to Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* (1995). I will concentrate on Rupert Brooke’s *Letters from America*, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, for which I will also be referring to the work of critics like Hermione Lee and Steve Ellis, who interrogated her ambivalent relationship with the Victorians.

THE BIRTH OF MODERN ADVERTISING

The practice of advertising dates back to the days of Ancient Greece but it was only after the Industrial Revolution that it took the form we recognize today, when its growth was prompted by factors like the birth of large industrial companies, the increasing production of significant quantities of goods at low unit price, and the growth of education and literacy (Douglas, 1985: 12). At the time, publicity mainly took the form of media press and posters, so it was largely print based, but nevertheless by the end of the Nineteenth century ‘advertising was established as a major element in the commercial life of the western world’ (Douglas, 1985: 12). Famous brands like Colman’s Mustard, Pears’ Soap, or Cadbury’s and Fry’s Cocoa began to advertise at this time, often including an image of Queen Victoria in their posters to add credentials to their products. Alongside advertisements for foods and medicines, emigration posters or ‘panoramas’ were also a favourite with the Victorian public, designed to encourage emigration by evoking the concepts of civilization and education (Slater, 1996: 202). One of the most famous emigration posters was the ‘Colonial Panorama’ of the New Zealand Company designed by Samuel Charles Brees, the principal surveyor and engineer, which showed him ‘rubbing noses and exchanging friendly noises with a feathered and painted Maori warrior’ (Slater, 1996: 202). In the Nineteenth century advertising was thus becoming a prominent element in every-day life and as a social phenomenon it began to interest writers like Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope.

CHARLES DICKENS

As discussed by Andy Williams (2010), Dickens was a supporter of advertising for the promotion of literary works, and used revenues from advertising to maximise the sales of literary magazines; for example, he made substantial use of it in *The Pickwick Papers*, which regularly included an advertising section for products like perukes and hair balsams (Slater, 1997: 339). However, if on the one side he was not against newspaper advertising to help selling his publications, on the other he condemned the invasive character of the industry in the every-day life of citizens and its overwhelming presence on city walls and streets. Discourses of advertising in Dickens are in fact mostly related to London and its contradictions as an energetic, dynamic and modern centre, as well as a city full of social problems: Dickens was interested in registering the transformations that the industrial revolution brought to the city, and the social changes in the urban life (Jordan, 2011: 107). As John Jordan points out, ‘for Dickens, London was the theatre in which the visions of the imagination, and all the contradictions of modern life, were realized, acted out, and displayed’ (2001: 118). The chronicles of Nineteenth-century advertising techniques in his weekly magazine *Household Words* provide a valuable account of the proportions this practice reached in the 1800s (Slater, 1997). In the ‘Bill Sticking’ article, Dickens laments the state of an old warehouse he has seen, ‘which rotting paste and rotting paper had brought down to the condition of an old cheese’, and he describes it as a decomposing building, ‘encrusted with fragments of bills’, as doors and windows bear the signs of repeated posting (in Slater, 1997: 340). He depicts it as a ghost building, abandoned by stickers in despair regretting their own doing. City walls and bridges were also covered in advertisements to the detriment of the people as well as of the traffic; as Slater points out,

‘External paper-hanging’, or the pasting up of advertising posters on every available square foot of space on walls, fences, hoardings, etc., reached epidemic proportions during the 1830s and 1840s, one of the things that encouraged the practice being the exemption of such posters

from the tax levied on newspapers advertisements. Advertising vans, parading the streets at a walking pace, constituted a major nuisance to other traffic. (1997: 339)

In particular, advertising vans were accused of causing the biggest problems around the city because of their dimensions and slow pace. Dickens describes witnessing ‘a solemn procession of three advertising vans, of first-class dimensions, each drawn by a very little horse’, and reflects on their ‘terrific’ announcements, a selection of the most tragic and negative news of the day, as ‘addressed to an unthinking people’ (in Slater, 1997: 342). With little sympathy for his fellow Londoners, he criticises those members of the public who did not question the truthfulness or honesty of adverts, thus making their success possible, something that Dorothy Sayers will reiterate in 1937 in her essay ‘The Psychology of Advertising’.

In the episode of the King of the Bill-stickers, published in *Household Words* on March the 22nd 1852 (in Slater, 1997: 339), Dickens turns his attention to the fierce competition between bill-sticking companies of the time and to the representation of the life of the poorer classes. As often in Dickens, this amusing episode transforms the urban environment into a theatre where the characters are in constant motion, at pace with the city itself, and acting out the ‘contradictions of modern life’ (Jordan, 2001: 110). In this case, the character Dickens lingers on is a bill-sticker who believes himself to be the most experienced in London, and who has in fact given himself the title of ‘king of the bill- stickers’. Dickens interviews the man on how to beat competition and recounts: ‘his majesty said that you could hardly put too little in a poster; what you wanted, was, two or three good catch-lines for the eye to rest on- then, leave it alone’ (in Slater, 1997: 349), a statement that could easily be associated with the principles of clarity and economy of Modernist poetry as proposed by Ezra Pound. Dickens is amused by the man’s tales and colourful personality, but he laments the danger to health represented by working with advertising bills, as he himself discovers when he gets sick from the inhalations of printer’s ink and arsenic paste used to affix the posters (in Slater, 1997: 350). The articles in *Household Words* reveal a contradictory attitude towards the

advertising industry as Dickens clearly distinguishes between newspaper advertising used for the promotion of literary texts and more commercial advertising resulting in invasive bills and posters. In particular he laments the difficulties its constant presence causes in the urban environment, its corruptive and untruthful nature, as well as the dangers represented by working with the toxic substances used in the posters.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

Anthony Trollope draws a satirical sketch of the abuses of advertising in *The Struggles of Brown, Jones, and Robinson* (1870), a novel that expresses a highly critical view on the subject through the form of memoirs narrated by Mr. Robinson. It retraces the origin of his partnership with Mr. Brown and Mr. Jones, which ends in the collapse of the business because of advertising expenses, reflecting the mid-Victorian outburst of new commercial enterprises and the expanding mass market (Mullen and Munson, 1996: 479). Robinson is responsible for the advertising department within the firm and he is in charge, unaided, of ‘preparing, and correcting, and publishing such thousands of advertisements in prose and verse and in every form of which the language is susceptible’ (8). His actions cause the ruin of the firm as he loses money in costly advertising campaigns which are his only interest in the partnership. He intimates: ‘Advertise, advertise, advertise! And I say it again and again- Advertise, advertise, advertise! It is, or should be, the Shibboleth of British commerce’ (11). *The Struggles* is a valuable text as it anticipates modern themes such as the nature of the relationship between advertising and literature, the cult of ‘the new’, and the fascination with the spectacle of grandiose advertising.

The relationship between literature and advertising is discussed in different points in the novel; when first introduced to the character of Mr Robinson, the reader is informed that he ‘had already established himself as an author in his own line, and was supporting himself decently by his own unaided abilities’ (32), and that ‘he soon took to original composition; and it may be said of him,

that in fluency of language and richness of imagery few surpassed him' (31). In complete contrast to George Orwell's Gordon Comstock sixty years later in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, Robinson abandons his job as a writer to become an advertising copywriter, a role which he believes is not far from that of a literary author:

There are those who say that advertisements do not keep the promises which they make. But what says the poet, - he whom we teach our children to read? What says the stern moralist to his wicked mother in the play? 'Assume a virtue if you have it not? And so say I. 'Assume a virtue if you have it not' (11)

By comparing the job of a copywriter to that of a poet and defining it as 'the poetry of euphemism' (191), Robinson legitimises the telling of lies in his advertisements and the distortion of facts which is a constant throughout the novel. He says of advertisements:

No man,—no woman believes them. They are not lies; for it is not intended that they should obtain credit. I should despise the man who attempted to base his advertisements on a system of facts, as I would the builder who lays his foundation upon the sand. The groundwork of advertising is romance. It is poetry in its very essence. Is Hamlet true? (118)

Robinson's soliloquy continues the long debate about poetry and its function started by Plato in 390 B.C. in *The Republic*, and continued by Philip Sidney and *The Defense of Poesy* in 1579 and Percy Bysshe Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* in 1821. In the tenth book of *The Republic*, Plato attacked poetry as exposing the corruption of the self (in Richards, 1966) and damaging the mind, banishing poets from his project of a perfect state. Sidney then refused Plato's allegations maintaining that 'a poet can scarcely be a liar' because 'he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth' (1967, 123); poets, he maintains, talk of imaginary things but declaring so, therefore they do not pretend to be telling the truth. Instead of being attacked, Sidney believed, poets should be celebrated. In the 1800s Shelley resumed the debate and defended poetry as the expression of the imagination (in Brett-Smith, 1972: 23) and a source of pleasure (31). He believed poetry to be divine for its faculty of enlarging the mind (33; 53). In Trollope's novel, Robinson seems to take the side of Sidney and

Shelley on the subject; he believes advertising to be a form of poetry, and legitimated to lie because such is its nature. As Sidney said of poetry, Robinson does not consider advertisements to be lies as, he maintains, they are not supposed to be believed in the first place, and are based exclusively on the romantic suggestion of ideals.

With his statements, Robinson confesses his own distrust of advertisements and exposes their nature as founded upon false facts, the employment of good language and rhetoric. He adds: 'Advertise, advertise, advertise. That is, assume, assume, assume. Go on assuming your virtue. The more you haven't got it, the more you must assume it' (14). He intimates traders to invest all their capital into advertising without too much thought (12), as he believes it to be the only successful method to obtain credit. Even when the business collapses, he attributes the fault to his colleagues and their departments, and defends his actions for the cause of British trade asserting that he has worked to perfect the art of advertising. Robinson holds advertising in high regards, and considers it a sibling of poetry and literature because, he maintains, they follow the same rules; as the character of Robinson is ridiculed throughout the novel though, it is unlikely that this was also Trollope's view on advertising. The language is in fact often misused by Robinson through exaggeration and, far from the elegant style of poetry, it is doomed to lose its power: echoing the words of the King of the Bill-Stickers in Dickens' *Household Words*, the narrator says of the firm's latest advertising campaign: 'superlatives had lost their value, and it had come to pass that the strongest language sounded impotently in the palled ears of the public' (271). Trollope considers literature to be superior to advertising and makes it the more respectable career, as after the collapse of the firm Robinson returns to writing and regains a stable life with 'his present wants [...] provided for by his pen' (291). Strongly related to advertising is the cult of the 'new', and although it is regarded as characteristic of Twentieth-century society, starting to be reflected in literature by Ezra Pound's imagist principle 'Make it new', Trollope shows that Victorian society was already fascinated with novelty.

The French poet and critic Paul Valéry said of this phenomenon in 1930:

Novelty. The cult of novelty. The new is one of those poisonous stimulants which end up becoming more necessary than any food; drugs which, once they get a hold on us, need to be taken in progressively larger doses until they are fatal, though we'd die without them. It is a curious habit, - growing this attached to that perishable part of things in which precisely their novelty consists. (1970: 102)

Valéry talks of a society obsessed with novelty, where 'modern man is a slave to modernity' (1951: 72), chasing the always-new but despising it at the same time, conscious that it is quickly degraded and replaced by the 'more-new'. The purpose of advertising is precisely that of publicising the latest products, emphasizing their 'newness' to promote the search for what Walter Benjamin defines as 'the eternally up-to-date', the 'always new' (1999: 543). Trollope anticipates this modern obsession with the new: in *The Struggles*, Mr. Brown represents an old man who has dated views about capital and scarcely any knowledge of advertising (16), while Mr. Robinson is the youth with innovative ways to approach trade and to promote the business. Robinson often accuses Mr. Brown of living in the past and of having an old mentality when it comes to trade, while he is always concerned with novelty and with finding new ways to advertise. Mr. Brown, the narrator says, 'had learned to be silent on the subject of advertising, and had been brought to confess, more than once, that the subject was beyond his comprehension' (124). He confesses to Robinson of ignoring the secrets of this art that 'seems to be new' (124); Robinson on the other hand, knows that the secret is 'to arrange new methods of alluring the public into that emporium of fashion' (62). The 'new methods' Robinson devises are such as magenta-coloured booklets (Magenta House is the headquarters of the firm), advertising vans and horses, and men in full armour with advertising banners and cards. Anticipating Twentieth-century consumerism, Robinson identifies the new as the winning concept that appeals to the public and persuades consumers to buy, the major engine that drives commerce, for, as he says, 'if it be not new, it is nothing' (124). He is fascinated with the search for novelty in his slogans, culminating in the design of 'a method of advertisement [...] which he flattered himself

was altogether new' (196); at the same time he seems to despise society for this new cult as he is conscious that it requires a constant commitment and the continuous devaluation of his work: 'There is nothing so fickle as the taste of the public. The most popular author of the day can never count on favour for the next six months' (137). The generational gap causing incomprehensions between Brown and Robinson anticipates the struggles that modernism would have to face a few years later, whereby the new form of art based on concepts like the 'new' and the representation of the 'modern' was unintelligible to the older generation.

Linked to the idea of the new in the novel is that of the spectacle; Robinson's new advertising methods satisfy the modern quest for the grandiose and the shocking of which critics such as Guy Debord speak in relation to Twentieth-century culture. Robinson devises unusual and provocative ways to boost sales and spread his advertisements on 'walls, omnibuses, railway stations, little books, pavement chalkings, illuminated notices, porters' backs, gilded cars, and men in armour' (47), so as to turn his campaigns into small performances throughout the city. Robinson is driven to spend all the firm's money in grandiose methods of advertising by the belief that wealthy people are not attracted by common street advertisers and bills: 'To startle men and women to any purpose, and drive them into Bishopsgate Street, you must startle them a great deal. It does not suffice to create a momentary wonder' (63). He believes that adverts must be designed so as to attract attention, and not necessarily to be believed; to be profitable, they must be attractive. And to be attractive they need to shock the public in unusual and unexpected ways by creating a spectacle. The shock is an indisputable characteristic of the modern city according to the critic Walter Benjamin, as the modern urban environment is characterised by too many stimuli which the human mind cannot take in, and which result in 'shocks'; in 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' he identifies advertising as one of its contributors (Benjamin, 2006). A real show is put on by Robinson when he creates a series of adverts around the false pretence that the firm has been injured by the company of 'Johnson of Manchester'. He keeps the public's interest in the matter alive by printing continuous

updates, enlarging the lies, and exaggerating the circumstances, thus creating a dramatic expectation of justice in the public eye. The invented scandal has a big effect on the customers, who are pleased to be provided with entertainment; the narrator tells: ‘the sales during that week were so great, as to make it seem that actual commercial prosperity was at hand’ (136). Robinson is proven right in his belief that drama sells and that a general thirst for tragedy characterises modern society. As the critic Guy Debord says (1995), modern advertising is a spectacle of entertainment, an indissoluble part of the city landscape, constantly persuading consumers to buy. Robinson soon identifies the advertising potential of the city of London:

Would that I had a monopoly of all the walls in London! The very arches of the bridges must be worth ten thousand a-year. The omnibuses are invaluable; the cabs are a mine of wealth; and the railway stations throughout England would give a revenue for an emperor. (190)

Robinson wishes he had access to all the walls in the city to cover them with posters, as he advertises exclusively ‘to attract notice, not to state facts’ (166). He strives to create desire through grand gestures and attractive slogans, and he puts on shows which he hopes no customer in London can refuse.

