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Taste Global Capitalism: Affect, Multitude and 'Diet Jouissance' in Coca-Cola Commercials

Taste the feeling, Open Happiness, Enjoy: almost everybody knows the slogans and commercials the Coca-Cola company has created and launched over the last decades. But what is the political dimension of these advertising campaigns? This article explores the dialectics of affect and *jouissance* in several TV campaigns from the seventies to the present. It shows that the categories of affect and multitude as described by Hardt/Negri, Deleuze/Guattari and Beasley-Murray do not have any liberating quality here. Coca-Cola's advertising strategy is the embodiment of the ideal of a peaceful multitudinous revolution lead by the constituent power of positively affected bodies. By creating the utopian vision of a happy revolution untainted by borders, class or race, Coca-Cola helps to deprogram, in the Jamesian sense, the concept of the sovereign nation state in favor of unlimited global capitalism. While this borderless 'government' may produce happy consumers, it simultaneously requires the renunciation of a political consciousness. The community that Coca-Cola's commercials aim to create is thus a community based on affective power – enjoyment, shame, alleviation – that excludes the ones 'who wouldn't feel the same' and that is unable to think of revolutionary action beyond consumerism.

1 Affective history: Coca-Cola with Deleuze and Ricœur

In the 1980s, a Coca-Cola executive is reported to have said "Coca-Cola is more durable, less vulnerable, more self-correcting than the Roman Empire. This product is destined to outlast the USA" (cited by Wilson 2006: 564). Not only does this statement compare the strength and significance of a company to those of the Roman Empire, it also links the history of a state and the history of an enterprise. Coca-Cola practically *is* the new and improved Roman Empire, which is synonymous here with the United States: "it [Coca-Cola] managed to become the distillation of the 'spirit' or 'essence' of America" (*ibid.*). Later, the company crossed the American borders and went global. Most Coca-Cola TV-commercials do not bother much to stress the history and tradition of the product. Rather, their campaigns focus on capturing a present moment of 'joyful spirit' that relies mostly on fast cuts, music, colours and happy faces. However, there are some commercials which deal with history in a similar way as the quotation above suggests, linking historical and national events to the development of the soft drink. An advertising spot from the 1990s provides a minimalistic, animated 'historical timeline' from the Stone Age to

the invention of Coca-Cola in 1886 and beyond. The voice-over suggests that history before Coca-Cola has merely been a history of dullness, darkness (the 'dark' Middle Ages) and violence ("there were stones and rocks ... and stones and rocks ... and stones"). From 1886 onwards, however, it is emphasised that history has made significant progress; a period of "peace and tranquillity" began (stones and rocks in a 'good way'): the first flight by Orville Wright, the invention of the bikini, of pizza, the flash bulb and television, the beginning of the space age, the fall of the Berlin wall. Treating the apparition of Coca-Cola as an almost messianic event, it is suggested that the future, 'guided' by the soft drink, will be bright and beautiful, with the use of alternative energies in 2763 and the accomplishment of world peace in 3246.¹ In 2007, a commercial was launched that juxtaposed Coca-Cola history with the history of Afro-American emancipation in the United States. The commercial combines the development of what would be the fetishized contour glass bottle with important events in Black history such as Rosa Park's refusal to cede her seat on the bus to a white woman, or Martin Luther King's famous speech from 1963.² In the full-length 'documentary' feature *Coca-Cola. The History of an American Icon* from 2001,³ the specifically designed contour bottle and the iconic crown seal with the Coca-Cola logotype are being celebrated in a similar, yet much more melodramatic way. The establishing shots show the close-up of a sunlit Coke bottle on an ice floe with bubbling water gently caressing it (the image somewhat resembles Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, implicating both the birth of something new and wonderful as well as Coca-Cola's somehow 'natural' relation to love and desire). After a cut, we see various extreme close-ups of the bottleneck filled with the sparkling liquid known to be "delicious and refreshing", as one of the first slogans from 1904 tells us.⁴ "On the surface, it's just a soda pop", says the narrator whose words are accompanying the close-ups of the bottle as well as the subsequent images of happy people of various races, "a cold drink you can buy almost anywhere. But it's come to be more than that. How did this soft drink, Coca-Cola, become an emotional touchdown for millions around the globe? Trace their story and you trace a small part of the world's story." Subsequently, three soundbites from historians and

¹ Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0t2bztzcd0>, 31.05.2017).

² Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgR92otjoUk>, 31.05.2017).

³ Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2li291DmgI&t=2s>, 31.05.2017).

⁴ For a history of the Coca-Cola slogans see <http://www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/coke-lore/slogans>, 31.05.2017.

other experts are blended in, all confirming the strong relationship between national history and the company's history. The first states, "I've often said to my friends that I could probably teach a course of American social history and use nothing but the advertising for Coca-Cola", the second says, "[i]t brought with it the effervescence of American society in the effervescence of this drink." The last statement, closing the introductory part of the film, takes up the words of the voice-over suggesting an emotional connection between not only Coca-Cola and the United States, but also the whole world: "If you're having a bad time, if your country's having a bad time, if the world's having a bad time, it's okay because there's still Coke." The film continues, informing the spectators that 1886 was a good year for the birth of "national icons": the construction of the Statue of Liberty, the birth of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and the invention of Coca-Cola by pharmacist John Pemberton. National pride, freedom, individual entrepreneurship and extreme intelligence hence are linked directly to Coca-Cola. All these feelings are characterised by excess. The excessive intelligence and character of Sherlock Holmes, an independent spirit who enjoys nothing more than cocaine, nicotine and hard mental exercise, is implicitly linked to the equally free-spirited, clever American consumer who, however, despises nicotine and alcohol,⁵ and for whom Coke means an equally or even superior excessive enjoyment. Second, American patriotism is expressed through the iconic metaphor of liberty, which is mirrored in the capitalist logic of the self-made-man, allowing the ordinary worker to become rich if they only try hard enough. Coke and excess in its multiple forms (taste, enjoyment, freedom and success) are thus shown as being intrinsically tied to each other. The film ends with another close-up: the image of a globe and a hand in the foreground tightly holding up a Coca-Cola bottle. The hand, emerging from the globe and embracing the bottle, suggests that we, the consumers, control the bottle, while holding it up in the air and displaying it as our favourite drink. What is perhaps involuntarily suggested here is that the opposite may be true: we do not control Coca-Cola but Coca-Cola controls us, affecting us with the wish to drink it in order to be affected by the (excessive) enjoyment it ought to create instantaneously. But how do affect,

⁵ Some of the first professional Coca-Cola advertising campaigns took place during the era of prohibition (1920–1933), establishing Coca-Cola as a delightful alternative to alcohol. The analogy between Sherlock Holmes' cocaine addiction and Coca-Cola is, however, peculiar, as cocaine is said to be one of the ingredients of the original Coca-Cola recipe back in the 1890s. The company, however, denies until today that the soft drink has ever contained the drug.

emotion and, moreover, the Lacanian notion of *jouissance* come together in this "emotional touchdown", as the narrator in the film phrased it? Can affect here actually have the force that Jon Beasley-Murray attaches to it – a pure, liberating force beyond representation (Beasley-Murray 2010)? I argue that many Coca-Cola campaigns present the classic icons of the brand in the shape of an affection-image described by Gilles Deleuze. By doing so, Coca-Cola establishes both a consumerist and a political or sovereign icon that rules the world beyond national borders. Many advertising campaigns apply a dialectics of emotional contagion, affect and the promise of *jouissance*. Coca-Cola hereby affects the multitude – a conception celebrated by Hardt and Negri and by Beasley-Murray – in a way that both, affect and the multitude, cease to be (if they ever were) a powerful, constituent revolutionary force. Finally, I shall draw on Fredric Jameson's hypothesis that affect has waned in the age of postmodernism, and link this statement to the situation of the nation state in the age of consummated globalisation we are experiencing today.

