

A Systemic Functional Approach to Multisemiotic Texts

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This Honours Thesis represents my own work and due acknowledgement is given in footnotes whenever information is derived from other sources. No other part of this Honours Thesis has been or is being concurrently submitted for any other qualification at any other University.

Signed _____

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of tables and diagrams	v
Abstract	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Why Systemic Functional?	1
Chapter 2: Why Multisemiotic?	9
Chapter 3: Advertisements as Multisemiotic Texts	13
Chapter 4: The Systemic Functional Model	18
Chapter 5: Analysis of the Absolut Vodka Advertisement	32
Chapter 6: Conclusion	64
References	65

LIST OF TABLES AND DIAGRAMS

TABLES

Table 1:	O'Toole's model of analysis for paintings	8
Table 2:	Proposed systemic functional model of analysis	19
Table 3:	Mathematical representation of intrarelations	28
Table 4:	A mapping of different approaches and their respective functions	31
Table 5a:	A functional grammar analysis of clause I	51
Table 5b:	A functional grammar analysis of clause I (cont'd)	52
Table 6:	A functional grammar analysis of clause II	55
Table 7:	A functional grammar analysis of clause III	56
Table 8:	A functional grammar analysis of clause IV	57
Table 9:	A functional grammar analysis of clause V	58

DIAGRAMS

Diagram 1:	A system of paradigms and syntagms	5
Diagram 2:	A multisemiotic text incorporating literary and visual semiotic codes	11
Diagram 3:	The effect of visuals on semantics	15
Diagram 4:	A representation of relationships in the operational function	30
Diagram 5:	The Absolut Vodka Advertisement	33
Diagram 6:	The metaphor of 3D modelling	34
Diagram 7:	Representation of the Compositional Function	36
Diagram 8:	Representation of relationships in sequence I	44
Diagram 9:	Representation of relationships in sequence II	46
Diagram 10:	Representation of relationships in sequence III	48
Diagram 11:	Representation of interrelationships of the text	61

ABSTRACT

In current academia, text analysis is concerned with the analysis of only one semiotic code, usually the linguistic semiotic code. However, the advent of Information Technology saw the influx of other semiotic codes into texts. This gives rise to multisemiotic texts, which are texts that deploy more than one semiotic code. Compared to text with a single semiotic code, the meaning potential of multisemiotic texts is greatly expanded. Hence, meaning creation becomes an interactive, dynamic and symbiotic process.

In this thesis, I will construct a systemic functional model that is able to effectively and exhaustively analyse multisemiotic texts that contain both the visual and linguistic semiotic codes. To illustrate how the model of analysis works, I will analyse an advertisement. The proposed model of analysis is able to distinguish the salient components that function within the advertisement, capture the dynamic processes of meaning creation and reveal the advertisement as a powerful and holistic communicative tool.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation results from a convergence of my work as a graphic designer and my studies. As a linguistics student, I discover that the systemic-functional approach used to analyse language can be applied to the analysis of the visual language (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; O’Toole 1995). The frameworks postulated are able to analyse the visual schemata comprehensively. However, the usual design project does not use visual images *per se* but uses words as well. In my preliminary research, the systemic functional models are not able to analyse texts with more than one semiotic code effectively. Realising the wide variety of multisemiotic texts available, I narrow down the scope of research to one genre of multisemiotic texts. Current models of analysis applied to that particular genre are myopic in their approach and insufficient for the purpose of understanding the dynamic processes of meaning creation. Thus, in this thesis, I propose a systemic functional model that can comprehensively analyse this specific genre of multisemiotic texts.

CHAPTER 1

Why Systemic and Functional?

In recent years, much interest has been generated in the field of systemic functional linguistics. It is attributed largely to M A K Halliday and his seminal work An Introduction to Functional Grammar (1994). Subsequently, the large amount of work and research emanating from Australia contributed to the establishment of the systemic functional approach to language. In particular, the Newtown Semiotics Circle in Sydney provided the fertile ground for the development of systemic functional linguistics. Today, under the

auspice of systemic functional linguistics, a plethora of subjects are explored. For example, subjects as varied as painting, sculpture, architecture, charts, maps, mathematics texts, science texts, literary texts, service encounters, images and genre studies have been explored by Eggins (1994), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Lemke (1998), O'Halloran (in press), O'Toole (1994), Thibault (1991) and Ventola (1987). The systemic functional approach is a versatile and comprehensive approach that can be applied to many fields of research.

Essentially, there are two basic assumptions in a systemic functional approach. It has to be systemic and functional. I stand accused that these assumptions may just be a stating of the obvious or mundane acts of verbal juggling. However, the theoretical underpinnings of this entire approach lie in these two meaning-laden words. In current academia, these two words together with linguistics have been reduced to the abbreviation 'SFL' (Systemic Functional Linguistics). There is a need to clearly define these two terms which serve as the basic tenets of SFL. The definitions given here are not etymologically based. Instead, I believe that the two words and their explanations provided here capture SFL in their visceral qualities.

Firstly, reiterating the obvious again - the approach has to be functional. It has to be functional in the sense that each model can be used to analyse authentic texts taken from actual usage. As far as possible, it steers clear from a theory-based, prescriptive method of analysis to a practice-based, descriptive method. Eggins (1994:1) writes that 'underlying all these varied applications is a common focus on the analysis of authentic products of social interaction'. Similarly, Halliday (1994:xiii) states that 'it is functional in the sense that it is designed to account for how the language is used'. The model's

function is to be practical and feasible when it comes to analysing texts found from actual usage in a given community.

Indeed, almost every systemic functionalist uses authentic texts to elucidate the application of their systemic functional models. Halliday (1994:368-391) extracts an interaction between a manageress and a new salesgirl. The ‘silver text’, as it is commonly known as, is a transcription of an actual interaction in which a manageress gives advice to a salesgirl on selling techniques and the love for silver. O’Toole (1994:3-31) analyses Botticelli’s Primavera to demonstrate a more systematic and consistent way of discussing a painting while Eggins (1994:307-347) analyses the ‘Crying Baby’ texts to demonstrate her model’s capability of distinguishing genres. All of these are not examples concocted to fit their respective frameworks; they are actual occurrences. And therein lies the functional element in each working framework – it has to be functional not in theory but in practice. Similarly, the systemic functional model of analysis proposed in this thesis will be subjected to the test of authentic texts.

Besides the model of analysis being functional, systemic functionalists believe that the semiotic codes themselves are functional. Their function is to make meaning. Members in a community with knowledge of these semiotic codes are able to communicate with one another because of the rich resources available in these semiotic codes. Each semiotic code is studied as a tool for communication. Halliday (1994:36) believes that there are three essential components in the creation of meaning: the ideational¹ metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction and the

¹ Halliday further divides the ideational metafunction into the experiential and logical metafunctions.

textual metafunction. Eggins eloquently summarises the imperative of language:

‘the fundamental purpose that language has evolved to serve is to enable us to make meanings with each other. In other words, language users do not interact in order to exchange sounds with each other, nor even to exchange words or sentences. People interact in order to make meanings: to make sense of the world and of each other’

(Eggins 1994:11).

For his model of the analysis of paintings, O’Toole (1994) modifies these metafunctions into the modal function, the representational function and the compositional function. O’Toole believes that paintings use these three essential functions to communicate to the viewer the message. In summary, underlying each systemic functional model is the belief that semiotic systems’ key function is to encode meanings about the world around us.

Besides the semiotic system being functional, each element within that particular system must be functional. The meaning of each element is derived from the system it resides in. And at this juncture, this aspect of functionality is related to the systemic aspect of SFL. Quoting the obvious again, the systemic functional approach has to be systemic. Systemic functionalists believe that each and every element can be anchored within a system. Like a grid system, this anchoring is performed on two axes: the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic axes. On the syntagmatic axis, Saussure asserts that

‘words acquire relations based on the linear nature of language because they are chained together... combinations supported by linearity are syntagms. The syntagm is always composed of two or more consecutive units... in the syntagm

a term acquires its value only because it stands in opposition to everything that precedes or follows it'

(Saussure 1959:123).

The meaning of each element ultimately lies not in its own intrinsic value but in its oppositional value with other elements. Both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes confer oppositional value to the element, making it a composite meaningful unit. However, each axis creates meaning of a different kind. The paradigmatic axis consists of a finite set of choices in which only one choice can be made. The choice acquires its value not from oppositions in linearity but oppositions in a specific paradigm.

This can be elucidated in *Diagram 1*:

k	Q	t
b	Q	t
m	Q	t

Diagram 1: A system of paradigms and syntagms.

The phonemes /k/, /Q/ and /t/ lie on a syntagmatic axis while the phonemes /k/, /b/ and /m/ lie on a paradigmatic axis. The composite sound /kQt/ is created by a linear sequence of oppositional sounds, /k/, /Q/ and /t/ but it is differentiated from composite sounds /bQt/ and /mQt/ because of the paradigmatic opposition of the phoneme /k/ from /b/ and /m/. The paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes create a system that breathes meaning

into each element through oppositions. Similarly, each element within a systemic functional model is functional only within a system of oppositions.

We can expand this concept of an oppositional system beyond the two axes into contexts. It is known that meaning is only relevant within two contexts: the context of situation and the context of culture. Eggins (1994:19) states that ‘the system thus orders the conceptual world according to culturally established conventions about which dimensions of reality is meaningful’. Hence, it can be viewed that an element is functional within the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes while a semiotic system is functional only within contextual fields of situation and culture. Each text’s meaning potential is ultimately derived from a particular context of situation or culture. The ‘silver text’ is derived from a cultural context of western-based customer service and a situational context of a manageress teaching a new salesgirl while Botticelli’s Primavera is relevant only in a culture of Italian patronage of fine arts and a situational context of Greek mythology. These contexts breathe meaning into texts and their respective internal semiotic systems.

At this juncture, the phrase ‘systemic functional’ becomes significant through the interaction between these two salient ingredients of the approach. The approach’s function of understanding how meaning is created (functional) is tied to how meaning is created within a system (systemic). This belief in the system and its functions are consciously captured in systemic functional models of analysis. Halliday’s functional model of analysis of the clause takes into account the three metafunctions and structures them into an exhaustive system of analysis. Similarly, O’Toole’s (1994) model of analysis of paintings distils the three functions into a system of work, episode, figure and member (*Table 1*

pg8). Each systemic functional model of analysis is a system that orders each function and element in a cohesive structure, with the objective of discovering how meaning is created.

In conclusion, Halliday's summary of the systemic functional approach is appropriate:

'In general, therefore, the approach leans more towards the applied than the pure, the rhetorical rather than the logical, the actual rather than the ideal, the functional rather than the formal, the text rather than the sentence. The emphasis is on text analysis as a mode of action, a theory of language as a means of getting things done'

(Halliday 1994:xxvii).

O'TOOLE'S MODEL

Painting

Unit \ Function	REPRESENTATIONAL	MODAL	COMPOSITIONAL
WORK	Narrative themes Scenes Portrayals Interplay of episodes	Rhythm Gaze Frame Light Perspective Modality	<u>Gestalt</u> : Framing Horizontals Verticals Diagonals Proportion Geometry Line Rhythm Colour
EPISODE	Actions, events Agents-patients-goals Focal/side sequence Interplay of actions	Relative Prominence Scale Centrality Interplay of Modalities	Relative position in work Alignment Interplay Coherence } of forms
FIGURE	Character Act/Stance/Gesture Clothing Components Object	Gaze Stance Characterization Contrast: Scale Line Light Colour	Relative position in episode Parallelism/Opposition Subframing
MEMBER	Part of body/object Natural form	Stylization	Cohesion: (Parallel/Contrast/Rhythm) Reference

Reproduced from O'Toole 1994: 24..

Table 1.

CHAPTER 2

Why Multisemiotic?

To be pedantic about definitions, the term ‘semiotic’ is actually coined by Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher (Cook 1992). He postulates that there are three types of signs: icon, index and symbol; each having a different relationship with the concept it signifies (Eco 1976). However, his work remains elusive because of its philosophical density. Its more applicable counterpart is semiology, ‘a science that studies the life of signs within society’, as postulated by Saussure (1959:16). However, in recent times, semiotics has become the generic term for the science of signs. In this thesis, the term ‘multisemiotic’ alludes to the science of signs. More specifically, it means that two or more semiotic codes are being deployed within a single text.