The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson is a strong attack on advertising showing how trade is often damaged by ruthless systems of advertising based on lies and the exaggeration of facts, which Trollope strongly condemns. Trollope’s concerns as expressed in the novel reflect the social concerns of the time, and although his satire is at times deemed excessive, the themes treated are nevertheless aspects which were becoming increasingly relevant towards the end of the Nineteenth century and which anticipate later literary works. In fact,

it was a sincerely felt need to expose a growing corruption in public perception, not just in these gaudy new stores but in the mania for advertising which played on human greed- good value for little money. (Mullen and Munson, 1996: 479)

To the character of Robinson, firm supporter of advertising, Trollope opposes throughout the novel the character of Mr Brown who strives for good morals and, above all, honesty. Honesty is in fact the one value that Trollope cannot accept to compromise, and the reason why he disapproves of advertising, believing the two to be irreconcilable. As Mullen and Munson point out, ‘Trollope had a deep distrust of advertising, which he feared was leading to a decline in the national sense of honesty. [...] He was horrified at the exuberance of Victorian advertising techniques’ (1996: 2). In *The New Zealander* he defined advertising as ‘that plague of the nineteenth century...that disease in which are combined the two most pernicious evils with which man can be afflicted, falsehood and self-praise’ (1972: 89). When in *The Struggles* it is clear that the firm is bankrupt, the last advertisement is printed with the heading ‘RUIN! RUIN!! RUIN!!!’ for a ‘TRUE, HONEST, BONA-FIDE SALE’ (272), which proves to be the most successful for the Magenta House. Finally, the only honest advert produced by the firm is the one to generate the best sales, as quickly all the stocks are cleared and big sums of money made by the company; the narrator remarks: ‘For the four appointed days the sale was continued, and it was wondrous to see with what animation the things went off ’ (279). While the continuous lies had led to the ruin of the company, the truth shown in the last advert attracts the customers and guarantees excellent sales, an expedient used by Trollope to confirm the point he had expressed right at the beginning of the novel, that ‘an honest man is the noblest work of God’ (27).

SECTION 2: TWENTIETH-CENTURY ADVERTISING AND ITS CRITICS

INTRODUCTION TO EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY ADVERTISING

In the first decades of the Twentieth century, advertising gradually became more than just posters and bills. More media were incorporated by the industry, which led to the use of hot-air balloons, trams and buses as moving billboards, skywriting, neon signs, and radio advertising in the United States (Douglas, 1985: 12). Campaigns started to be planned on a grand scale, so as to reach millions of people, and gradually regulations were formed to contain slogans which set out not just to inform, but increasingly to persuade the public. In America for instance, it was not until 1938 with the 'Pure Food and Drug Law' that advertising was regulated, as before then advertisers answered to no higher authority and were free to make unreasonable claims (Sarch, 1997: 33). To understand how important advertising was becoming, it is sufficient to note that in 1920 an international advertising exhibition was organised in London, for which London Transport created a poster including the most famous advertising characters of the day (Douglas, 1985: 14). The London Underground was one of the biggest employers of advertising of the beginning of the Twentieth century, with posters as old as 1911 featuring famous literary works of poetry and prose which invite the public to 'enjoy the urban pleasures of theatres, concerts, shops, parks and playgrounds or, better still, to explore the surrounding countryside' by underground (Benson, Chernaik, and Herbert, 1992: 21). However, it was the United States who were at the forefront of the advertising revolution; it was there that radio advertising flourished, and although skywriting was invented in the United Kingdom, it was in the United States that it was employed most extensively and was used for many years by companies such as Pepsi, Rolex, and Lucky Strike (Marsh, 2003: 2). As the home of advertising, the United States fascinated early Twentieth-century writers like Rupert Brooke and F. Scott Fitzgerald, while Virginia Woolf wrote of its London counterpart.

RUPERT BROOKE

The poet Rupert Brooke travelled in the American continent for two years from 1913, and his account of New York in letters two and three of *Letters from America* (1916) provides an insight into the excessiveness of the American advertising culture. Brooke examines the effect that advertising has on the people and the spectacle into which it is transformed. He also investigates the phenomenon by which advertising is reduced to a cult, almost a religion, by its constant presence in the every-day life of the American citizens.

Brooke is confronted by the reality of the invasiveness and pervasiveness of American advertising from the moment he lands on the continent. In the first letter, entitled 'New York', he recounts being met at the Customs by a man advertising a luggage delivery company. He describes his looks as that of 'a caricaturist's Roosevelt' with "'Express Company' [...] written on his forehead', and carrying in his pockets 'labels of a thousand colours, [and] printed slips' (14). Once in the city, Brooke is attracted by the liveliness of Broadway and its many advertisements; the first thing to catch his eye there is an old notice advertising the show of a singing bird, assuring: 'positively the only bird that can both dance and sing. [...] Almost superhuman' (20). Further on, he notices 'a little crowd, expressionless, intent, and volatile' and soon finds out what is causing the stir:

In the shop-window was a young man, pleasant-faced, a little conscious, and a little bored, dressed very lightly in what might have been a runner's costume. He was bowing, twisting, and posturing in a slow rhythm. From time to time he would put a large card on a little stand in the corner. The cards bore various legends. He would display a card that said, "THIS UNDERWEAR DOES NOT IMPEDE THE MOVEMENT OF THE BODY IN ANY DIRECTION." Then he moved his body in every direction, from position to position, probable or improbable, and was not impeded. With a terrible dumb patience he turned the next card: "IT GIVES WITH THE BODY IN VIOLENT EXERCISING." The young man leapt suddenly, lunged, smote imaginary balls, belaboured invisible opponents, ran with

immense speed but no progress, was thrown to earth by the Prince of the Air, kicked, struggled, then bounded to his feet again. But all this without a word. "IT ENABLES YOU TO KEEP COOL WHILE EXERCISING." The young man exercised, and yet was cool. (21)

The spectacle of the live advertising show mesmerizes the crowd, and although Brooke limits himself to reporting the scene, he wonders how the repetition of such a performance for prolonged hours affects the man's mental state. Brooke then moves on to discuss department stores and their advertising divisions, which saw a boom in the first decades of the 1900s and which he defines in the second letter as 'the greatest of those peculiarly American Institutions' (27). He takes an interest in the unusual types inhabiting this area:

In one corner of this store is the advertising department. There are gathered poets, artists, *litterateurs*, and mere intellectuals, all engaged in explaining to the upper middle-classes what there is for them to buy and why they should buy it. (28)

Interestingly, the advertising department described by Brooke is served mainly by writers and intellectuals, who try to persuade people to buy through 'the most perfect taste and great artistic daring and novelty' (29). Brooke points out that some of Europe's finest avant-garde artists had been employed by American advertising companies before their name reached England:

The most 'advanced' productions of Europe are scanned for ideas and suggestions. Two of the leading young 'post-impressionist' painters in Paris, whose names are just beginning to be known in England, have been designing posters for this store for years. (28)

Brooke here shows how America was at the forefront of the advertising industry at the beginning of the century, and how it sought to engage with artists and men of letters to create unique and original adverts.

In the second letter, entitled 'New York (*continued*)', Brooke reflects on the character of American commerce, believing that 'Business has developed insensibly into a Religion' (26), a cult with its rituals and rules. In particular, he says,

one of its more mystical manifestations is in advertisement. America has a childlike faith in advertising. They advertise here, everywhere, and in all ways. They shout your most private and sacred wants at you. Nothing is untouched. (26)

The immorality and the exaggeration of American advertising alarm Brooke as, he notices, it is without boundaries: it invades the private and exploits inner weaknesses. The transformation of advertising into a form of religion in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century has been pointed out before, in particular as a consequence of ‘the crisis of institutional religion and a search for new forms of religious experience’ (Bradshaw and Dettmar, 2006: 19), and as I will show, it is a theme that returns in F. Scott Fitzgerald, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce. After this reflection, Brooke turns his attention to night-time Broadway, land of lights and neon signs, as well as heart of the American advertising spectacle. The models in the adverts are described by him at the same time as devils and god-like figures, deities whose function is to direct, and simultaneously to scare and comfort their viewers. Neon light advertising is at the same time godlike and satanic, a new form of cult including both good and bad ‘forces’. The first thing Brooke sees in the lightshow is a toothbrush advertisement with a Devil, who appears for a few seconds just to then disappear leaving an ‘unconscious throngs of ant-like human beings’ (27). The mesmerizing effect the lightshow has on the crowd is very similar to the one described by Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway*, where the advertising airplane also reduces the passers-by to a mass of unconscious watchers. But the Devil is soon substituted by a more positive image:

Turning with terrified relief from this exhibition of diabolic impotence, the stranger finds a divine hand writing slowly across the opposite quarter of the heavens its ingenious message.
(27)

An underwear advert featuring ‘a youth and a man-boy, flaming and immortal, clad in celestial underwear’ (27) appears and disappears, continuing the battle between lit-up devils and gods in night-time Broadway. Brooke comments: ‘What gods they are who fight endlessly and indecisively

over New York is not for our knowledge' (27), just before diverting his attention to an advertisement for a drink, in which 'a Spanish goddess, some minor deity [...], dances continually, rapt and mysterious' (27), like a creature of Paradise. The spectacle of light in these 'sands of "amusement"' and its 'coruscating divinities', is never questioned or doubted by its 'incurious devotees' (27). Broadway's lightshow is almost sacred, and its watchers venerate it as life continues normally, without interruptions, all around it.

Above all the 'divinities', Brooke rests his gaze upon one: 'most colossal of all, it flashes momentarily out, a woman's head, all flame against the darkness' (33). She is described as a queen reigning over the city, but unlike a queen or a goddess, she carries a commercial message: 'her ostensible message, burning in the firmament beside her, is that we should buy pepsin chewing-gum' (33). She is there to 'survey [...] mankind', hour after hour she winks repeatedly and then vanishes. 'She is immortal', Brooke says, worshipped by men like a Greek goddess or the Virgin Mary, whom she resembles for her 'divine stare' (33), her persistent gaze over the inhabitants of the city. Her function is to provide relief to tired and stressed workers and break the darkness of the night with her slogan. Brooke almost sees her image as that of a saviour: 'the only answer to our cries, the only comment upon our cities, is that divine stare, the wink, once, twice, thrice. And then darkness' (34). More like Greek oracles than gods, though, the 'divinities' in the neon adverts that light up Broadway provide a temporary relief in exchange for a purchase, or the promise of a future one. If American advertising is transformed into a religion, it is nevertheless a commercial, immoral, and corrupted one, with a price to pay attached to it. Brooke even doubts that the American population is capable of worship because, he believes, the obsession for business has transformed it in a soulless race: 'Is it the absence of soul? It must be' (19). However, participation to this cult does not seem to be left to personal initiative; the American citizen is forced into this system, as advertisements are everywhere and hardly ignorable, and the public is slowly educated to believe in a commercial cult that requires the expenditure of money in exchange for the provision of a

beautiful but temporary illusion. Brooke regards the Americans as a 'soulless' race bewitched by the charm of advertisements and what they claim to provide. He sees the American advertising industry as first and foremost an entertainment industry, arguably transformed into a religion which fascinates its adepts with spectacular advertisements. Brooke's concepts find a counterpart in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald (2001), published in 1925, describes the world of modernity as artificial, mechanical, and dependent on the aesthetics of the spectacle. Before turning to writing, Fitzgerald spent 'five disgusted months in advertising' (Marsh, 1992: 8), an experience which results in an attack on the industry in the novel; New York, the narrator Nick Carraway says, has a mechanical vitality, a 'constant flicker of men and women and machines' that entertains the restless eye (37). The modernity of 1920s' New York is a spectacle made of 'ceaseless glints of light on the city's shining, metallic surfaces' (VI). At the centre of the characters' social circle is the 'new', product of the great technological innovation that characterised the 1920s, when inventions such as electric lighting, cars and telephones were affirmed as part of every-day life (VII). Fitzgerald describes the artificiality of the jazz age through the culture of advertisements and their constant presence, as well as their influence on the characters' identity and their role in the creation of celebrity culture. Finally, linked to the idea of celebrity culture, Fitzgerald discusses a different type of advertising, which I will call the advertising of the self.

In New York advertisements are everywhere. Nick Carraway points out how, full of blinding signs, 'the façade of Fifty-ninth Street, a block of delicate pale light, beamed down into the park' (51). The underground, as Myrtle recalls when talking of the first encounter with Tom, is full of them too: 'every time he looked at me I had to pretend to be looking at the advertisement over his head'

(24); their first meeting is in fact in ‘an advertisement-plastered subway train’ (Marsh, 1992: 8). The constant presence of adverts in the novel has a deep effect on the characters’ identity; New York’s lighting effects, neon signs and adverts create an exciting, modern, technological, and dynamic environment, which is at the same time profoundly unsettling and disorientating (IX). Newness is vital to one’s personality in the novel, so much so that it becomes a defining element of their person and is indicative of their importance in society. A person’s identity changes in the novel as a function of their keeping up to date with the new and the modern, as ‘Identity is plastic and can be remade or rebranded’ (XVIII). The function of advertisements is that of updating customers on what is new, of providing ways for them to maintain their status in modern society through the consumption of the latest products, although Fitzgerald ridicules their ephemeral quality as the central advertisement in the novel, that of T.J.Eckleburg, is described as already old and in ruin. Nevertheless, as Guy Debord points out, the spectacle of advertising reproduces social divisions, and this is noticeable in the novel; advertising is ‘the very heart of society’s real unreality’, declaring the ‘predominance of appearances’ in social life (Debord, 1995: 14). In fact, all social relations in the novel are based on appearances, strongly influencing the characters’ consciousness and impoverishing their personality. Their chase for the ‘new’, impersonation of advertisements and projection of desires into models to copy is used by Fitzgerald to stress the emptiness of their person.