In his book *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement*, Deleuze elaborates a theory of the so-called *image-affection*. Building upon Sergej Eisenstein and Bela Balázs, he characterises the *image-affection* as a close-up – often the close-up of a face. He describes the structuralist functioning of the *image-affection* as defined by Henri Bergson as "une tendance mortice sur un nerf sensible. En d'autres termes, une série de micro-mouvements sur une plaque nerveuse immobilisée [for example, the face, J.B.]." (Deleuze 2006: 126)⁶ However, Deleuze diverges from Balázs, suggesting that not only the face (a close-up per se) has an affective quality, but also things that have 'become face', so to speak. Given there is a reflective surface and intensive micro-movements, "nous pourrions dire : [une, J.B.] chose a été traitée comme un visage, elle a été 'envisagée' ou plutôt 'visagéifiée', et à son tour elle nous dévisage, elle nous regarde ... même si elle ne ressemble pas à un visage." (Deleuze 2006:

⁶ Translation: "a motor tendency on a sensitive nerve. In other words, a series of micro-movements on an immobilised plate of nerve." (Deleuze 2013: 98) Concerning the face, Deleuze writes: "Le visage est cette plaque nerveuse porte-organes qui a sacrifié l'essentiel de sa mobilité globale, et qui recueille ou exprime à l'air libre toutes sortes de petits mouvements locaux que le reste du corps tient d'ordinaire enfouis." (Deleuze 2006: 126). Translation: "The face is this organ-carrying plate of nerves which has sacrificed most of its global mobility and which gathers or expresses in a free way all kinds of tiny local movements which the rest of the body usually keeps hidden." (Deleuze 2013: 98)

126)⁷ In the establishing shots of the film on Coca-Cola, we can see how the 'faceification' of a thing, in this case a bottle, works: The bottle is the "immobilised plate of nerves", a "reflective surface" that receives a series of "intensive micro-movements": cool water, gently running around it, alternating shadow and light reflections as the camera approaches, soft guitar music; then golden brown liquid pouring through the bottle neck, a slow, devotional rotation of the bottle so that we can see it from all sides, and high key light projecting a shiny gloss on the glass as if it were a film star, or, rather, the face of a film star such as Greta Garbo. Many Coca-Cola commercials, especially during the 1990s, also display this kind of "faceified" affection-image. The principal part in these mini films is either played by the bottle or by the red crown seal with the classical logotype, both often depicted in a fast sequence of close-ups. A memorable example (and one that, telling by the comments underneath the YouTube-video, still fuels happy memories of peoples' childhoods) is an advertisement from 1993.⁸ For one minute, nothing is shown here but the red Coke crown seal in close-up. While playing the jingle "Always Coca-Cola" – a song that also succeeded as a disco mix –, a large series of "intensive micro movements" is displayed onto the red disc. Using extremely quick cuts, the red is continuously changed for other colours and different backgrounds (flowers, strips, random patterns) before it is changed back to pure red with the white logotype and the iconic bottle in the background. In addition, when the disc is plain red, the songs' lyrics are almost word by word displayed on it, in a speed that picks up the music's rhythm.⁹ At the end of the ad, the "reflective surface" finally stands still, the micro-movements stop and the spectator can contemplate the icon surrounded by a kind of aureole that repeats the quintessential meaning of the song lyrics: "Always the real thing. Always Coca-Cola". What Deleuze argues, following Balázs, is that the effect of the affection-image is to create an "entity", independent of time and space. The affection-image neutralizes the categories of time and space by distancing the

⁷ Translation: "we can say that [a, J.B.] thing has been treated as a face [*visage*]: it has been 'envisaged' or rather 'faceified' [*visagéfiée*], and in turn it stares at us [*dévisage*], it looks at us ... even if it does not resemble a face." (*Ibid.*)

⁸ Available on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cLZQ_2ITLI, 01.10.2017).

⁹ "Wherever there's a pool, there's always a flirt. Whenever there's a school there will always be homework. Whenever there's a beat, there's always a drum. Whenever there is fun, there's always Coca-Cola. The stars will always shine, the birds will always sing. As long as there is thirst, there's always the real thing. Coca-Cola classic is always the One. Whenever there is fun, there's always Coca-Cola. Always Coca-Cola."

image from them. It thereby creates a timeless entity that does not require any context or explanation – it becomes self-explanatory (Deleuze 2006: 136) and thus tautological, so to speak: it just 'is', or, like the slogan from 1980 phrases it, "Coke is it!" In the case of the affective Coke close-up in the spot, this quality is further enhanced by the lyrics: nonspecific as well as all-encompassing temporal deictic such as "wherever", "whenever", "always", or "as long as" give the impression of permanence. Moreover, the music itself seems to be near endlessly repeating itself, hence adding an acoustic loop or 'circle' to the o-shaped crown seal, itself surrounded by the 'aureole' – another circle that suggests endless continuity.¹⁰

However, where lies the political dimension of the Coke crown seal, which establishes what Deleuze describes as the independent, self-explanatory entity of the affection-image? I believe that this entity, removed from the categories of time and space, bears some resemblance to Louis Marin's and later Paul Ricœur's interpretations of sovereignty and its representation in a monarchy as well as in modern national states: the power of a monarch is not so much represented by – or achieved through – him as a person, but is, rather, a result of the various forms of his visual representation. What images of the king provide is a supplementary (eternal) presence that is taken for real by the people and thus strengthens the king's power. Marin's famous example is the medals Louis XIV had engraved for him to ensure the visibility of his glory. In his study *Le portrait du roi*, Marin describes that these medals worked as "royal hosts", their transcendental quality being in line with the Christian Eucharist (Marin 1981: 147–168). Referring to Marin, Paul Ricœur assumes that the visual representation of sovereignty and greatness also applies for constitutional times: the nation state has no less need to confirm its power and strength. Therefore, it often relies on iconic visual representations of power, for example the iconic depiction of 'great statesmen' (*l'homme d'État*) and their political as well as private life (Ricœur 2000: 343–358). With Coca-Cola, however, it is not a statesman that is visually represented: the trademark itself becomes 'king'. Its

¹⁰ It is interesting, though logical from an economic point of view that as early as 1922 Coca-Cola stressed the independence of the trademark from any fix time frame: the 1922 slogan was "Thirst Knows No Season". In 1939, it was "Whoever You Are, Whatever You do, Wherever You May Be, When You Think of Refreshment Think of Ice Cold Coca-Cola" – an advertising copy that, although overly detailed for today's point of view, resembles a lot the 1993 jingle.

medal, a strikingly perfect analogy to Louis XIV's 'host', is the red crown seal with the equally iconic bottle and the white logo (see fig. 1).¹¹



Fig. 1: The Coca-Cola medal in the "Always the real thing" commercial

In this way, Coca-Cola visually generates itself as the powerful sovereign in an enormously extended nation state – a global sovereign. This may not be so surprising after all, since, as we have seen above, Coca-Cola considers itself deeply engaged with the American nation. In 1906, during prohibition, the company's preferred slogan was "The Great National Temperance Beverage"; in 1985, it became "America's real choice". However, since 1971 the introduction of the token line "I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke", Coca-Cola's ambitions have broken up national boundaries. Via the affection-image, the Coke medal (or 'host') extends the American nation state beyond its own borders, visually representing itself as the sovereign leader both of the soft drink industry and, implicitly of course, of the respective nation state where the commercial is aired. In the immensely successful "Hilltop" commercial, the transition from Coca-Cola as a "national beverage" to a global soft drink favorite parallels the 'soft' transition from the emblematics, ideology and tradition of the nation state to the ideology of the global 'Coke nation'. Jumping on the bandwagon of the hippie movement that had reached its peak by then, Coca-Cola took the melody of the song "True Love and Apple pie" and invented the lines

I'd like to buy the world a home and furnish it with love,
grow apple trees and honey bees, and snow-white turtle doves.
I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony,
I'd like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company.

¹¹ For the "royal host" of Louis XIV, see for instance: <https://www.monnaiedeparis.fr/fr/boutique/medailles-et-mini-medailles/medaille-historique-la-devise-de-louis-xiv-bronze-florentin-81>, 01.10.2017.

It's the real thing that the world wants today. Coca-Cola is it.

The spot begins with the close-up of a young girl's face before she starts to softly sing. For about eight seconds, the camera rests on the blond girl's face, establishing the affection-image with the "plate of nerves" (the face) and "a series of micro-movements" playing on the face (softness, joy and affectionate movement). We then see medium close-ups of many other faces of several different ethnicities, all singing the song with a bottle of Coca-Cola in their hands. At the end of the one-minute spot, letters are superimposed on the screen, saying: "On a hilltop in Italy, we assembled young people from all over the world to bring you the message from Coca-Cola bottlers all over the world. It's the real thing. Coke." The sovereign medal – this time not presented as close-up – here takes a back seat in favor of the affectionate community of Coca-Cola lovers (who want to bring their joy to the world) and their faces. As Coca-Cola establishes this apparently self-sufficient, independent, non-political community of love and ultimately consumerism on "a hilltop in Italy"¹², it evokes the legendary foundation of the Roman Empire by Romulus on the first of Rome's seven hills, the Capitol. The analogy to the Roman Empire, later established again by the executive cited above, sustains the idea of Coca-Cola as a commercial vision of the capitalist Empire at its strongest, destined to "outlast" all others. By stressing the importance of the multicultural Coca-Cola community by means of the affective facial close-ups, the sovereign quality of Empire apparently steps back in favor of a global stance. Coca-Cola presents itself as a vehicle for the 'people': the fulfilment of the Rousseauian *volonté générale*. However, what Coca-Cola stages here is not really a people. It is a happy multitude in the sense of Hardt and Negri – a multitude of hippies that, unlike the Rousseauian people, is emptied of any real political potential or volition. Political banners are substituted for the Coca-Cola contour bottles with the effervescent 'essence of happiness' that renders every political program obsolete. This is how the "Hilltop" campaign establishes a connection between political empire and commercial empire, between nation state and a 'no-border' community, constituting itself via the consumption of the same product. By applying the multitude as a legitimizing tool, Coca-Cola's sovereignty is one that remains in the background, implicitly putting

