*Repress*enting the manimal: A semiotic/psychoanalytic approach to the strategic importance of anthropomorphism in branding

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Abstract: S.Brown proclaimed in 1995 that there is no representation without taxation. In an attempt to extend this line of reasoning, this paper puts forward the argument that there is no representation without repression. By drawing on the exemplary brand identity building stratagem of the anthropomorph and by recourse to the dreamwork formative process illustrated by Freud in his magnum opus *The Interpretation of Dreams,* an account is yielded of the equivalent process involved in the formation of the brandwork. Moreover, by unlocking the potential of the faculty of imagination as constitutive of the web of metaphors and metonymies wherein the brandwork as figurative discourse is embedded, a genealogical route is pursued with view to demonstrating that what are usually described as universally recognizable brand symbols, stem from singular representations or imaginary constellations that reveal a brand's truth inasmuch as they conceal it. By extending the interpretive findings pertaining to the imaginary status of the anthropomorphic figure, suggestions are made as to why a brand should not be viewed only in terms of manifest personality traits, but also in terms of a latent unconscious.

***Keywords*:** anthropomorphism, unconscious, imaginary signifier, dreamwork, icon.

INTRODUCTION

Anthropomorphism may be usually defined as the attribution of human characteristics to non-human things or events, based on *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, such as the personification of inanimate objects (i.e. a talking mug) and/or animals (i.e. a dancing rhinoceros). The social uses of anthropomorphic characters throughout cultures and historical periods vary considerably. A striking example is the pre-christian example literature, where animals were used to tell moralizing stories that later became known as fables (Kemp, 2007). In the context of fables animals were pictured in a rather realistic way, although they were engaging actively in human activities. In the medieval era, anthropomorphic figures resurfaced as bestiaries, where more stylistic animals told christian stories. Anthropomorphism was also prevalent among ancient tribes endorsing totemism.

> "In the first place, the totem is the common ancestor of the clan; at the same time it is their guardian spirit and helper, which sends them oracles and, if dangerous to others, recognizes and spares its own children. Conversely, the clansmen are under a sacred obligation (subject to automatic sanctions) not to kill or destroy their totem and to avoid eating its flesh (or deriving benefit from it in other ways)" (Freud, 2000, p. 2651).

The social function performed by the totem is still relevant nowadays, albeit in a changed form, such as the mascot, where, instead of clan members ritually supplicating for rain one encounters cheer-leaders. This process corresponds to what Belk, Wallendorf, Sherry (1989) described as secularization of the sacred and sacralization of the secular, the qualifying difference lying in the mode of maintenance of the sacrality of the secular representation.

Anthropomorphism reached its apogee in the totemic figure. The sacred character of the totemic figure was manifested in the prohibitions that accompanied its sacrilege. Through the totemic figure the animal was sublimated and instead of reflecting the inhuman, the irrational, it came to symbolize higher, super-human forces. The animal was domesticated in the image of the clan through a figurative discourse that furnished communal bonds among clan members. What has changed in the advertising representation of the anthropomorph is the kind of figurative discourse that determines the mode of sacralization of the secular figure. The secularized nature of an animated totem, such as Kellogg's Tony the tiger[1], in

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1 For a comprehensive listing of anthropomorphic figures as key symbolic elements of brand discourse see
http://www.grupthink.com/topic/2736/Favorite_Anthropomorphic_Advertising_Mascot

contradiction to the sacred character of the totem, rests with its replicability. In the era of mechanical reproduction, the infinite replicability of the totem is responsible for the loss of its transcendental aura and at the same time for its recuperation through the proliferation of anthropomorphic representations in advertising.

MARKETING PERSPECTIVES ON ANTHROPOMORHISM

Anthropomorphism in marketing has been conceptualized, so far, mainly from the angles of consumer behaviour and branding/advertising discourse. In terms of branding/advertising, the ascription of human characteristics (encompassing elements of the human anatomy and behavioral features) to animals, mostly manifested as cartoon characters, affords to create a unique brand personality, easily copied, but not credibly so by the competition, thus paving the way for the creation of long-lasting strong, unique, favorable brand associations or, in Keller's (1998) terms, a robust consumer-based brand equity platform. Moreover, "unlike real people, cartoon-character symbols rarely generate unfavorable surprises and they do not age" (Aaker, 1996, p.148). Successfully leveraging anthropomorphism may also yield a cost-efficient advertising conceptual platform, insofar as a company-owned and patented brand persona is free from royalties and contract renewals, based on the period and geographies where specific commercials are intended for airing, as against a human endorser.

Additionally, a company owns an anthropomorphic character, it may dispose of it as it pleases, irrespective of contractual agreements or potential conflict with other brand values, as might be the case with a human endorser who appears in multiple brand commercials, either in the same airing period or in insufficiently distanced periods that would allow for the weakening and/or effacement of generated brand associations (which also poses the threat of diluting the effectiveness of an endorser, thus mitigating the effective values transfer from endorser to brand). At the same time, an imaginary anthropomorphic figure, such as Tony the tiger (or a mythical counterpart, such as Cerberus), excites the imagination.