ADVERTISEMENTS AND CELEBRITY CULTURE

Celebrity culture is also a point of interest for Fitzgerald. In *The Great Gatsby*, advertisements not only have the function of showing people what to buy, but they can also bring them to fame and determine their rise in the public eye, as in the case of Jordan Baker. Her character, who so fascinates the narrator, is described as having been in many advertisements. This is the reason why she first catches Nick Carraway’s attention; he is initially attracted to her because he recognises the face he has seen many times in magazines and advertising images. He says:

I knew now why her face was familiar- its pleasing contemptuous expression had looked out at me from many rotogravure pictures of the sporting life at Ashville and Hot Springs and Palm Beach. (14)

Jordan Baker is part of the celebrity culture which emerged in the 1920s. She is part of a system that foments society's need to find in famous and wealthy people a model to follow, a new tendency foremost created by the press and its many advertisements. As Guy Debord puts it, 'MEDIA STARS ARE SPECTACULAR representations of living human beings, distilling the essence of the spectacle's banality into images of possible roles' (1995: 38). As a form of commodity and illusion, they provide distraction from the banality of every-day life. For Nick Carraway, Jordan Baker, just like Gatsby, satisfies the desire to be seen and associated with someone famous and well-known, the desire to be part of the modern, fast-moving and exciting crowd which constitutes the élite West-Egg society.

THE ADVERTISING OF THE SELF

Linked to the idea of celebrity culture is the concept of self-advertising. The first instance of this in the novel is Gatsby's mansion, a sort of advertisement for Gatsby himself; no different to the road and underground advertisements, the house is part of the West Egg artificial and spectacular world. The narrator, Carraway, is taken by surprise when he first sees it:

When I came home to West Egg that night I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire. Two o'clock and the whole corner and the peninsula was blazing with light, which fell unreal on the shrubbery and made thin elongating glints upon the roadside wires. Turning a corner, I saw that it was Gatsby's house, lit from tower to cellar. (52)

The house is introduced before the figure of Gatsby is, as it is emblematic of his person. Designed to attract attention and to sponsor its owner, Gatsby's luminous mansion is a point of reference to the inhabitants of the peninsula: 'Fitzgerald's New York is bright, even blazing, and structured around the height of Gatsby's mansion or advertising billboards or Manhattan's buildings' (VIII).

Carraway describes the scene as ‘unreal’; the house emphasises in fact the artificiality of the landscape in the peninsula, as ‘artificial light creates an original form of American landscape, a kind of urban pastoral that is both natural and man-made’ (VIII). Gatsby’s mansion is an advertisement aimed at Daisy, lit up like a neon sign to attract attention, but also hiding its inner emptiness as, apart from the nights in which it hosts spectacular parties, it is home exclusively to Gatsby and his servants. The figure of Gatsby himself is an advertisement too: he actively publicises himself by giving large and extravagant parties to make his name known, and he behaves almost like a ‘walking advertisement’. In the figure of Gatsby, Fitzgerald explores ‘the consumerisation of the self, a self constituted of surfaces’ (IX), whereby he becomes almost a commodity: Gatsby is the advertisement of himself, the very product he publicizes. Yet, at the same time, he is never himself, always wearing a mask to impersonate and advertise an ideal self. His extrovert and eccentric behaviour is a way to promote his profile, increase his fame, and thus his chances to impress Daisy. She at one point tells Gatsby ““You resemble the advertisement of the man,” she went on innocently. “You know the advertisement of the man-”” (76), thus confusing him with the figure of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg from the billboard advert. She identifies him with the advertisement she knows because Gatsby has adopted the looks of movie stars, celebrities, and recognizable figures of the time, and has carried it further by constructing his life as an advert for himself, as his house shows. He is famous, admired by everyone. Like Jordan Baker, Gatsby is part of the celebrity culture, but unlike her he has made himself famous not by appearing in adverts, but by resembling them. He keeps the house full of interesting people ‘who do interesting things[,] celebrated people’ (58); to maintain his position in society and his fame, he surrounds himself with other celebrities in the hope that his new-found status will make him a desirable man in the eyes of Daisy, a part of her world of richness and perfection.

ADVERTISING AS SUBSTITUTE FOR RELIGION

Like Rupert Brooke, Fitzgerald also discusses the transformation of advertising into a form of religion. In *The Great Gatsby* the figure of 'God' is represented by T.J.Eckleburg, the image on the billboard between West Egg and New York, a constant presence in the story and an unsettling influence on the characters. Carraway introduces it thus:

Above the grey land and the spasms of bleak dust that drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T.J.Eckleburg. The eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic- their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a nonexistent nose. Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens, and then sank down himself into eternal blindness, or forgot them and moved away. But his eyes, dimmed a little by many paintless days, under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground.

(16)

The persistent stare of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg is constantly mentioned in the novel as an oppressive presence in the life of the characters. The billboard is in ruin, its best days surpassed by other, newer adverts. The image of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg becomes almost alive, referred to by Fitzgerald and looked at by the other characters as almost another person in the story. It is in fact after 'exchanging a frown with [him]' that Tom declares the surroundings as a 'terrible place' (18).

The ruin of the billboard seems to have determined the decadence of the land and of its people too, the creation of a place forgotten by God and left to its own devices. Interestingly, this is also the place where the car accident takes place, under the doctor's persistent gaze. Dr. Eckleburg's giant eyes keep their vigil as a spooky and uncomfortable presence (79). Even more odd is the effect the advertisement has on Wilson:

Standing behind him, Michaelis saw with a shock that he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg, which had just emerged, pale and enormous, from the dissolving night.

“God sees everything,” repeated Wilson.

“That’s an advertisement,” Michaelis assured him. Something made him turn away from the window and look back into the room. But Wilson stood there a long time, his face close to the window pane, nodding into the twilight. (102)

Like the advertisements described by Brooke which become objects of reverence invested with religious meaning, Wilson sees in the eyes of Dr. Eckleburg the eyes of God, telling him to revenge his wife’s death. To Wilson, those eyes see and judge everything, as he ‘confuses the omnipresence of God with the ubiquity of advertising’ (Marsh, 1992: 8). Fitzgerald shows to what excess this new culture can impact the lives of the people when transformed into a form of religion by the fanatic and ignorant public, showing that the Victorians’ view of advertising as a corruptive influence on society’s morals was still a matter of concern in the Twentieth century. Like Rupert Brooke says of the Americans in his *Letters*, the characters in the novel develop a faith in advertising and see it in many ways as a point of reference, an indication of how to gain one’s place in society, and a trusted presence to follow for guidance.

The role of advertising in the novel is that of filling the empty life of the characters and of guiding their fast-moving lives so as to keep the social order intact. It symbolizes the artificiality of their existence, based on appearances and status, and the deceitful and mutable character of their identity which, just like an advert, changes to be always new. As anticipated by Rupert Brooke, advertising is for F. Scott Fitzgerald ever-present and invasive, a source of spectacle and a substitute form of religion. In *The Great Gatsby*, though, he also analyses its function in determining the character’s mutable identity, and in helping create and maintain the system of celebrity culture.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf (1994) is a novel that acknowledges the role of commercial culture at the beginning of the Twentieth century, mentioning department stores and famous

newspapers like *The Times*, as well as advertisements. In particular, Virginia Woolf critiques the manipulative power of advertising, as well as its transformation into a religious-like form of spectacle. Woolf often criticised the Victorians, and she strongly disapproved of Charles Dickens's writing in an essay on *David Copperfield* written in 1925 (1968). However, as the critics Hermione Lee and Steve Ellis point out, she owed more to the Victorians than it is obvious to see, and her works show an ambivalence towards them. Woolf was strongly influenced by her Victorian upbringing and her view of society was both based on an excitement for the 'modern' and a nostalgia for the past. In *Virginia Woolf* (1997), Hermione Lee defines her as a blending of modern and post-Victorian, both experimental and nostalgic. Steve Ellis prefers to see her as an heir of Victorian tradition, respectful of its culture, rather than as a revolutionary, and he defines her as 'Post- Victorian', where 'post' indicates 'a complex relationship of difference and debt', 'affiliation with and dissent from her Victorian past, which reciprocally and necessarily signifies affiliation with and dissent from her modern present' (2007: 1-2). In particular he identifies *Mrs Dalloway* as finding 'new ways of promoting Victorian-Modern communications', through the novel's combining of 'past experience and present receptivity' (2007: 52). Ellis sees Woolf's modernity as anchored in the past and a way to fight anxiety and alienation, and indeed her views on advertising in *Mrs Dalloway* echo those of her Victorian predecessors.

As she describes the character of Hugh Whitbread walking through the streets of London, Woolf lingers on the description of the commercial clock hung above the shop of Rigby and Lowndes. She describes the clock as a magnet for customers strategically located to direct their attention to the shop while looking at the time. The clock is introduced as a helpful device for the busy shoppers:

a commercial clock, suspended above a shop in Oxford Street, announced, genially and fraternally, as if it were a pleasure to Messrs Rigby and Lowndes to give the information gratis, that it was half-past one. (223)

However, the ‘friendly clock’ provides a free service only in seeming, as Hugh Whitbread reflects strolling down Oxford Street:

Looking up, it appeared that each letter of their names stood for one of the hours; subconsciously one was grateful to Rigby and Lowndes for giving one time ratified by Greenwich; and this gratitude [...] naturally took the form later of buying off Rigby and Lowndes socks or shoes. (223)

Woolf condemns the clock as an object of exploitation of the weakness of the human psyche, as it subliminally persuades customers to buy from the shop as a thank-you gesture for being provided with the exact time. As pointed out by Torin Douglas, the ‘distinction between information and persuasion is almost impossible to define, and the vast majority of advertisements set out to achieve both’ (1985: 12), and in the case of the shop of Rigby and Lowndes the line between the two is very fine. The clock exploits subliminal advertising, as instead of adopting the form of an explicit advert it substitutes the numbers of the hours with letters from the names of the owners of the shop, strategically positioned above it. The passer-by is subconsciously made to feel ‘grateful’ towards Rigby and Lowndes and to return the favour, Woolf says, they ‘naturally’ feel compelled to buy something from the shop. Time is exposed to ridicule as a commodity and sales stratagem, in fact ‘Greenwich time’s imperial significance is marvellously deflated by Woolf here, reduced to a sales device for advertising socks’ (Barrows, 2011: 119).

The central advertising scene in *Mrs Dalloway*, though, is the skywriting scene, in which an aeroplane fills the sky with smoke writings of famous brand names of the day. Woolf’s ambivalence towards the contemporary, and her suspicion of the ‘aggressive intrusion of the new’ (Ellis, 2007: 61) is visible in her rendering of the scene. The spectacle deeply affects all those present, who are confused by it and alienated from the others around them. Moreover, a sort of mysticism characterises the event in the mind of its spectators. Woolf narrates: ‘There it was coming over the trees, letting out white smoke from behind, which curled and twisted, actually writing something!

making letters in the sky!’ (168). The aeroplane goes on to write the names ‘Glaxo’, a popular brand of condensed milk of the time, and ‘Kreemo’ (Young, 2000: 99). No one can ignore the ‘show’ and all those present look up to read the messages. For the description of the scene, Woolf might have been inspired by real events as in 1922, three years previous to the publication of *Mrs Dalloway*, the Daily Mail had hired a plane in Derby to advertise the name of the newspaper in smoke letters (Young, 2000: 99). However, even though airplanes were starting to be used for advertising and had become more and more common after the First World War, they were still looked at with curiosity and were, in a way, still new (Young, 2000: 99), which is why the scene in the novel causes such a reaction in the crowd. Those present at the ‘show’ are in fact struck by the event in a sinister way. Woolf describes the reaction of Mrs. Coates, who with an ‘awe-stricken voice’ looks up, and of her baby who, ‘lying stiff and white in her arms, grazed straight up’ (168), both mother and son mesmerised by the spectacle. Mrs. Bletchley is reduced to the state of murmuring ‘like a sleep-walker’, and Mr. Bowley is also gazing ‘straight up’ (168). Woolf says: ‘All down the Mall people were standing and looking up into the sky’, in a London which suddenly becomes still and silent, deeply affected by the event. As in a pre-organised show, the plane then fades without a sound, leaving everyone in a state of expectancy, just to come back seconds after, ‘the sound boring into the ears of all the people in the Mall’, to continue writing adverts as if the ‘show’ had never stopped (169).

The grandiosity of the spectacle makes people believe the event has elements of the sacred and the mysterious, and Woolf mocks the naivety of the bystanders by exaggerating the description of the scene as immersed in ‘extraordinary silence and peace, in this pallor, in this purity’ (168). The event is transformed in the mind of the people into a mysterious and inexplicable happening, a ‘mission of the greatest importance which would never be revealed’ (168). However, Woolf shows the fallacy of this grandiose advertising enterprise as its supposedly clear and universal messages are misunderstood by many; the passers-by read different things and some cannot make out the words

at all: 'But what letters? A C was it? an E, then an L? Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky' (168). The response of the audience reveals their credulity: the passers-by want to see the plane as a divine agent sent to complete a mission which is bigger than them, to which they have briefly been witnesses, and fail to see it as simply another agent of the consumerist society they live in. The spectacle brings people together, but it is only an apparent proximity; as Debord says, the spectacle appears as a means of unification mediated by images, but in reality it reinforces isolation and creates a 'lonely crowd': 'it unites what is separate, but it unites it only in *its separateness*' (1995: 22). In the skywriting episode, the passers-by do not interact with each other, but are instead estranged and alienated by the scene, everyone a single spectator separate from the others, and everyone attributing different meanings to the smoke words. The life of the characters is suddenly enlightened by the unexpected event in which they want, or need, to see excitement and liberation, to read a great and magical meaning; its greatness, though, is merely an illusion which is soon to fade away.

The character of Septimus is the one to attribute the deepest meaning to the scene. He is temporarily brought back to reality by the sight of the writings in the sky, which he thinks are addressed to him:

So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signaling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signaling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! Tears ran down his cheeks.

(169)

Septimus looks for a meaning in the smoke words, something written with the sole aim of comforting him. While the scene transforms every other spectator into an almost un-dead sleep-walker, it has the opposite effect on Septimus, that of bringing him back to life. Septimus sees the

plane advertising toffee and considers it a blessing, a comforting message sent to make him forget his worries; the aircraft represents 'the reassuring triviality of peace after the war, which is still melting and freezing the consciousness of Septimus Smith' (Bowlby, 1992: 154). But with this, Woolf is not leaving the possibility of redemption to the scene; in fact Septimus is specifically chosen as the recipient of this beneficial effect as it is mostly in his mind. He is not fully conscious of what is happening and, like the others, cannot make out the words clearly ('he could not read the language yet'). He symbolizes the lack of communication and understanding, the opposite of what the plane is trying to convey: a simple message, easily recognizable and understandable by all (the same aim of religious precepts). Like the rest of the people, Septimus fails to see the event just for what it is, an advertising campaign, and tries instead to invest it with higher meanings. But again, he is alone in the enjoyment of this beauty, as he is the creator of it in his own mind; therefore, he is condemned to silence and to the impossibility to communicate what he sees and feels to others. Woolf criticises the manipulative side of advertising and the invasive presence of subliminal advertising in present society, aimed at directing the public towards the purchase and consumption of more and always new products. Like the Victorians, she is aware of the growing fanaticism towards it, and its elevation to the role of a guide to follow; moreover, like Trollope, she ridicules spectacular advertising enterprises as doomed to fail, as in *Mrs Dalloway* the slogans written in the sky are unintelligible to many, and the whole act is made futile. As in Rupert Brooke and F. Scott Fitzgerald, the religious-like adoration of advertising and its transformation into a spectacle are deeply distrusted by Woolf, as they alienate human beings and distort reality.