¹² A hill in the Manziana commune, close to Rome (<http://1059sunnyfm.cbslocal.com/2015/05/18/10-things-you-should-know-about-that-mad-men-finale-coke-ad/>, 31.05.2017).

the multitude in charge while still retaining its ideological strategy. In doing so, the business thus mobilizes the quality of being sovereign through affective capital control, one that functions and profits under the guise of a marketed independent consumerism. With the multitude as proxy, it reigns over an empire which is not only inherently unpolitical but where every social action becomes a mere consumer spectacle – cleansed of aggressiveness but also of a political consciousness.¹³

Another strong example of the amalgamation of market and national sovereignty in Coke is an advertising campaign on the Danish flag from 2013. In this TV-commercial,¹⁴ the female voice-over tells the spectator that, although the Coke logo is over a hundred years old, few have noticed that the flag of Denmark is hidden within it. Following this discovery, Coca-Cola erected a substantial outdoor advertisement in Copenhagen airport, attaching little Danish paper flags to it, exactly at the point where the second o melts with the l, forming a curvy white cross on red background. Those anticipating friends and relatives to arrive in the airport are encouraged to take a flag and greet the arriving passengers, waving the flags saying "Welcome to the Happiest Country in the World. Coca-Cola." Here, Coca-Cola not only attaches itself to the "happiest country in the world". In addition, the affection-image in the shape of the giant white on red logo presents this happiness as directly connected with Coca-Cola. At the same time, Danish happiness is here attached not only to societal or political achievements, but more importantly to consumerism. By displaying its 'medal' like this, a global brand effectively presents itself as the eternal, commercial, border transcending (national) 'state of happiness' – in the double sense of the word.

2 Emotional contagion and affect, or, diet *jouissance*

Besides the affective depiction of bottle, logo, crown seal and liquid that enhance the trademarks' monopolistic (in a way 'monarchical', if we consider Ricœur) sovereignty, Coca-Cola campaigns tend, as we shall see, to rely also on a phenomenon called "emotional contagion". Emotional contagion, as Amy Coplan states, describes the way spectators emotionally experience audio-visual narratives – a way

¹³ I will return to the connection of Coca-Cola and the multitude in the last chapter.

¹⁴ Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVfneC6dXY>, 31.05.2017).

that differs substantially from the emotional engagement one experiences with literary narratives (Coplan 2006: 26). In a film,¹⁵

[s]ome of the characters express fear, some anticipation, some anxiety, and others depressed resignation [or happiness, J.B.]. While watching them, most spectators end up experiencing the same sort of feelings that the characters are experiencing. This kind of mimicry is a result of emotional contagion, an automatic and involuntary affective process that can occur when we observe others experiencing emotions. (*Ibid.*)

These responses to other peoples' (or film characters') expressions of pain, laughter, smiling, disgust, anger and other "incidents" (*Ibid.*: 28) such as reflexive movements, "do not involve beliefs or the imagination but are based on automatic and involuntary processes [...]." (*Ibid.*: 26)

Many Coca-Cola commercials are perfect examples for the triggering of emotional contagion. Especially in those campaigns that do not rely on the display of the affection-image (crown seal, bottle, logo) in the first place, but, rather, on the depiction of happiness within a random group of people, emotional contagion seems to be a strong component. These campaigns are built on a code system consisting of white and red elements, music motifs and words associated with the isotopy 'happiness' – like, for instance, "smile". The "Smile Back" campaign of 2013 is especially interesting in this respect. In these spots, employees of Coke, wearing red T-Shirts and helmets and riding red bikes, randomly approach passers-by on the streets of major cities in Canada, Chile, Jamaica, Great Britain, Tunisia and Pakistan. They stare at them smiling, reach out their hands to greet them, make gestures, burst out in laughter etc. Everybody who "smiles back" at them receives either a free bottle of Coca-Cola or merchandising articles like red sunglasses or even the red bike.¹⁶ The Coke employees broadcast the emotion 'happiness' to the passers-by.¹⁷ In doing so, they generate emotional contagion that is very similar to affect as characterised by Spinoza:

¹⁵ Here, Coplan refers to Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998).

¹⁶ Available on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TL-FCx7_BhM, 31.05.2017).

¹⁷ In the foreword of his translation of Deleuze's and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi defines affect as a "prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another [...]" (Massumi 1987: xvi). Following up on this definition, Eric Shouse further distinguishes feeling, emotion and affect. He states that 'affect' is pre-personal, non-verbal, and abstract (outside of the symbolic order, to put it in Lacanian terms); feeling, in turn, is personal and attached to and judged from the perspective of previous experiences (previous feelings) of the individual. Emotion, by contrast, has a social dimension: it is the broadcasting of the respective feeling to the other. Emotion can therefore be either feigned or genuine (Shouse 2005).

By affect [affectum] I understand affections of the Body [in] which the Body's power of acting [agenda potential] is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections. (As cited in Marshall 2014: 167)¹⁸

Spinoza here links the impact that another body or any external object may have on my body to the concept of representation, namely the "idea" of what has affected my body. Furthermore, he stresses that there are no more than three primary affects, which change the mind's *conatus*: pleasure or joy [*laetitia*], pain or sadness [*tristitia*] and desire [*cupiditas*] (see *ibid.*):

By Joy, therefore, I shall understand in what follows that passion [in] which the Mind passes to a greater perfection. And by sadness, that passion [in] which it passes to a lesser perfection. (*Ibid.*)¹⁹

In the advertising spot, the passers-by experience "affections of the Body" which apparently cause their minds to pass to "greater perfection" because the primary affect provoked here is *laetitia*. We could argue that the provoked pleasure is at first a "bad" one, because it goes along with passivity for the passers-by who can merely react to the "active" Coca-Cola employees who laugh at them. This passivity is, for Spinoza, only removed through understanding pleasure, through forming an idea of it: as soon as the pleasure becomes associated with Coca-Cola, it turns into a "good" pleasure – the understanding ('oh, it's Coke') becomes a source of joy (see Lloyd 1996: 81 for these aspects of Spinoza). The TV-commercial therefore seems to contain in a nutshell the Spinozian conception of affect (taken on by Deleuze / Guattari and Beasley-Murray) and the definition of emotional contagion in film as described by Coplan. The "Smile Back" campaign sells itself as a mini documentary – an experiment in normal peoples outlook on life, so to speak. The apparently freely experienced sensations in the spot therefore seem more authentic than the emotions broadcasted by professional actors in a highly refined scenery, as for example in the spots of the "Enjoy the Real Thing" campaign.²⁰

¹⁸ I use the translation by Marshall 2014. The Latin original reads: "Per Affectum intelligo Corporis affections, quibus ipsius Corporis agenda potential augetur, vel minuitur, juvatur, vel coercetur, & simul harum affectionum ideas." (Spinoza 1925: 139)

¹⁹ Original: "Per *Laetitiam* itaque in sequentibus intelligam *passionem*, quâ *Mens ad majorem perfectionem transit*. Per *Tristitiam* autem *passionem*, quâ *ipsa ad minorem transit perfectionem*." (*Ibid.*: 149)

²⁰ In an "Enjoy the Real Thing" spot from 1999 (available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HccD97Ryl7g>, 31.05.2017), we see many different, mostly young people laughing, dancing, jumping, kissing at home, in the car, in the park, beside water fountains, at the beach etc., opening Coke bottles and cans, enthusiastically drinking it while the theme song is played.

This apparently volatile experience of affect is even stronger in another campaign from 2015: in Belgium, an actor was hired to maniacally laugh in a subway train during rush hour.²¹ The stronger his laughter became, the better the emotional contagion worked: the other passengers also started laughing, exchanging their formerly gloomy mood with a cheerful and positive atmosphere. Once everybody has been infected by the laughter, smiling Coca-Cola employees suddenly show up, handing out free sodas. Here, we seem to be witnessing something like an "affective flow" (Beasley-Murray 2010: 131): a bodily reaction not even channelled by the 'Coke code' of red and white, but spread exclusively by the infectious laughter of the actor dressed in civilian clothes. What is interesting here is that the Coca-Cola employees appear precisely at the moment when the emotional contagion is at its peak, thereby preventing it from going any further. It is the emotional contagion, not the soda that prompts the passengers to *actually* experience a *jouissance* in laughter. The soft drink therefore does not fuel happiness – it interrupts it. How, then, can we describe the type of enjoyment at stake with the consumption of Coca-Cola?

