

FLESH FOR FANTASY

**Exposing the sexualized and manipulated female persona in
contemporary women's media**

by

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I, the undersigned, hereby declare that **Flesh for Fantasy : Exposing the sexualized and manipulated female persona in contemporary women's media**, is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date:

SUMMARY

This thesis focuses on the representation of women in media aimed at women. A critical examination of visual communication (magazines, advertising and visual story-telling¹) will demonstrate that the media may be regarded as highly influential in the way women perceive their bodies, reproduction and sexuality.

I begin by examining the presentation of the 'ideal' woman as an instance of the Pygmalion complex. This reading of the media's formulation of the female ideal aims to demonstrate the psychological effects of the Pygmalion complex on women, and illustrates how the resultant striving for perfection drives production and consumption. I shall demonstrate how the image of the 'ideal' woman is increasingly more sophisticated and convincingly portrayed through the use of digital manipulation, plastic surgery, excessive dieting and exercise regimes. I propose that the average woman is left feeling inadequate and is undermined by the voice of her own cultural representation.

This thesis also investigates the persistence of the virgin / whore binary in the media's depiction of female sexuality. I propose that this is an essentialist and dualistic presentation of female sexuality as either 'good' (surrendered, submissive and conforming – i.e. the virgin); or 'bad' (transgressive, explicit, dangerous and destructive – i.e. the whore). I further suggest that this polarised appropriation of women's sexuality deprives women of ownership of their own sexuality. I also propose that the media's treatment of female sexuality presents women as being in competition within one another for male attention and approval and that this representation damages female solidarity.

Finally I demonstrate that pornography has infiltrated all aspects of popular culture, from magazines to music videos. My hypothesis is that this use of pornographic conventions depicts the rape and abuse of women as normative, commonplace and even entertaining, and that this has a detrimental effect on both women's and men's sexual and social wellbeing.

¹ I am grouping together television, movies and children's books as all are story-telling or narrative processes which enforce, encode and engender what is expected of the individual in society.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis is gerig op hoe vroue in die media wat op vroue gerig is, verbeeld word. 'n Kritiese ondersoek van visuele kommunikasie (in tydskrifte, reklame en visuele verhalings²) sal toon hoe die media as uiters invloedryk beskou kan word ten opsigte van hoe vroue hul eie liggame, voortplanting en seksualiteit beskou.

Ek begin deur die voorstelling van die 'ideale' vrou as 'n voorbeeld van die Pygmalion-kompleks te ondersoek. Hierdie beskouing van die media se formulering van die ideaal van vrouwees is daarop gerig om die sielkundige effek van die Pygmalion-kompleks op vroue te demonstreer en illustreer hoe produksie en verbruik deur die strewende na perfektheid wat as gevolg van hierdie formulering ontstaan, aangedryf word. Ek sal toon hoe die beeld van die 'ideale' vrou, as meer en meer gesofistikeerd, oortuigend weergegee word deur middel van digitale manipulasie, plastiese snykunde, oormatige volg van diëte en oefenprogramme. Ek voer aan dat die gemiddelde vrou hierdeur met die gevoel gelaat word dat sy tekortsiet en ondermyn word deur die boodskap van die publikasies wat haar eie kulturele beeld verwoord.

Hierdie tesis ondersoek ook die volhardendheid van die tweeledige voorstelling van vroulike seksualiteit in die beelding van maagd en hoer wat in die media aangebied word. Ek voer aan dat dit 'n wesenlike en dualistiese voorstelling van vroulike seksualiteit as óf 'goed' (uitgelewer, gedwee en konformerend – d.w.s. die maagd), óf 'sleg' (oortredend/sondig, eksplisiet, gevaarlik en vernietigend – d.w.s. die hoer) is. Ek stel verder voor dat hierdie gepolariseerde toe-eiening van die vrou se seksualiteit vrouens van eienaarskap van hul eie seksualiteit ontnem. Ek stel ook voor dat die voorstelling van die vrou se seksualiteit soos dit in die media aangebied word, suggereer dat vrouens ter wille van die aandag van 'n man en om goedkeuring te wen met mekaar kompeteer en dat hierdie voorstelling skade doen aan die gevoel van solidariteit tussen vroue.