From a consumer behavior perspective, Lancendorfer, Atkin, Reece (2008) found by using the heuristic – systematic model (HSM) that the presence of a dog in the tested advertisement increased heuristic processing, concurrent processing, and ultimately attitude

toward the ad, while pointing to directions for future, more extended research linking attitude toward the ad with attitude toward the brand.

Puzakova, Kwak, Rocereto (2009) defined brand anthropomorphization as the incidence of brands being perceived by consumers as actual human beings with various emotional states, mind, soul and conscious behaviors that can function as social bonds. In their conceptual approach that furnished five testable hypotheses they outlined a social function for anthropomorphism, with regard to branding, by drawing on the famous self-concept / brand-image congruency theory. According to their perspective, individuals whose need for social connection is not satisfied, experience pain at an intensity similar to physical pain. For thes individuals, as well as for individuals who suffer from chronic loneliness and for those who are in need for closure, the authors hypothesize that self-concept/brand-image congruency will have higher positive associations with anthropomorphized brands.

The above advances in consumer research are undoubtedly instrumental in pointing to areas where anthropomorphic figures may be of superior value to positive attitude formation towards the ad and towards the brand compared to others sorts of advertising stimuli, as well as for putting the evocative power of an anthropomorphic branding strategy in perspective, in the context of particular need-states and lifestyles.

From a cultural viewpoint, anthropomorphism attains to overcome traditional binary logic and resolve the tension of logical contradictions by simulating the co-existence of opposites. Tony the tiger is neither Man nor animal, he is both man and animal, he is *manimal*.

As a principle for the production of cultural narratives, anthropomorphism at an even more foundational level reflects a universal tendency of humans, as Hume notes (cited in Guthrie, 1997, p.51), to conceive of all beings like themselves. The concept of anthropomorphism could not have escaped the attention of the archi-philosopher of suspicion, F.Nietzsche, to which he alluded regularly throughout his more or less fragmentary, aphoristic oeuvres. Instead of exalting the virtues of man-made measures, like Protagoras, Nietzsche reduced the 'higher ideals' of humanity (encompassing morality, the Platonic ideals of truth, beauty, goodness etc.) to what he calls *anthropomorphic projections*, in a pejorative sense, standing for narcissistic self-complacency. In fact, his so-called perspectival theory of truth is predicated on the aphoristic expulsion of metaphysical truth as "a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms" (Nietzsche, 1988, p.46). As Stack (1980, p.42) stresses,

"the arrogant claim to possess knowledge is reduced to the invention of knowledge shaped by the human intellect for the sole purpose of preserving and conserving the life of man". And yet, what Nietzsche, in the name of some sort of hypothetical and disinterested non-anthropomorphic notion of truth, repudiates as mere linguistic ploy made up of metaphors and anthropomorphisms that yield a poetic picture of actuality that is presumably false, is precisely what constitutes metaphor as institutive of the very distinction between truth and falsity, as will be shown in due course.

As process, anthropomorphism concerns the production of images and a celebration of the singular representation's fleeing the universalistic boundaries of metaphysical discourse, irrespective of genre. By following a psychoanalytic approach, augmented by semiotic insights, I shall attempt to demonstrate that anthropomorphism as manifest representation in an ad text essentially constitutes a *repressentation*, whereby either unaccomplished wishes or recurring traumas return to haunt the coherence of the ego through a metaphorical rendition of what has been repressed or censored in the process of translating a latent dream content into a manifest one. By drawing parallels between the function of the dreamwork and the process of the formation of a brand's personality (or what may be called the *brandwork*) the anthropomorphic *repressentation* will be shown to constitute an exemplary case. The anthropomorph not only constitutes an appealing and relevant brand metaphorizing mode, but, at an even more foundational level, it lays bare how iconic signs are transformed into symbolic signs.

THE STATUS OF THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURE IN SEMIOTIC TERMS

This section starts with a big 'if'. If, as one may extrapolate from the above approaches to the function of anthropomorphic branding figures, the primary reason for the appeal of the anthropomorph lies in maintaining proximity with formal elements pertaining to the comportment of what is intuitively perceived to be human, then why not employ human actors instead of anthropomorphic representations? If the 'truth' of the anthropomorphic figure is a function of its 'proximity' to the human figure, then what is the reason for employing a hybrid logical monstrosity instead for the 'real McCoy'? In strict advertising effectiveness terms one might as well argue that the relative effectiveness of anthropomorphic figures lies in their not having worn out as figurative tropes (which is debatable), given that anthropomorphism is a special case of metaphorical use of audiovisual language. But what is