In his short Lacanian analysis of Coca-Cola's classic slogans and commercials ("Enjoy the Real Thing", "This is it"), Slavoj Žižek describes the Coca-Cola campaigns as incarnations of what Marx has said about the commodity: a commodity is never just 'it'. It has something transcendental attached to it – an invisible, untraceable surplus value, which shows itself in the mysterious excess that comes with Coca-Cola: 'it' or 'the real thing'. This surplus or excess is the Lacanian object cause of desire (the *objet petit a*). We desire the soda because of its mysterious, transcendental value (Žižek 2012: 00:13:06–00:16:47). Coca-Cola commercials like "Smile back" or the "Laugh Train" trigger the primary affect joy [*laetitia*] as described by Spinoza, which in turn resembles the concept of emotional contagion. Considering Coplan's definition that emotional contagion suggests there is no difference between the body of the subject (who becomes affected by the emotion he or she sees on screen) and the body of the other (the character on screen experiencing or broadcasting the emotion), I argue that there is a structural analogy between this concept

²¹ The actor continually looks at his notebook while laughing, spreading the impression to be maybe watching an immensely funny video or something similar. The content of the screen is, however, never revealed. Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfezfZPw-qk>, 31.05.2017).

and one of the forms of Lacanian *jouissance*. Nestor Braunstein differentiates between three modalities of *jouissance*, and it is his second term the "jouissance of being", that I wish to use in the present analysis. This form expresses an enjoyment experienced through the mutual fulfilment between the infant and its mother, prior to lack and desire (Braunstein 2003: 110). In the mother-child-dyad, the infant enjoys the mother's breast, for instance, and cannot yet distinguish between their own body and that of the mother. However, due to the necessary absence of the mother and subsequent helplessness experienced by the child (*ibid.*), the *jouissance* here is already governed by a binary between lack and fulfilment: "The experience of despair and helplessness followed by an ideal, mythical satisfaction is inscribed, written, as a jouissance which is alien to speech, a bodily hieroglyphic that can only be deciphered after the incorporation of the subject in the world of language." (*Ibid.*: 109) Therefore the *jouissance* experienced within the dyad gains its quality as mythical satisfaction only retroactively, after the subject has entered the world of language.²² By means of 'affective' advertisement, Coca-Cola tries to guide us back to those moments prior to lack and hence to the illusion of uncompromising *jouissance*. The promise of Coca-Cola campaigns such as "Smile Back" or the "Laugh Train", which rely on emotional contagion and affect therefore consists in the apparent *jouissance* one obtains by drinking Coca-Cola, or the excessive surplus Žižek described as effacing the subjective trauma of lack.

However, the sensation experienced by the 'affected' multitude in the Coca-Cola commercials is never full – it is always a supplement. The "Laugh Train" campaign reveals that the actual *jouissance* – for example sexual *jouissance*²³ – is something that must be repressed in order to meet the requirements of consumer capitalism. Towards the end of the "Laugh Train" spot, we witness two young women sitting next to each other, smiling at each other happily and tenderly, apparently on the verge of starting to hug or even kiss. Precisely at this fragile moment, there is a cut

²² Once the child, according to Lacan, enters the mirror stage, it becomes absorbed by the symbolic order (the society, school etc.) and enters the world of language and hence of castration – the (symbolic) father ends the dyad with the mother. Needs have to be verbalized from now on, they are hardly fulfilled, let alone immediately satisfied by the mother figure any more. See Lacan (196: 93–101) For the primordial *jouissance* as a retroactively constructed ideal, created from the perspective of the already castrated subject, see also Stavrakakis (1999: 42–45).

²³ For Lacan, different kinds of *jouissance* (translatable not so much as enjoyment but as satisfaction of libido) are possible. One of them is the orgasm, hence the sexual encounter. However, as *jouissance* bears always an excess in itself, it has always a close connection to pain and death. He thus qualifies someone committing suicide by burning himself in gasoline as *jouissance* (Lacan 2006: 83). The origins of *jouissance* are hence to be found in Freud's "Jenseits des Lustprinzips" (1920).

and what we see next is an intertitle in white on red stating "Happiness starts with a smile", "What are you waiting for?" Then, as the last image, we see four Coke bottles in red, green, black and grey, promising enjoyment via the hashtag "#choose happiness". If the last sequence of the spot was part of a remake of Michelangelo Antonioni's anti-capitalist film *Zabriskie Point* (1970), it would probably be the twin of the famous last scene in the desert where the young female protagonist imagines a bourgeois house blowing up, with a bevy of American consumerist icons being 'profaned' and destroyed. We could well imagine how the Coca-Cola spot would proceed in this case. The two young women and the other passengers would start kissing each other, enjoying each other's bodies right in the middle of the train, while bottles and cans of Coca-Cola would be dashed against the windows, poured over the cabin floor transforming it into one big dirty lake, thereby revealing the true, sticky nature of "the real thing".²⁴ The alleged *jouissance*, suggested through emotional contagion or affect, respectively, is therefore a fake one. The excessive affect, as Žižek convincingly put it, is the object cause of desire, imminently tied to the circle of desire and endless consumption. Affect presents itself in the shape of "jouissance of being", suggesting a 'whole' and happy body, positively in touch with other happy bodies. However, whenever the possibility of actual *jouissance* shows up, an enjoyment independent of the consumer object, it must be suppressed and supplemented for 'canned' or 'bottled' happiness. The *jouissance* promised here is thus, to phrase it within the Coca-Cola universe, a 'diet *jouissance*': both a supplement and cleared of the radical, ultimately lethal dimension Lacan originally attached to it.²⁵

The affects that Coca-Cola commercials produce are, for that matter, much closer to the sensation that remains after what Fredric Jameson has called the "waning of

²⁴ Something similar to the spirit of destruction in *Zabriskie Point* – although probably without the neo-Marxist spirit – can be witnessed in the YouTube channel of the user HowToBasic. In the various "How to"-videos, usually several consumer objects are destroyed, set on fire, mixed up with strange ingredients, poured over floors and walls and so on. In the "How to make Coke"-video (available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVqVQC8D2II>, 31.05.2017), 'HowToBasic' (we never see who he is) puts several indefinable condiments into a bowl, creating a disgusting greenish liquid that he violently stirs before adding actual Coca-Cola, causing the brew to bubble over. However, unlike Antonioni's protagonists, 'HowToBasic' does not seem to have an actual political program (like Marxism) in mind to use as a tool for resistance. His angry, irrational outbursts are somewhat closer to infantile anal eroticism in Freud's sense. What his videos convey is thus a kind of infantile *jouissance* in the sense of destruction with relish, but their disturbing effects seem to fade rather quickly.

²⁵ See footnote 23.

affect in postmodern culture" (Jameson 1991: 10) has happened. Beasley-Murray comments only briefly on Jameson's claim that there is no more affect in postmodern culture. He states that the world has changed since the 80s (when Jameson originally published his article) and that in contemporary society "[a]ffect is back (if it had ever really gone away)." (Beasley-Murray 2010: 126) Jameson, he argues, thought that the postmodernist subject has lost the deep feelings the modernist 'monad' subject felt – like anxiety, alienation, or solitude. The postmodernist subject only experiences free-floating "emotional intensities" in the shape of euphoria. After 9/11, Beasley-Murray claims, anxiety has returned, and so affect has returned as well (cf. *ibid.*). Jameson, however, did not assert that the postmodernist subject was only able to experience the somewhat opaque feeling of euphoria. He argued, on the contrary, that anxiety has never left the postmodernist subject. What has happened is, rather, that with postmodernity, the subject gradually loses the possibility of political participation (Jameson 1991: 316). This leads to the formation of a commodity fetish and, very importantly, to the end of 'historicizing'. Jameson's theory suggests that postmodernity is characterised by a fundamental "depthlessness" and by "schizophrenic" subjects. He develops his notion of schizophrenia from Lacan's conception of the signifying chain, where "meaning is generated by the movement from signifier to signified. When that relationship breaks down, [...] then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers." (*Ibid.*: 26) For Jameson, "the links of the signifying chain snap" (*ibid.*) when the subject, as it is the case in postmodernism, has lost reference to history as a structuring principle of his or her life, rendering it thus "schizophrenic". Postmodernism is, and this is essential for Jameson, 'cleaned' of the fundamental affective dichotomies that once structured the experience of the modernist subject: essence and appearance, the latent and the manifest (Freud), authenticity and inauthenticity, signifier and signified. With the 'deconstruction' of these dualisms, "the very aesthetic of expression itself" seems "to have vanished away" (*ibid.*: 11). In matters of *jouissance* becoming a 'diet *jouissance*' in Coca-Cola, we could add another fundamental dualism that is weakened in (postmodernist) Coca-Cola campaigns: the dichotomy of ego-ideal and ideal ego that Lacan bases his conception of the mirror stage on.²⁶ The ideal ego is the idea of wholeness that the subject happily experiences in front of

²⁶ See footnote 22.

the mirror (*l'assomption jubilatoire*), whereas the ego-ideal is the marker of castration, of not complying with the perfect completeness of the ideal ego. Coca-Cola embraces the virtual unity of the subject, suggesting that the castration has not taken place – or is, however, easily to be withdrawn – and that full *jouissance* is obtainable. But since the affect it produces via the affection-image and emotional contagion is a postmodernist affect – for Jameson, a contradiction in terms – it is just another example of depth "replaced [...] by surface, or by multiple surfaces" (Jameson 1991: 12). The potential 'depth' of the sexual encounter or resistance against the symbolic (e.g. political) order is exchanged for a vague feeling of euphoria in the light of consumerism – a euphoria that proves to be 'empty' the second the bottle is consumed (and nothing has changed).