Ten slotte demonstreer ek hoe pornografie reeds alle aspekte van die populêre kultuur vanaf tydskrifte tot musiekvideos binnegedring het. My hipotese is dat hierdie gebruik van pornografiese konvensies die verkragting en mishandeling van vroue as normatief, alledaags en selfs vermaaklik uitbeeld en dat dit 'n nadelige effek het op die seksuele en die sosiale welsyn van mans sowel as vroue.

² Ek plaas televisie, films én kinderboeke onder hierdie hoof omdat hierdie media stories vertel of verhalende prosesse behels wat die samelewing se verwagtings op die individu afdwing, dit kodeer en voortbring.

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PREFACE

My practical work investigates how I feel about *my* body, it's complex physicality and sexuality. This thesis presents the complementary theoretical research that was undertaken to further my understanding of how media images insidiously permeated and influenced my physical self-image from an early age. I believe that our perception of ourselves as women is determined by our socialisation and that the greatest determining factor within this socialisation has been the media machine of the late 20th century.

The representation of the 'perfect' female in magazines and the advertising media in general teaches us to be ashamed of our 'imperfect' bodies. The glamorised, disciplined and slim female body is indelibly imprinted onto the female psyche. Advertisements are loaded with powerful and emotive messages which direct us to buy the product and to buy into patriarchal ideology. Women are urged into being perfect home-makers, wives, mothers, sexual partners and career women. The pressure to be superwomen leaves most women feeling inadequate and ashamed, and thus open to the emotional directives of these images. Women's magazines often promote themselves as constituting a 'friend' or personal support for women. In keeping with this message, editorials often provide women with empowering information that has gone a long way towards liberating women, but the advertisements and fashion features, which form the financial backbone of the magazine, often directly contradict the editorials or the emancipatory contents of the articles.

By identifying specific designers / labels and photographers who repeatedly produce the same stereotypical and hyper-sexualised images of women, I have embarked on a name-and-blame campaign in the hope that, by identifying specific protagonists, a sense of personal responsibility will emerge, which may go some way towards addressing the 'anonymous' abuse of women.

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Figure 154. Helmut Newton “Leda”
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Figure 155. *YDE* “YDE Young Designers Emporium under your skin” advertisement, *Elle* SA Edition Vol. 5 No. 2 May 2000:45.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the way in which the media industry represents women, particularly in women's fashion magazines. Women's magazines represent a certain voice of authority and a form of social and cultural identity for the women who read them, and constitute a type of 'support club' for women. As a thirty-something, white female, I shall look at magazines that target my market. At this point it is important to emphasize *market*, for while magazines may be a voice to identify with, I shall state that their main purpose is as a marketing tool for selling products.

Theoretical Framework

In identifying magazines as tools of commerce as well as a medium of communicating dominant ideologies, I have adopted a broadly Feminist and, more particularly, a Marxist-Feminist approach to identify Patriarchy and Capitalism as the two dominant ideologies around which Western society is structured and framed. Although I am aware that many theorists – particularly within the Cultural Studies arena – have problematised a simple equation between Patriarchy and Capitalism, I argue that Capitalism could not have arisen or taken hold as it has without the pre-existence of Patriarchy. Roberta Hamilton¹ shows how the seventeenth century society out of which Capitalism emerged was a Patriarchal society divided along lines of gender, class and race, creating a pyramid of power with a wide base of a subjugated workforce. While Feminists have identified Patriarchy, Marxism identified Capitalism² as the dominant social ideology and the cause of social inequality. However, Feminists assert that the sexual caste system not only preceded private property but it exists in both capitalist and socialist countries (Hamilton 1978:12). As the patriarchal system of domination

¹ Roberta Hamilton's *The Liberation of Women* (1978), explores the transition from feudal society to capitalist society, as well as the transition from a predominantly Catholic society to a Protestant one.

² The Marxist analysis "... has located the origins of female subordination in 'the development of surplus wealth due to the development of production' (Magas in Hamilton 1978:11); that is, in the phenomenon of private property... . The more central the role of private property became, the more ground women lost... . For Marxists, patriarchal ideology appears as an ahistorical abstraction, or at best, part of the superstructure." (Hamilton 1978:11)

and submission, is based on the biological differences between the sexes, Hamilton argues that this provides a materialist basis of its own, thereby justifying the insistence that “patriarchal ideology cannot be seen simply as part of the superstructure” (1978:11). Hamilton addresses patriarchal ideology as “that ideological mode which defines the system of male domination and female subjugation in any society. Like other ideologies, it is instilled through socialization and maintained by institutional methods” (1978:11). Therefore, as both Feminists and Marxists have shown respectively, Patriarchy and Capitalism are intrinsic parts of Western society and the culture which exists within this society is therefore a culture which represents the interests of both these ideologies. It is therefore in the interest of these dominant ideologies to maintain and re-affirm the *status-quo* which asserts that men are the dominant gender and that women are there to serve them, not only sexually and physically, but also as producers and consumers.