particularly appealing in anthropomorphism as against familiar representations involving human actors? The answer is, or so my interpretive compass points to at this argumentative juncture, that the relatively superior to common human actors appeal of the tropical stratagem of the anthropomorph rests with its entering in an iconic relationship with what it represents, as an incidence of contrived iconicity. Now, the descriptor 'contrived' implies, on the one hand, the notion of conventionality and, on the other hand the notion of natural resemblance. If conventionality is implied in the icon, then it is rather a symbol and if conventionality is conceived as the contrary term of a bipolar semantic axis, then it must be complemented bv some sort of naturality. By following a different line of argumentation, but within the wider discussion pertaining to the interplay between iconic/symbolic sign in Peircean semiotics, Grayson concludes that "the foregoing analysis reduces all icons to symbols, because all icons require conventions in order to be seen as icons" (Grayson, 1998, p.35)[2], a standpoint which echoes Wittgenstein's conventionalism that was popularized through his theory of family resemblance, as laid out in *Philosophical Investigations*.

With view to disambiguating the concept of iconicity, which is central to the function of the anthropomorph, let us turn provisionally to the Peircean triadic classification of the sign (symbol/index/icon). It is a popular misconception that Peirce's notion of iconic sign is a simple relationship of resemblance between sign and object.

> "In Peirce's universal categorial system, the icon belongs to the category of firstness, in contrast to the index and symbol, which belong to secondness and thirdness. Firstness is the mode of being which represents "the absolute present [. . .], something which is what it is without reference to anything else" (§ 2.85). The icon participates in firstness because it is "a Sign whose significant virtue is due simply to its Quality" (§ 2.92), or "An Icon is a Representamen whose Representative Quality is a Firstness of it as a First. That is, a quality that it has qua thing renders it fit to be a representamen" (§ 2.276)" (Nöth, 1990, p.121).

If the criterion of similarity between icon and object rests with some qualia of the object that render it fit to be a representamen, then the question is transposed from the icon's

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2 For a comprehensive overview of the applications of Peircean semiotics in marketing research see Mick et al., 2004, pp. 1-74. Also see Mick, 1997, pp.244-256.

relationship to the iconized object to the mode of cognition whereby these extra iconic qualia may be known as such and hence their fit to be discerned vis a vis the icon. Since this process would contravene the notion of iconicity, Peirce is forced to acknowledge that the referential object does not even have to exist.

> "Each Icon partakes of some more or less overt character of its Object. They, one and all, partake of the most overt character of all lies and deceptions, their Overtness. Yet they have more to do with the living character of truth than have either Symbols or Indices. The Icon does not stand unequivocally for this or that existing thing, as the Index does. Its Object may be a pure fiction, as to its existence. (§ 4.531)" (ibid, p.123).

> "Both existent things and non-existent, merely fictional or imaginary ideas can thus be the objects of a picture" (Nöth, 2003, p.7). The debate that continues to rage unabated in semiotic circles about the notion of iconicity and the ever complex argumentative threads that are deployed occasionally in a circular fashion certainly lie beyond the scope of this paper. Let us retain for the sake of the argument Peirce's concession that the object of an iconic relationship might as well be a fictive or imaginary one or, in Nietzsche's terms, a *factum fictum* (fictive fact).

If this is the case, then where do we stand with regard to Tony? Is Tony a *factum fictum* or a composite icon whose primary components (tiger and man) resemble prototypical subjects? The latter is not defensible insofar as Tony's signification rests neither with the species 'Tiger' nor with the species 'Human Male'. Tony resembles Kellogg's, is a sign for Kellogg's insofar as he stands for it and as is well known a sign is something that stands for something else to someone in some capacity. Tony stands for Kellogg's according to his audience by virtue of his capacity to act as the brand's endorser and key figure of the brand's personality. Tony does not signify because he is a hybrid species combining tiger and human male, but because he is the spokesperson for Kellogg's, in a relationship of contrived iconicity. Thus, he is beyond a simple metaphorical usage of 'tiger' in terms of attributes and values transfer, as is the case with Esso's classic advertising where semantic closure is effected by the slogan 'Put a tiger in your engine'.

Tony the tiger looks like a tiger but he speaks like human. He represents the domestication of nature by culture, the subjugation of wild life in a teleological framework interspersed with human values. Whom does Tony look like? A tiger, Kellogg's spokesperson, a father figure passing advice about the ideal breakfast? These questions are crucial, as in addressing them we may gauge that Tony the tiger only resembles the brand or more accurately sub-brand Kellogg's Frosties. But, where does this iconic resemblance stem from? Eco (1976) stresses that the so-called iconic signs are arbitrarily coded, a postulate that was fervently adhered to in *Theory of Semiotics*. There is no-extra semiotic resemblance between icon and object. Moreover, any resemblance is the outcome of the function of metaphoricity that underpins not only the relationship between metaphor and proper name, but also between denotation and connotation. Thus, Eco (1976, p.193) poses the critical questions "Is one really sure that iconic signs are similar to the objects they stand for? Indeed, is one sure that they stand for objects at all?". "The criterion for similitude is based on precise rules that select some parameters as pertinent and disregard some others as irrelevant" (ibid, p.196).