O’Toole (1994) suggests that the analysis of texts across semiotic codes is plausible. He elucidates this by comparing W.H. Auden’s Musée des Beaux Arts with Pieter Bruegel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus (O’Toole 1994:145-165). The former is a poem and the latter is a painting, hence, the comparison is between the literary and visual semiotic codes. The significance lies in the interaction between these two different semiotic codes and their ability to create multiple meanings:

‘Modern semiotic art criticism and modern linguistic stylistics, however, can offer more than the counting and matching of individual features and lexical items. It concerns itself with the syntax, and, as we are trying to show, the networks of relations which make up the whole syntagm of the poem and picture are complex, multidimensional and interactive’

(O’Toole 1994:154).

The comparison between Auden's poem and Bruegel's painting is possible only because there is a point of similarity between the two. Auden's poem is essentially a critique or interpretation of Bruegel's painting. Although not entirely impossible to find, these points of similarities are uncommon across semiotic codes and apply only to a specific range of texts. However, these points of similarities can be found predominantly in multisemiotic texts where different semiotic codes work together and against one another within a single text. Hence, instead of comparing semiotic codes across different mediums, we can compare semiotic codes within a single medium. For example, the poet, William Blake fuses the visual and the poetic into a multifaceted rhetoric. He uses illustration to modify or clarify the metaphor of a poem. The Tyger, one of Blake's poems, creates a semantic tension by contrasting the descriptive poem of the fearful creature with an illustration of a meek creature (Johnson 1979:50). As a result, both the literary and visual semiotic codes work against each other and together to form a discordant or more complete picture of the Tyger (*Diagram 2 pg11*).

Multisemiotic texts do not exclusively deploy a single semiotic code, instead they combine different semiotic codes to produce symbiotic meanings. Lemke (1994) terms these texts as multimedia genres. A better-suited term would be multisemiotic texts (O'Halloran in press) as it points to the existence of multiple semiotic codes within the texts. Moreover, in today's nomenclature, the term 'multimedia' has become a generic term for media that use moving images, text, sounds and interactivity. Multisemiotic emphasises that semiotic codes are the essential infrastructure of meaning-creation. Thus, O'Toole's suggestion of comparative semiotics can shift its focus on searching for relationships which may not exist in the first place to discovering the new meaning potential of the evident relationships between

WILLIAM BLAKE

The Tyger

(reproduced from Johnson 1979: 50 -51)

The Tyger

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night:⁴
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

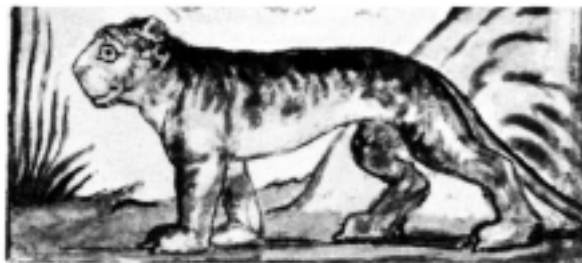
In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare sieze the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?⁵

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:⁶
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb⁷ make thee?

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?



*A multisemiotic text of
the literary and visual semiotic codes.*

the different semiotic codes. Understandably, intertextuality occurs when multisemiotic texts interact with other texts or semiotic codes to form new meanings. Again, the emphasis should not be on creating contrived links between texts but through obvious links and relationships, exploring and understanding the dynamic processes of meaning creation.

Research into multisemiotic texts is not new. Barthes (1985) studied Parisian advertisements, deconstructing their intended and unintended meanings. O'Halloran (in press) creates frameworks for mathematical symbolism and visual display to analyse mathematical texts which utilise images, text and mathematical symbols. Lemke (1998) explores the visual and verbal dimensions in scientific texts. Kress and Leeuwen (1996) construct a framework entirely based on Halliday's Functional Grammar. Hanno Ehses (1987) at the Nova Scotia College of Art uses literary metaphors to discover visual images and textual parallels in theatre posters. Each approach is visibly different because of the vastly different multisemiotic texts being analysed and their respective underlying academic disciplines.

In this thesis, I am not proposing an approach or a model that can be a panacea for all analytical problems when dealing with multisemiotic texts. Instead, I am proposing that the systemic functional approach can create exhaustive and effective models of analysis for multisemiotic texts. I will explore one specific genre of multisemiotic text that has come under much academic scrutiny in recent times. I will show how the systemic functional model of analysis can decode or deconstruct a multisemiotic text comprehensively to discover the text's underlying structure, define the relationships between the semiotic codes and capture the dynamic processes of meaning creation.

CHAPTER 3

Advertisements as Multisemiotic Texts

In this study, I will focus on advertisements, regarding them as the quintessential multisemiotic text. Capitalism has become the machinery that runs today's global economy. Even China, the largest communist nation in the world, has succumbed to capitalistic sentiments (Moore: 1994). And global capitalism needs advertising to sustain mass consumption as well as fuel consumption to astronomic levels. Raymond Williams, a British historian, calls advertising as 'nothing other than the official art of capitalism' (quoted in Arens 1996:22). Besides affecting the economic sphere, advertising also has a significant impact on the social and political spheres. Arens (1996:40) writes 'some professional critics... believe advertising adversely affects people's value systems by promoting a hedonistic, materialistic way of life'. In America, the average person is bombarded with as much as 1,000 commercial messages a day (Arens 1996:39). The proliferation of advertisements and their intrusion into all spheres of the life of the modern man has made advertisements the quintessential text.

The analysis of advertisements is not new. Sociologists like Barthes (1985), Williamson (1978) and Goffman (1979) are the first to analyse advertisements. In recent years, linguists like Cook (1994), Kathpalia (1992) and Howe (1955) have also taken a special interest in advertisements. However, the approaches of analysis vary significantly, adapting frameworks from social-semiotics to genre analysis. Although there may be some overlapping, each approach is largely confined to their respective areas of study. On the whole, the approaches ignore the fact that besides communicative objectives, advertising has other objectives. Taking these approaches' shortcomings into consideration, I propose

a systemic functional approach that can provide a comprehensive analysis of this particular genre called advertisements.

At this juncture, there is a need to separate advertising into its various forms: print, television, radio and new media (for example, web advertising). This study restricts itself to only the traditional medium of print advertising for several reasons. Firstly, the mediums of television and radio allow true authenticity only in their original forms. The print medium can only capture motion from television with storyboards and sounds from radio with transcripts. The translation from the dynamic to the static can never quite capture the essence of the original. New media, by its own definition, is relatively new and still in its formative stages. Although print advertisements can be represented easily on paper in this thesis, they remain, at best, good replicas. Factors such as original size, the page it first appeared and its relative position within the entire magazine cannot be captured. However, of all the mediums, print advertisements are the least problematic for representation.

Secondly, most print advertisements have only two semiotic codes at work – images and text². In the context of this thesis, images are subsumed under the visual semiotic code and text under the linguistic semiotic code. In order to create a linguistic sign, the linguistic semiotic code can deploy either the graphetic system for writing or the phonetic system for speech. The linguistic sign is thus formed by either combining graphetic signs or phonetic signs. The combinations are meaningful, hence, the linguistic sign is essentially

² However, in recent times, new developments in the printing industry have allowed sounds and smells to enter into the print medium. This is still uncommon due to the costs involved.

semantic in quality. The graphetic sign is realised as a '[mark] on a surface' while the phonetic as a '[sound] in the air' (Cook 1992:60). However, each of the graphetic and phonetic systems has an accompanying semiotic system known as paralanguage. Resources such as gestures, facial expressions, body postures, eye contact, tone, pitch and loudness of voice are paralinguistic features of the phonetic system. The graphetic system's paralanguage is technically known as typography, which means the way writing is displayed. Since the linguistic sign is dependent on either the graphetic or the phonetic system to create meaning, inevitably, it is also affected by paralanguage. In the case of print advertisements, the phonetic system is not present as the linguistic sign is created through the graphetic system and its paralinguistic counterpart.

Most of the times, it can be a self-defeating exercise to separate the three components since they are extricably tied to one another and function as a holistic sign. However, it is necessary to pinpoint cases where the visual quality of a linguistic sign has a significant impact on the semantic quality. The diagram below depicts how the visual quality can affect the semantic quality:

I Hate You

Figure a

I HATE YOU

Figure b

Diagram 3: The effect of visuals on semantics.

Figure *a* (typeset in Futura Condensed Heavy) is a congruent depiction of the semantic meaning of the word 'hate'. In fact, the words' visual qualities of boldness and

clarity reinforce the meaning of 'hate'. In contrast, figure *b* (typeset in Nuptial Script) is an incongruent representation. Its stylised and elaborate features have altered the semantic meaning of the word 'hate'. Hence, in these cases, it is important to distinguish the linguistic sign from its visual forms.

Lastly, advertisements are singled out because the encoders understand the semiotic codes' potential to create meaning and harness this potential to create strong messages. Each image and word is carefully selected to perform a specific function. The interaction and negotiation of images and words can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger modus operandi of the cooperation between the illustrators, graphic designers, photographers and copywriters in the advertising world. In advertising, the term 'creative director' connotes the act of direction and planning in a creative manner. Advertisements are multisemiotic texts that maximise both semiotic codes' meaning potential to encode meaning for effective communication.

These qualities make advertisements the perfect candidate for analysis. It is a text that we come into contact so often that we have perhaps forgotten its latent power to influence not just our purchasing decisions, but our entire perspective on life. Wernick writes:

'Overall, then, the commercial requirements of cultural adaptation and the political requirements of social control combined to make advertising strategic not only in the management of consumer demand, but in the management of consciousness.'

(Wernick 1991:25)

Being powerful mediums of communication in this new global village, advertisements have become social, political and cultural imperatives (McLuhan and Fiore 1967). Under such circumstances, a rereading of advertisements is needed not just to explore the social significance, but to discover the structure, the power and the dynamism of this powerful communicative tool. And the systemic functional approach can provide the essential keys to this discovery.

CHAPTER 4.1

The Systemic Functional Model

O'Toole's (1994) model of analysis of paintings (*Table 1 pg8*) is essentially a systemic functional model. However, O'Toole's model is unsuitable for the analysis of advertisements for one main reason. The model is formulated to analyse paintings exclusively. Unlike paintings, most advertisements deploy more than one semiotic code. O'Toole's model of analysis fails to capture the interaction between different semiotic codes and their symbiotic meanings. To overcome this limitation, I propose an alternative model for the analysis of advertisements (*Table 2 pg19*).

The model (*Table 2 pg19*) is structured under a precise system of units and functions. Halliday (1994:35) terms this as 'the Rank Scale' and subsequently, postulates that there are three general principles at work in a Rank Scale system. Firstly, there is the principle of exhaustiveness, which means that 'everything in the wording has some function at every rank' (*ibid.*). In the model, each rank (work, episode, element) serves three specific functions (operational, modal, compositional). Secondly, the principle of hierarchy states that 'an element of any given rank is constructed out of elements of the rank next below' (*ibid.*). In the proposed model, elements make up an episode, and many episodes make up an entire work. Lastly, the principle of discreteness states that 'each structural unit has clearly defined boundaries' (*ibid.*). In the model, the division into episodes and elements clearly demarcate the components that made up an entire work.

The following chapters explain the various units and functions in the model. The units of work, episode and element will be discussed under the three functions.