The fundamental depthlessness of the postmodern world does not mean, for Jameson, that the postmodernist subject is not prone to extreme sensations like euphoria or anxiety. But, as these feelings are not tied to the strings of history anymore, they are rather 'free floating', attached only temporarily to different consumer objects. Instead of the deep affects once felt by the still 'historicizing' modernist subject, the postmodernist subject rather experiences a constant "emotional ground tone". The postmodernist subject, Jameson argues, is attached to an "eternal present" and as such is easier to please: an old shoe²⁷ and the "organic mystery of the human toenail" potentially equally fascinate it (*ibid.*: 10). The postmodernist subject of the Coca-Cola commercials is, then, a subject that is potentially fascinated by the postmodernist affection-image of a Coke bottle, which provides it with an "eternal present": it does not need to relate to any other history than the history of Coca-Cola. As the "Timeline" spot I described at the beginning ironically suggests, there is no history worth remembering outside of Coke's history; the 'actual' birth of the American nation and hence of a worldwide 'Americanness' begins with Coca-Cola.

Interestingly, the conceptions of both affect and the multitude – as Beasley-Murray describes them in his various case studies of Latin American (revolutionary) politics of the 20th century – convey, to a certain extent, a longing for the 'old' modernist subject and its deep, dichotomous feelings. Beasley-Murray describes how the guerrilla movements are characterised by excessive joy, or, how Lacan would put it, *jouissance*. Here, we find actual *jouissance* in its radical, lethal dimension: the

²⁷ The "old shoe" refers to Andy Warhol's painting *Diamond Dust Shoes* that Jameson opposes to Van Gogh's various depictions of peasants' boots.

joy of killing the enemy, the joy of meaningful death, of celebrating victory and the fear of returning to normal life, to the symbolic order. It is a 'real' *jouissance* that differs from the diet *jouissance* depicted in the Coca-Cola campaigns. But it also differs from the depiction of the "good" multitude in contrast to the "bad" multitude" (Beasley-Murray 2010: 247)²⁸. The good multitude represents joyful encounter, there is no deadly risk in it. Maybe that is the reason why this multitude is so easily fascinated by consumer objects: the pure joy can only persist within the world of the object cause of desire (*objet petit a*) – not within the world of *jouissance*. The (postmodernist) multitude is thus prone to Jameson's commodity fetishism, but not ready for political change. In the following chapter, I will argue that the idea of the multitude as defended by Hardt / Negri and Beasley-Murray is perfectly realised in the Coca-Cola campaigns described so far. As they depict encounters of people made happy through the consumption of Coke, the commercials insinuate that the multitude is a concept that, especially if brought into position against the people and the nation state, ends up in a random agglomeration of consumers for whom the concept of a political consciousness – beyond the vague display of 'positive' feelings (tolerance, helpfulness, guilt) towards 'the other' – is no longer available.

3 Programming global hegemony: the Coca-Cola multitude

For Beasley-Murray, the conceptions of affect and multitude are a means to overcome the classic cultural studies dichotomy between hegemony and counter-hegemonic resistance, which, he claims, "only reinforces all the populist assumptions upon which all hegemony rests, leaving the state unquestioned." (2010: 226) He argues that, just like affect, the constituent, immanent power of the multitude (as it were, the good power) is parasitically captured by the constituted, transcendent power of the state (as it were, the bad power). According to Beasley-Murray, especially "populist"²⁹ governments, like the one of Juan Perón in Argentina,³⁰ but basically every form of state that enforces the concept of the people, makes use of the multitude, which

²⁸ See my discussion below.

²⁹ He states that "[p]opulism is a meditation upon constituent power: it identifies, appropriates, and then disavows the multitude in the name of the people, but remains anxiously aware that the multitude always returns." (Beasley-Murray 2010: 243)

³⁰ According to Beasley-Murray, in Peronism "[a]n unknown (indeed, unknowable) multitude has to be converted into the expected people. This slippage between multitude and people is resolved only by reference to some defining event, here the demonstration of October 17, 1945, that brought

forms as bodies come together through resonances established by good encounters, but it is always open to new encounters, and so to new transformations. In the multitude, "the 'many' persevere as 'many' without aspiring to the unity of the state." (*Ibid.*: 228)³¹

Affect and the multitude are connected in the way that the multitude is "affect become subject" (*ibid.*: 127). Like affect, the multitude is a potentially revolutionary power with an ambivalent quality: the state relies on it for its formation, but it needs to clean it of most of its revolutionary potential. In the context of the formation of a state, Beasley-Murray argues, affective intensities are captured: bodies are fixed and immanent affect is transformed into (controllable) emotion, enabling the emergence of subjectivity and transcendence (*ibid.*: 128). If affect is saved from capture and closure, it threatens social order because it has the capability of "sweep[ing] subjects away from normative models (man, state, human) and toward their counterpoles (woman, nomad, animal)." (*Ibid.*: 132) For Beasley-Murray, affect is a rebellious refusal potentially comparable to the declaration of a guerrilla war (*ibid.*: 143). Dwelling on Massumi's conviction that emotional capture is never total, as the subject is always threatened to be overwhelmed by non-normative affect (hence the somewhat topical statement "something has always and again escaped" [Massumi 1995: 96]), Beasley-Murray states that

affect's capture by the state is contingent, partial, and unstable. Captured and (de)formed affect underwrites the state and its claims to sovereignty, but also suggests that other social formations are imaginable: affect is autonomous, immanence does not depend upon transcendence. [...] Immanence pre-exists social organization. (2010: 144)

The multitude, he emphasizes, possesses the same ambiguous quality: the state, especially the populist one, relies on its constituent power, but it is, at the same time, always threatened by the re-emergence (the escape) of the multitude. Now, one doesn't even need to go as far as to question the significance and probably also somewhat ambiguous character of 'populism' as such (after all, Perón was a legitimate president, elected three times) to ask: is the idea of the multitude as a constit-

Peronism to power: 'In October 1945 the multitude in the street took us by surprise – a multitude that was the people – and we saw its face. And a few months later, in February 1946, we saw it in the elections'. The people, then, is constituted in a retroactive act of naming that puts the multitude in a relation with the state. The Peronist multitude can be equated with the people once it is identified with a leader, Perón, and reframed within a hegemonic process, here the 1946 elections." (*Ibid.*: 242). He quotes here from an article in *Mundo Argentino*, entitled "La multitud es el pueblo" (1950).

³¹ Beasley-Murray here quotes Paolo Virno (2004): *A Grammar of the Multitude*. New York: Semiotext(e).

uent power (cf. Hardt / Negri 1994: 323), continuously challenging the social contract between the state and the people and refusing any submission to unification and stable identity (cf. Beasley-Murray 2010: 235–237), not something that excludes effective revolution after all – precisely because, in the end, it excludes politics?³² Described as an "unrepresentable community" (Hardt / Negri 1994: 323), the conception of the multitude is critical about the idea of a (representative) social contract between state and people:

[...] contract theory maintains that constituted power is in fact society's great benefactor. We are all in debt to the state. [...] A civil society is also a civic religion in which the product of the multitude's contraction is fetishized as a benevolent deity. To represent the multitude is also to eliminate it. In place of a fluid mass of variable singularities, the contract shapes a people composed of individual citizens. (Beasley-Murray 2010: 239)

But what about the 'deity' of consumerism that has a walk-over affecting the various different bodies of the multitude? If "the multitude's immanent expansion proceeds by means of *contiguity* and contact, in resonances established through affective encounter" (*ibid.*: 235), the Coca-Cola crowd from the commercials (a mirror of the society or at least of what the society hopes to become) proves to be the perfect embodiment of the multitude. Moreover, it is even the multitude in its best possible shape, because it signals nothing but "good encounters": "good encounters are associated with joy, expand the body's power to affect and be affected [...], the bad, by contrast, are associated with sadness, cause a diminution of the body's power, and lead to division and destruction." (*Ibid.*: 247)³³ A commercial from the "The Coke Side of Life" campaign nicely conveys how Coca-Cola turns potentially bad encounters into good ones. In this animated video game style spot, a young man, apparently a gangster, aggressively rushes into a gas station and buys a Coke. He swallows a mouthful and suddenly turns into a 'nice gangster'. He drags another person out of his vehicle but instead of stealing the car hands him another bottle of Coca-Cola. Afterwards, he returns a stolen handbag to an old lady, extinguishes a