> "Even the continuous line tracing the profile of the horse may be considered as the intuition of a relation of similitude by a transformed correspondence point to a point between the abstract visual content model of a horse and an image drawn on a given surface. The image is motivated by the abstract representation of the horse, but is nevertheless the effect of a cultural decision and as such requires a trained eye in order to be detected as a horse's profile. Similitude is produced and must be learned" (ibid, p.200).

Does Tony possess any inherent attributes by virtue of which he constitutes a good fit for Kellogg's? Hardly so. Now, this fact that emerges most strikingly through the exploration of the iconic relationship between the factum fictum of the anthropomorph and the brand of which he acts as a spokesperson, speaks not only for the general canon of the arbitrariness of the sign, but, more specifically, regarding branding discourse, for the very metaphorical process whereby brands are constituted as icons, whose constitutive elements resemble them by virtue of a semi-symbolic fit that has been brought about through inscription of this contiguous resemblance in the brand audience's memory. *Tony the tiger is not an example of anthropomorphism, but anthropomorphism is exemplary of the very process of brand formation.*

In order to render this process clearer and by implication account for the reason why anthropomorphic figures are particularly appealing as strategic elements of a brand's core identity, I shall now revert to Kant's functions of productive and reproductive imagination, Aristotle's dual definition of mimesis and Derrida's description of the institutive role of metaphor.

IMAGINATION AS THE FUNCTION RESPONSIBLE FOR YIELDING REPRESENTATIONS

Kant may be credited for paying particular emphasis on the constitutive nature of imagination regarding the production of representations. In fact, according to Kant, the synthesizing role performed by imagination is responsible for producing reality as such. How does reality emerge through the faculty of imagination and what is the difference between productive and reproductive imagination?

We read in the *Kant Dictionary* (Caygill, 2000, pp.246-249) that the famous philosopher introduced a critical distinction between productive or poetic imagination and empirical or reproductive imagination. This is the distinction between imagination as a faculty of the original representation of the object (exhibitio originaria), which consequently precedes experience and as a faculty of the derived representation (exhibitio derivativa). *Productive imagination is responsible for producing an 'original representation of the object' or, one might say, is responsible for an object's objectification.*

The crux of the argument is that productive imagination produces original representations that are not derived from experience, but provide conditions of experience. In the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant equates imagination with the principle of the necessary unity of pure (productive) synthesis of imagination, as the ground of the possibility of all knowledge, especially of experience (*Critique of Pure Reason* A 118), while in the second edition imagination features as the spontaneous source of all synthesis (*Critique of Pure Reason* B 152). In the *Critique of Judgment*, which constitutes Kant's aesthetic theory, imagination and judgment do not merely apply the laws of the faculty of understanding, but in reflective judgment simultaneously invent and apply laws, that is, their function is not reproductive and imitative, but productive and original. In short, Kant pioneered with his distinction between productive and reproductive imagination by placing imagination in its

productive aspect, initially (in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) in between sensibility and perception and later (in the *Critique of Judgment*) as responsible for the very invention of conceptual categories. "The unity of the totality of intuition […] cannot spring forth from the synthesis of the understanding. It is a unity which is caught sight of in advance in the image-giving imagining" (Heidegger, 1997, p.100). Certainly the technicalities involved in the actual argumentation are characterised by considerable complexity, but what interests us most in this paper is the very productive character ascribed to imagination by Kant, which later was identified by Heidegger with the very process of truth's presencing as bringing forth from concealment into unconcealment (Tony 'brings out the tiger in you'). By evoking the common etymological root between *phaino* (to let appear) and *phantasia* (imagination or the process of letting appear) Heidegger demonstrated from an ontological perspective the importance of Kant's notion of productive imagination as responsible for furnishing re-presentations or repeating in manifest content what lies in concealment. A similar conceptual distinction was furnished by Aristotle in Poetics regarding the dual definition of mimesis. As Derrida illustrates in a remarkable passage from *White Mythology*,

"at the beginning of the Poetics, mimesis is taken to be in some way a possibility inherent in physis. Physis is revealed through mimesis, or in poetry, which is a form of mimesis. What makes this possible is a far from obvious structure in which the redoubling or folding effect of mimesis is not something brought from outside. Rather, it belongs to physis or we might say that physis includes its own exteriorization and its double. In this sense, then, mimesis is a «natural» movement" (Derrida, 1974, p.37).