<div style="text-align: right;">Function</div> <div style="text-align: left;">Unit</div>	Operational How it works?	Modal How it attracts?	Compositional How it organises?
<p style="text-align: center;">Work The big picture</p>	<p><i>Objective</i> Message Product/ Service Inform Persuade Reinforce/branding Audience Context of situation: tenor, field, mode Context of culture</p> <p>Inter-relationships <i>intertextuality, cotextuality</i></p>	<p><i>Central Visual Impact</i> Textur e: tactile & visual Colours, tone, hue, saturation Contrast: high/low Perspective/ dimension Shape Gaze Volume Movement: static or dynamic</p> <p>Starting point</p>	<p><i>Divisions of field</i> Visual field Space: negative & positive Framing Columns, tables, modules Grid structure intuitive horizontals, verticals, diagonals</p> <p>Interface: screen, paper, 3D Format: size</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Episode The major elements</p>	<p><i>Relationship Map</i> Intra-relationships image-word - elaboration, extension, enhancement anchoring, relaying image-image - clarification, expansion, irony word-word - cohesion, theme, information, mood, transitivity</p> <p>Extra-relationships denotation, connotation icon, symbol, index</p> <p>Cross/Multiple relationships <i>see colour plate 4</i></p>	<p><i>Interplay of modalities</i> Similarity/dissimilarity Proximity/distance Cohesion/chaos Scale Centrality</p> <p>Reading path Direction</p>	<p><i>Balance</i> Symmetry/assymetry Alignment Space</p> <p>Principles of proportion golden rectangle golden section root 2 rectangle geometrical proportion</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Element God is in the details</p>	<p>Connotative value Denotative value Relationships</p>	<p>Point: dpi/lpi Line: verticals/horizontals/diagonals/curves Shape/form: basic geometric shapes</p> <p><i>Typography</i> display, body type, point size bold, italics, upper vs lower case, mixed serifs vs sans serifs x-height, ascender, descender justification</p>	<p>Internal composition</p> <p>Typography spacing leading kerning internal space</p>

table 2.

CHAPTER 4.2

The Modal Function

The modal function is related to the interpersonal metafunction (Halliday 1994:xiii): ‘to act on the others’; manifested in the clause of exchange. It seeks to explain how the speaker’s utterance act on the listener. However, in a multisemiotic text of advertisement, the speaker is the encoder who actually consists of a creative group. In this case, the advertisement can be viewed as the speaker. The speaker is the utterance. Subsequently, mood, modality and polarity are reduced into the expression of the speaker-utterance. Halliday’s modality also includes the speaker’s attitude towards the utterance. In this context, again, this is converted: the tripartite relationship between speaker-utterance-listener becomes a relationship between the duality of the speaker-utterance entity and the listener. The listener is in actual fact, the viewer of a multisemiotic text, standing at a vantage point outside the text.

The modal function is similar to O’Toole’s (1994:5) modal function: one that ‘engages your attention and thoughts and emotions’. Siebert states that this is one of the key principles in layout design: ‘a good layout attracts: grabs your readers’ attention and pulls them into your piece. It has to stand out from the crowd by being different from everything around it’ (Siebert 1992: 8). The modal function is a function of attraction, bringing the viewer into the text and a function of extension, retaining the viewer’s attention to the text.

At the unit level of WORK, the modal function is translated into the key focal point where most of the visual energies are concentrated in that particular area. However,

there are deviations, for example, two or more episodes may share this key focal point. Their proximity and similarity contribute to the function of attracting the viewer's attention. Mario Garcia (in Bohle 1990:36) terms this focal point as the center of visual impact (CVI): 'the CVI is where the reader enters the page... without a CVI, a page is a mass confusion of elements competing for attention'. As displayed in *Table 2 (pg19)*, the identifying attributes include strategic positioning, colour and shape. The differential values in terms of light, tone, hue, saturation, contrast, dimension, volume, shape and frame also help to distinguish the CVI from the inchoate mass. The CVI can have a gaze element to draw the viewer into the text. The focal point also becomes the entry point for the reading path of the multisemiotic text. It is the theme of the entire text: 'the point of departure of the message' (Halliday 1994:37).

At the unit level of EPISODE, the modal function is primarily a function of extension. The similar resources of colours, tone, shape, etc. used by the CVI is deployed by the episodes. The episodes may compete with one another, vying for the viewer's attention. In effect, there is an interplay of modalities. However, this is not necessarily so as they can always cooperate. Similarity in features, proximity and cohesion between the various episodes allow the episodes to actually function as a holistic instrument, almost equivalent to a CVI in terms of attractive power. In contrast, dissimilarity, distance and chaos between the elements create competition. If competition does arise, the results of the respective winners are translated into the reading path of the text. This, in turn, will determine the information flow as well as the direction of the text. Bohle (1990) believes that after the CVI initial attraction, there must be a clear direction as to where the reading path is headed to.

At the unit of level of ELEMENT, the modal function sheds light on what are the integral components of the episode and how they combine to form gestalt figures of attraction (*Table 2 pg19*). The basic design elements of point, line and shape/form are commonly cited in formal design education: CDIS (1986), Stonehill³, Laughner⁴, and Kent State University⁵. These building blocks adopt principles of gestalt psychology to create a myriad of visual images (Arnheim 1974). A line is actually derived by placing many points side by side while a shape is derived by placing lines together at different angles. Horizontal and vertical lines connote stability while diagonals and curves connote dynamism. Full-colour photographs, upon close inspection, are actually composed of millions of similar dots, in varying tones of four composite colours: cyan, magenta, yellow and black (CMYK). A single letter can be divided into shapes of typographical terms: x-height, ascender, descender and serifs. Their differences go on to create concepts of typography such as boldness, italics, case and typefaces.

In conclusion, Robert G. Scott (in Bohle 1990:38) advises designers to ‘keep the [viewer’s] eye moving within the format until attention is exhausted. There must be no leaks where the eye is allowed to escape from the pattern by accident’. This bears the entire essence of the modal function – to attract attention and sustain it by using the various design resources available. As a result, the modal function is a significant function in the visual semiotic, ultimately able to determine reading path of a multisemiotic text through the interplay of modalities at different modal strengths.

³ Stonehill, Brian. The On-Line Visual Literacy Project. California: Pomona College. (<http://www.pomona.edu/visual-lit/>).

⁴ Laughner, Thomas C. The Vocabulary of Vision. Indiana: University of Notre Dame. (<http://www.nd.edu/~laughner/capp395/metros3.html>).

⁵ Kent State University. Visual Literacy. (<http://www.educ.kent.edu/vlo/literacy/>).

CHAPTER 4.3

The Compositional Function

The compositional function is related to the textual function: ‘to breathe relevance into the other two [ideational and interpersonal metafunctions]’ (Halliday 1994:xiii), manifested in the clause as message. One key element in Halliday’s textual metafunction is the theme. However, this point of departure has already been substantially covered in the previous function, realised as the CVI. In this case, the term, ‘textual’ takes on a more obvious meaning, that which is of the text: the inner workings, the basic infrastructure of the text itself. In an advertisement, the textual function is the compositional function realised as layouts of images and text. O’Toole (1994:22) aptly defines it as ‘the arrangement of forms within the pictorial space’.

At the unit level of WORK, the compositional function divides the visual field into different parts, allocating positive and negative space and defining areas of focus. Negative space occurs when the space is occupied by a visual element while positive space is empty space, also known as breathing space. Positive space is essential as it allows the clear demarcation of the various visual elements. At the heart of the compositional function is this instrument of division. The compositional function allows the work to be divided into episodes and each episode into elements. Eventually, this division allows the clear demarcation of image and word, establishing image-image, word-word and image-word relationships at the operational function. In addition, it helps us to differentiate the various modalities at the modal function.

The method of division is usually dependent of a grid system: ‘any combination

of horizontal and vertical lines that aids in the solution of a design problem or serves as the foundation of a modular design system' (Hulburt 1978:5). The space around the visual elements is known as the frame, which can be positive or negative. The space that delineates between text blocks is known as columns. Columns can create tables which can 'carry textual ellipses to its greatest extreme, using visual organizational resources to enable meaning relations to be recovered from bare thematic items in the absence of grammatical constructions' (Lemke 1998). The compositional function's processes of dividing and organising are mediated activities which ultimately determines the relationships between the visual and linguistic semiotic codes.

At the level of EPISODE, the compositional function establishes harmony in the visual field by allocating each episode with the necessary positive and negative space. Balance can be realised in symmetry or assymetry. Symmetry occurs when elements serve as complements along a central axis while 'asymmetrical layouts incorporate tension and implied movement, dictated by element size, shape and position' (Laughner)⁶. For example, an asymmetrical layout may use the sum total of three small, dissimilar visual elements to balance a large item. Assymetry balance is more difficult to attain, however, they create more visual interplay in the text. Balance can be construed as grammatical constructions where each element finds its optimum position on the paradigmatic (vertical) and syntagmatic (horizontal) axes.

In establishing balance, a knowledge of certain basic principles of proportion will

⁶ Laughner, Thomas C. The Vocabulary of Vision. Indiana: University of Notre Dame. (<http://www.nd.edu/~laughner/capp395/metros3.html>).

enable one to divide the space logically. One significant principle is known as the golden section, first postulated by Phidias, the master planner for the Acropolis. The golden section can be expressed algebraically as $a:b = b:(a+b)$ or represented as the phi ' Φ ' which equates to 1.61803398. Basic geometrical shapes such as the circle, square and triangle also serve as principles of composition. The square as 'the simplest of all rectangles' is useful in developing other proportional rectangles such as the root-2 rectangle (Hulburt 1978:11). The root-2 rectangle is currently adopted in the A series of paper sizes (used in Europe, UK and Asia). The paper size that this thesis is printed on is known as A4. Each increment in number represents an addition of another rectangle of the same size, for example, A4 is derived by placing two horizontal A5s on top of each other. Besides adopting these systematic principles, one can use his or her own 'natural and intuitive sense of proportion' (Hulburt 1978:9).

At the final unit level of ELEMENT, the internal composition within each episode is taken into consideration. Similarly, principles of composition apply to organise the composite elements within each episode so as to create a balanced layout. At this unit level, typography takes on a different significance. Negative and positive space between letters (kerning), between sentences (leading) and between words (spacing) become components of the compositional function at this elemental level. This process of visual organisation cannot be belittled as it ultimately affects the interaction between the visual and linguistic semiotic codes.

CHAPTER 4.4

The Operational Function

The operational function is related to the ideational metafunction: ‘to understand the environment’ (Halliday 1994:xiii), manifested in the clause of representation. According to Halliday (1994:106), this metafunction ‘enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them’. The ideational metafunction, then, is a linguistic representation of a tangible reality⁷ of the world. For his model of analysis, O’Toole (1994:14) translates this into the representational function: ‘what the painting actually depicts’. Similarly, in this model of analysis proposed here, the operational function serves as the link between the multisemiotic text and reality. However, the term ‘operational’ is chosen instead of ‘representational’. O’Toole’s representational function can only encompass the depiction of reality. The operational function of an advertisement includes creative strategy, conceptualisation and interpretation of reality. The operational function, in this respect, fulfils specific and practical purposes.

At the unit level of WORK, the multisemiotic text is seen as a holistic text, serving a specific objective (*Table 2 pg 19*). In the case of advertisements, they have either a product or service to sell. Sometimes, it can just have a message to tell. These are not exclusive to each other, a text can have many objectives. Texts can be used to inform, reinforce or persuade. The advertisement, as a multisemiotic text, has a precise plan, every step is deliberated and objective. It also has an intended viewership, a specific target audience in mind. In that sense, it is context-dependent. The message is only meaningful

⁷ Reality can never be captured in its original visceral quality, hence the reality proposed here is actually a construction of reality.

in the correct contexts of situation and culture (Eggs 1994). Interrelationships are formed when the text as a holistic work relates to other texts. Texts which are of the same genre are called 'cotexts' while texts that are not of the same genre called 'intertexts'.

Establishing the register variables of tenor, field and mode will enable us to accurately define the context of situation. The two contexts of situation and culture are essential because they define the boundaries of the meaning potential of the text. The multiplicity of meanings, created by the interaction of different semiotic codes, is dangerously unlimited in terms of quantity and direction. The texts can become 'floating chain[s] of signifieds' (Barthes 1985:28). One can easily get over enthusiastic and 'over-read' into and outside the text. This is not restricted to multisemiotic texts of advertisements alone. Each multisemiotic text requires a delimitation to ensure the analysis and observations are relevant, meaningful and can be substantiated.