³² As Karin Priester puts it: "Sie [Hardt and Negri] vitalisieren die Multitude als vorstaatliche [...] Stoßkraft, die aber [...] die >Singularitäten< nicht homogenisiert, sondern in ihrer Vielfalt und Differenz anerkennt. Ein solcher radikal entstaatlichter Pluralismus selbstbestimmter Gruppen gehörte immer schon zum Programm des Anarchismus. Nicht umsonst ist er aber immer gescheitert, weil er von einer idealistischen Annahme ausgeht: Die Befreiung vom Staat werde *eo ipso* zur Freiheit von Herrschaft führen. Faktisch wird aber das Moment von Herrschaft nur auf die vorstaatliche Ebene eines pluralen Kampfes von Gruppen verlagert." (Priester 2016: 79)

³³ Beasley-Murray here draws on Spinoza and follows that a "more complex account would stress that there are good multitudes and bad: bodies that resonate and expand versus dissonant bodies or bodies whose resonance hits a peak that leads to collapse." (Beasley-Murray 2010: 247)

fire, and magically changes the apocalyptic banners of two lone protesters from "the end is near" to "give a little love". In the end, everybody dances in the streets like a happy parade.³⁴ Coca-Cola hence neutralizes the aggressive, destructive potential of the multitude and thereby transforms political resistance (the protest signs) into the kitschy discourse of love and harmony. However, one question remains: if we keep in mind Massumi's and Beasley-Murray's conviction that affect gets captured and absorbed by the state, which transforms it into compliant emotion, ought we not conclude that Coca-Cola is the prime example for such an operation? Do Coca-Cola's commercials not take the potentially dangerous affect, capture it for its own sake and turn it into emotion? I would say: no, they don't. The supposition that 'free', constituent affects are captured and subsequently turned into emotions is based on the assumption that affect is a primordial, immediate being beyond of discourse, which has no direction yet. There are, however, several problems with this assumption. Describing the ways in which researchers have dealt with the terms affect and emotion, Monique Scheer points out that the conventional idea of a dualism between nature and culture (affect and emotion) and the notion of an immediate intensity overlooks the epistemological insights of the linguistic turn and of poststructuralism (Scheer unpublished). She asks why the same theorists who initially dismissed the Enlightenment myth of the 'autonomous subject' now consider the pre-personal affect or the body of all things autonomous. She argues that depicting affect as the only free force outside the cultural system denies that thinking and acting human beings have an agency in history: of what, finally, should the affect be independent at all? (*Ibid.*: 5)³⁵ From a psychoanalytic point of view, on the other hand, affects are linked to representatives which remain repressed, so, they attach themselves to other representatives that are not repressed. In order for affects to be even felt as feelings (otherwise they could not be expressed at all), they need to be given a signification. Affect is therefore always already linked to representation, it is

³⁴ Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHiNwDhLfRs>, 31.05.2017).

³⁵ "Problematisch aus historisch-kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive ist die Behauptung, der Affekt sei vorkulturell, denn es lässt ihn ahistorisch und universal erscheinen. Diese Behauptung baut [...] auf einem übertrieben 'systemischen' Kulturkonzept auf, das es in der Kulturwissenschaft schon lange nicht mehr gibt. Es wirkt so, als wäre die einzig 'freie' (und daher auch geschichtsmächtige) Kraft der außerhalb des kulturellen Systems befindliche Affekt, der sich nicht komplett einfangen lässt und so den kulturellen Wandel anstoßen kann, den die Kultur von sich aus nie selbst produzieren könnte. Eine solche Auffassung schreibt auch die Menschen und ihr Denken und Handeln aus der Geschichte heraus, da der einzige Akteur, der sich gegen die 'Struktur' des Diskurses zu wehren vermag, der präpersonelle Affekt sein soll." (Scheer unpublished)

never beyond it: that is why "affect will always be waiting for it to be given a signification or meaning, so that it can be 'felt' as a feeling of this or that." (Hewitson 2010)³⁶ Lacan makes it very clear that affect beyond representation does not exist:

The affective is not like a special density which would escape an intellectual accounting. It is not to be found in a mythical beyond of the production of the symbol which would precede the discursive formulation. (Lacan 1988: 57)

And, in seminar X on anxiety:

I've tried, on occasion, to say what affect is not. It is not Being given in its immediacy, nor is it the subject in a raw form either. It is in no respect protopathic. (Lacan 2016: 14)

Lacan here answers in a way Scheer's question what the affect should be independent of: nothing, it always depends on a representative and thus on signification. In other words, emotion is not the ominous cultural force that captures the affect and causes it to lose its revolutionary potential in order to 'work' for the system. Rather, emotion is, at least in this context, the necessary signification for affects to be able to unfold any expressive potential at all.

If we now take another look at commercials like the "Smile Back" campaign, it becomes clear that what we are dealing with here is not a bunch of people walking around with independent, unrepresented affects in their minds and bodies, waiting to 'explode', before Coca-Cola arrives and captures those allegedly free affects, turning them into emotion. The problem is that we are never free because the symbolic order is everywhere. Our affects are part of the chain of signifiers that structure the symbolic order, the culture we live in. It would thus be too easy to say that Coca-Cola – or, in Beasley-Murray's reasoning, the state – makes use of the affects' potential that would otherwise remain free. What the Coca-Cola employees in the spot provoke are affections of the body as defined by Spinoza – affects that lead to the formation of the 'good multitude' as described in *Posthegemony*. The same is the case with the "Nice gangster" spot: Coca-Cola does not capture the revolutionary, unrepresented aggressive affects the gangster seems to be ridden by before. Following Spinoza, we can see that the external object (the Coca-Cola bottle) simply affects his body just as it has been affected by something else before, causing him, this time, joy. With Freud and Lacan, we could say that the Coke bottle helps

³⁶ Interestingly, Freud's and later Lacan's lines of thought here resemble Spinoza's, who stated that *corporis affectionis* impact the body, causing the mind's *conatus* to change according to the three primary affects (joy, pain, desire) and to form an idea of the affection (Marshall 2014: 167).

the gangster to define his rage and to attach his energy to something else. His body gains power, causing him joy. He still acts aggressively but he does it now in order to help others, because Coca-Cola has given his affect that had lost sight of his original representation, a new one. Even if we leave the psychoanalytic dimension out of the picture and assert the affect and the multitude a pure, autonomous, constituent intensity – with regard to Beasley-Murray's argument, the question remains: how are we even to distinguish between the notion of the 'good' multitude, consisting of joyful encounters, and the 'bad' multitude, causing chaos and violence? At least with Coca-Cola, there is not much difference to be noticed between these allegedly good or bad revolutions. The question for me therefore is, rather, how effective the idolized multitude and its revolution can actually be – whether in the political context or in the universe of consumerism. To shed light on this issue, let us take a look at another Coca-Cola campaign, which evokes the idea of revolution. The "What if we stand up?" campaign from 2013 goes further in satisfying the multitudinous demand for revolutionary affect. Here, a young man sits alone in a giant corporate building after closing time, still working on his computer. Exhausted, he gets up to get a bottle of Coca-Cola from a big vending machine. Suddenly, someone calls him ("Hey you, kid. Get over here"). He enters an enormous executive's office with a panorama view over the big nocturnal city. Behind the desk, he sees nothing but a big office chair with the back turned against him. The voice, apparently coming from the person sitting on the chair, tells him: "Do you know who we are? We are the real power. You'll find us in all the major decision-makings centres. For centuries, we've been controlling you. At work ... when you're at home ... when you go out. We control everything. We are ... chairs! And now it's time to conquer you." The desk chair suddenly turns around and we see that no one is sitting on it. It was the chair itself talking to the boy. The boy thinks for a moment and then asks the key question: "And ... what if we stand up?" The desk chair hesitates a moment and then answers, "then we lose." The rest of the spot shows people all over the world and of different ethnicities standing up, leaving deserted chairs in libraries, schools, stadiums, halls, on the streets etc. In the end we read: "Learn about our 4 commitments to fight overweight and sedentary lifestyle at cocacola.com."³⁷ The spot obviously puns with the ambiguity of the word "chair": the piece of furniture

³⁷ Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMLjHwwpAdg>, 31.05.2017).