Complementary to the etymological contiguity amongst *phaino, phantasia* and *physis*, what is of interest in the parallel reading of Kant's productive imagination and Aristotle's mimesis is the apparent structural homology these "founding tropes" (Derrida, 1974) perform in a metaphorological system, as constitutive of a general economy for the production of representations. Moreover, from a metatheoretical standpoint, the originally metaphorical employment of these terms became ossified as an oppositional pair between 'reason' and 'imagination', thus pointing to the manner whereby an originary process of metaphoricity is responsible for yielding oppositional pairs, even the very fundamental binarism between 'proper' and 'metaphorical' signification. By tracing genealogically the formation of such binarisms we are confronted with the fact of their originary unity.

Derrida has demonstrated how the very process of metaphoricity is constitutive of the derivative difference between the literal and the metaphoric (see Gasche, 1986, pp. 293-320). At the level of the interplay between philosophical and rhetorical discourses, various authors have demonstrated how rhetorical tropes, such as metaphors and allegories function as heuristic devices in instances of syllogistic aporias (i.e. Plato's myth of the cave in the theory of truth deployed in the *Republic* or «the participative mechanism» whereby the individual soul participates in immortal Forms in the argument for the immortality of the soul in Plato's *Phaedo* or the analogical construct of *Scala Amoris* in Plato's *Symposium* or St.Augustine's analogical construct of *Analogia Entis*), how artificial lines between rhetoric and philosophy have been drawn in philosophical discourse (i.e. in the discussion of the differences between rhetoric and philosophy in Plato's *Gorgias*), how rhetoric was appropriated by logic and dialectic, reducing it to an art of oratorical ornamentation and why critical thinking is inextricably linked with rhetoric.

"The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 2008, p.5). This definition is very similar to the Peircean definition of the sign, according to which a sign is something "that stands for something to someone in some respect or capacity" (Nöth, 1990, p.85). Metaphors have the power to extend the literary meaning of concepts, as embedded in a lexicon, by transforming them figuratively, thus transposing a concept from the plane of denotation to the plane of connotation. "If metaphor can be defined as an uncharacteristic or uncustomary use of a word in a particular context, then this means that the metaphoric sign departs from the semiotic structure of the language system in its conventionality" (ibid, p.130). Thus, metaphor is a motivated sign, displaying a high degree of creativity. "The labor of metaphor is always motivated. What must be asked here is if those effects and properties are not already cultural constructions" (Eco, 1986, p.108). The analogical similarity between the metaphoricized concepts is not one of iconic similarity, as resemblance between 'external object' and icon, but a case of contrived similarity or invention and the institution of a conventional sign. The process whereby a metaphor as unconventional creative sign becomes conventionalized follows, according to Nöth, a four-step route. At first, a creative destabilization of a concept's literal meaning emerges. This creative metaphor, once inscribed and circulating in ordinary discourse assumes the character of a lexicalized metaphor. As the original meaning of the concept vanishes, the concept becomes an opaque metaphor. Finally, as the concept becomes

restabilized according to its newly ascribed meaning, it constitutes a dead metaphor (see Nöth, 1990, p.131).

"If words are constantly changing their meaning, if meanings, too, 'change their words' very easily, this is largely through the play of figurative uses which are subsequently lost as such; They become literal meanings and thus perpetuate the unwinding of the diachronic process by a double rebound effect; supplanting the growth of new figurative meanings" (Metz, 1982, p.158).

This process is identified by Eco as the institution of catachreses, "not the institutionalised catachresis, transformed into a codified lexeme (for example, the leg of a table), but the institutive catachresis" (Eco, 1986, p.101).

Brand personality, in fact most branding concepts, constitute outcomes of metaphorical thinking. Enmeshed in a web of similes and analogies, metaphors in branding aim at concretizing abstract concepts, which is how the anthropomorph functions. When we predicate a brand personality-related image characteristic of a brand essentially we compare and assimilate it to a feature held by a real person. Thus, when claiming that Brand X is adventurous, what emerges in this elliptical analogy is the metaphorical simile Brand X is like an adventurous person, which may also be rendered as Brand X is sheer adventurousness. Lakoff and Johnson (2008, p.25) call the metaphors that arise from experiencing objects 'ontological metaphors', "that is, ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances" (idem). The authors classify personification metaphors as a special case of ontological metaphors, and hence brand personality as a personification tactic. Personification "allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities" (ibid, p. 35). So-called brand personification projective techniques are also popular in qualitative branding research, whereby consumers are requested to ascribe personality characteristics to brands indirectly, in the process of associating them with car brands, actors, planets and all sorts of recognizable human and non-human agents. Such techniques are also popular for gauging competitive brand dynamics, such as requesting of consumers to imagine that two brands meet at a party and then describe what they would say to each other, how they would be dressed, what kind of drink they would drink etc. Thus, not only brands are metaphorical entities, as they exist by

virtue of being invested with human personality attributes, but the very process of coming into existence is a metaphorical one.