At the unit level of EPISODE, the operational function examines how the various episodes interact to create meaning. Each episode can connect themselves to the outside world through denotation or connotation. The denoted message is 'a kind of Adamic state of image; utopianly rid of its connotations, the image would become radically objective, i.e., ultimately innocent' (Barthes 1985:31). The denotation is essentially the visual representation of reality. In Peircian semiotics, this denotation can either be an icon, or index. An icon is a sign that shares very obvious similarities with the signified while an index 'bears a natural relation of cause or effect to what it signifies' (Abrams 1993:276). Conversely, a connotation would be 'constituted by an architecture of signs drawn from a variable depth of lexicons (of idiolects)' (Barthes 1985:36). Pierce terms this as 'symbol':

a reduced sign which bears little resemblance to the signified and is dependent highly on a recognised semiotic code within specific contexts. Denotation and connotation are termed as extrarelations as these relationships are linked to semiotic codes or signs outside the text.

Episodes can also interact with one another to form intrarelations, relationships that are within the text. The meanings from these relationships can either be elaborated, extended or enhanced (Eggs 1994:105). These relationships can be mathematically formulated:

TERM	FORMULA	EXPLANATION
Elaboration	$a + a = 2a$	addition of similar meanings equate to total clarified meaning
Extension	$a \times ab = a^2b$	multiplication of meanings equate to total expanded meaning
Enhancement	$a + b = x$	addition of dissimilar meanings equate to total different meaning

Table 3: Mathematical representations of intrarelations.

Between image and word, elaboration can occur either by anchoring or relaying. The act of clarifying the meaning of a visual sign by a linguistic sign is known as ‘anchoring’ (Barthes 1985:29). Conversely, the act of clarifying the meaning of a linguistic element by a visual element is called ‘relaying’: the image becomes the anchoring device for the word. For extension of meaning to occur, there must be a link between the linguistic and visual signs. The connection allows for an expansion of the final meaning. Enhancement

occurs when both of the episodes are discordant. The contact between the two episodes changes the meaning of both, resulting in a sum total of a different value.

The linguistic code at this rank level is also analysed using Hallidayan grammar. Word episodes such as headline, body text and copy are analysed to distinguish features such as theme, mood and cohesion etc. Ultimately, this is used to elucidate the relationships between words and images and the processes of meaning creation.

The three types of relationships (interrelationships, extrarelations and intrarelations) existing in the operational function are diagrammatically represented in *Diagram 4 (pg30)*. The diagram represents each relationship as independent of other relationships. In actual fact, there are a lot of cross and multiple relationships involved. A symbiotic meaning can have more than one extrarelation and yet be related to another visual sign through an intrarelation. The essential idea at this point is to concretise the elusive nature of these three relationships found within a multisemiotic text. The creation of a relationship map can elucidate the various relationships and the process of meaning-creation.

At the final unit level of ELEMENT, the operational function also serves as an indicator for relationships between the rudimentary units of words and images. However, at this point, there is the danger of over-reading. However, some element remains significant, for example, the logo of the advertiser in the multisemiotic text. The shape of the logo may be intrarelated to the CVI, establishing a symbiotic sign, extra-related to reality by connotation.

RELATIONSHIPS

Operational Function

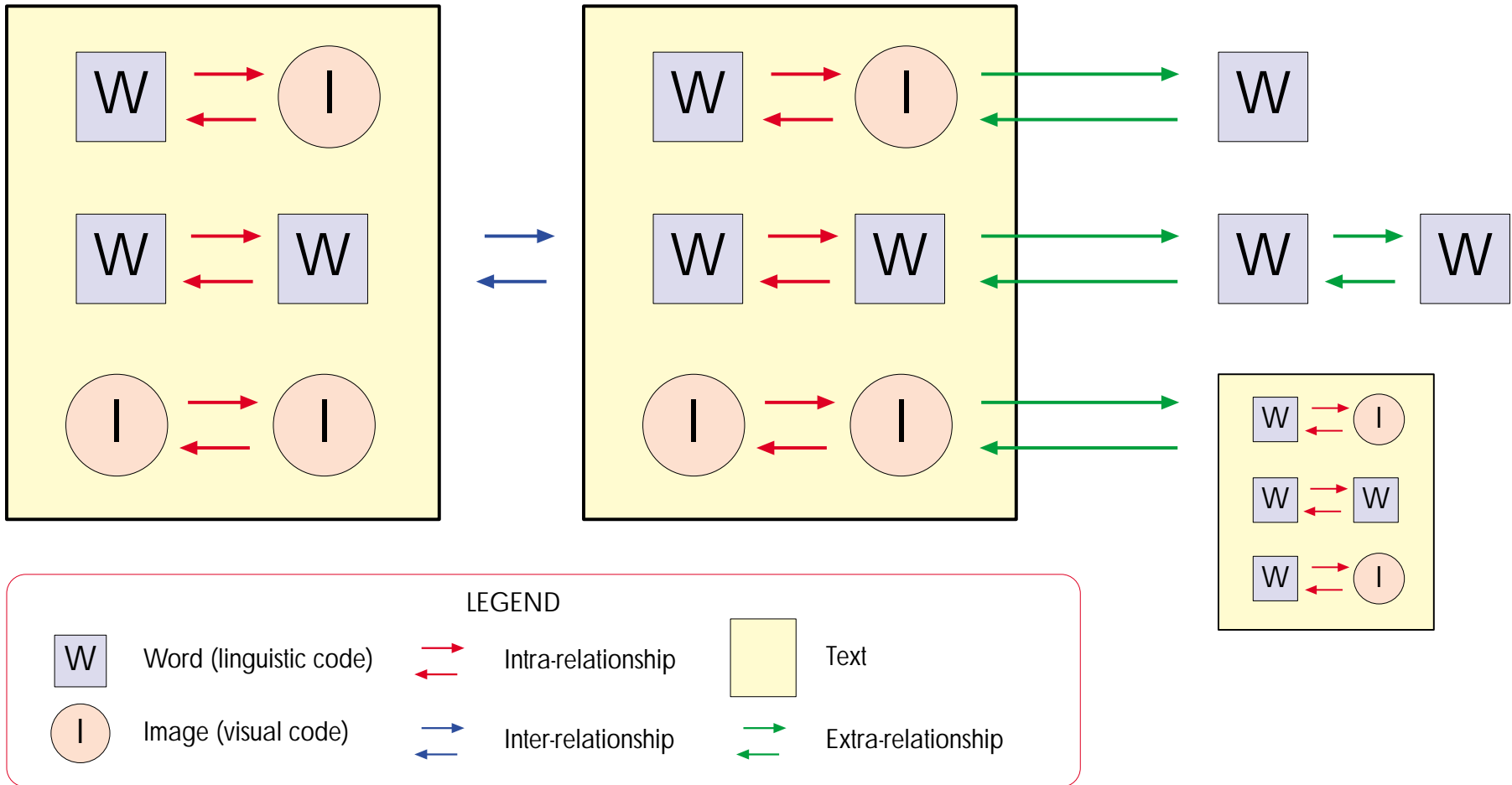


Diagram 4.

A Representation of Relationships in the Operational Function.

CHAPTER 4.5

Mapping of Functions

The three functions: the operational function, the modal function and the compositional function may seem to have little in common with systemic functional linguistics. But in actual fact, they are very similar to Halliday's metafunctions. A mapping of the different approaches will reveal that their functions share more similarities than differences:

APPROACH	AUTHOR	FUNCTION 1	FUNCTION 2	FUNCTION 3
Functional	Halliday (1994)	Ideational	Interpersonal	Textual
Painting	O'Toole (1994)	Representational	Modal	Compositional
Layout	Siebert (1992)	Works	Attracts	Organises
Advertising	Peterson (1996)	Conceptualisation: design principles	Execution: design elements	Execution: structure
Proposed	Wee (1999)	Operational	Modal	Compositional

Table 4: A mapping of different approaches and their respective functions.

The systemic functional approach proposed here adopts a Hallidayan perspective towards language while adapting and synthesising elements from other models of analysis. As a holistic system, the systemic functional approach can be viewed as an eclectic and comprehensive approach towards the analysis of advertisements as multisemiotic texts. The subsequent chapters show how the model can be applied to an authentic text.

CHAPTER 5.1

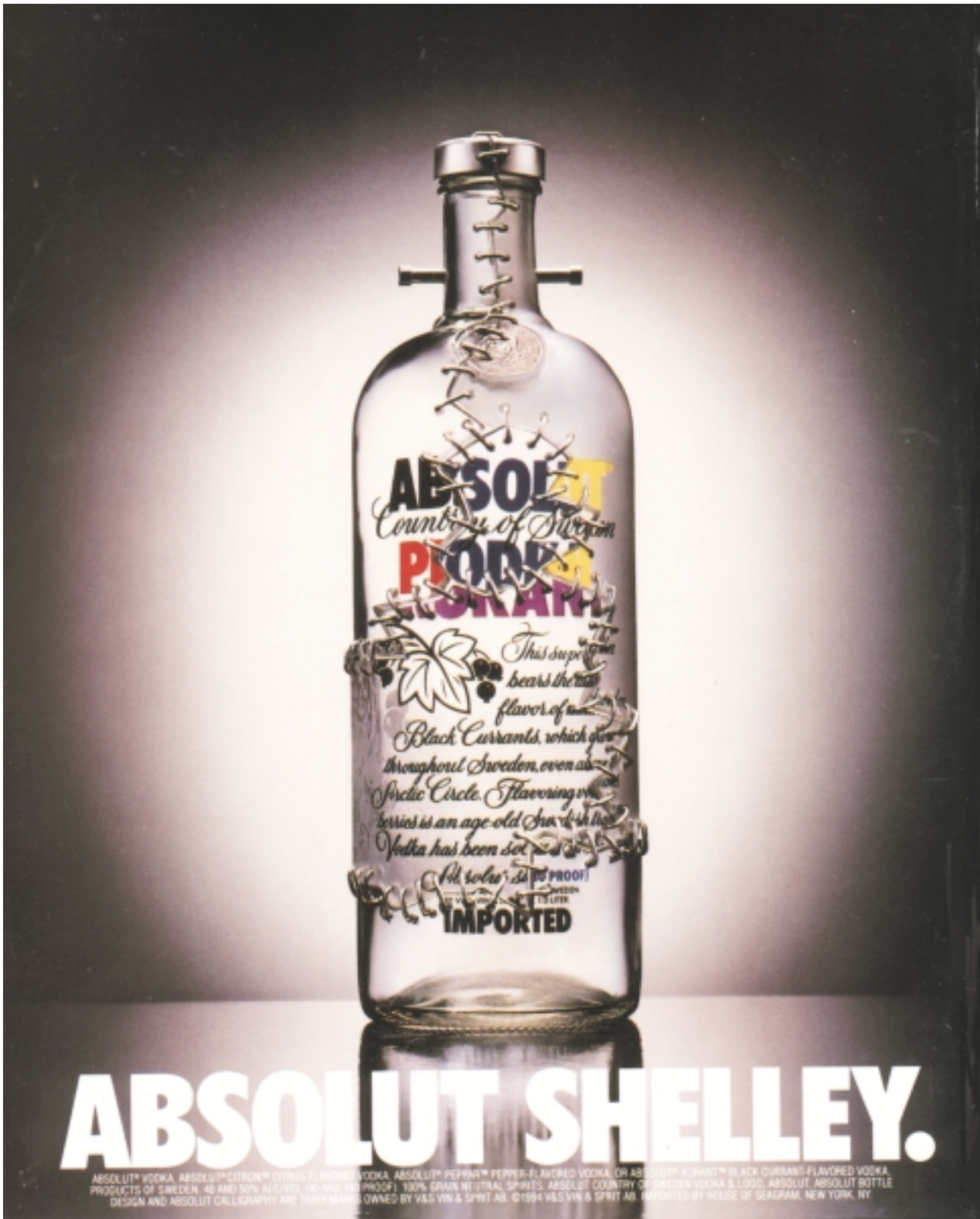
Analysis of Absolut Vodka Advertisement

The advertisement displayed in *Diagram 5 (pg33)* is taken from Movieline (January/February 1996), a US magazine that reports on the entertainment industry. One can choose to start his or her analysis in any 'box' of the model (*Table 2 pg19*), moving from function to function or unit to unit or even indiscriminately. However, there are some advantages in a systematic movement. It will ensure that you have a clear direction and not get lost in the gargantuan amount of details.