CONCLUSION

From the Victorians to early Twentieth-century writers, advertising was a subject that fascinated many, and even though the two are usually spoken of in antithetical terms, as I have shown they presented strong similarities in their thought. The negative opinion regarding advertising that characterised Dickens and Trollope is also present in the writings of Rupert Brooke, F. Scott

Fitzgerald, and Virginia Woolf. Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope showed not only a scepticism towards it, but they altogether condemned it as a detriment to the urban landscape and its people in the case of Dickens, and as a corruptive and immoral practice based on superficiality in the case of Trollope. Although Brooke, Fitzgerald, and Woolf wrote in a different century, characterised by the birth of new media and the radically different context determined by the First World War, they nevertheless shared the same views. The corruption of society's morals due to advertising of which the Victorians talked about finds a counterpart in the works by these authors in a critique of its pervasive, mind-conditioning and cult-like character. Moreover F. Scott Fitzgerald, like Trollope, related it to the phenomenon of the search for the 'new', as well as commenting on its relationship to the emerging celebrity culture. If on the one side the Modernists claimed to be writing in opposition to the dated and conservative style of their Victorian predecessors, their views on publicity and its place in society are very similar and express a general disapproval and anxiety towards this emerging practice that would grow to be a vital trait of Twentieth-century society, and on which other contemporaries had radically opposed views.

CHAPTER II- ADVERTISING AND THE LITERATURE OF THE AVANT-GARDE

At the same time as Rupert Brooke, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Virginia Woolf were expressing negative views about advertising, another group of writers was instead enthusiastically embracing it as an expression of modern society. Allen Upward, Wyndham Lewis and Fortunato Depero welcomed advertising and made it an intrinsic part of their work, thus breaking down the literary categorizations that usually divide modernist from avant-garde writing, as well as the divide between high art and popular culture. In his text *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984), Peter Bürger distinguished very strongly between modernism and the avant-garde movements which were emerging at the same time; he argued that the avant-gardistes wished art to play a practical role in society, as opposed to the static function the bourgeoisie had always attributed to it:

The European avant-garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society. What is negated is not an earlier form of art (a style) but art as an institution that is unassociated with the life praxis of men. When the avant-gardistes demand that art become practical once again, they do not mean that the contents of works of art should be socially significant. The demand is not raised at the level of the contents of individual works. Rather, it directs itself to the way art functions in society, a process that does as much to determine the effects that works have as does the particular content. (Bürger, 1984: 49)

Avant-garde art, Bürger argued, was 'to be integrated into the praxis of life' (1984: 53). Another critic who separated modernism and the avant-garde was Andreas Huyssen, who maintained that 'modernism constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture' (1986: v), and he defined this 'categorical distinction between high art and mass culture' as the Great Divide (1986: viii). He believed modernism always remained hostile to mass culture and detached from everyday life (v), while the avant-garde aimed at conciliating high and low (1986: viii). Bürger and Huyssen saw the avant-garde as a rebellion against modernism, however in recent years there have

been numerous debates concerning ‘the nature of their mutual relationship’ (Murphy, 1999: 2). Contemporary to Peter Bürger, Matei Calinescu argued in *Faces of Modernity* that the avant-garde is a later, more radical phase of modernism (1977), while Richard Murphy regards the avant-garde as the more political and revolutionary branch of modernism, constantly trying to differentiate itself from it. He remarks:

Modernism and the avant-garde often seem to be locked into a dialectical relationship in which the avant-garde questions the blind spots and unreflected presuppositions of modernism, while modernism itself reacts to this critique. (Murphy, 1999: 3)

My discussion will continue that of critics arguing for more similarities between modernism and the avant-garde than Bürger accounted for in his influential book. The avant-garde is described as ‘committed to the critical representation of modern life’ (Murphy, 1999: 29) and to its most authentic rendering; Bürger also maintains that ‘if a movement calls the institution of art into question, it constitutes a break with modernism, and is to be considered avant-garde’ (2010: 2). Bearing in mind these premises, I intend to show how Imagism and Vorticism, usually considered to be modernist movements, are in fact just as interested in the representation of modernity and in the questioning of the high-low divide in art in favour of a more practical role of art in society as Futurism, considered the ‘art of modern life’ and the avant-garde movement par excellence (Murphy, 1999: 29). In particular, I will concentrate on their common interest and enthusiasm for the practice of advertising to show the similarity in their approach. I will discuss the imagist poem ‘The Magic Carpet’ by Allen Upward, and the vorticist magazine *Blast* edited by Wyndham Lewis, for which I will be referring to Mark Morrisson’s study in *The Public Face of Modernism*, as well as the manifestos published by the futurist Fortunato Depero.

ALLEN UPWARD AND IMAGISM

The imagist movement set out to create a style whose principles were not new but nevertheless modern, and the principles of this style have many similarities with the style of advertising. Imagism was founded by Ezra Pound (Tew and Murray, 2009: 53), and although it is usually regarded as the forerunner of modernism, it is also looked at as ‘a mild version of the European avant-garde, shorn of its politics’ (Armstrong, 2008: 30), which suggests that the difference between the two was not so clear-cut. The preface to the second edition of *Some Imagist Poets* of 1915 contained an explanation of the movement’s aims, deemed ‘the essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature’ (Goldman et Al., 1998: 268-9). With many similarities to the language of advertising, the Imagists aimed to use ‘the language of common speech’, and to always employ ‘the *exact* word, not the nearly-exact’ (269). They declared to believe in ‘the artistic value of modern life’, and to want to create ‘new rhythms’ to ‘present an image’ (269). Imagist poetry, they maintained, ‘should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities’; it must be ‘hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite’, but expressing the exact idea (269). To the Imagists, ‘concentration’ is the essence of poetry and similarly to the publicity industry, the aim is to condense a concept in as few words as possible. Andrew Thacker points out that Imagism avoids abstractions in favour of a language ‘made of concrete things’, as Ezra Pound said (2011: 53). The same elements of advertising criticised by the Victorian Dickens and Trollope, are instead enthusiastically embraced by imagist poetry in the words of Pound and, as I will show, Allen Upward. The Imagists themselves were not indifferent to the culture of advertising; the tag ‘imagiste’ was invented by Pound himself to help H.D. publish her poems and create group identity, and the literary magazine *The Egoist* employed mass publicity strategies to make imagism ‘carry an advertising value for the magazine’ and create a public for it (Morrisson, 2000: 103). An often-ignored member of the Imagist movement was Allen Upward, who expresses the Imagists’ enthusiasm for popular culture by showing the link between Imagist poetry and advertising in his poem ‘The Magic Carpet’, published in the issue of *The Egoist* of June 1st, 1914 (See appendix).

‘THE MAGIC CARPET’ AND ADVERTISING POETRY

The poem conforms to the canons of Imagist poetry through its adoption of a simple language with the purpose of evoking images. Upward describes in fact the experience of being ‘snatched from Trafalgar Square’ (2), and mentally transported to Asian lands, by the words and images in the poster. In the last two verses, by condensing the message of the poem in just a few words, it also conforms to the direct treatment of the thing that Imagists advocate for. Here, he finds himself,

transported by the magic of advertising from the public hustle and bustle of Trafalgar Square to a realm of poetic imagination and creation. Upward uses images from an advertising poster as the substance of an imagistic poem (Morrisson, 2000: 99).

From the layout of the text it is clear that this is no traditional poem. The title and the author’s name appear in big letters at the top of the poem; they are the first things the reader sees, making it look much like an advertisement for Upward’s work. Everything from the title, to the name of the author and the text itself is circumscribed in a frame, and the poet even refers to it in the opening line as ‘this painted poster’, instead of calling it a poem. The terms ‘magic carpet’ of the title seem to refer to the same poem/poster and give it the faculty of evoking far lands and magic atmospheres.

Upward invests advertising posters with the same faculties of poems to evoke ideas and images through words, fusing the two, which had traditionally been regarded as two separate and sometimes opposing categories, into one thing. He concludes with the tag ‘ALL RIGHTS RESERVED’, and includes the writing ‘Envoy:----- & Sons’, often found at the bottom of real advertisements. By giving his poem the layout and typography of an advertising poster, Upward seems to imply that there is no difference between literature and publicity, between high and low arts; the two closing lines contain the message of the whole poem:

There is more poetry in your advertisement
Than many numbers of our best Reviews. (9-10)

With these two lines, Upward clearly defends popular culture. He insists that expressions of popular culture such as advertisements are as valuable as literature, as they too are rich in images and ideas. To him advertisements deserve the same recognition as poems, and by giving his poem the form of an advertising poster he rebels against the constraints of traditional poetry and hierarchies in the arts. This poem at once advertises its author, Allen Upward, but by being included in the *Egoist* it also advertises Imagist literature as interested in popular culture, and positioned against the high-low divide. With this text, Upward ‘affirmed the alluring vitality of modern advertising’, demonstrating awareness of its power and aesthetics, as well as celebrated Imagism’s fusion with popular culture (Morrisson, 2000: 99). As Timothy Materer points out, ‘the manipulation and juxtaposition of images and the move to replace the discursive text with the evocative image in commodity advertising does suggestively parallel aspects of the emerging imagistic poetic’ (Morrisson, 2000: 99), and Allen’s poem shows this by evoking images of the Far East. Moreover, the poem ‘plays on the audience’s need to categorize it as either poem or advertisement- in order, simultaneously, to be both’ (Morrisson, 2000: 100). In Upward’s work, popular culture becomes art, which is also the view of Wyndham Lewis, who shaped his literary magazine as an advertising manifesto, as well as making advertising an intrinsic part of his drama.

WYNDHAM LEWIS

Wyndham Lewis was one of the most prominent exponents of the vorticist avant-garde movement, and this section examines the 1914 edition of the magazine *Blast*, of which he was editor, and in particular his drama ‘Enemy of the Stars’ published within the magazine. They both show comparisons to the advertising style, of which Lewis talks in the second chapter of his cultural and philosophical essay *Time and Western Man*, which I will also discuss. Lewis’s works show similarities with Futurism, discussed further on in relation to Fortunato Depero; vorticist art and literature concentrated in fact on the energy and dynamism of modernity, and looked at new ways to

express it (Morrisson, 2000: 116). This is a common trait between the two movements, and in particular the interest in advertising as a representative symbol of modernity also concerns both. In fact, ‘advertising provided the perfect element of “life” with which the vorticists could inject their form of English “art”’ (Raynolds, 2000: 242), and this might also explain why some regard vorticism as an avant-garde movement. Tew and Murray, for instance, maintain that vorticism ‘remains perhaps the only authentic avant-garde of English modernism’ (2009: 65).

THE ‘HERE AND NOW’ & THE INDIVIDUAL- *BLAST*

The first edition of the magazine *Blast*, published on June 20th 1914, opens with a list of aims of the movement, taking very much the form of a manifesto. The act of issuing a manifesto as well as its aggressive character typical, for instance, of the futurists’, is another element that suggests the ‘avant-gardism’ of the movement. Lewis declares that Vorticists ‘stand for the Reality of the Present’ (1914: 7), and have no interest in the future or the past, deemed sentimental and too ‘distant’ to be worthy of attention. Lewis will also return to the concept of living the present in the drama ‘Enemy of the Stars’, which as I will discuss combines dramatic action with advertising style, in which he says ‘POSTERITY IS SILENT, LIKE THE DEAD, AND MORE PATHETIC’ (55), again reiterating the negativity that he believes characterizes both the future and the past. Like the advertising industry, Vorticism moves very fast and concentrates exclusively on the present. In *Time and Western Man*, Lewis draws clearer parallels: advertising, he says, is the ‘glorification of the life-of-the-moment’, as ‘the world in which Advertisement dwells is a one-day world’ (Lewis, 1927: 23):

in the world of Advertisement [...], everything that happens to-day (or everything that is being advertised *here and now*) is better, bigger, brighter, more astonishing than anything that has ever existed before’ (1927: 24).

Both Vorticism and the advertising industry seem to focus on the ‘here and now’, ignoring what came before and what will come after. Lewis intimates that his magazine will appeal to the

individuality of the common man: 'Blast will be popular, essentially. It will not appeal to any particular class, but to the fundamental and popular instincts in every class and description of people, TO THE INDIVIDUAL' (1914: 7). Similarly, advertising is designed for the masses but usually addresses the individual directly and creates a feeling of privilege in the recipient. Lewis declares that 'Blast presents an art of Individuals', and he defends popular art as such. He says: 'WE ONLY WANT THE WORLD TO LIVE, and to feel its crude energy flowing through us' (1914: 7).

A MAGAZINE DESIGNED AS AN ADVERTISEMENT

The typography of the manifestos in *Blast* is also interesting for its resemblance to that of advertising posters in its 'prominent image, large typeface, and easily readable text' (Reynolds, 2000: 246). The magazine adopted 'posterlike strategies' (Morrisson, 2000: 119) to promote its ideas:

the vorticists reconfigured the relationship between high art and advertising in order to create a chaotic aesthetic form that would shock, polarize, and eventually educate the limited public to which they addressed *Blast*. (Reynolds, 2000: 240)

In this sense, Lewis almost presents himself as an advertiser (Reynolds, 2000: 243). *Blast* was designed to promote Vorticism and Lewis as the leader and, as the vorticist painter William Roberts pointed out, it became almost a slogan (Morrisson, 2000: 117). Through the advertising spectacle Lewis tries to create an audience for vorticism, recognizing the 'value of spectacle' and exploiting it to the maximum so as to make artists part of the public sphere (Morrisson, 2000: 121- 132). The 1914 edition of *Blast* was the 'English attempt to adopt the manifesto-driven style of the continental avant-garde' (Morrisson, 2000: 117). *Blast*'s 'blesses' and 'blasts' lists are not too far off from advertisements and as Paige Reynolds points out, they 'set forth a doctrine of what constituted good and bad advertising', and through endorsements promoted what they thought were good contributors to Vorticism (2000: 248- 249). *Blast* enthusiastically embraces advertising and almost

becomes part of it. It exploits the techniques of commercial advertising and it invokes advertising aesthetics (Raynolds, 2000: 246). The impudence and aggressive character of *Blast* helped promote the Vorticists' cause and their belief that 'art should more aggressively engage with contemporary life' (Raynolds, 2000: 257). It seeks to show the public the point of contact between high and low art, in particular between literature and advertising, even though it claimed to reject any form of populism. On the one side in fact, *Blast* claimed to ignore public opinion, but on the other it sought to spread and promote its ideas by adopting advertising techniques and glorifying publicity as art.