you sit on and the chair(-man) of a big company, both of which apparently control the world by making us either fat and lazy or blind consumers obsessed with the latest lifestyle product. The *mise en scène* of the video invokes the thriller or the *film noir* genre: A multiple-storeyed office building, low key light, an innocent young employee and the sinister voice of what appears to be an old patriarch. Like in Fritz Lang's arguably Marxist film *Metropolis* (1927), the young hero wins the fight against the patriarch, leading a united group of other (young) people from all over the world to a dramatic victory. However, the difference is that in *Metropolis* the patriarch's son, Freder Fredersen, leads a group of blue collar workers to fight impenetrable social barriers. In the spot, the opposite is happening: the young man leaves the office armed with a bottle of Coke just like a knight would seize his sword. Simultaneously, people of different nationalities and ethnicities apparently unite in the fight against the 'chair', but they do so with the help of consumerism. They hence do not fight the patriarch's empire, but help to sustain it. With the ambiguity of the term "chair" and the invocation of the thriller genre, the spot introduces an atmosphere of a grass roots revolution. However, this ambiguity soon becomes neutralized by parody: the moment the empty desk chair turns around and we realize it was the piece of furniture itself talking, the classic thriller narrative becomes substituted for something else. With the announcement of the Coca-Cola campaign against overweight in the end of spot, the possible double entendre of "chair" is dissolved in favour of the non-metaphoric, denotative meaning of "chair" as a piece of furniture. The parody and the closure revealing that obesity is our actual enemy hold up to ridicule the formerly invoked idea of a worker's revolution against chairmen. The commercial thus introduces the ambiguity of meaning to subsequently neutralize any actual desire for a grass roots movement, and thereby channels the urge for revolutionary politics into the individual fight against one's own imperfect body. By applying the romantic narrative of a rebellion against some mutual enemy, it satisfies the diffuse desire for a resistance against global capitalism and shifts it to the desire to consume (Coca-Cola in this case). The spot, I would argue, illustrates the contradictions inherent in the concept of the multitude: it proposes a multitude of people of different colours and ethnicities, which, guided by the insight of the young white American yuppie, overthrows an imaginary, powerful sovereign – with the help of Coca-Cola. This multitude is not aware of the fact that what might actually be worth fighting against is late capitalist consumerism,

which makes the actual sovereigns, the CEOs of the multinational companies, the rulers of the world.³⁸ This *méconnaissance* is the reason why Coca-Cola is able to launch such a spot: it welcomes an allegedly mutinous multitude, because it knows that this multitude praises revolution against anything – econo-politics, an autocratic regime, the nation state, or obesity – as long as this revolution does not affect its consumerist needs.

Now, one could of course argue that this is not the way it is supposed to be: that the Coca-Cola multitude is a captured multitude, parasitically used for the sake of capitalism. But is the postmodernist multitude of "good" and joyful "encounters", this threatening thunderstorm against the state, even perceivable without the consumerist element? After all, Beasley-Murray himself says that the multitude can go terribly wrong and that "not all pain can be attributed to the state" (Beasley-Murray 2010: 257). But what Coca-Cola campaigns crave is already the "good" multitude, the one that brings joy. Maybe the question to ask is, therefore, if the real revolutionary potential today does not rather lie within a nation state actually doing politics instead of economics?³⁹ If we take a closer look at the history of the company, we can see that the development of Coca-Cola is, in a way, a condensed, perverted form of the transformation of a traditional 'nation state' and of potentially dangerous populism into the multitude – hence a pre-rational, multi-identical, affective gathering of different, 'immanent' bodies.

In its early years, Coca-Cola was the *national* beverage; with growing globalisation, it became a soft drink consumed worldwide. Whereas during the founding years of the global 'empire', say, from the seventies to the early millennium, the affection-

³⁸ *Posthegemony* seems to fail to consider the power of multinational companies, which sometimes more or less take a state over, destroying the nation state and its structures. Responding to the connection Beasley-Murray draws between Deleuze and Guattari's nomadic "war-machine" and affect, Oscar Ariel Cabezas criticizes this apparent *méconnaissance* in his review of *Posthegemony* from 2012: "Wasn't neoliberalism in Latin America precisely a war machine against the state? Wasn't neoliberalist market terrorism the war machine against left-wing political parties? Isn't hegemonic US transnational capitalism the war machine against Latin American national industry? These are important questions for the neo-Spinozan left in which *Posthegemony* inscribes itself. In this sense, what the theory of the multitude cannot easily resolve is the fact that late capitalism can deterritorialize radical processes of subjectivization, and re-territorialize them into a perfect process of commodification." Available online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/pc.12322227.0003.007>, 31.05.2017.

³⁹ The relatively new conception of 'post-democracy' defends the idea that nowadays politics are a mere entertainment for the masses, while the real politics happens on the level of finance capitalism (cf. Wilson 2006: 560–561). Therefore, the classic political structure today consists of some mainstream parties sharing the power, while antagonistic 'third' parties that do not share the same aim are demonized and subject of collective "moral condemnation" (Mouffe 2005: 72). See also Crouch 2004.

image in the shape of Marin's royal medal was still required,⁴⁰ later campaigns often rely mainly on affective emotional contagion, encouraging a random multitude to collectively enjoy Coca-Cola while experiencing all sorts of lifestyles and identities.⁴¹ What many Coca-Cola commercials, especially "Smile Back" or the "Laugh Train" therefore depict is, curiously, the hoped-for multitude: a random group of people, gathered at random spots around the world, all affected by the joyful sensations Coca-Cola wants to provoke. From this perspective, the multitude is a gathering of bodies who do share nothing but one thing: the desire to consume the same commodity, "whenever" and "wherever". If Coca-Cola was a state, Beasley-Murray would perhaps argue that this multitude is in fact the 'people', captured by the state with its former affect transformed into emotion. But the case of global companies such as Coca-Cola shows that this dichotomy does not work: the 'good' multitude and the soft drink consumers are, at least in the campaigns, indistinguishable. Coca-Cola's campaigns are thus a prime example of what Žižek, partly drawing on Masumi, who "formulated clearly this deadlock" (Žižek 2004: 184), states in *Organs without Bodies*:

Is the much celebrated Spinozan *imitatio affecti*, the impersonal circulation of affects bypassing persons, not the very logic of publicity, of video clips, and so forth in which what matters is not the message about the product but the intensity of the transmitted affects and perceptions? (*Ibid.*)

Aiming directly at the concept of the multitude, he adds:

Hardt and Negri's slogan – multitude as the site of resistance against the Empire – opens up a further series of problems, the primary one among them being at the level at which a multitude functions – what a given field of multitude excludes, what it has to exclude to function. There is, hence, always a nonmultiplex excess over multitudes. [...] [C]apitalism is multiplicity in principle (totally monopolistic capital is conceptual nonsense), but, precisely as such, it needs a universal medium as the sole domain within which its multitude can thrive, the medium of a legally regulated market in

⁴⁰ The above discussed "Always Coca-Cola" spot from 1993 appears at a time when Coca-Cola, after a rather disastrous changing of the traditional recipe and the subsequent return to the original formula, needs to win the young generation for whom the identification of Coke with the 'American spirit' is not a given (like it probably was for previous generations).

⁴¹ Several Coca-Cola commercials explicitly promote diversity, hence inscribing themselves into the ideal of a tolerant, open-minded multitude: for example, the "Together is Beautiful" spot from 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JchALYBVEGw>, 31.05.2017), the Coca-Cola Enterprises spot "Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter" from 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sArxiB9z2D4>, 31.05.2017), or the "Choose Happiness" spot from 2015 that depicts diverse families (white parents with an adopted Asian child, a somewhat elderly mother of a primary school child, a male homosexual couple with their son etc. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NG04zloEQOo>, 31.05.2017)). While no discussion should be necessary about the importance of diversity and the acceptance of non-conform family models, it should be noted that these 'multitude' commercials unite people under the banner of consumerism, or under the regime of 'happiness'. This, in turn, can only happen via the implicit exclusion of those subjects that refuse to obey the unpolitical, postmodernist happiness flag (see my discussion below).

which contracts are respected [...]. [...] [O]ne cannot simply oppose the subversive immanent multitude to the centralizing transcendent State Power: it was the very establishment of a centralized state power [...] that created the space for the emergence of the modern political multitude in the first place. (*Ibid.*: 197)⁴²

The Coca-Cola multitude does not really rely on the confrontation with the state in order to present itself as its congenial, but rebellious counterpart. This multitude is already a multitude in power.⁴³ It is its own empire and its own border-transcending state. However, it needs, as Žižek writes, to exclude something from it in order to work properly. Like in a sovereign state, where group formation also works via exclusion, for example on the level of class, the Coca-Cola multitude excludes certain subjects that do not comply with the rules of happiness. To use Sarah Ahmed's words, this community constitutes itself on the basis of shame (cf. Ahmed 2014: 101–121): in this case, the shame about not responding adequately to the happiness offered to you. While there is naturally a lot to criticize about the logic of classes, social hierarchy and so on, the consciousness of being a member of a certain class, like the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, after all generates a political consciousness (that can lead to revolution). The random exclusion based on shame, on the other hand, does not generate the formation of different political groups. It just strengthens an ideology based on a catalogue of appropriate feelings, which it is difficult to challenge – especially if these feelings contain, besides shame, happiness and enjoyment.