As a guide, it is always easier to start from a basic position. Although the Central Visual Impact (CVI) at the modal function is the first element that engages the viewer, the rudimentary element of any advertisement is actually the visual space. The visual space is also the starting point of the creative team. Besides this, the division of this visual field will ensure a clear demarcation between episodes and between elements. This division also equips the other two modal and operational functions with a consistent nomenclature. After the compositional function, one can choose to analyse the modal or the operational functions. The modal function's salient concept of the interplay of modalities has a direct effect on the interaction between words and images in the operational function. The operational function should be analysed last because of its complexity. It is important to establish the scaffolding of the entire structure and its elements before discovering their interconnectivity. This interrelatedness of the three functions in the model reveals the system where each function and unit is functional only in relation to another unit/function. This can be visually represented using the metaphor of 3D modelling. To obtain a 3D model of a sphere, the designer creates a wireframe first. Secondly, he adds texture to it

diagram 5.

The Absolut Vodka Advertisement



Reproduced from the backcover of *Movieline* Jan/Feb 1996.

and finally, placing it within a situational context, he gives it meaning. This is diagrammatically represented as *Diagram 6* below.

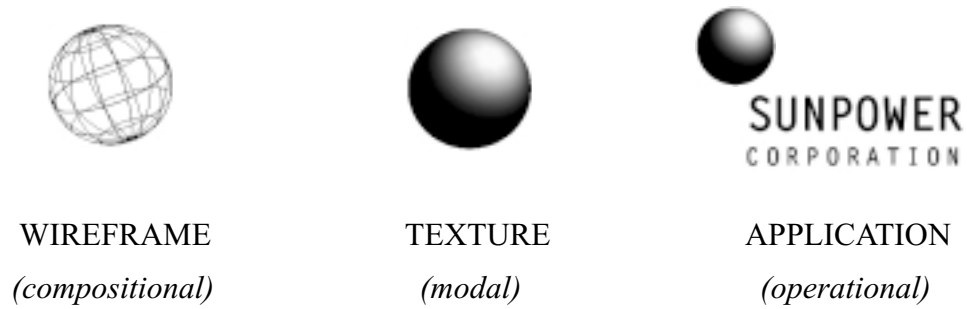


Diagram 6: The metaphor of 3D modelling.

Before we delve into the analysis of the text proper, please do take another look at the multisemiotic text in its bare form and try to interpret the meaning of the text (*Diagram 5 pg33*).

CHAPTER 5.2

The Compositional Function

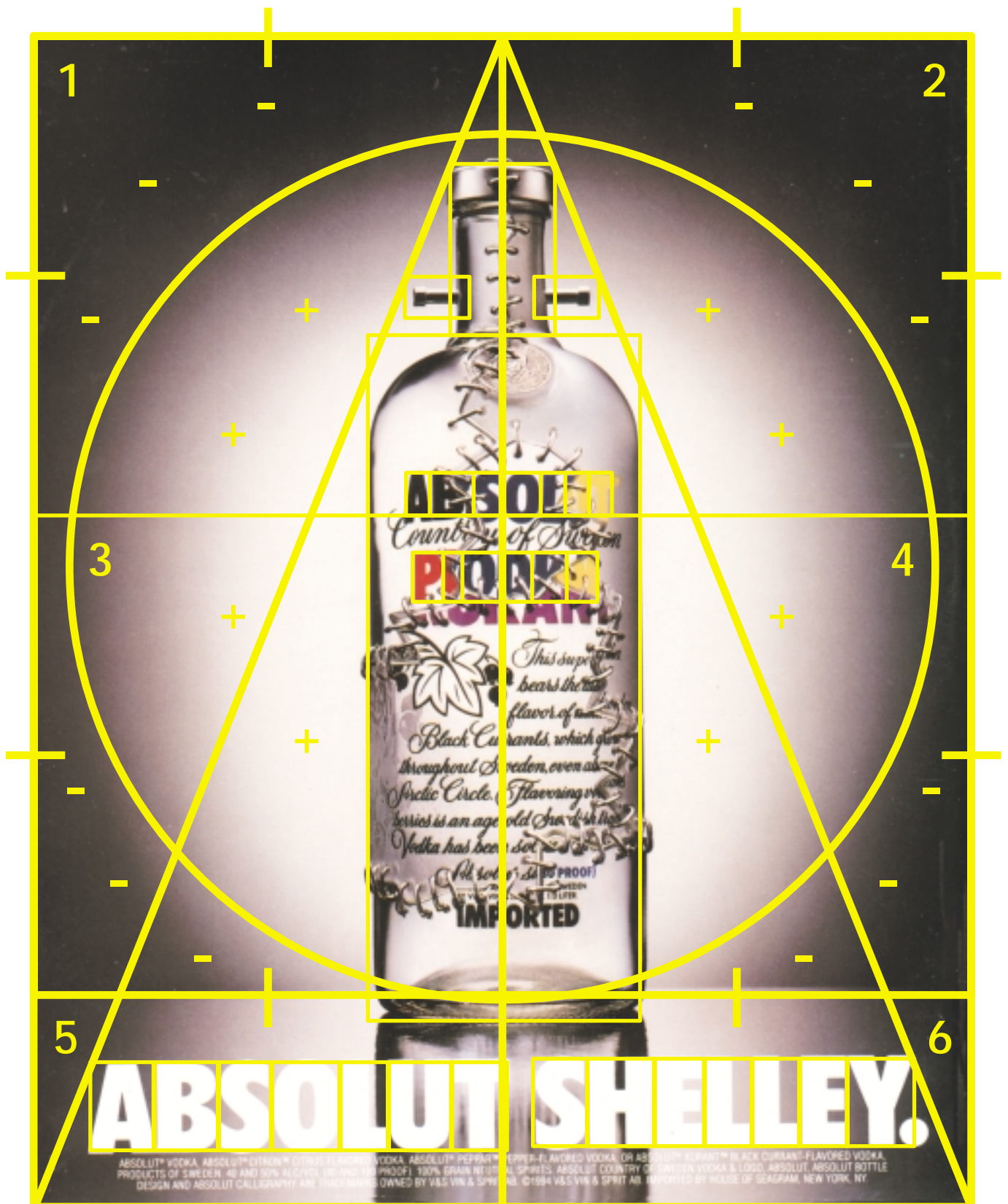
5.21 WORK

At the unit level of work, the text belongs to the paper medium. In its original form, it serves as the back cover of that particular issue of Movieline. Together with the cover, it is applied with a layer of gloss varnish, creating a sheen-like image. It is slightly smaller than the letter format, with actual dimensions measuring 208mm by 267mm horizontally. From *Diagram 7 (pg36)*, we can see the visual space is divided into a square (1+2+3+4) and an elongated horizontal rectangle (5+6). The positive space emanates from a central negative space (occupied by the bottle), and eventually fades into the negative space (occupied by the black shadows). This spatial movement is reflected on the shiny surface which the bottle stands on. Positive space is also created when the gloss varnish layer reflects light from an outside source. In effect, this creates a natural sequence of concentric circles in increasing sizes. As a result, this circular spatial movement creates a natural frame to the bottle. Cutting through the centre, a vertical line divides the visual space into equal parts (1+3+5 and 2+4+6). It is also possible to divide the square into another four equal squares (1, 2, 3 and 4). Through basic shapes of squares and rectangles, a precise grid structure of two columns is thus formed. With its apex at the equidistant point of square (1+2+3+4) and its respective base points at the corners of the visual space, a triangle defines the boundaries of the bottle and the words.

5.22 EPISODE

The division of the visual space distinguishes the episodes involved in this text. There are two episodes: that which is formed by the square (1+2+3+4) and by the elongated

The Compositional Function



-- negative space
+ positive space

horizontal rectangle (5+6). The precise equal divisions of the elements indicate that these two episodes comprise of six sub-parts. Each of them has an uncanny mirror image, reflected at the central axis. Exquisite balance is created in through the symmetry of the following pairs of sub-episodes: 1 and 2; 3 and 4; and finally 5 and 6. This perfect symmetry is also echoed by the two right-angled triangles sitting on the base of the visual space. The four squares which comprise of the large square) reinforces the balance created by the geometrical proportions of the square.

5.23 ELEMENT

At the element level, many rectangular elements can be found within the two main episodes. In the main episode of (1+2+3+4), the biggest rectangle is accurately located in the central axis. It frames the body of the bottle. Within this frame, rectangular shapes frame the word 'A-B-S-O-L-U-T' and the indiscernible word 'P-O-D-K-A' as well as their composite letters. This rectangular concept is reinforced further with the shape of the neck of the bottle. In their horizontal format, two rectangles also frame the two screws sticking out of the bottle's neck. The second main episode (5+6) has all the closely kerned letters defined in rectangular shapes. This time, the precise symmetry is found in the geometrical shape of the rectangle. The words 'ABSOLUT' and 'SHELLEY' are symmetrically opposed not just in terms of shapes. Their symmetrical balance can also be found in their frame. In the episode (5+6), the high contrast between the words and the background reverses the negative space around the words into positive space. It is also known as breathing space - - space which allows the words to 'breathe'. At the unit level of element, the geometrical shape of the rectangle dominates.

CHAPTER 5.3

The Modal Function

5.31 WORK

The entire advertisement, in actual fact, is a studio shot of a bottle under special lighting conditions. The photographer creates the effect by ‘[placing] a sheet of matte Plexiglas behind it, and [illuminating] it with a soft glow’ (Lewis 1996:13). At the onset, at the rank level of WORK, the texture created by the advertisement is both visual and tactile. The visual texture enhances the shape of the bottle as a 3-dimensional object. The tactile texture is produced by the gloss varnish, which emphasises the positive and negative spatial relations (mentioned earlier in the compositional function). These two aspects reveal the advertisement’s ability to attract the viewer into the text via its textural qualities.

The Central Visual Impact must be established in order to discover the entry point of the text. This exercise, for some, may be just a stating the obvious. However, in some advertisements, the CVI may not be as obvious as it is in this particular text. Nevertheless, the exercise is crucial in understanding the finer mechanisms at work in determining the CVI. Quite evidently, the bottle is in the center of the entire advertisement. However, looking back at *Diagram 7 (Pg36)* again, the bottle is not just in the center but clearly constrained and divided symmetrically into two equal parts by a central axis. In addition to this, the bottle’s aura is further established by the amalgamation of three basic shapes: the circle, the triangle and the square. Its unique shape, the potential volume it can hold and the rich visual material within it further establish the bottle as the CVI. Surrounded by a mass of neutral colours of shades of grey, the bottle possesses the only brilliant colours found within the text. In addition, the circular frame mentioned earlier creates a high

contrast between the bottle and its surroundings. The bottle's significance is captured in the placing of the bottle as a perpendicular vertical rising from a horizontal plane. Finally, the bottle's direct and frontal confrontation with the viewer establishes the gaze. Without a single doubt, the bottle is the CVI of the text and also the entry point for a reading of the text. The crucial point of this exercise cannot be reiterated enough. As seen in the analysis above, the CVI is not created by simply putting a large object in the center of a visual space. It demands an understanding and precise selection of the various elements, both modal and compositional, combining them to create a holistic and effective CVI.

5.32 EPISODE

As revealed earlier, the text can be divided into two major EPISODES and six comprising parts (*Diagram 7 pg36*). Each episode is a modality because it functions as a modal verb, vying for the viewer's attention. The relationship between the major episodes of the square (1+2+3+4) and the elongated rectangle (5+6) is an unfair one. The square clearly overrides the rectangle's ability to attract the viewer. However, the relationships between the parts remain more consistent. Squares 1 and 2, squares 3 and 4 and finally, rectangles 5 and 6 are three pairs of perfect mirror reflections at the central axis. Although, they may differ in terms of shape and volume, the use of neutral colours (in mixtures of black and white in each episode) creates the necessary cohesion. But ultimately, the discrepancy in size between the episodes of the square and the elongated rectangle is more significant than this modal symmetry between these parts. Hence, the viewer reads the text from a top to down direction rather than a left to right direction as depicted by the parts. After the initial cursory reading, the viewer reads the text again as the parts contain detailed visual information about the meaning of the entire text. Thus, the reading path becomes a recursive process. At this juncture, it is

important to note that the compositional divisions assist us in discovering the modal aspects at the rank levels of work and episode. The interplay of the modalities helps us to establish the reading path (*Table 2 pg 19*), which will help us to unravel relationships between the modalities in the operational function.