ENEMY OF THE STARS- A PLAY IMMERSED IN PUBLICITY CULTURE

Published in *Blast* was Wyndham Lewis' drama *Enemy of the Stars*, set in a fantastic spatial dimension of the 'Thirtieth century' (1914: 61), and concerned with modern man's personal struggle between individualism and collectivism (Fashay, 1992: 29). 'Enemy of the Stars' is immersed in advertising culture: even before the play itself starts, Lewis inserts a page entitled 'ADVERTISEMENT', describing 'THE SCENE', 'THE CHARACTERS', and 'DRESS' (1914: 55). As Mark Morrisson points out, the purpose of this page is dubious, especially as it does not seem to advertise anything in particular, nor to provide any explicit stage directions to follow, which occur instead further on, on page 60; strangely it does not even mention the two characters in the play (2000: 126- 128). This is because, he says, the page has the function of a modern advertisement, and not of a stage direction:

the page takes its cue from the advertising poster's typography and reliance on eye-and-ear-catching phrases, not complete descriptive sentences, and evocative words and images that, again, do not directly describe the "product". (Morrisson: 2000: 128)

It has also been pointed out by Raynolds that the page may be an advert for both Lewis' text and for Vorticism at large (2000: 248), as it appears before the actual start of the play, and it is followed by examples of Lewis' artwork.

THE CHARACTERS AS ADVERTS AND LIVING LIFE THROUGH THEM

Advertising is also part of the life of the characters in the play. When Lewis describes the protagonist Arghol in *THE NIGHT*, he says: ‘a white, crude volume of brutal light blazed over him. Immense bleak electric advertisement of God. It crushed with wild emptiness of street’ (1914: 64). Arghol ‘advertises’ himself as almighty, emerging from the ‘electric’ atmosphere of this imaginary land. Again, when he talks of him in part VI, Lewis says: ‘He repeated his name- like sinister word invented to launch a new soap, in gigantic advertisement- toilet-necessity, he, to scrub the soul’ (1914: 82). Arghol’s name becomes here a slogan emphasized through repetition, a technique Leopold Bloom also resorts to in Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Moreover, as for Leopold Bloom, advertising structures here Arghol’s self-identification, as he has made himself a brand name (Morrisson, 2000: 131). Arghol does what the modern artist should do according to Lewis (and what Lewis himself does in *Blast*): he makes a spectacle of himself so as to assert his individuality and promote his ideas to the public, as in the play advertisements become a kind of self-formation as well as of self-promotion (Morrisson, 2000: 132). They are the means to assert one’s self in a time of crisis characterised by alienation, as well as to promote the artist’s ideas. The second character of the play, Hanp, also resorts to advertisements to describe his relations. He says:

My uncle is very little of a relation. It would be foolish to kill him. He is an échantillon, acid advertisement slipped in letter-box: space’s store-rooms dense with frivolous originals. I am used to him, as well. (Lewis, 1914: 66)

To describe his uncle as a nuisance, Hanp compares him to an advertisement; he is used to his uncle’s presence just like one is used to seeing advertisements around. He irritates Hanp, but cannot be avoided, like adverts in letter-boxes. In the play, advertising is therefore a source of identity, and not just that, but a solution to the modern condition of alienation. The play tries to ‘evoke in the audience awareness of a crisis, of a dramatic physical and spiritual challenge at the heart of modernity’ (Fashay, 1992: 27), and it seems to provide a solution through advertising, identified as the means to survive the crisis without losing one’s identity. It describes the ‘dividedness of man

from himself, within himself”, a state of confusion which makes him incapable of action (Fashay, 1992: 29).

THE LANGUAGE OF THE PLAY

As Morrison points out, ‘the insistent theme of advertising in *Blast* becomes here explicit’ (2000: 126), as Lewis uses ‘heavy alliteration to give the ear-catching charge used by modern advertising’, as well as ‘evocative half-phrases and vibrant images’ (128- 132). Moreover, Lewis explicitly refers to advertising to draw analogies and explain his characters. The language of the play is also interesting for its resemblance to advertising style, as it uses short and direct sentences, often omitting the verb. The opening pages of the play are almost entirely written in capital letters, with only a few sentences in lower case letters, another element which reminds the reader of advertising posters. Moreover, in more than one case Lewis addresses the reader of the play. In the opening page entitled ‘ADVERTISEMENT’, he concludes by writing ‘VERY WELL ACTED BY YOU AND ME’ (55), which implies that the spectator in the audience/reader of the play is also an actor in it, as the story can be enlarged to include all humanity. Again further on he says:

“Yet you and me: why not from the English metropolis?”- Listen: it is our honeymoon. We go abroad for first scene of our drama. Such a strange thing as our coming together requires a strange place for initial stages of our intimate ceremonious acquaintance. (59)

Again similarly to the style used by advertisements, the reader is personally addressed and drawn to the text. Further on Lewis also informs the reader that ‘THE BOX OFFICE RECEIPTS HAVE BEEN ENORMOUS’ (61), as if to self-advertise and make his audience aware of the fortune of his own play.

Lewis embraced the modern practice of advertising in his works, and demonstrated his enthusiasm for it both in his magazine *Blast* and in his drama ‘Enemy of the Stars’. Even though vorticism is usually considered a modernist movement, and as such against popular culture, Lewis fused

advertising and drama and ‘engaged advertising aesthetics to create a work that resists traditional categories, a work that was uniquely vorticist’ (Raynolds, 2000: 248). However, from Lewis’ manifestos the idea seems to emerge that Vorticism is the only movement that could employ promotional culture with success. Raynolds maintains that ‘by celebrating the conflation of art and advertising, the vorticists could define themselves in opposition to other art groups in London, both native and continental’ (2000: 245). This is not altogether true, and as I will show in the following section, the futurist avant-garde movement clearly showed the same inclination towards promotional culture, and in fact inspired Lewis’ work.

FORTUNATO DEPERO

The movement that Windham Lewis set himself against is futurism, which as I will show presents strong similarities as far as its approach to advertising goes. Futurism was the first of the European avant-garde movements, founded in 1909 by the leader of the movement F.T Marinetti (Armstrong, 2008: 27), who was

the first avant-gardist to use commercial promotional techniques such as newspaper placements, saturation advertising, and whistle-stop tours in an effort to provoke the masses into an engagement with art’ (Raynolds, 2000: 243),

and to place his movement ‘at the forefront of the British art scene’ (243). Vorticism and Futurism share many similarities, but Marinetti’s call for an ‘absolute freedom of images and analogies’, ‘condensed metaphors’ and ‘compressed analogies’, also echoes Pound’s imagist poetry based on an ‘imagination without strings’ (in Apollonio, 1970: 100). To show the similarities between these movements, I will analyse the works of Fortunato Depero, not one of the most prominent figures of Italian futurism, but nevertheless one who made considerable contributions to the movement and who helped spread its ideas abroad, in particular to America. Depero is of particular interest to me also for his close pursuit of advertising techniques; in this regard, I will discuss his manifesto *Futurism and Advertising* published in 1932, as well as *ABC of Italian Futurism* (Depero, 1990).

Both show an interest in the practice of advertising as expression of modernity and show its transformation into a tool for self-promotion, of which the futurists were masters (Doordan, 1989: 50).

Even though Futurism was born with the intention of being truly modern, and with a ‘dread of the old and the known. Love of the new, the unexpected’ as Marinetti said in 1913 in *Destruction of Syntax- Imagination without strings- Words-in-freedom* (in Apollonio, 1970: 96), the futurist representation of modernity was nevertheless doomed to last a short time. The rejection of the past, in fact, inevitably entails a paradox: the new cannot remain such for a long time, it is not a stable entity, and therefore no art can claim to represent modernity in its absoluteness and to be a definite point of reference. Marinetti himself said in the *Manifesto of Futurism* published in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909:

The oldest of us is thirty: so we have at least a decade for finishing our work. When we are forty, other younger and stronger men will probably throw us in the wastebasket like useless manuscripts- we want it to happen! (1970: 23)

He was conscious that his work would soon be denigrated as old fashioned and dated, aware of the paradox his own precepts embodied. John Rodker wrote in 1926 in *The Future of Futurism*, that ‘the time has come to widen our definition of the classical, for futurism only exists as a state of flux, immediately it is accepted becoming the classical for its own generation and posterity’ (21-22), thus interrogating the validity and legacy of the movement. In the same way, Tew and Murray point out that

The avant-garde’s predilection for manifestoes is grounded in a desire to declare contemporary culture dead, yet each moment thought itself uniquely equipped to bring about its successful rejuvenation. (2009: 115)

Marinetti seems to be conscious of this paradox, but he embraces it, inviting the next generation to overtake his work and bring its own novelty.

ADVERTISING IS ART: FUTURISM AND POPULAR CULTURE

Depero was mainly an artist and a poet, and he contributed to the Italian futurist tradition of manifesto writing with the 1932 manifesto *Futurism and Advertising*, where he theorizes what he puts into practice in his artwork. As is clear from the manifesto, for Depero, just like for the Imagists and Vorticists, there is no divide between low and high arts. Pasquale Verdicchio says in the preface:

The power of advertising, its ability to reach our subconscious through well defined rhetorical persuasion, was readily recognized and integrated by the Futurists. Their attraction to, and use of, advertising further qualified their opposition to academia and the traditional separation of art and industry, art and the market-place. (Depero, 1990: 1)

With a prophetic tone, Depero starts by declaring that ‘the art of the future will tend strongly towards advertising’ (3). Not only it will be prominent in the future but, he says, so it was in the past:

all art of the past centuries is marked by the scope of advertising: exaltation of war, or religion; documentation of facts, ceremonies and characters in their victories, in their symbols, within their grades of command and of splendour. (3)

Depero thus maintains that the practice of advertising is not new or particularly modern, but that it has always been employed throughout history. He continues: ‘There is no ancient work that is not garlanded with trophies of advertisement, its tools of war and victory, marked by monograms and original symbols of powerful families’ (3). More than ever though, Depero believes advertising is crucial to modern society, and the best tool to be used to express its vibrant nature and speed as the futurists aim to do: ‘our brilliance, our glory, our men, our products, are in need of a new art, as brilliant, as mechanical and fast, exalting and dynamic, of practice, of light, of our materials’ (4). In particular, the reason why Depero exalts the practice of advertising is for its embodiment of the characteristics of modernity.

ADVERTISING AS THE EXPRESSION OF MODERNITY

Depero believes that art cannot ignore the advances of society, but must instead collaborate with them and work alongside new trends: 'art too needs to march in step with industry [...], the styles of the time, glorifying them- such a glorifying art was begun by futurism and by advertising' (1990: 4). He sees advertising as the glorification of modernity:

advertising is a decisively coloured art, obliged to synthesis [...]. A living art, multiplied, not isolated and buried in museums- art free of any academic restraint- a joyous art- defiant- exhilarating- optimistic. (4)

Depero considers advertising as an art that takes part in the progress of society, not a static type of art which is simply there for contemplation, but one which expresses the character of its age and is part of its essence. As for Upward and Lewis, once again the opposition to the static nature and uselessness of bourgeois art of which Peter Bürger speaks is found in advertising.

The futurists attribute to their art the discovery of a new approach to advertising. Depero believes:

advertising offers themes and an artistic field of inspiration that are completely new-
advertising is fatally necessary
fatally modern art-
fatally daring art-
fatally paid art-
fatally lived art. (Depero, 1990: 3)

The futurists, he believes, appreciate the vitality of advertising and its faculty to mirror contemporary society and its changes, as well as exalting advertising for opening up new perspectives in art. Advertising is deemed necessary and praised for its daring nature, a quality very much appreciated by the futurists. Depero rejoices in the fact that the futurists were the first to employ it and absorb it in their work, and the first ones to celebrate its modernity and dynamism. Moreover, he adds,

seem to infer that for Depero, just like for Allen Upward, there is no difference between futurist art/literature and advertising, as publicity is everywhere to be found because intrinsically modern, just what futurist poetry aims to be. Depero rejects conventions in the arts and considers advertising a fine art. The futurist work naturally comes with an aggressively advertising character, and Depero clearly used his experience in advertising to promote his own activities (Chiesa, 2010: 6). The manifesto *Futurism and Advertising* expresses the desire for his work and futurism in general to be recognized as a glorifying art because it is a 'living' one (Chiesa, 2010: 19).

CONCLUSION

In the first decades of the Twentieth century, if some writers rebelled against publicity and its invasive and corruptive power, others enthusiastically embraced the practice of advertising by including it in their works and shaping their poetry, drama, and writings according to its forms and conventions. As a modern phenomenon, it is one that both modernist and avant-garde writers saw as a tool to express their view of contemporary society and its fast-changing reality. As discussed, even though they adopted different approaches, Allen Upward, Wyndham Lewis, and Fortunato Depero all exploited its concise and direct style, as well as recognized its importance in the creation of a public for their work and the promotion of their art. Vorticist and imagist writers, canonically defined as modernists, show an approach to advertising more similar to that of the historical avant-garde. The authors I have discussed abolished the high-low divide in the arts and in fact exploited the practice of advertising to both promote their work and portray their view of modernity through it. However, a decade later, the enthusiasm and embrace of publicity as an art was replaced by more moderate views.