Having thus far established that imagination is responsible for furnishing representations through the function of productive imagination and explained why the process of mimesis as bringing forth into unconcealment from what lies in concealment in the form of determinate representations through a metaphorical process whose essence is institutive of branding discourse and brand personality and hence of the anthropomophic figure, let us now proceed with a comparison between the formative process of the dreamwork and the brandwork. This comparison will attain to establish another structural homology between *lethe* or the locus of concealment wherefrom *phantasia* lets representations appear and its counterparts *physis* and its internal psychic mirroring as unconscious (as termed in Freud's first psychic topography in the *Interpretation of Dreams*).

In essence, this is the process whereby imaginary representations morph into symbols and by implication singular representations into symbolic figures, such as the singular representation of the anthropomorphic figure of Tony the tiger, originally conceived by a creative director and progressively morphed into an integral symbolic element of Kellogg's Frosties brand personality.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS AS *REPRESSENTATIONS* OR THE DREAMWORK AS BRANDWORK

On the surface level of a brand's narrative structure, the attribution of anthropomorphic features to an animal or inanimate object allow not only for identifying more easily with a brand's values, but also for legitimating brand discourse as the cultural milieu where nothing is impossible. Moreover, by virtue of the legitimacy of brand discourse as the milieu of infinite semiotic possibilities, overabundant onomatopoeia and marketing mythopoeia (in Sherry's terms), the repressed unconscious is projectively and phantasmatically liberated through the 'excitement' caused by the universality of otherwise singular figurative constellations. Anthropomorphic brand discourse is the locus where the dream comes true or, more explicitly, where the primary dream content surfaces in its unrepressed singularity prior to undergoing revision. Anthropormophic brand discourse is thus *repressentation* (or repressed representation) unbound, albeit in a feigned manner,

succumbing to an identificatory logic. The anthropomorphic character, a hybrid representation in itself, a contrived sign and a plastic figura, is an occasion for celebrating the dangerous supplement that evaded reduction to a universal signifier (be it a lexeme or a symbol). Tony the tiger is not only symbolic of Kellogg's, as a brand symbol, but if we assume that Kellogg's is the category leader in the cereals category and that it outperforms all competitors on the functional image attribute 'It tastes great' (even after cleansing data from any 'halo effect'), which is a threshold perceptual critical success factor, then Tony the tiger stands synecdochically as the symbolic gatekeeper of an entire category. Tony the tiger is as real as it can be. He is stored in consumers' memories as a structural schema that denotes a fundamental critical success factor. His stopping power in a supermarket corridor is unquestionable.

The anthropomorphic figure as signifier is a fragment/figment of a creative director's imagination that assumes universal representational value in the context of a cultural logic by virtue of a brand discourse's legitimate ability to (re)present an imaginary aleatoric point (the event or the encounter between latent and manifest dream content or the encounter of the lost trace of the unconscious during its metaphorical substitution and metonymic displacement in the imaginary signifier of the manifest dream content). The receivers of the brand symbol, on a surface reading, endorse the imaginary signifier not only as an occasion for celebrating the moment of Ratio's domesticating power of animal alterity, but also because of the fact that Tony the tiger managed to rise above his singularity as unique manifest dream content to a universal Icon and hence as an occasion of celebrating the power of Iconicity. If Reason maintains its coherence by virtue of a narcissistic mirroring that transpierces its systemic echelons, Tony the tiger celebrates the moment of an ephemeral fictive constellation's turned into universal lifestyle background expectancy.

But Tony also achieves what I shall call a 'figurative first mover advantage', not simply by virtue of furnishing a powerful symbolic proxy of paramount stopping power in the process of consumer choice and evaluation of alternative offerings, while creating a 'mental blocker' in prospects' associative networks, but also in purely stylistic terms, by reducing the effectiveness of similar fictive copycat characters. Thus, if Nestle, for example, opted for the introduction of Nicky the Weasel[3] as emblematic of a new sub-brand or as the fictive endorser

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3 Yet, anthropomorphic mascots abound in the cereals category; see http://egotvonline.com/2011/04/25/the-best-cartoon-mascots-in-breakfast-cereal-history/

of a key brand in its portfolio, Nicky would probably be perceived as a lamentable follower, which would reflect in turn negatively on the brand.

Freud's analysis of the dreamwork is of paramount relevance to branding insofar as it addresses three crucial aspects in the formation of a dream, which do correspond to equivalent facets in the creation of a brand. First, he conceives of the dreamwork as a grand associative network with "loop-lines or short-circuits made possible by the existence of other and deeper-lying connecting paths" (Freud, 2000, p.753). Second, even though fuelled by considerably 'subjectivist' accounts (not to mention the issue of sample size), Freud's interpretations seek to restore associative pathways between largely rationally constituted latent thoughts with figuratively produced manifest contents. Third, he shows how a narrative analysis of a 'patient's' story is concerned more with what is left unsaid than what is expressed in dream recollections. In fact, by employing a Heideggerian notion of truth as dialectic between concealment and unconcealment in the movement of a-letheia, Lacan in Book IV of *Ecrits* locates the subject's truth or the unconscious as its Other in absence (and the very dynamic process of simultaneous concealment/unconealment of a-letheia is echoed in Freudian theory in the fort/da [here/there] game invented by his grandson as displayed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 'Da' also standing for the 'thereness' in Heidegger's existential analytic of Da-sein or the return of the censored unconscious, according to Derrida's interpretation in the *Postcard*, which Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* equates with the Nietzschean concept of the eternal recurrence of the same or, in Freud's terms, the return of the repressed).