5.33 ELEMENT

At the basic rank level of ELEMENT, the geometrical shape of the rectangle is the building block of the entire text. The text itself is a rectangle and the different sizes of this rectangle are manifested throughout the entire text (*Diagram 7 pg36*). The main focus is, of course, the stability achieved through these rectangles. Rectangles are considered stable forms as they comprise of verticals and horizontals containing fixed volumes. The details within the CVI can be separated into their respective elements. Firstly, there are the two screws on the neck of the bottle which serve as essential clues to solve this enigmatic advertisement. Contributing to this package of clues are the rings that hold the broken pieces of the bottle together. These scars cut across the central axis and branches off to virtually everywhere in the CVI. Other important elements include the mixture of four different colours that make up the name of the bottle. Even the leaf and the grapes on the bottle are significant. Each element, despite of its small size, has a specific function. Besides, attracting us to their quality through modal features, they are also essential in our understanding and analysis of the advertisement in the operational function.

The typeface used in the tagline is Futura Condensed Extra Bold from Adobe Systems. It belongs to the Futura family. Paul Renner, the designer, inspired by the De Stijl movement and the Russian Constructivist movement, designs it according to

geometrical principles. 'Its crisp and formal simplicity made it very popular' (Seller)⁸. It may be over-presumptuous to assume that the geometrical proportions found within the text are actually based on the philosophy behind the typeface. However, it is obvious that the typeface used for the tagline is the same typeface used for the logotype 'ABSOLUT'. The significance of this similarity will be explained in the operational function. Nevertheless, the extra-boldness of the typeface is undeniable. It is able to assert its presence despite the over-arching bottle over it. In fact, it becomes another layer of texture above the texture of the photograph. The tagline's salience also comes from the fact that it is the only major representation of the linguistic code in the text other than the copyright assertions below the tagline. And since we are at the rudimentary level, it is interesting to note that the copyright assertions' typeface is Futura Condensed Light which is also in the Futura family. Amazingly, these copyright assertions, in spite of their small font size, also have repercussions at the operational function.

⁸ Seller, Ron. Multimedia studies program: typography. San Francisco: San Francisco State University. (http://www.hisandhers.com/his/cd_site/f15a.html).

CHAPTER 5.4

The Operational Function

5.41 EPISODE

For the operational function, instead of starting our analysis from the rank level of work, we shall start at the rank level of episode. The relationships between the modalities are crucial in understanding the entire text. The interaction between the images and the words unravels the meaning of the entire text and subsequently reveals the advertisement's objectives at the rank level of work. Unlike a hard-sell advertisement which 'makes a direct appeal' to the audience (Cook 1992:10), this advertisement creates a puzzle for the viewer to solve. Strictly speaking, it is neither soft nor hard sell. Intrinsically, it is enigmatic. And only by solving this puzzle, we are able to define the message at the rank level of work clearly.

We will trace the various relationships in terms of the reading path. The reading path, as established in the compositional and modal functions, starts from the CVI. Initially, the viewer's attention is captured by the bottle because of its powerful modal features and its central position in respect to the entire text. However, the viewer does not understand the meaning of the bottle at first glance. Through the interplay of modalities and balanced composition, he follows the reading path, leading him to: 'ABSOLUT SHELLEY'. Instead of clarifying the image, this tagline adds to the confusion of the text.

This first reading path is the cursory reading of the text. It is the path most viewers will take. The viewer, still confused, may either give up at this point or read further into the text. The subsequent reading path that follows this initial scanning path is definitely

not the only reading path available. Neither is there any attempt of prescribing a correct or *de facto* reading path. The reading path presented here shows how the various systems in the two semiotic codes are exploited to create meaning. This can be captured in a step by step analysis of different sequences. And eventually, the analyses of these sequences of relationships will lead us to the solution of the enigmatic text.

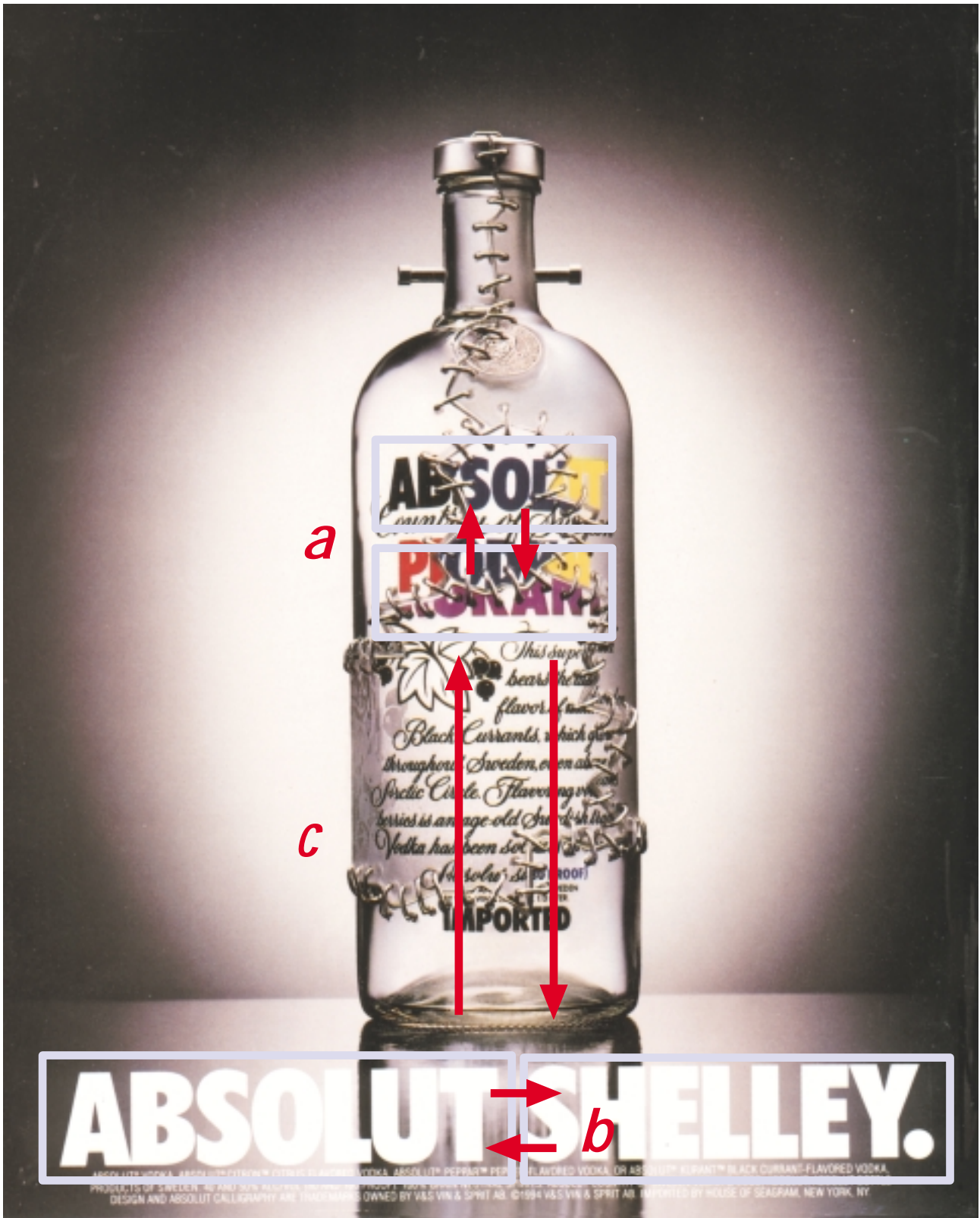
SEQUENCE I

Assuming that the viewer's interest in the advertisement has not waned and undeterred by the difficulty of the puzzle, the viewer delves deeper into the details. The only colourful element that attracts his immediate attention is a mishmash of letters on the CVI of the bottle. He can barely figure out the word 'ABSOLUT' but he knows this word is related to the other indecipherable word 'PODKA?'. This intrarelationship between the two elements is not coincidental but determined by modal and compositional functions. Compositionally, both elements are centrally aligned along the central axis. Modally, both elements use similar modal features of colours, font, shapes and dimensions. This similarity creates an interplay of cohesion which is further accentuated by the proximity of the elements. This intrarelationship is depicted as *relationship a* in sequence I (*Diagram 8 pg44*). Moving down the central axis, the viewer sees this large broken piece of glass. One tries to read the text imprinted on it but gives it up eventually. For now, the broken narrative does not make much sense.

Going further down the central axis, the viewer turns his or her attention to the tagline 'ABSOLUT SHELLEY'. The words 'ABSOLUT' and 'SHELLEY' are intrarelated through similar modal features such as typography and colour and compositional features

The Operational Function Sequence I

diagram 8.



Representation of Intrarelations in Sequence I.

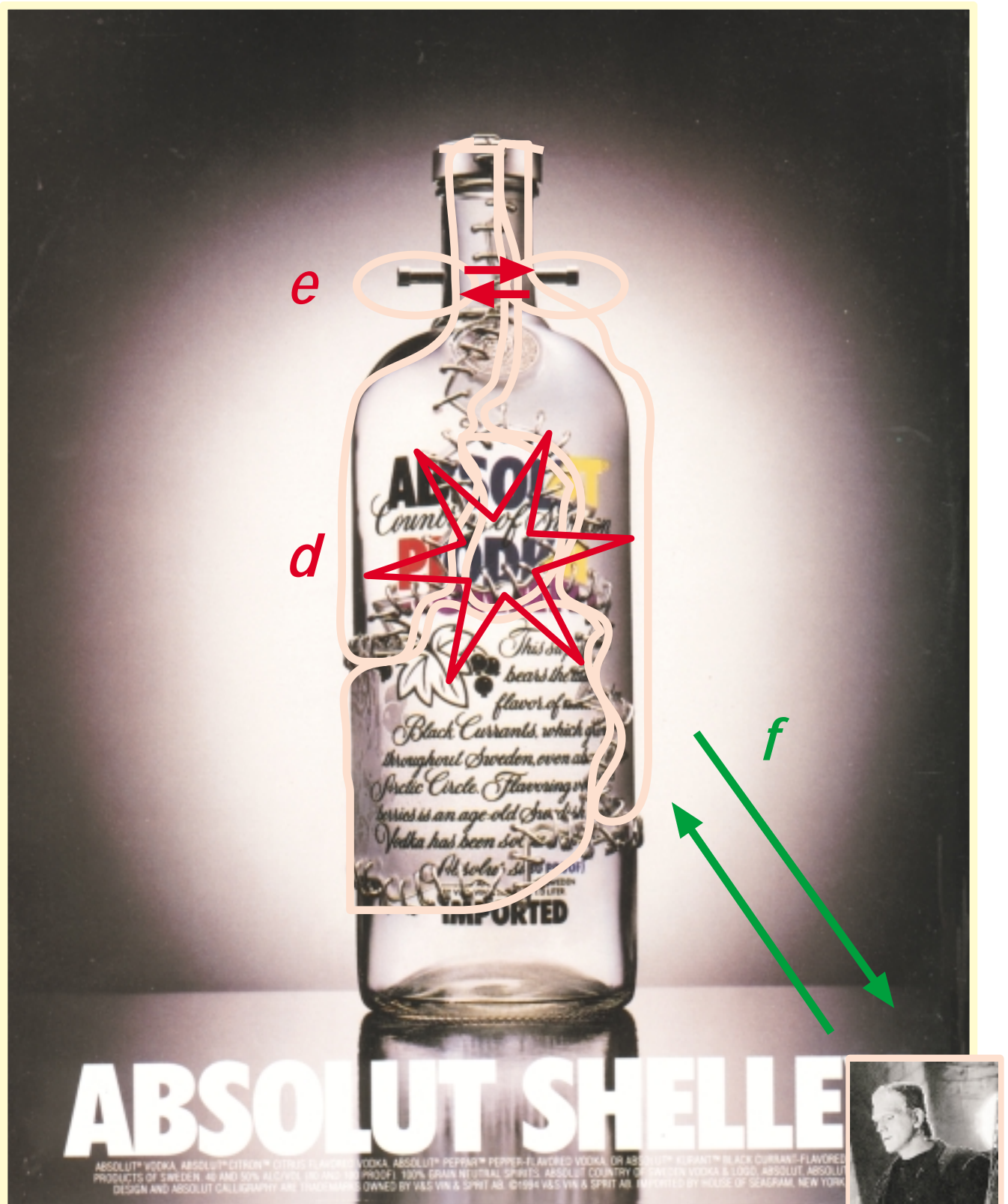
of proximity and symmetry. This intrarelationship is represented as *relationship b* in *Diagram 8 (pg44)*. Subsequently, the viewer realises that this is intrarelated to the colourful mishmash as they possess the same modal features of font and shape. This intrarelationship is represented as *relationship c* in the same diagram. The word ‘ABSOLUT’ existing in both intrarelationships *a* and *b* affirms *relationship c*. The visual cohesion is reinforced with lexical cohesion. Their centrally aligned positions, modal features and their lexical content play a part in creating this third intrarelationship. Subsequently, the viewer attempts to find a link between their secondary words ‘SHELLEY’ and the indecipherable word ‘PODKA?’.