CHAPTER III- JAMES JOYCE AND THE WRITERS OF THE 1930s

In the third and final chapter I am going to look at three writers who approached advertising in a more moderate way compared to the Victorian and Modernist writers I have previously discussed. James Joyce, Dorothy Sayers, and George Orwell, although very different writers, were all fascinated by advertising, but they communicated ambiguous views on the subject. Like Anthony Trollope, they describe the world of advertising first-hand through characters working for advertising agencies rather than consumers consuming it. On the surface they do not seem to have many similarities: Joyce was a modernist experimental writer writing in the 1920s, while Sayers, a detective fiction writer, and Orwell, a political writer, were writing in the 1930s. Moreover, Orwell strongly criticised modernist writing in his essay 'Inside the Whale'. However, if on the one hand they belong to different historical contexts and have sometimes opposing views, these authors approach the theme of advertising in a similar way, often leaving the reader wondering whether they have a firm position on the subject. James Joyce shows an interest in advertising in his novel *Ulysses*, where examples of both real and fictional adverts haunt the daily thoughts of the characters and seem to be found at every corner. In particular, it is the character of Leopold Bloom who is impressed by them the most: his thoughts take the form of adverts, which shows how profoundly his mind is affected by his work as an advertising canvasser and the popular culture in turn-of-the-century Dublin. Dorothy Sayers worked for an advertising agency for many years and her daily job inspired some of her works, such as the novel *Murder Must Advertise* and the essay 'The Psychology of Advertising'. In the novel, Sayers chooses an advertising agency as the scene of a crime and of the subsequent investigations, revealing the corruption and immorality that reign there. In her essay, however, she concludes that advertising itself cannot be condemned, because ultimately the responsibility is the consumer's. Advertising is also the subject matter of George Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, where it is at first condemned by the protagonist Gordon Comstock as revealing the faults of the system and being a 'low art', but subsequently shown to be inevitable and in fact necessary as a means to earn a living.

JAMES JOYCE

The advertising culture of 1904 Dublin constitutes a major theme in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (2008), published in 1922. Joyce is clearly aware of advertising and of its importance at the time, and he seems to treat it as both a positive and a negative aspect of popular culture. In the novel, publicity is described as being at every corner in the city and an influence on the minds of its dwellers or, in the case of Leopold Bloom, an obsession. Bloom is an advertisement canvasser and his job has conditioned him to the extent that his thoughts are formulated as adverts, as in the case of the one he imagines for his own disappearance, and he sees them as his way to success and personal fulfilment, as for example Keyes' ad which Bloom is constantly trying to improve. They do, in a way, constitute his identity, and shape both his professional and his private persona. Nevertheless, while on the one side advertisements are invasive and mind-conditioning, they also provide a way for Joyce to express the culture of modern Dublin through the figure of Bloom. In fact as Jennifer Wicke remarks, *Ulysses* advertises the modern, placing us readers in the position of the public reading the adverts in the novel (241).

ADVERTISEMENTS IN *ULYSSES*

In *Ulysses*, it is clear that

Joyce by no means deploras commodity culture, just as he does not repudiate mass culture.

[...] More so than any other Modernist writer, Joyce [...] acknowledged that modern literature was intertwined with mass culture and mass media. (Wicke, 2004: 236)

Joyce's interest in popular culture is clear from the many examples of advertisements he introduces in the novel. While walking around the city, Leopold Bloom observes the adverts he finds on his way:

He walked back along Dorset street, reading gravely. Agendath Netaim: planters' company. To purchase waste sandy tracts from Turkish government and plant with eucalyptus trees. Excellent for shade, fuel and construction. (58)

Joyce makes the adverts Bloom sees a constant in his thoughts to show that they never go unnoticed, even if Bloom does not always express a judgement. Throughout the day he keeps walking, always with an eye on the adverts around him:

Mr. Bloom stood at the corner, his eyes wandering over the multicoloured hoardings. Cantrell and Cochrane's Ginger Ale (Aromatic). Clery's summer sale. (73)

Even when reading a newspaper, the first thing to catch Bloom's eye is publicity. The first advert he mentions is for 'Plumtree's Potted Meat'. Bloom dislikes it, but the advert makes a strong impression on him and it reappears again and again in the novel:

He unrolled the newspaper baton idly and read idly:

What is home without

Plumtree's Potted Meat?

Incomplete.

With it an abode of bliss.' (72)

Whether small or big, on walls or in the newspaper, every advert Bloom sees becomes object of interest.

ADVERTISING BLOOM'S IDENTITY

The adverts Bloom encounters during the day strongly affect him. He thinks about them constantly as slogans pervade his mind. To him they are vital to his career, the means by which he hopes to achieve success in life. As Brandon Kershner points out, Joyce shows how 'advertising had come to influence the structure of the human subject's "universe" with dominance and pervasiveness' (1996: 129). Even Bantham Lyons greets Bloom with a 'Good morning, have you used Pears' soap' (82), almost making himself an advert for the popular Victorian soap brand. Kershner maintains that the function of advertising, and in particular of the 'Plumtree's Potted Meat' advert, is to 'reassure the subject, to fill their void' (127), adding that it 'deliberately evokes a sense of lack and incompleteness in order to suggest completion by the product' (127), therefore to make complete

what is incomplete and rectify what is imperfect. Advertising at large seems to have the same function of providing something lacking but necessary in Bloom's life. Adverts constitute Bloom's life framework: his constant object is to find ways to improve the adverts he sees. For example, the horseshoe poster over the gate of college park attracts his attention:

Cyclist doubled up like a cod in a pot. Damn bad ad. Now if they had made it round like a wheel. Then the spokes: sports, sports, sports: and the hub big: college. Something to catch the eye. (83)

Many of Bloom's daily thoughts are structured around advertisements, and he looks for faults in them as well as ways to rectify them. Another advert that always haunts his mind and that Bloom wishes to improve is the one for Keyes, which he thinks about even at Patrick Dignam's funeral:

Like Keyes's ad: no fear of anyone getting out, no passout checks. Habeat Corpus. I must see about that ad after the funeral. (103)

The same ad comes up again in a discussion with Mr Nannetti, during an interview with the editor:

Just this ad. [...] House of keys, don't you see? His name is Keyes. It's a play on the name. (140)

Bloom is on a quest for the perfect advertisement (Blades, 1996: 125), and while he thinks Keyes' ad has potential, he believes the slogan for 'Plumtree's Potted Meat' is not as impressive:

Potted meats. What is home without Plumtree's potted meat? Incomplete. What a stupid ad! Under the obituary notices they stuck it. All up a plumtree. Dignam's potted meat. (163)

Bloom is so irritated by the advert that it comes up unexpectedly on his mind:

(offhandedly) Kosher. A snack for supper. The home without potted meat is incomplete (424)

It is interesting to see how strongly this advert affects his mind, even though later on in the novel it is referred to as a very improbable stimulant to Bloom's cogitations (636). The culmination of Bloom's perception of his identity through adverts, comes when he reflects on a possible advert for his supposed disappearance:

What public advertisement would divulge the occultation of the departed? £5 reward, lost, stolen or strayed from his residence 7 Eccles street, missing gent about 40, answering to the name of Bloom Leopold (Poldy), height 5 ft., 9 ½ inches, full build, olive complexion, may have since grown a beard, when last seen was wearing a black suit. Above sum will be paid for information leading to his discovery. (679)

This is not surprising as Bloom is an advertising canvasser, so in a way he advertises advertising itself, and his own persona as a product. Like Gatsby, Bloom has an end which goes beyond the sole advertisement of his self, as his aim is to get more work, just as Gatsby does it to increase his notoriety and finally win Daisy over. Advertisements are an important presence in Bloom's life, and they even have the power to change the whole course of his day for the better or the worse:

What imperfections in a perfect day did Bloom, walking, silently, successively, enumerate? A provisional failure to obtain renewal of an advertisement. (681)

Bloom is immersed in the consumerist culture around him, and because of his job as an advertising canvasser, most aspects of his life are in some way affected by it. Thomas Richards argues that Joyce depicts advertising as 'a coercive agent for invading and structuring human consciousness' (1990: 207), and the character of Bloom embodies this.

BLOOM'S MODERNITY

Bloom is an expert in mastering the 'gentle art of advertisement' with a modern approach (130). He exalts the power of repetition:

Because you see, says Bloom, for an advertisement you must have repetition. That's the whole secret. (310)

And in this respect, he sees church masses as the perfect advertisement:

Could hear them all at it. Pray for us. And pray for us. And pray for us. Good idea the repetition. Same thing with ads. Buy from us. And buy from us. (360)

Alongside repetition he recognizes that the strategic position of the advert is also vital: 'Best place for an ad to catch a woman's eye on a mirror' (355). Bloom is conscious of modernity and of what is required to make something 'new' and effective, and advertising constitutes for him a way to express his understanding of the modern. As Jennifer Wicke says, 'Joyce is among the first modern writers to link the commodity form with modernity, and to give it a face and a name. [...] Joyce sets individual ads floating down the river of his text as if they were bubbles of modernity' (236- 239). For example Bloom is fascinated by the idea of the spectacle (see chapter 1, part 2):

Where was that ad some Birmingham firm the luminous crucifix? Our Saviour. Wake up in the dead of night and see him on the wall, hanging. (144)

The idea of a luminous crucifix, lit up like an advertising billboard, is to Bloom the perfect religious advertisement, transforming a holy figure into a spectacle of entertainment. The quote also reminds of T.J. Eckleburg's eyes in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* ('God sees everything' chapter 1, p.20), although here God is looked at, rather than exercising his gaze on the passers-by.

It is Helys' sandwichmen, however, that inspire Bloom with a clever and more scenic alternative for the firm's advertisements:

I suggested to him about a transparent showcart with two smart girls sitting inside writing letters, copybooks, envelopes, blottingpaper. I bet that would have caught on. Smart girls writing something catch the eye at once. Everyone dying to know what she's writing. Get twenty of them round you if you stare at nothing. Have a finger in the pie. Women too. Curiosity. Pillar of salt. Wouldn't have it of course because he didn't think of it himself first. Or the inkbottle I suggested with a false stain of black celluloid. His ideas for ads like Plumtree's potted under the obituaries, cold meat department. (147)

The idea is a very modern one, similar to Brooke's account of the underwear model in the streets of New York creating a spectacle of live advertising; Bloom's winning point is that he can see other people's point of view (Blades, 1996: 120), and that he instinctively knows what the public craves

to see. As Kershner points out, ‘In terms of his instincts for an advertising campaign, [...] Bloom is far ahead of his time’ (1996: 137-138). Bloom knows that the modern art of advertising has not reached its full potential in 1904 Dublin, as he reflects on

the infinite possibilities hitherto unexploited of the modern art of advertisement if condensed in trilateral monoideal symbols, vertically of maximum visibility (divined), horizontally of maximum legibility (deciphered) and of magnetising efficacy to arrest involuntary attention, to interest, to convince, to decide.

Such as?

K. 11. Kino’s 11/- Trousers.

House of Keys. Alexander J. Keyes (636)

Keyes’ advert is once again mentioned as an example of an effective slogan. Bloom’s aim is in fact to create adverts that reflect modernity, its speed and novelty:

What were habitually his final meditations?

Of some one sole unique advertisement to cause passers to stop in wonders a poster novelty, with all extraneous accretions excluded, reduced to its simplest and most efficient terms not exceeding the span of casual vision and congruous with the velocity of modern life. (672)

Bloom’s thoughts echo the words of modernist and avant-garde writers such as Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and F.T. Marinetti and aspire to the same economy of words that characterizes their writings. He identifies as key the stripping down of language to its most basic and effective terms to create successful advertisements, and to best express the fast-changing quality of modernity. What he identifies as vital characteristics for adverts are very similar to those attributed to modernist and avant-garde literature. Moreover, he aspires to the ‘new’ as well as the spectacle of which Debord speaks (‘to cause passers to stop in wonders a poster novelty’). As Len Platt points out, ‘Bloom [...] is at home in modernity. He knows exactly how things get done in contemporary Dublin and seems indicative of the modern on a larger scale’ (2011: 73). He is superior to his fellow

citizens in recognizing what is required from contemporary society and in creating intrinsically modern slogans to satisfy it.

In *Ulysses*, James Joyce shows an awareness of the consumerist culture of the time and in particular of the phenomenon of advertising as an influential presence in modern society. As Garry Leonard says, ‘to the question “How low can you go?” Joyce seems to answer: there is no limit. No low art low is low enough to be excluded or ignored.’ (2004: 40). He uses many examples of both real and fictional adverts, to give realistic quality to the novel as well as to highlight the pervasiveness of the advertising culture in turn-of-the-century Dublin and relevant aspects of the characters, who are strongly affected by them. In particular, Joyce shows how advertising becomes an obsession for the character of Leopold Bloom, for whom the job of advertising canvasser turns into a fixation that conditions most aspects of his life. Advertisements define Bloom’s identity and the way he relates to the world, as Joyce sees a clear link between consumerism and consciousness (Williams, 1997: 45). Nevertheless, they also provide him with the opportunity to express his understanding of modernity and contemporary society, as he stands out in the novel for his capacity to identify what is current and sought-after in Twentieth-century culture. That advertising is an intrinsic part of modernity seems to also be the view of Dorothy Sayers who, just like Joyce, shows ambivalence towards it. Although much happened which affected consumerism between the publication of Joyce’s *Ulysses* in 1922 and Dorothy Sayers’ novels in the 1930s, such as the Great Depression which started in 1929, her attitude towards advertising seems nevertheless to resemble Joyce’s, remaining ambivalent and aware of both its positive and negative influences.

DOROTHY SAYERS

Dorothy Sayers worked as an advertising copywriter in the industry for many years and was the author of several famous slogans for Guinness and Colman’s Mustard (Kungl, 2006). Her experience inspired some of her works, such as the novel *Murder Must Advertise*, and the essay

‘The Psychology of Advertising’. In the novel, published in 1933, she presents an ambivalent judgement of advertising, at times disapproving of its immorality and attributing its negative effects to the attitude of the public. In 1937 she published the essay where she engaged in a radical defence of advertising and the ability of the copywriter to make the most of language, condemning the public’s ignorance instead.

MURDER MUST ADVERTISE

The novel *Murder Must Advertise* (1978) is one of Sayers’ many crime novels centred on the character of the gentleman detective Lord Peter Wimsey. In this particular novel, the crime scene is an advertising agency, Pym’s Publicity Ltd, which provides Sayers with the opportunity to express her opinion about the industry she worked in. Scattered among the many advertising jingles in the novel, her views are nevertheless ambiguous; she describes the world of advertising copywriters as a fantasy world where morality has been devalued. Pym’s Publicity Ltd is also a corrupted place involved in drug dealing, and Sayers ridicules both adverts and members of the agency, describing the place as home to gossip and vanity. However, in several instances she seems to blame the public for their ignorance and indifference.