Methodology

The approach that I took to analysing the images that I investigated was informed by feminism and Marxist-Feminism, and actively sought to expose patriarchal constructs. “Feminism is a politically motivated movement dedicated to personal and social change. Feminists challenge the traditional power of men (patriarchy) and revalue and celebrate the roles of women” (Feminism and Gender studies:111³). Feminism examines all subject areas with a critical political agenda that sees all cultural manifestation as part “of a larger and deeply contentious CULTURAL project.” (Feminism and Gender studies:111) The various feminisms I have embraced include Socialist Feminism – which is informed by Marxism and Cultural Materialism, Postcolonial and Multicultural Feminisms, and psychoanalytical analysis, as well as social and historical analysis. I also used the standpoint of Liberal Feminism (also unfortunately termed Bourgeois Feminism) as I am selectively focusing on images produced mainly for the white

³ This was taken from a photocopied text which unfortunately included no other bibliographical information.

Western woman (My source material will be identified later). I therefore employ an eclectic array of feminisms.

As identified by Luce Irigaray in her seminal text *This Sex which is not one* (1977) woman's position within society and her representation within the dominant social economy is one of passive objectification. She suggests that women have no position within history other than as metonymy – they “appear as **exterior** representations of **something else** – monuments of Justice, Liberty, Peace ... or as **objects of men's desire**” (cited in Appignanesi et al.1998:95). The representation of woman as virgin or whore (as dealt with in Chapter Two) may therefore be seen as a metonymic representation of female sexuality – a representation of women as the sex which is not one. Like Irigaray, Julia Kristeva refutes Freud's positioning of women as outside the process of self-constitution. Where Irigaray positions women within the role of passive object, Kristeva asserts that women are still “in the process of becoming”, which positions women's roles as active and constitutive (cited in Appignanesi et al. 1998:101).

There are thus two approaches which must guide any evaluation of representation – while the process of photographing the body is by its very nature one which reduces the body to an object, the scopical mediation of the viewer allows for some form of negotiation of meaning. “[I]ndeed, much feminist literature now stresses the importance of seeing women not as passive victims uniformly dominated but as active agents mediating their own experiences” (Deveaux 1999:245). I am indebted to Deveaux for outlining Feminist interpretations of Foucaultian theory. This includes the process which examines women both as passive ‘docile’ bodies, who, through the process of panopticonism, enact the self-disciplinary measures of the dominant ideology upon themselves (as outlined by Bartky in Deveaux), and women's ability to mediate external influences (as shown by Bordo in Deveaux). Hartsock also directs us to “develop an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and constitutive of the real world” (Nancy Hartsock cited in Deveaux 1999:243).

The Second Wave of feminist theory focusing on Foucault's later 'agnostic' model of power, proposes that "where there is power there is resistance". It also suggests "that individuals contest fixed identities and relations in ongoing and sometimes subtle ways" (Deveaux 1999:242). This position then assists feminists in the location of diverse sources of women's subordination, as well as to identify modes of resistance in our everyday lives "[b]y demanding that we look to the productive character of power and to the existence of multiple power relations rather than dualistic, top-down force" (Deveaux 1999:242).

Literature Survey

The main texts used to research and substantiate my argument are Gerda Lerner's *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Roberta Hamilton's *The Liberation of Women*, Marilyn French's *The War Against Women*, John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* and Andrea Dworkin⁴ and Catherine MacKinnon's various anti-pornography texts. I have also read a wide variety of Cultural Studies sources, principally by John Storey, Ann Brooks and Deveaux, which I found useful in terms of approaching, understanding and analysing media images. However, while the agency of the viewer is emphasised in Cultural Studies, I am focusing on the end product of media. I therefore address the possible negative consequences by the inundation of media images aimed at the female target market, and the effects of the internalisation of these messages on women's self-image.