SEQUENCE II

Unable to figure out the relation, the viewer goes in a different direction. This time, the focus is on elements rather than episodes. The CVI, the viewer discovers, contain many details. Firstly, the bottle is not a one-piece structure. Instead, it is made up of various pieces of broken glass joined together by metal links. Because of their positions being restricted by the shape of the CVI and obvious modal features, the broken pieces are inextricably intrarelated. These intrarelationships are depicted as *relationships d* in sequence II (*Diagram 9 pg46*). The metal links are also inextricably intrarelated because of obvious modal and compositional reasons. However, the viewer observes that this links actually make the bottle looks like it has been sewn together from many glass scraps. The viewer adds this observation to his or her collection of clues. While tracing the links, the viewer suddenly notices that there are actually two screws sticking out of the neck of the bottle, which she or he has apparently forgotten after the initial reading. The two screws are also intrarelated through their exact modal features and symmetrical composition, represented

Operational Function Sequence II

diagram 9.



Representation of Intrarelations and Extrarelations in Sequence II.

as *relationship e* in *Diagram 9 (pg46)*. Perhaps, at this point, a chord struck. The viewer remembers an image. With the discovery of these intrarelations found within the CVI, the viewer creates a holistic image which is extra-related to a similar image totally outside the text. This extrarelation is represented by *relationship f* in *Diagram 9 (pg46)*.

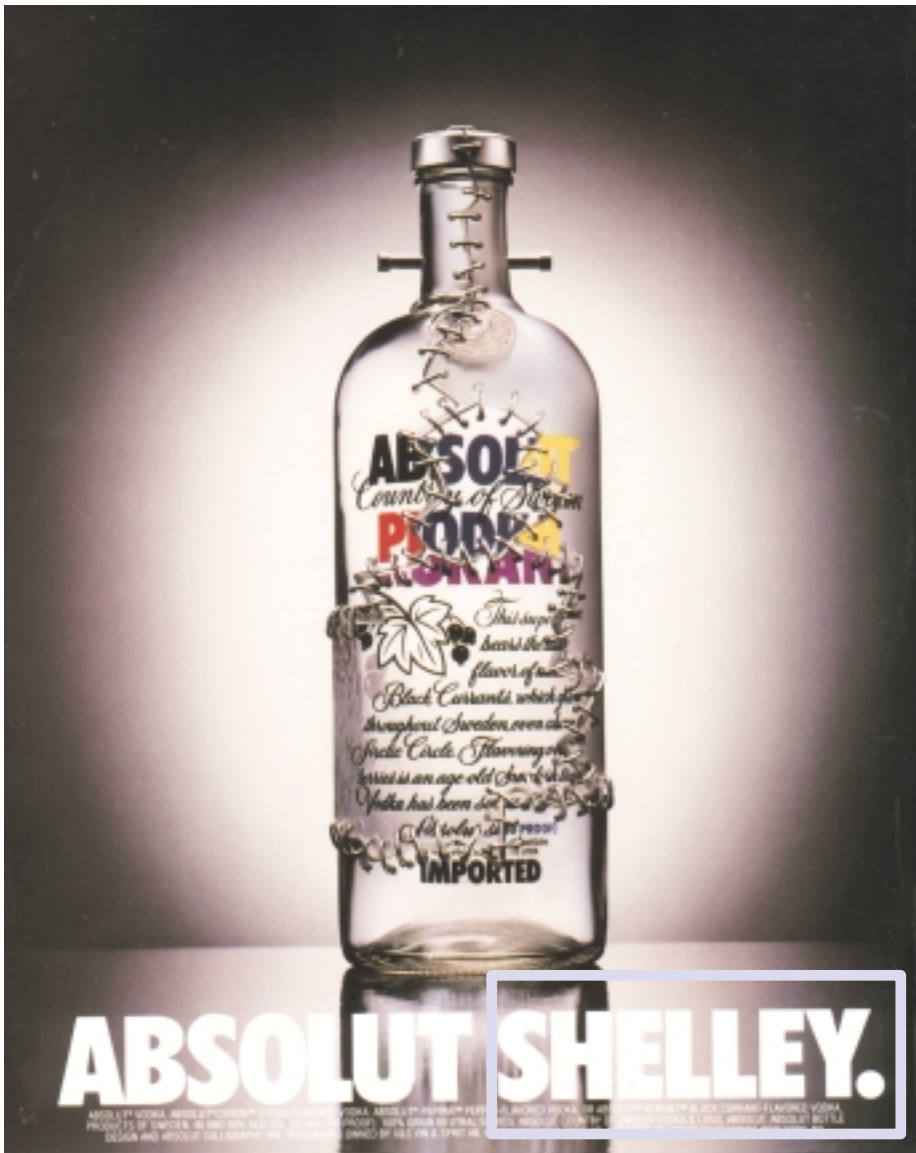
SEQUENCE III

To confirm these assumptions, the viewer returns to the unsolved tagline, in particular, to the word, 'SHELLEY'. The image from the previous extrarelation is again recalled: Frankenstein's monster. The viewer tries to associate Frankenstein and Shelley together, depicted as *relationship g* in *Diagram 10 (pg48)*. Suddenly, he remembers: the book, Frankenstein is actually written by Mary Shelley! The third extrarelation is established, depicted as *relationship h*. This extrarelation is immediately linked back to the word 'SHELLEY' found in the text. The extended meaning of this particular extrarelation is the solution to the entire puzzle.

In summary, it is a sequence of expanded meanings which finally lead to a conclusive answer to the problem, mathematically realised as $a^2b' + a^2b'' + a^2b'''$. In this text, meaning creation becomes an additive process. However, it must be noted that this act of meaning-creation has a recursive effect on previous relationships. The pieces of glass, the metal links that looked like scars and especially the two screws sticking out of the neck make sense now. They allude to Frankenstein's monster. The assumptions that the viewer made regarding the various intra and extrarelations are confirmed and proven right.

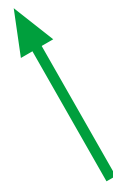
Operational Function Sequence III

diagram 10.



g

Frankenstein's Monster



h



Author Mary Shelley

Representation of Extrarelations in Sequence III.

SEQUENCE IV

However, the mystery word ‘PODKA?’ has not been solved yet. The viewer returns to the mishmash of letters on the bottle with a different perspective. The viewer understands that it alludes to Frankenstein’s method of taking elements from different places and combining them together. Looking for other clues, the viewer realises that he or she has ignored the detailed but minuscule description below the tagline because it is basically overwhelmed by the large tagline. Despite its small font size, it remains legible:

ABSOLUT® VODKA, ABSOLUT® CITRON™ CITRUS FLAVOURED VODKA, ® PEPPAR™ PEPPAR-FLAVOURED VODKA, OR ABSOLUT® KURANT™ BLACK CURRANT-FLAVOURED VODKA, PRODUCTS OF SWEDEN. 40 AND 50% ALC/VOL (80 AND 100 PROOF). 100% GRAIN NEUTRAL SPIRITS. ABSOLUT COUNTRY OF SWEDEN VODKA & LOGO, ABSOLUT, ABSOLUT BOTTLE DESIGN AND ABSOLUT CALLIGRAPHY ARE TRADEMARKS OWNED BY V&S SPIRIT AB. IMPORTED BY HOUSE OF SEAGRAM, NEW YORK, NY.

He begins to read the text carefully and slowly associates different parts of the words with other words and with images, forming a network of intrarelationships between word-word and image-word. This can be elucidated with a functional grammar analysis of the text as displayed in *Tables 5 to 9*. The analysis shown here is comprehensive for the sake of exhaustiveness. However, for this particular text, only the functional grammar elements of cohesion, information and theme are relevant.

CLAUSE I (*Tables 5a & 5b pg 51-52*)

The word ‘ABSOLUT’ repeats frequently and together with the complementary recurring symbol for registered trademark: ‘®’, the viewer confirms that the brand is actually

known as 'ABSOLUT'. This is further affirmed by the visual representation of the word 'ABSOLUT' in the colourful mishmash and the tagline 'ABSOLUT SHELLEY'. These recursions and repetitions serve as intrarelations between word-word, image-word and image-image. Collectively, the brand name 'ABSOLUT' becomes the cohesive thread that runs through both the linguistic as well as the visual semiotic codes.

Thus, 'Absolut' becomes given information, forcing the viewer to focus on the new information: 'vodka', 'citronTM', 'pepparTM' and 'kurantTM'. The viewer notes that the symbol for trademark 'TM' recurs. The viewer, then, tries to interpret the information that accompany these trademark names: 'citrus flavoured vodka', 'pepper flavoured vodka' and 'black currant-flavoured vodka'. The pieces begin to fit together. Experience tells the viewer that 'vodka' cannot be trademarked because it is a generic term for a type of alcohol. Through obvious collocations, the viewer realises that 'citronTM', 'pepparTM' and 'kurantTM' are actually modifications for citrus, pepper and currant. The viewer now understands that 'Absolut CitronTM' is actually a citrus flavoured vodka; 'Absolut PepparTM', a pepper flavoured vodka and 'Absolut KurantTM', a black currant flavoured vodka.

Suddenly, the viewer remembers that the images of grapes and the phrase 'black currant' have occurred before. Going back to the image, the viewer discovers that the image and the phrase are found in one of the broken pieces of the bottle. An intrarelationship is formed through linguistic cohesion. The viewer begins to associate the different trademarked names with the different broken pieces. The modal feature of colours assists the viewer in his or her interpretation. Citrus is commonly derived from lemons which is a yellow coloured fruit, pepper is a red coloured plant and currants are commonly associated

ABSOLUT® VODKA, ABSOLUT® CITRON™ CITRUS FLAVOURED VODKA, ABSOLUT® PEPPAR™ PEPPER-FLAVOURED VODKA,

COHESION	repetition collocation		
THEME	Theme		
	Topical		
INFORMATION	Given ← new	given ←————— New	Given ←————— New
MOOD	Subject		
	Mood		
TRANSTIVITY	Carrier		

CLAUSE I

Operational Function
Sequence IV

A Functional Grammar Analysis of Clause I.

table 5a.