THE AGENCY AS A CORRUPTED ENVIRONMENT

The role of copywriters was a relatively new one in the 1930s, having been born at the beginning of the century (Morrisson, 1997: 444), and Sayers ridicules them by presenting them as cynical and disillusioned types, as well as criticising the environment of the agency throughout the novel. When Wimsey is at first introduced to Mr Ingleby from the agency, the latter warns him against working in advertising: ‘Three years in this soul-searing profession have not yet robbed me of all human feeling. But that will come in time’ (13). As she will also debate in her essay, Sayers maintains that copywriters are heartless and oblivious to ethics, hardened day by day by their job. The character of Ingleby in fact remarks: ‘We spend our whole time asking intimate questions of perfect strangers

and it naturally blunts our finer feelings' (57). While being a strict environment with its rules and its order, at the same time the departments of Pym's Publicity Ltd compete against each other and very few things are taken seriously as the firm is home to vanity and gossip (28). Moreover, the agency is home to ruthless rivalry and unfair behaviour: just like the deceased Mr Dean whom Lord Wimsey is investigating, copywriters are continuously stealing each other's ideas and taking false credit for them (37). Far from being a harmonious place, the advertising agency is also home to arguments:

No doubt it was because agreement on any point was so rare in a quarrelsome world, that the fantastical announcements of advertisers asserted it so strongly and so absurdly. [...] Actually, there was no agreement, either on trivialities like tea or on greater issues. In this place, where from morning till night a staff of over a hundred people hymned the praises of thrift, virtue, harmony, eupepsia and domestic contentment, the spiritual atmosphere was clamorous with financial storm, intrigue, dissension, indigestion, and marital infidelity. And with worse things- with murder wholesale and retail, of soul and body, murder by weapon and by poison. These things did not advertise, or if they did, they called themselves by other names. (237)

Wimsey believes that the dishonesty and corruption that reign in the agency make it a perfect cover for dope-trafficking, as he realizes in a conversation with his friend Parker:

PARKER: - As far as I can make out, all advertisers are dope-merchants.

WIMSEY: - So they are. Yes, now I come to think of it, there is a subtle symmetry about the thing. (204)

He will in the end be proven right.

Sayers also attacks the dishonesty of advertising slogans. She includes many examples in the novel, emphasizing their aim to scare the public; Bredon soon discovers the importance of ruthlessly exploiting human weaknesses and worries to create successful adverts:

Headline for Sanfect- Could I say, at a guess, ninety million? It sounds a good round number.

‘Ninety Million Open Doors by which Germs Can Enter- Lock Those Doors With Sanfect.

[...] ‘Would you leave your Child in a Den of Lions?’ That ought to get the mothers’ (49).

Copywriters seem to be indifferent to the feelings of the public, as Ingleby shows by saying: ‘How should anything be sacred to an advertiser?’ (57). Everyone in Pym’s Publicity Ltd seems to have resigned themselves to immorality, and to be fully conscious of the dishonesty their job requires.

Wimsey sums it up to Parker thus:

WIMSEY: -Now, Mr Pym is a man of rigid morality- except, of course, as regards his profession, whose essence is to tell plausible lies for money.

PARKER: - How about truth in advertising?

WIMSEY: - Of course, there is *some* truth in advertising. There’s yeast in bread, but you can’t make bread with yeast alone. Truth in advertising [...] is like leaven, which a woman hid in three measures of meal. It provides a suitable quantity of gas, with which to blow out a mass of crude misrepresentation into a form that the public can swallow. (65)

Again, when Wimsey expresses to Ingleby his doubts about the nature of their jobs, he is not met with sympathy:

WIMSEY: - I think this is an awfully immoral job of ours. I do, really. Think how we spoil the digestions of the public.

INGLEBY:- Ah, yes- but think how earnestly we strive to put them right again. We undermine ‘em with one hand and build ‘em up with the other. The vitamins we destroy in the canning, we restore in Revito, the roughage we remove from Peabody’s Piper Parritch we make up into a package and market as Banbury’s Breakfast Bran; the stomachs we ruin with Pompayné, we re-line with Peplets to aid digestion. And by forcing the damn-fool public to pay twice over- once to have its food emasculated and once to have the vitality put back again, we keep the wheels of commerce turning and give employment to thousands- including you and me. (48)

The immorality of the job does not seem to concern Ingleby, instead he rejoices in the power copywriters have to control and manipulate the public. Again, regarding the Whifflets campaign, Ingleby's scheme is designed to direct the public to do what the company wants:

This scheme should carry a strong appeal to women. 'Give your children that seaside holiday by smoking Whifflets'. That sort of thing. We want to get women down to serious smoking. Too many of them play about with it. Take them off scented stuff and put them on to the straightforward Virginia cigarette. (229)

Even Miss Meteyard, while being critical of certain slogans and asserting that 'everything is unnatural' in their job (37), nevertheless firmly believes in the service advertising agents offer: 'If we didn't do it, what would happen to the trade in this country? You've got to advertise' (286). Described as heartless and corrupted, the advertising agents of the novel seem to have resigned to the inevitability of advertising and the compromises it demands.

The agency is depicted as a fantasy world detached from reality, where the staff acts immaturely and everyone thinks in clichés. Wimsey is soon affected by its artificiality:

The very work that engaged him [...] wafted him into a sphere of dim platonic archetypes, bearing a scarcely recognisable relationship to anything in the living world. (152)

This 'unnatural' world has its own rules concerning language, and Sayers ridicules their strictness. Wimsey is promptly taught

That the word 'pure' was dangerous, because, if lightly used, it laid the client open to prosecution by the Government inspectors, whereas the words 'highest quality', 'finest ingredients', 'packed under the best conditions' had no legal meaning, and were therefore safe. [...] That the north of England liked its butter and margarine salted, whereas the south preferred it fresh; that the *Morning Star* would not accept any advertisements containing the word 'cure', though there was no objection to such expressions as 'relieve' or 'ameliorate'

and that, further, any commodity that professed to ‘cure’ anything might find itself compelled to register as a patent medicine and use an expensive stamp. (31)

Sayers seems to be particularly critical of the proportions advertising had reached in the 1930s, as she describes a scene in the city:

All over London the lights flickered in and out, calling on the public to save its body and purse: [...] The presses thundering and growling, ground out the same appeals by the million [...]. Whatever you’re doing, stop it and do something else! Whatever you’re buying, pause and buy something different. Be hectored into health and prosperity! Never let up! Never go to sleep! Never be satisfied. If once you are satisfied, all our wheels will run down- keep going- and if you can’t Try Nutrax for Nerves! (77)

The novel denounces advertising slogans as almost attacking the public leaving them no time to think or question their reliability, and invading every private space.

THE IGNORANCE OF THE PUBLIC

However, while in the novel Sayers clearly maintains that advertising is a corrupt and immoral practice, she also attributes responsibility for it to the public who, ignorant and disinterested, lets the companies exercise their power of manipulation. The indifference of the public is also a cause of criticism at the agency:

If Whifflets announce that they don’t damage the lungs, Puffins claim that they strengthen the pulmonary system and Gasparettes quote doctors who recommend them in cases of tuberculosis. They will try to snatch each other’s thunder. And what happens? The public smoke them all in turn, just as they did before. (215)

Throughout the novel, the public is made fun of by the copywriters, and is regarded as being ‘very odd’ (17). Wimsey quickly learns

That if, by the most far-fetched stretch of ingenuity, an indecent meaning could be read into a headline, that was the meaning that the great British Public would infallibly read into it. (31)

Ingleby and Garrett, in particular, have a very low opinion of the all-enduring public:

INGLEBY: - 'Upon my soul, I sometimes wonder why the long-suffering public doesn't rise up and slay us'

GARRETT: - 'They don't know of our existence,' said Garrett. 'They all think advertisements write themselves. When I tell people I'm in advertising, they always ask whether I design posters- they never think about the copy.'

INGLEBY: - 'They think the manufacturer does it himself,' said Ingleby. (57)

Mr Armstrong doesn't hold a more positive view:

It's no use telling people that the cost of the advertising has to come out of the quality of the goods. They don't care. All they want is something for nothing. (228)

The characters in the novel and, as she will confirm in her later essay, Sayers herself, consider the public to be ignorant and attracted by superfluities. Sayers frees advertisers of at least some of the criticism by deeming the public responsible for the effectiveness of advertising slogans; moreover, with her closing remark, she also intimates that advertising is ultimately necessary and unavoidable:

Tell England. Tell the world. Eat More Oats. Take Care of your Complexion. No More War. Shine your Shoes with Shino. Ask your Grocer. Children Love Laxamatt. Prepare to meet thy God. Bung's Beer is Better. Try Dogsboddy's Sausages. Whoosh the Dust away. Give them Crunchlets. Snagsbury's Soups are Best for the Troops. *Morning Star*, best Paper by Far. Vote for Punkin and Protect your Profits. Stop that Sneeze with Snuffo. Flush your kidneys with Fizzlets. Flush your Drains with Sanfect. Wear Woolfleece next to the Skin. Popp's Pills Pep you Up. Whiffle your way to Fortune...Advertise, or go under. (287)

Sayers concludes that modern society needs to advertise, as publicity can no longer be ignored or opposed. It must be accepted as part of the modern world, a point of view she reiterates in her essay.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ADVERTISING

A very resolute defence of advertising is given by Sayers in her essay published in 1937 in *The Spectator*, entitled 'The Psychology of Advertising'. In the essay Sayers explores themes she picked up on in the novel I have discussed, like the necessity to advertise in order to sell, and the public's responsibility to filter the information they receive from adverts. She also strongly defends the role of copywriters and praises their inventiveness. Overall, if *Murder Must Advertise* is ambivalent towards advertising, the essay published just four years later expresses a wholly positive view of the industry. Sayers maintains in the opening of the essay that everyone is in some way influenced by advertising, even if unconsciously. She states, 'in order to sell anything you must advertise', deeming advertising vital to commerce. Sayers was a copywriter herself for almost ten years and in the essay she defends copywriters, who are in her view unjustly criticised. She states:

The task of the advertisement writer is excessively difficult; he has to persuade people to spend money on things they do not know they want. He has to do this in a very small space [...]. In a few hundred words, or perhaps in as few as fifty, he must arrest attention, hold interest, persuade, confute and stimulate to action. (24)

Echoing descriptions of modernist writing and its condensation of language, Sayers praises the creativity that the copywriter must possess in order to convey a clear message in very few words; moreover, she adds: 'in addition to being a vivid and economical master of language, he must be a shrewd psychologist' (24). Freud's theories at the beginning of the century had been a key inspiration to modernist writers, but Sayers' description also recalls Trollope's accounts of advertising as a mind-conditioning and mind-controlling weapon, seen from the point of view of employees working in the advertising industry.

The advertiser must, she continues, persuade the public that the products he advertises are happiness, 'temporarily disguised under protean and slightly unexpected forms' (24). This 'colossal task', she maintains, legitimises the copywriter's appeal to human weaknesses such as fear, sloth,

greed and snobbery. His job is made so much harder, she continues, by the fact that he must exploit these weaknesses, and in order to do so he has to

Harden his heart, preserve his sense of humour and remind himself that, however loudly he shouts and however exaggerated his statements, he will be lucky if one-tenth of what he says is heard or the hundredth part of it attended to. He is obliged to be a hypocrite to some extent. He must seize to whatever virtue happens to be fashionable and turn it into commercial advantage. (25)

Sayers recognises the difficult task demanded of copywriters to suspend every sense of morality. Moreover, she says, the advertiser's success is largely due to the ignorance of the public:

The only weapons left him are the *suggestio falsi* and the *suppressio veri*, and his use even of these would be very much more circumscribed if one person in ten had ever been taught how to read. The first lesson the advertising writer has to learn is the exact use of words, and because this is the last thing the common reader cares to learn, the advantage is with the advertiser every time. (25)

She continues, firmly,

It will be seen that the best defence against both *suggestio falsi* and *suppressio veri* is to read advertisements carefully, observing both what is said and what is omitted. Those who prefer their English sloppy have only themselves to thank if the advertisement writer uses his mastery of vocabulary and syntax to mislead their weak minds. (26)

Unforgiving towards the public, Sayers concludes by saying

The moral of all this [...] is that we have the kind of advertising we deserve; since advertisements only pander to our own proclaimed appetites, and with whatsoever measure we meet our desires they are (most lavishly and attractively) measured to us again. (26)

'The Psychology of Advertising' strongly defends advertising and criticises the attitude of the public towards it. Sayers praises the copywriters' inventiveness and creativity with language, and condemns the indifference and incomprehension of the public.

It is interesting to notice how her opinion of advertising differs in her novel and in her essay. The novel, supposedly wanting to be more entertaining and amusing, mainly highlights the negative aspects of advertising, copywriters, and advertising agencies (although it does also hint at the negligence of the public), making fun of their peculiar ways and condemning the corruption of their environment. The essay, though, gives Sayers the chance to be more blunt about her views on the subject, calling into question her opinions after years of work in an advertising agency. A contemporary of Dorothy Sayers was George Orwell, who also wrote about advertising with ambivalence, showing he had more in common with the modernist James Joyce than his essay 'Inside the Whale' would have one think.

GEORGE ORWELL

In the essay 'Inside the Whale', published in 1940, Orwell condemns the modernists for their lack of purpose and 'attention to the urgent problems of the moment' (1970: 557), and while this may be true of political events, it is not of social changes, as Joyce showed with his interest in advertising. Orwell's message in *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* (1975), published in 1936, is similar to that of Joyce and Sayers. The protagonist of the story, Gordon Comstock, initially leaves his job as an advertising copywriter because he associates it with lying and corruption, strictly linked with money and commerce. He wishes instead to dedicate his time to writing poetry but as this results in failure, short of money he finally realizes that he cannot give up his condition of middle-class man: he resumes his job at the advertising agency, finally aware that advertising is a necessary 'evil' in modern society which cannot be fought against.

ADVERTISING AS A LOW AND CORRUPTED ART

In the novel, advertising is more than just posters on the walls; it symbolizes the decay of the modern world and the corruption of capitalism. Gordon hates modern life, and 'modern life is symbolized by that most eminent agency for the corruption of language, advertising' (Lee, 1970:

51). With these words, Orwell anticipates the discussion in his essay of 1946 'Politics and the English language', where the corruption of language is still a concern, in particular regarding political propaganda, which employs it as a tool to hide the truth (Orwell, 1971). In *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, Gordon despises advertisements for their silly slogans and their lies:

Next to the Prince of Wales, were tall hoardings covered with ads for patent foods and patent medicines. A gallery of monstrous doll-faces- pink, vacuous faces, full of goofy optimism. Q. T. Sauce, Truweet Breakfast Crisps ('Kiddies clamour for their Breakfast Crisps'), Kangaroo Burgundy, Vitamalt Chocolate, Bovex. Of them all, the Bovex one oppressed Gordon the most. A spectacle rat-faced clerk, with patent-leather hair, sitting at a café table grinning over a white mug of Bovex. 'Corner Table enjoys his meal with Bovex', the legend ran. (9)

Gordon feels hate and scorn towards advertising and struggles to come to terms with its power and effectiveness on the public:

His eyes fell again upon the ad-posters across the street. He almost wanted to laugh at them, they were so feeble, so dead-alive, so unappetizing. As though anybody could be tempted by *those!* (18)

In particular, the representation of a false and idealised society irritates Gordon the most:

He looked again at the ad-posters. He really hated them this time. That Vitamalt one, for instance! 'Hike all day on a slab of Vitamalt!' A youthful couple, boy and girl, in clean-minded hiking kit, their hair picturesquely tousled by the wind, climbing a style against a Sussex landscape. That girl's face! The awful bright tomboy cheeriness of it! The kind of girl who goes in for Plenty of Clean Fun. Windswept. [...] and next to them- Corner Table. 'Corner Table enjoys his meal with Bovex'. Gordon examined the thing with the intimacy of hatred. The idiotic grinning face, like the face of a self-satisfied rat, the slick back hair, the silly spectacles. Corner Table, heir of ages; victor of Waterloo, Corner Table, Modern Man as his masters want him to be. A docile little porker, sitting in the money-sty, drinking Bovex. (19)

Gordon is obsessed by these thoughts all throughout the novel and, similarly to Leopold Bloom, he cannot separate them from his every-day life.