Chapter One examines the 'ideal' body represented in Popular Culture aimed at women. I have used the myth of *Pygmalion* as a guiding metaphor to symbolise the representation of the 'ideal' woman. The chapter is titled *Body Politics* as the representation of the female body is not merely an issue of vanity or whim, but is guided by the changing needs of society and the dominant ideology that is served by society. I shall show that this serves to keep women in a position of subordinated objectification, and that changing the external criteria of this 'ideal'

⁴ Although I have relied heavily on the writings of Dworkin, I do not accept her point of view that all men are inherently rapists, as this is an essentialist perception of men as the virgin / whore dichotomy is of women.

in turn drives the economy. Chapter One therefore examines the reasons behind the morphing of the female silhouette, as well as its social and psychological implications. Naomi Wolf (1992) shows how advertising creates what she has termed the “Beauty Myth” – the ideal perpetuated by magazines to convince women that they are not good enough, while always offering the promise of perfection and happiness through the purchase of the advertised product. Marilyn French is more hard-hitting in seeing advertising and magazines as by-products of a patriarchal ideology which systematically abuses and undermines women. John Berger explains that advertising is the new painting of the twentieth century. He explains that the viewer is always presumed to be male, so that the female learns to internalise the male gaze and perceive herself as others see her. He shows how advertising steals the love of one’s self and offers it back to us through the purchase of a product. I use these perspectives to help me analyze the representation of the female body in advertising. I also examine the unrealistic pressure placed on the average woman when she compares herself to the models and actresses who fill the pages of ‘her’ magazines. I demonstrate that these role models are not realistic representations, but either anorexic young waifs, or super-toned sportswomen. Added to this, images are digitally manipulated, which results in women having their bodies manipulated through plastic surgery to ‘fit’ the current cultural trends of representation. I aim to show that these representations have left women feeling alienated from society and from their own bodies.

Chapter Two focuses on how women have been put to war against one another – a gender divided is a gender that may be manipulated and dominated. I have used Lerner’s study of this dichotomy as arising from social differences between the slave and the free woman as background to this perception and historical representation. As patriarchy became the dominant Western construct, the cultural manifestations of various civilizations within this construct all perpetuated the presentation of women as either ‘good’ (the virgin) or ‘bad’ (the whore). Women had to surrender their autonomy (which included their sexuality) to patriarchal authority; if they did not submit, they were seen as transgressive, even dangerous.

Thus women are not only split within themselves, but also from one another and it is impressed upon them that their enemy is their fellow woman – that they are in perpetual competition with one another over the male. This limits and objectifies women and their roles within society. I further identify and problematise that, in many cases, it is women who actively enact oppression on one another. Thus patriarchy has succeeded in making women enact discipline on themselves, as well as on one another. Women are also complicitly engaged in maintaining dominant social orders, in that, in order to partake in the power, one has to promote its ideologies.

Chapter Three examines what I believe to be the most serious aspect of Patriarchy – the control of female sexuality. As this is a field of very broad representations, I have focused on

- the role of the female as the sexual slave and performer;
- the presentation of female sexuality in interrelation with the male partner and the various engendered myths that are enacted; and, finally
- the sexual violation of the female body.

In order to do this it was necessary to understand what constitutes a pornographic image and how pornography has infiltrated most media forms. The writings of Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, both of whom are committed anti-pornography and human rights activists, show how magazines glamorise rape and how rape is still used to demean and demoralise women into subjugation, and that this exists as an acceptable part of first-world Western society.

In conclusion I postulate that the more women have fought to liberate themselves, the more devious the means have become to keep control over women, their bodies, their labour and their sexuality. Marilyn French states that, “[t]he real attitudes of a society often lie buried from view, and can be extricated only by close analysis of behaviour, language, and images” (French 1992:157). It is therefore only by stopping and analysing the images that we pass over on a daily basis that we begin to see beneath the surface.

Source Material

The following is a list of the various women's fashion magazines from which I have drawn the images with which I justify my perceptions and arguments:

- *Vogue UK Edition*
- *Marie Claire SA Edition*
- *Marie Claire UK Edition*
- *Cosmopolitan SA Edition*
- *Fair Lady*
- *Elle SA Edition*
- *Elle UK Edition*
- *Elle French Edition*
- *Vanity Fair*
- *Shape SA*
- *Longevity*
- *Dazed & Confused*
- *Face*
- online source <http://www.about-face.org>

CHAPTER ONE – Body Politics

Chapter One demonstrates that the portrayal of women in fashion magazines serves two ideologies: Firstly, unobtainable perfection leaves the viewer feeling inferior (which serves patriarchy) and, secondly, the means of achieving this perfection is promised through the purchase of a range of items (which fuels capitalism). This statement will be justified through the decoding of advertisements and fashion stories. This is not to negate women's ability to mediate their reactions towards these images. Rather, as Marilyn French explains in *The War against Women* (1992) – media images of the female body in the last half of the Twentieth Century⁵ have become increasingly aggressive towards women, and postulates that this may be interpreted as a reaction to feminism. According to French, with feminism having become more widespread and empowering women to think and act for themselves, society has had to seek more subversive means of dis-empowering women.