← ABSOLUT® KURANT™ BLACK CURRANT-FLAVOURED VODKA, [ARE] PRODUCTS OF SWEDEN. ↑

COHESION	repetition collocation		
THEME	Theme	Rheme	
	topical		
INFORMATION	Given ←—————→ New	New (focus)	
MOOD	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood		Residue
TRANSTIVITY	Carrier	Process: intensive	Attribute

CLAUSE I (cont'd)

Operational Function
Sequence IV

A Functional Grammar Analysis of Clause I.

table 5b.

with the colour purple despite the prefix 'black'. The viewer now fully understands the implications of the colourful mishmash. 'ABSOLUT' is a brand of vodka and has three other flavours: citrus, pepper and currant. The bottle is a synthesis of parts from the four different flavours. This is of course alluded to Frankenstein's monster, which is a synthesis of parts from different bodies. The brand 'Absolut' is always suffixed with another word to derive its different collocations: Absolut Vodka, Absolut Citron, Absolut Peppar, Absolut Kurant and finally, Absolut Shelley. 'Absolut X' becomes a creative strategy of branding. 'Absolut' and the author 'Shelley' are both creators. 'ABSOLUT' is the creator of the different flavours of vodka while Shelley is the author of the book 'Frankenstein'. The puzzle has been entirely solved.

However, being inquisitive, the viewer may re-read the sentence and discover the phrase 'products of sweden' (*Table 5 pg52*). Realising an intrareationship between the word 'sweden' and the word-image 'sweden' on the bottle, the viewer forms another intrareationship between the words, 'country' and 'product'. The word 'imported' on the bottle becomes relevant: another intrareationship is formed. 'Absolut Vodka' is made in Sweden and imported into the United States. This is affirmed by clause V: 'Imported by House of Seagram, New York, NY'.

OTHER CLAUSES

The word 'spirits' in clause II (*Table 6 pg55*) confirms that the product, 'vodka' is a type of alcohol or spirit. The new information, '40 and 50% alc', indicates that vodka has a strong alcoholic content. The word 'grain' may confirm some viewer's assumptions on the fact that vodka is actually made from wheat. The words 'Absolut' and 'trademarks'

found in clause III (*Table 7 pg56*) and in embedded clause IV (*Table 8 pg57*) confirm that ‘Absolut’ is a brand name.

In this text, there is a plethora of cross and multiple relationships. The relationship maps (*diagrams 8-10*) depict the relationships and clarify their processes of meaning creation. The functional grammar analysis also attempts to represent obvious intrarelations between the words and the images. At the functional grammar level of cohesion, vertical arrows depict intrarelations between the particular word and an image while horizontal arrows depict intrarelations between word and word. Intrarelations can be either form through repetition, coded with the colour, red or through collocation, coded with the colour, dark green.

5.42 WORK

With a complete understanding of what the text actually means, one can proceed to analyse the function of the text as a holistic system. The objective of the advertisement may be viewed as selling the brand of vodka called ‘Absolut’. However, this sales tactic is definitely covert as there is no price tag, no call for action and the brand ‘Absolut’ is vague. Moreover, the alcoholic drink ‘vodka’ is not stated except in the minute words below the tagline. In fact, the advertisement can be very baffling to the uninitiated. However, to the viewer who is familiar with Absolut Vodka, he understands the message completely. The advertisement reinforces the image of ‘Absolut Vodka’ as a creative brand for creative and smart people.

← [THEY ARE] 40 AND 50% ALC/VOL (80 AND 100 PROOF). [AND] 100% GRAIN NEUTRAL SPIRITS. ←

COHESION	ellipted reference: lexical		(abbreviated hyponym)	lexical cohesion	(hyponym)
THEME	Theme (topical)				
INFORMATION	New				
MOOD	[Subject]	[Finite]	Complement		
	Mood		Residue		
TRANSTIVITY	Carrier	Process: intensive	Attribute		

CLAUSE II

Operational Function
Sequence IV

A Functional Grammar Analysis of Clause II.

table 6.

ABSOLUT COUNTRY OF SWEDEN VODKA & LOGO, ABSOLUT, ABSOLUT BOTTLE DESIGN AND ABSOLUT CALLIGRAPHY ARE TRADEMARKS

COHESION	repetition collocation		
THEME	Theme	Rheme	
	topical		
INFORMATION	Given	←	New
MOOD	Subject	Finite	Complement
	Mood	Residue	
TRANSTIVITY	Carrier	Process: intensive	Attribute

CLAUSE III

Operational Function
Sequence IV

A Functional Grammar Analysis of Clause III.

table 7.

← / TRADEMARKS OWNED BY V&S SPIRIT AB. / ←

← ©1994 V&S SPIRIT AB.

COHESION	collocation repetition			repetition
THEME	Theme	Rheme		Theme
	topical			
INFORMATION	Given	← New		New ← Given
MOOD	subject	(past part.) Finite	(own) Predicator	Complement
	Mood			Residue
TRANSTIVITY	Value	Process: identifying, possessive		Possessor

CLAUSE IV

Operational Function
Sequence IV

A Functional Grammar Analysis of Clause IV.

table 8.

↑
IMPORTED

BY HOUSE OF SEAGRAM, NEW YORK, NY.

COHESION	repetition			
THEME	Theme	Rheme		
	topical			
INFORMATION	Given	←—————→	New	
MOOD	[Subject]	(past participle) Finite	(import) Predicator	Complement
	Mood			Residue
TRANSTIVITY	Goal	Process: material	Actor	

CLAUSE V

Operational Function
Sequence IV

A Functional Grammar Analysis of Clause V.

table 9.

The contexts of culture and situation bear great significance on the text itself. Firstly, it is targeted at an audience who is familiar with American culture. As a test, ask someone the question ‘who is Frankenstein?’ and more often than not, you will get the answer that he is some grotesque creature. Even for those who know that Frankenstein is actually the name of the scientist who created the monster, the first image that is evoked by the utterance is a grotesque creature with stitches all over his face and two screws sticking out of his neck. This image can be traced back to the 1931 film adaptation directed by James Whale. This image of a creature (*Diagram 9 pg46*) with a high forehead, long limbs, stitches on his face and two screws on his neck is further reinforced by numerous sequels and adaptations over the years: the Bride of Frankenstein (1935), Son of Frankenstein (1939) and Young Frankenstein (1974). Through films and images, this image of Frankenstein has been ingrained in our minds that we begin to associate the word ‘Frankenstein’ with this particular image. The signifier ‘Frankenstein’ has become extricably linked to the signified of this image in the cultural context of Hollywood.

One may think that the advertisement’s tagline ‘Absolut Shelley’ is literary based, recognising that Frankenstein is actually written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, a female writer based in England (Shelley 1994). However, it alludes rather to a new Hollywood production of Frankenstein called ‘Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein’ (1994) directed by Kenneth Branagh. This is further affirmed by the fact that the advertisement appeared in a magazine called Movieline. Ironically, in this film adaptation, the director tries to change this ingrained image of Frankenstein’s monster while Absolut Vodka strengthens this image through the very title of his film. To this very day, the image stays with us.

This context of culture is clearly understood by the advertising company that created the advertisement. Lewis writes about this particular advertisement and two other advertisements (Absolut Wells and Absolut Stoker found in *Diagram 11 pg61*):

‘These three ads were but the first in a select group comprising what I think as our film and literature series. It’s a special set of ads that are obviously not for everyone. We run them only in literary-minded publications such as the New Yorker and the New York Times Book Review, or occasionally in film and entertainment magazines. Understanding them takes a few seconds – maybe many seconds – even when the reader is on the appropriate wavelength and reading a magazine whose emphasis is on literature. But we hear time and again that people appreciate the challenge, particularly when they conquer it.’

(Lewis 1996:231).

Hence, this particular text can be viewed as a text within an entire semiotic coding of Frankenstein. At the work level (*Table 2 pg19*), the text’s meaning is relevant only in a specific context of culture. However, the text can also be viewed as an inter-text, interacting with the text of the entire semiotic coding of Frankenstein. This interrelationship is depicted as *relationship a* in *Diagram 11 (pg61)*.

The context of situation of the entire Absolut advertising campaign also assists us in the definition of the message and the understanding of the advertisement. Since 1981, Absolut Vodka has been running the same concept in all its print advertisements. It has become a genre in its own rights with obligatory items such as the bottle, the brand name ‘Absolut’ and the same format of an image and a tagline ‘Absolut X’ at the bottom of the advertisement. This particular context of situation enables one to identify the different elements easily and discover the meanings.

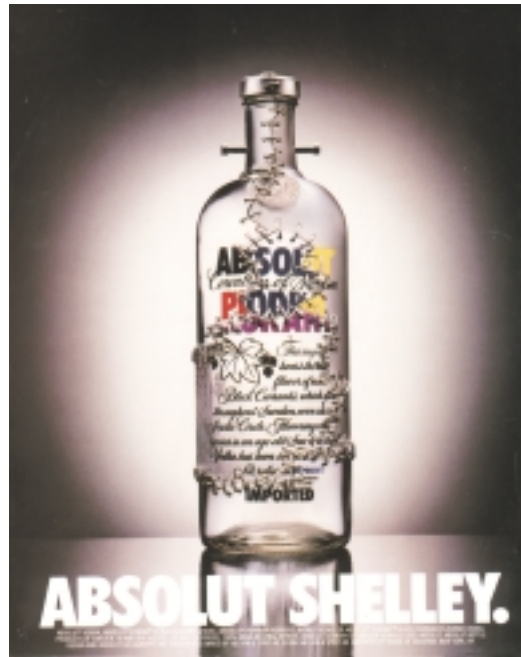
INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

Operational Function of Work



semiotic coding of Frankenstein

→
←
a



text

→
←
b



diagram 10.

visual codings
of the same genre as the text

a Intertextuality *b* Cotextuality

diagram 11.

A Representation of the Different Interrelationships in the Text

In this context of situation, this particular text forms interrelationships with other cotexts as depicted in *relationship b* in *Diagram 11 (pg61)*. It is a case of cotextuality rather than intertextuality as they belong to the same genre. Unlike intertextuality's functions of extending or enhancing the meaning, cotextuality has the function of elaboration (*Table 3 pg28*). The text reinforces the entire genre of Absolut advertising. As a whole, *Diagram 11* shows the difference between intertextuality and cotextuality at the rank level of work of the operational function.

5.43 ELEMENT

The most powerful element of the text is probably the brand name 'Absolut'. Although lacking the letter 'e', it connotes the other proper English word 'absolute' which means 'complete; perfect... not allowing any doubt... having complete power... not measured by comparison with other things' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 1990:3). The improper spelling actually allows the company to register it as a trademark because the word 'absolute', being a generic term, cannot be registered as a trademark. The company of Absolut Vodka knows this quite vividly:

'A very important element is how we ourselves use our brand name... everything we do must clearly communicate to everyone in the organization and to everyone in the market that this is a valuable name. The new ® communicates both that we are serious about our brand and have the legal means to protect it.'

(Linner 1997:3)

The word 'Absolut' also has strong connotative value as well as denotative value. In the recent series of advertisements, the once thought to be obligatory element of the

bottle is made redundant. The essential element is reduced only to its registered trademark word 'Absolut'. The advertisements feature famous authors like Douglas Coupland, Dominick Dunne and John Irving (Linner 1998). The authors are supposed to pen a short story with only one criterion: it must incorporate the word 'Absolut'. In effect, this shows how a small element can have a significant operational function.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The analysis of the Absolut Vodka advertisement reveals the effectiveness and exhaustiveness of a systemic functional approach. The model of analysis, besides pinpointing the advertisement's marketing objectives, is able to discover the advertisement's underlying structure, its design features, the interaction between images and words and finally, the dynamic processes of meaning creation. The analysis is never lost in the vast amount of material because each function and unit is paradigmatically and syntagmatically situated within a precise system.

At its core, the proposed systemic functional model is a parallel for human communication (Shannon and Weaver 1949). It traces how an encoder having a message to tell, finds a medium, organises the information (compositional), then uses the available resources to form the most effective way of communicating the message (modal). And finally, the decoder unravels the message and discovers its meaning (operational). In effect, the model actually dissects the language of advertisements to equip the viewer with sufficient vocabulary and a consistent grammar to effectively analyse an advertisement. The act of decoding an advertisement becomes consistent, precise and clear.

This thesis may be microscopic in perspective as it only reveals how a specific model of analysis is applied to a single text in a specific genre. However, it serves as a microcosm for the wider application of the systemic functional approach to multisemiotic texts. Its effectiveness and exhaustiveness reside in a belief that a system of discrete components work together, each with specific functions to create a holistic and powerful message.

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