Alongside the lying, Gordon is concerned with the more sinister aspect of adverts, as he reads menacing messages hidden behind the cheerful smiles in the pictures:

He looked now with more seeing eyes at those grinning yard-wide faces. After all, there was more there than mere silliness, greed, and vulgarity. Corner Table grins at you, seemingly optimistic, with a flesh of false teeth. But what is behind the grin? Desolation, emptiness, prophecies of doom. For can you not see, if you know how to look, that behind that slick self-satisfaction, that tittering fat-bellied triviality, there is nothing but a frightful emptiness, a secret despair? The great death-wish of the modern world. Suicide pacts. Heads stuck in gas-ovens in lonely maisonettes. French letters and Amen Pills. And the reverberations of future wars. Enemy aeroplanes flying over London; the deep threatening hum of the propellers, the shattering thunder of the bombs. It is all written in Corner Table's face. (21)

He considers himself to be one of the few who 'know how to look' and see 'the great death-wish of the modern world' hidden in the advertisements. He believes their function is to divert the public's attention from the issues of society and deceptively maintain the illusion of a perfect world. He stops to look at the posters on Westminster Bridge, but its historical association with poetry since Wordsworth's sonnet 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' is replaced by that of commercial culture, as Gordon sees an advertisement in the form of a poem:

There were some posters opposite, livid in the lamplight. A monstrous one, ten feet high at least, advertised Bovex. The Bovex people had dropped Corner Table and got on to a new track. They were running a series of four-line poems- Bovex Ballads, they were called. There was a picture of a horribly eupeptic family, with grinning ham-pink faces, sitting at breakfast; underneath, in blatant lettering:

Why should you be thin and white?

And have that washed-out feeling?

Just take hot Bovex every night.

Invigorating- healing!

Gordon gazed at the thing- He drank in its puling silliness. (245)

This advert in particular irritates Gordon for its use of poetry, his chosen genre of writing through which he wishes to support himself. However, adverts are only the product of the world of publicity, and Gordon looks with the same scorn at advertising agencies.

Just like Pym's Publicity Ltd in Sayers' *Murder Must Advertise*, the advertising agency in Orwell's novel is a corrupt place where people are ignorant of morals, one of the 'fungi [...] that sprout from a decaying capitalism' (56). He remarks:

The interesting thing about the New Albion was that it was so completely modern in spirit.

There was hardly a soul in the firm who was not perfectly well aware that publicity-advertising- is the dirtiest ramp that capitalism has yet produced. (57)

If the agency is so 'modern in spirit' while at the same time working with 'the dirtiest ramp' of modern society, Orwell seems to be implying that modernity comes with a price. As in Sayers' novel, copywriters are portrayed as brutal and ruthless people:

Most of the employees were the hard-boiled, Americanised, go-getting type- the type to whom nothing in the world is sacred, except money. They had their cynical code worked out.

The public are swine; advertising is the rattling at a stick inside a swill-bucket. (57)

With much disregard for the public, the staff of the New Albion mercilessly devise new ways to exercise control over it. Both advertisements and advertising agents are described by Orwell as characterized by corruption and immorality.

THE MONEY-WORLD

Most of the disdain Gordon has for advertising comes from its relationship to money and commerce. He believes that his failures are all attributable to his disapproval of advertising and consequent lack of money. As he rebels against poverty, Gordon's ultimate problem is whether to accept or reject money, and society with it (Lee, 1970: 49). Money is a constant worry to him, one that prevents him from realizing his dream to write poetry:

He turned the money in his pocket. [...] He couldn't cope with rhymes and adjectives. You can't, with only twopence halfpenny in your pocket. (10)

Gordon's mind is constantly focused on his lack of money, and he sees advertising as the primary cause for it. Advertisements symbolize to him 'the money-stink' (18):

In a crude, boyish way, he had begun to get the hang of this money-business. At an earlier age than most people he grasped that *all* modern commerce is a swindle. Curiously enough, it was the advertisements in the Underground stations that first brought it home to him. He little knew, as the biographers say, that he himself would one day have a job in an advertising firm. (48)

To Gordon, advertising represents the 'money-world' (55) and money, he believes, is the reason of his isolation and his unhappiness:

Money, money, all is money! Because he had no money the Dorings snubbed him, because he had no money the *Primrose* had turned down his poem, because he had no money Rosemary wouldn't sleep with him. Social failure, artistic failure, sexual failure- they are all the same. And lack of money is at the bottom of them all. (84)

In particular he believes that his social failures are caused by his lack of money:

It's like those ads for Listerine, "Why is he always alone? Halitosis is ruining his career". Poverty is spiritual halitosis. (100)

Gordon attributes the origin of his struggles to the role that money plays in modern society and in particular to advertising as one of its most pervasive and influential manifestations. His obsession

with money comes from his class, and class also makes Gordon realize that he must give up his fight in order to maintain his respectability.

GORDON'S COMPROMISE

Gordon's rebellion results in him being cut off from society. His lack of money compromises every aspect of his life and prevents him from living a normal existence. As much as he would like to be a poet, the course of events shows him that it is not his righteous place in society:

Gordon showed, almost from the start, a remarkable talent for copywriting. He could compose an ad as though he had been born to it. The vivid phrase that sticks and rankles, the neat little para. that packs a world of lies into a hundred words- they came to him almost unsought. He had always had a gift for words, but this was the first time he had used it successfully (59)

He despises the deceitful nature of copywriting, but he finally realizes that it is the sole means to provide a living for him:

This, then, was what he was coming to! Writing lies to tickle the money out of fools' pockets! There was beastly irony, too, in the fact he, who wanted to be a 'writer', should score his sole success in writing ads for deodorants. [...] Most copywriters, they say, are novelists *manqués*; or is it the other way about? (59)

Even though Gordon's attitude to advertising is the opposite of Leopold Bloom's, who approaches it with enthusiasm, it nevertheless remains the way to success. The lack of money and his subsequent struggles convince Gordon to go back to the New Albion, where he finally obtains the success he has been craving:

There was no doubt about Gordon's literary ability. He could use words with the economy that is only learned by years of effort. So perhaps his long agonising struggles to be a 'writer' had not been wasted after all. (259)

The stable income which Gordon receives from his job at the advertising agency seems to provide the solution to his struggles: he reconciles with his friends, gets married, and starts a family.

Gordon 'accepts a society he spends most of the novel denying' (Lee, 1970: 50). He finally gives in to the haunting presence of the aspidistra, symbol of respectability and middle-class values, always reminding him of what his life should be like. With the symbolic purchase of the plant and the assertion that things are finally 'happening' in the Comstock family, Orwell closes the novel with the intimation that, in order to maintain one's respectable status in society, one must also compromise and accept its 'evils'. Gordon would like to be independent from money, but the lack of it is the very reason that prevents him from moving on in life, reducing him to a state of isolation and constant struggle. Advertising and money are at the bottom of Gordon's problematic existence as Orwell shows that 'it is the lack of money that alienates, possession of money that makes a person whole' (Ingle, 1993: 32), and advertising is one of its more modern manifestations. As Gordon finds out, rebelling against the system is futile, because the balance must always be restored. As for Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, advertising is for Gordon Comstock an obsession. His class requires of Gordon respectability, which he cannot seem to maintain without his job in the advertising firm. Ultimately, Gordon understands that in modern society a compromise is necessary, even if reintegration implies defeat (Ingle, 1993: 34). Orwell accepts the evils of advertising as unavoidable in modernity, and makes it, if not a substitute for literature, certainly a good contender.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to show that similar views on advertising are attributable to both writers from the 1920s, like James Joyce, and writers from the 1930s, even though they referred to different social, economical and political contexts, as they maintained ambiguous views about commercial culture and publicity. I have discussed very different writers, as James Joyce was a 'high' modernist, Dorothy Sayers a popular detective fiction writer, and George Orwell a politically committed author. James Joyce was strongly influenced by advertising and consumer culture, and he acknowledged its strong influence on Twentieth-century society. He maintains that advertising

and art are not completely separate and that advertising is a constituent of modern society. Similarly, Dorothy Sayers recognises that advertising is vital for commerce and she exalts its creativeness. She strongly defends advertising and the job of copywriters, but does not condone the apathy of the public and their 'weak minds' (26). Orwell's Gordon Comstock maintains that the divide between the two is clear, and regards advertising as a low art, positively inferior to literature. Orwell, however, identifies it as Gordon's only way to success; as Joyce, he is conscious of its pervasive character but he recognizes that advertising cannot be ignored in the modern world as it has become a necessary tool, and he sees a conscious compromise as the solution. Joyce, Sayers, and Orwell, as I have shown, had ambivalent opinions of advertising, but very similar ones. They accepted its role in modern society, nevertheless conscious of its faults.

CONCLUSION

Through my analysis of various works of literature, I aimed to show how opinions about advertising changed from the late Victorian era to the 1930s. As I have shown, it is a theme that interested many authors, sometimes radically different ones, going against canonical literary groupings. Victorian and early Twentieth-century writers approached advertising as a negative phenomenon and matter of social concern, and they regarded it as strictly separate from literature. However, during the 1920s and 1930s, it started to be seen as a new form of art and it gradually became inseparable from literature. The works by Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope I have analysed showed interesting resemblances of thought with early Twentieth-century texts by Rupert Brooke, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Virginia Woolf. Both showed an anxiety towards advertising as an agent of corruption in society, as well as believing advertising to be separate from and inferior to literature. Dickens believed in the use of advertising for the promotion of literature, but he regarded it as a practice detrimental to the urban environment and to the health of citizens, as its constant presence in the city traffic constituted a distraction and a nuisance, as well as a danger for the toxic substances employed. Anthony Trollope also believed advertising to be a threat to modern trade: in his novel it is the cause of ruin, while writing is portrayed as the only road to success for the character of Robinson. At the beginning of the Twentieth century, Rupert Brooke showed in his *Letters from America* the pervasive and unhealthy character of modern American advertising and its religious-like and mind-conditioning role. F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* depicts advertising as a corruptive practice which strongly influences social relations, while Virginia Woolf describes it as a manipulative and alienating force in *Mrs Dalloway*. Despite the difference in media and historical contexts, these authors shared a concern for the negative influence of advertising through its invasive, corruptive, and 'spectacular' character, as well starting to interrogate the relationship between literature and publicity.

At the same time, other authors such as the imagist Allen Upward, the vorticist Wyndham Lewis, and the futurist Fortunato Depero welcomed advertising and stressed its positive qualities as true representatives of modernity. Moreover, they questioned the high-low divide in the arts, showing that traditional differences attributed to Modernist and avant-garde authors are in fact absent when one considers their approach to popular culture. In their works, advertising and literature become inseparable; publicity plays in fact a practical role as an intrinsic part of the literary work, and is deemed a form of art equal to literature. Allen Upward combined advertising and poetry in 'The Magic Carpet', asserting that there is no difference between them, and elevating publicity to the level of a 'high' art. Wyndham Lewis showed in the magazine *Blast* the point of contact between advertising and literature by giving it the structure of an advertising manifesto, and by making advertising fundamental in the language and characterization of the play 'Enemy of the Stars'. Fortunato Depero gave his futurist manifestos the character of adverts to stress the modern nature of Futurism for, amongst others, its employment of advertising; moreover, his canons of futurist poetry are reminiscent of the characteristics of advertising slogans. These authors advocated for the abolition of the high-low divide in the arts and saw advertising as a form of art as valuable as literature.

Authors from the 1930s, preceded by James Joyce's *Ulysses* of 1922, took a closer look at the implications of working in advertising, and showed in their texts a more moderate approach to this practice. I analysed texts by George Orwell and Dorothy Sayers, two very different authors who moreover belonged to a different historical, social, and economical context to Joyce and who produced very different pieces of writing, nevertheless sharing his views regarding advertising. Despite Orwell's dislike for the Modernists, he and Sayers shared Joyce's view of advertising as a faulty but necessary practice in the modern world, and not strictly antagonistic to literature. To Joyce's Leopold Bloom, advertising is in fact an art: Bloom is an advertising canvasser, but also an aesthete of the art of advertising, as he focuses on the aesthetics of adverts, seeing them as a source

of beauty. Dorothy Sayers defended the role of copywriters and compared them to men of letters for their ability to make the most of language by being creative and specific with words. In Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* the protagonist Gordon Comstock seeks his fortune as a writer, but he only finds success as an advertising copywriter; Comstock despises advertising as a source of corruption, but Orwell seems to imply that it is not too dissimilar to literature, and not necessarily inferior to it. If sometimes ambiguous about the value of advertising, *Ulysses* by James Joyce, *Murder Must Advertise* by Dorothy Sayers, and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* by Orwell nevertheless seem to make it inseparable from literature in their structure: the narration is constantly broken up by citations of advertising slogans and examples of adverts, which become a constituent and inseparable part of the novel. As I have shown, from the Victorian era to the 1930s opinions about advertising have characterised literature from an antagonism towards it to an enthusiastic embrace, bringing together very different authors from different decades, and interrogating the relationship between advertising and literature, moving from a firm rejection of advertising as an art, to an embrace of it as a contributor and equal of literature.

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APPENDIX

Allen Upward, 'The Magic Carpet'. First published in the magazine *Egoist*, Issue I (June 1, 1914):

220 (Morrisson, 2000: 100).

THE
Magic Carpet.
ALLEN UPWARD.

*This painted poster
Has snatched me from Trafalgar Square.
To camels fording Asia streams,
Laden with woven dreams.
The soul of Persia dyes the wool:
The heart of the sad old Astronomer
Bleeds once again beneath the maiden's
foot.*

ENVOY:

_____ & Sons.

There is more poetry in your advertisement
Than many numbers of our best
Reviews.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]