What bridges the latent dream content or the unconscious with the manifest dream content or the representations recounted in a waking state is figurative discourse made up of that armory of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms, by virtue of which the unconscious appears in a condensed, displaced, distorted manner.

Now, if what grants similarity between two words or pictures (or picture and concept) standing in a metaphorical relationship between them and conditions their substitutability is an absent wish, in the context of the *Interpretation of Dreams* and an absent trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* then the condition of similarity is highly adhocratic and individualistic, while metaphor as *inventio* starts from a private language (or a new, institutive catachresis, in Eco's terms). As against a lexical semantic perspective that views the semantic transfer between two terms conjoined in a metaphorical relationship as "two coupled

significations in one metaphor" (Ricoeur, 2004, p.127), based on a set of common attributes between the coupled terms, which is a-contextual and diachronic, given that the condition for the coupling is the universal corpus of the lexicon, in the singular context of the dreamwork the condition of similarity resides in absentia, as individual wish or trauma (but also conditioned partially, by same day peripheral stimuli or even by stimuli received soon after waking from the dream-state, not to mention stimuli entering un-consciously in the dream formation process while being asleep, such as random noises). "The proper path of interpretation is the dreamer's associations and not the pregiven connections in the symbols themselves" (Ricoeur, 1970, p.102). This is certainly the case with advertising discourse, where the metaphorical association between two words or a concept and a picture initially manifest themselves as highly idiosyncratic. In more concrete terms, the metaphor "My love is a blossoming flower" makes universal sense by associating and transferring the attribute of growth from blossoming flower to love, but also, perhaps, the attribute of beauty to a gentle emotion. However, the associative transfer in the case of "My wish to become a certified chartered accountant is a pond of flamingoes dressed in ballet outfits" is far from making universal sense. Yet, through multiple layers and manipulations in advertising discourse there is certainly potential for such a metaphor to become universally instituted. This is especially the case with dominant brands, characterised by highly creative advertising (see, for example, Budweiser's frog http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVcbasIb8lQ).

By analyzing the mode of relatedness between latent and manifest dream content in terms of associative networks made up of nodes or latent dream thoughts that link both to other nodes as well as to elements of manifest dream content, Freud presaged the use of associative networks as a way of interlinking the strata and the dimensions of a brand knowledge structure. "Associative paths lead from one element of the dream to several dream thoughts and from one dream thought to several elements of the dream" (Ricoeur, 1970, p.757). In his account of the dreamwork's formation, Freud unearthed two critical issues that are tantalizing to researchers up until today, viz. how is the process of condensation brought about and how do we determine the cut-off point beyond which manifest content elements are deemed to be irrelevant in maintaining structural coherence with latent content thoughts? Freud provides an answer to the first question by stressing that condensation is not a faithful translation or a point-for-point projection of the dream thoughts, but a process of omission, a highly incomplete and fragmentary version (see Freud, 2000, p.754).

The fact that there is by definition no one-to-one correspondence between manifest and latent content is also a function of displacement, as already shown. Displacement is not just a matter of metonymy or semantic displacement, but, as Freud postulates, at an even more foundational level, 'a displacement of intensities' (ibid, p.779), which explains why a seemingly peripheral manifest content element may be overcathected with libidinal energy (which largely accounts for the phenomenon of fetishism). This dual conceptualisation of transposition by Freud also antedates Ricoeur's psycholinguistic approach to displacement (see Ricoeur 2004, p.237).

The second question, though, is answered through a circular argument. The thought elements find their way through the manifest content elements or "radiate through them" (ibid, p.778) "because they constitute nodal points upon which a great number of the dream-thoughts converge and because they have several meanings in connection with the interpretation of the dream" (ibid, p.756). The process is not viciously circular as if there might be a determinate linear equation that would account for the figurative transformations between the two levels, but because it is in essence an interpretive one, whereby a provisional hypothesis guides the aggregation of the supporting elements and in turn determined anew by them, or, in Peirce's terms, a constant process of abduction.