Ahmed has shown how the Australian people constitute themselves as a community through a mutually shared trauma over "the wrongfulness of the past dispossession, oppression and degradation of the Aboriginal peoples." (Governor-General of Australia, as cited in *ibid.*: 101) Anybody that refuses to share the common feeling of guilt is excluded from the community of shame. In some Coca-Cola campaigns, we can see a similar procedure, albeit a lot subtler. In the already discussed "Smile Back" commercial, one of the Coca-Cola employees dressed in red tries to shake

⁴² Žižek is of course not the only one who criticized the conception of the multitude. Besides Priester (2016) there are, for instance, the essays "Contra Hardt and Negri: Multitude or Generalized Proletarianization?" (Amin 2014) and "Multitudes ventriloques. À propos du dernier livre de Michael Hardt et Toni Negri" (Bensaïd 2004). In 2010, there was even a small article in the weekly German newspaper *Die Zeit* drawing on *Empire* as well as the then latest book by Negri and Hardt, *Common Wealth* (Grefe 2010).

⁴³ Drawing on the example of Latin American revolutionary movements, Žižek describes the "multitude in power" as follows: "Multitude in power' [...] necessarily actualizes itself in the guise of an authoritarian leader whose charisma can serve as 'empty signifier' able to contain the multitude of interests." (Žižek 2004: 197–198)

hands with a man in a business suit. The man, however, ignores him and walks away, leaving the Coca-Cola man standing alone with his hand stretched out and a disappointed look on his face, implicitly saying "why can't people just respond friendly to someone who is trying to be nice to them? Why are people so angry?" During the remaining time of the spot it is shown how every other person he meets ends up shaking his hand or laughing with him, receiving a free soda in exchange. They form the positively affected multitude that, last but not least, constitutes itself via the passive exclusion of those 'who wouldn't smile back': those who refuse to be ashamed of their (busy) lifestyle and who do not feel guilty for not laughing with strangers and for not spreading happiness during rush hour.

Something similar happens in a spot from Argentina for the new Coca-Cola Life (made with stevia). It shows a young couple in the first years of their baby; from the positive pregnancy test to toys and baby equipment lying all over the living room to a constantly interrupted sex life, subliminal jealousy over other young, childless couples, and so on. Towards the end of the spot, the woman enters the room with a bottle of Coca-Cola Life and another positive pregnancy test. The man, resigned and irritated by his son, drinks from the bottle and glances at the wife who timidly shows him the test. His mouth apparently opens to yell in anger, but then his expression changes and he starts to scream euphorically and hugs his somewhat surprised wife.⁴⁴ What is expressed here mirrors the words of the woman in the documentary film on Coca-Cola: "If you're having a bad time, it's okay, because there's still Coke." The message seems to be that it is alright to be unhappy with family life sometimes, however, it is vital to manage one's frustration and Coca-Cola Life offers to help with this. The subtext is that parents ought to feel ashamed if they cannot overcome their frustration: if Coca-Cola (or any other consumer product for that matter) does not work as a panacea for you, then you really are a bad parent, because you are not able to let yourself be positively affected by the happiness it promises.

The indistinct crowd of 'happy' consumer subjects thus allows everybody to shift their identity, to team up with other bodies, to try out unconventional lifestyles, as long as they ultimately keep in line and buy the advertised product. If there even are any potentially critical, aggressive, disturbing affects, they are turned into sales

⁴⁴ Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvbrQj4REgo>, 31.05.2017).

itches. These do not only advertise the product itself, but also a multitude that can be and effect anything – except for a political consciousness and, hence, political change that could *actually* make the situation easier for not so well-funded, 'precarious' middle class parents or the (migrant) working force on the fringes of society.

The way Coca-Cola stages affect and happy encounters of joyful bodies from all over the world makes it a prime example for the manner in which popular culture can serve as a means to effectuate the transformation of political and social orders. The Coca-Cola campaigns we have discussed help the postmodernist subject to adjust to the concept of a globalised world without borders and, most importantly, without the nation state. Coca-Cola is thus a piece of popular culture that, to borrow another term from Jameson, helps to "de-program" (Jameson 1990: 164) the traditional concept of the nation state. It helps the subjects to get used to the new concept of globalisation (global capitalism); a concept that requires them to relocate their affection – formerly clinging to the concept of the (sovereign) nation and the people of the nation – to the new concept of a global world order under the star-spangled banner of the United States. The 'de-programming' here often works as a "strategy of containment" (Jameson 1981: 52–54): a formal, symbolic resolution of a conflict or contradiction within the aesthetic realm, which remains unresolved in the real world (see also *ibid.*: 78–79). The paradoxical structure of this formal resolution can be seen in some of the controversial user videos to be found on YouTube. For example, a user version of the 2011 "There are Reasons to Believe in a Better World" campaign: instead of the antithetical construction of the original spot ("While a scientist designs a new weapon, 1,000,000 moms are baking chocolate cakes" etc.),⁴⁵ the video shows pictures of the Third World: crying babies, people living in horrible poverty etc. The images are underlined with information like "For any Coca-Cola factory there are 5 times higher pollutant values in water of population".⁴⁶ Similarly, another private video called "Official best Coca-Cola commercials ever since 1950" starts by actually showing Coca-Cola commercials through the years, until the beginning of the "Better World" campaign commercial. However, suddenly, the music stops, the commercial is rewound and then substituted for

⁴⁵ Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vKDOWAf5M8>, 31.05.2017).

⁴⁶ Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFn9MpXCC14&t=11s>, 31.05.2017).

other images: documentary footage of a Coca-Cola factory, a massive waste dump, obese people etc. The spectator learns about the amount of overweight people in the United States, and how many Coke products the average person consumes in a lifetime before finally stating "Don't make commercials fool you. You make your own happiness". Curiously, after this interposed criticism, the video ends with an official Coca-Cola TV-commercial that was aired, as the text announces, during the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. This video shows that, although Coca-Cola advertisements might trigger ('escaping') affects opposite to those they originally aim to trigger, those affects do not really have any effect, because they are already considered, already taken into account. Taking up the Coke 'statistics' of the "Better World" commercial, we could say that for every critical video on Coca-Cola, there are at least twenty users who enjoy the newest advertising campaign and refer to it positively in YouTube's comments' section. What is, apparently, performed here, is the basic democratic principle of free speech and critical debate – without of course changing the status quo. In this video, the critical message is contained within the usual advertisement, being a perfect example of a strategy of containment. It is there and informs the spectator about how Coca-Cola 'really' is, thus 'solving' the problem of diabetes, excessive, neo-colonialist, global capitalism etc., but it solves them only within the video itself. The critique is out, it is visible, but framed and thus not actually threatening.

An astonishing example for a strategy of containment within an official Coke commercial can be found in the "Happiness from the Skies" campaign from 2014. Taking place in Singapore, the advertising spot tells the spectator how this first world country is "built by a large migrant workforce", workers who, virtually invisible, slog day and night, far away from their families and excluded from the local communities. To bring them "a little happiness", Coca-Cola had Singapore natives write little "Thank you" messages and attach them to Coke bottles. Along with the messages, the bottles are delivered by drones that fly over the several-story-high construction sites, delivering their packages to the workers, who gratefully thank the locals and the company for thinking of them.⁴⁷ In this spot, Coca-Cola formally resolves one of the problems that come with globalisation, migration and cheap labour: the Coca-Cola drone symbolises the strategy of containment, providing an

⁴⁷ Available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k92o4RyVDBc>, 31.05.2017).

atmosphere of a happily united multitude, beyond class struggle and other crucial differences. In fact, by showing the somewhat nice and 'lovable' site of a drone, a tool normally considered an element of war, the spot also provides a formal resolution to the problem of imperialism in a postmodernist, globalized era.

Coming back to the beginnings of Coca-Cola in the 19th century, we could conclude that the postmodernist waning of affect (in the sense of the expression of fundamentally opposed dichotomies) and the emergence of the affected multitude mirror another important transition: the transition from the "transcendent" literature of the Romantic tradition in 19th century America to the principle of "econopoiesis" in the 21st century.⁴⁸ While poetry was "situated at the apex of national culture, central to social cohesion, self-understanding, and identity" (Wilson 2006: 563) in the "self-authorizing" romantic period, this part has been taken over by the econopoiesis of, for instance, advertisement in a globalised world. The function of the econopoiesis of the multitude is, I would argue, to deprogram the global subjects from their identification with a nation or a class, offering them instead the identification with pre-political affect that operates on the basis of the supposed mutual commitment to an opaque happiness. The excessive enjoyment sold as object cause of desire hence serves as a supplement for the overwhelming pleasure or pain formerly offered by the reception or contemplation of art, while the multitude becomes the 'sticky' supplement for a political consciousness and the concept of the state that may offer it.

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⁴⁸ This is a term coined by Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, see Wilson (2006: esp. 563–566).

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