The unconscious process of the formation of the dreamwork is an "unconscious process of thought, which may easily be different from what we perceive during purposive reflection accompanied by consciousness" (ibid, p.754). If the process of the formation of brand related consumer associations resembles the process of the formation of the dreamwork, which it does, insofar as the langue of brands, just like the langue of dreams is incumbent on treating "words as though they were objects and moreover invent new languages and artificial syntactic forms" (ibid, p.776), then the aforementioned issue of what a metaphorically constituted anthropomorphic figure such as Tony the tiger resembles as an icon surfaces anew. And the answer to such a question now (that is filtered through the formative process of the dreamwork) becomes clearer, in the form of a resemblance between a set of brand associations making up the sub-brand Kellogg's Frosties and a highly contrived, onomatopoeic figure in the form of a singular representation named Tony the tiger.

The reason why the anthropomorphic figure as part of the brand's advertising discourse and moreover as an integral symbolic element of the brand's personality is of

particular appeal lies with the audience's projectively fleeing the censorship/repression mechanism that is responsible for guarding the unconscious and reopening the distance between representations and 'what' is represented. This flight from censorship in the face of a singular representation is essentially a *repressentation* insofar as it maintains in suspense what lies in concealment as latent dream content in a simulacrum of feigned unconcealment (the brand's discourse urges consumers to bring out the tiger in them, where tiger stands for the potentially destructive power of Trieb/drive, which would literally devour the coherence of the ego if left unbound- a force represented mythically in the form of the bull-headed Minotaur lurking unexpectedly in the labyrinthine pathways of the unconscious).

The anthropomorphic figure is a spectacle that repeats the foundational process of bringing forth the unconscious through a singular representation produced by productive imagination that makes sense through participation in the figure as *repressentation*, prior to its subsumption under (but also in tandem with) a symbolic rationale and by extension its reduction to an incidence of symbolic consumption. Tony the tiger does not resemble his apparently constitutive elements of tiger and human male, as a theory of double articulation would have it, but is institutive as a metaphor of the very resemblance between the brand name Kellogg's Frosties and the network of associations making up the brand's knowledge structure. This resemblance is brought forth by imagination prior to morphing into a recognizable symbol. Tony the tiger, thus, also functions as an analgesic that resolves projectively oppositional tension. He is a Hegelian absolute spirit in fur, with tail and claws.

The process of the formation of the dreamwork as a key to the process of formation of the brandwork attains to render apparent the fact that brand symbols, such as the anthropomorphic figure of Tony the tiger, essentially constitute condensed and displaced figurative manifest renditions of a latent content (or a brand as a relationship between a set of manifest signifiers and a conceptual framework as its signified), which relation of resemblance makes sense in the context of a brand's internal poetic logic or the very particularity of the relationship between a brand's unconscious and its manifest content.

Freud's speculation about the reasons for the parataxis of two heterogeneous elements in the manifest content of the dreamwork, and by analogy the parataxis of tiger and human male in the case of Tony, is corroborative of the function of displacement that is operative in the manifest content's formation: "identification or the construction of composite figures serves various purposes in dreams: firstly to represent an element common to two persons,

secondly to represent a displaced common element, and thirdly, too, to express a merely wishful common element" (Freud, 2000, p.792).

IMPLICATIONS OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC *REPRESSENTATIONS* FOR BRAND MANAGEMENT

The anthropomorph is a highly figurative singular representation in its original inception by a creative director or an act of inventio, as Eco calls it, relatively undercoded insofar as it is not yet characterised as a universal representation by an interpretive community. By virtue of repetition and as a function of media frequency it assumes progressively a symbolic status. The aesthetic impact of the Manimal is not so much attributed to the particular hybrid representation, but to its standing as a representation of (i) the transition from singular to universal representation (ii) of the latent dream content's emergence in figurative discourse from oblivion as manifest text, as a snapshot of the suspended moment of repression/censorship prior to being reduced to another sedimented representation.

On a methodological level the opening up of the concept of brand personality to the unconscious level raises questions about the face value validity of personality traits gauged through projective techniques. If a brand may be explored in terms of a personality structure, then a more comprehensive 'psychic structure' is called for (such as Freud's psychic topographies, initially consisting of the subsystems of unconscious/preconscious/conscious and later of id/ego/super-ego) encompassing not only the manifest level of the ego and symbolic aspects, which are usually ascribed to the super-ego or the locus where ego-ideals are inscribed, but also the latent level of the unconscious. The interpretive process pursued in the Interpretation of dreams may yield the conceptual framework for exploring the unconscious aspects of a brand personality.

The suggested interpretive approach to the formation of anthropomorphic representations and the account of its relative appeal both as manifest ad discursive element and strategic brand identity element points to the usefulness of pursuing a genealogical route to the formation of brand representations, not only as regards their manifest elements, but the very conceptual underpinnings of brand related textual manifestations. With the aid of such a

genealogical approach, informed by a multidisciplinary conceptual toolbox, a brand management team (and the same holds for an account planning or a marketing research team charged with the task of shaping a brand personality over time) may ground and foreground potential imaginary pathways leading up to a manifest brand text, prior to the ascription of symbolic status to brand elements.

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