Underlying advertisers' constraints is the fear shared by the male establishment generally, that women with a stronger self-image might no longer be willing to remain a servant class, might even unite against exploitation. To keep a group subordinate, an elite must persuade it that it deserves subordination because of innate inferiority. A person of an inferior group cannot be the author of her or his own life but must centre on the superior group (French 1992:173).

French believes that the images of females in women's magazines represent a war to reassert men's control over them, their bodies, their sexuality and reproductivity, their social freedom and labour. Women's magazines form part of popular culture⁶, are a voice of authority informing women how they should look, think and behave and, as such, are a reflection of contemporary ideologies. By employing various sources, this thesis investigates what these ideologies are and how they influence women.

⁵ For an extensive explanation on the political changes that have impacted on women, their lives and the representation of their bodies during the last half of the Twentieth Century, please see French's *The War Against Women* (1992).

⁶ Popular culture – there are various ways to define what is meant by this term, however it is most simply that which is well-liked by many people.

1.1 A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

If French is correct in stating that there now is a ‘war’ to reassert men’s control over women’s bodies, we must assume that women currently do have some degree of control over their own bodies, and that their bodies were once not their own. Gerda Lerner corroborates this, showing that within Western patriarchal society⁷, women were seen as possessions⁸ (Lerner 1986:212, 213). Ultimately Lerner shows that Patriarchy “is a system, in which women do not have full rights to themselves” (Rubin cited in Lerner, 1986:25). Kate Millet argues that patriarchy with its fundamental concept of power is the most pervasive ideology of Western culture. She shows that patriarchy is deeply entrenched in political systems, social and economic forms, as well as most major religions (Millet 1970:25). To understand women’s current oppression, we must consider the complex intersections between patriarchy and capitalism. However, the scope of this thesis is not to identify these intersections but their impact on women’s lives, in particular their freedom.

Roberta Hamilton in *The Liberation of women* (1978) investigates how women were impacted upon by the rise of Protestantism and Capitalism⁹; “The seventeenth century has been called ‘one of the greatest watersheds’ in modern English history. The transition from feudalism to capitalism interlocked with the rise of Protestantism to leave no aspect of English life untouched” (Hamilton 1978:15). Hamilton suggests that neither Capitalism nor Protestantism could have developed in the manner that they did without the pre-existence of patriarchy¹⁰,

⁷ Patriarchy and its impact on women will be examined in greater depth in Chapter Two.

⁸ As farming developed, having more wives and many children to do the labour meant increased wealth, and women and children came to be seen as possessions and wealth. You could also trade women from other tribes, family groups etc., to strengthen ties and create peace (Lerner 1986:212, 213).

⁹ For a more in-depth discussion on the women within Feudal society, the transition to Industrial and Capitalist society and the rise and impact of Protestantism on women, please refer to Hamilton’s *The Liberation of women* (1978).

¹⁰ “That there was a relationship between the emergence of Capitalism and Protestantism, if not the nature of that relationship, has been taken as axiomatic by all scholars since Marx and Weber” (Hamilton 1978:21). It is my belief that the nature of this relationship was the underlying patriarchal nature of both systems.

out of which had developed a society divided along sex and class. Furthermore, Monique Deveaux shows how Michel Foucault identified the Seventeenth Century as a period of transition from sovereign authority to modern, disciplinary forms of power:

As the sovereign's rights over the life and death of subjects began to shift in the seventeenth century, two axes or poles emblematic of the modern power paradigm evolved. They were the 'anatomy-politics of the human body', which emphasizes a disciplined useful body (hence, 'docile bodies'), and the model Foucault calls the 'biopolitics of the population,' in which the state's attention turns to the reproductive capacities of bodies, and to health, birth, and mortality. The prime focus of the first axis of power is thus 'the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission.' The body becomes a 'political field', inscribed and constituted by power relations. (Deveaux 1999:237)

This meant that bodies, in particular women's bodies, became to some degree state property, and therefore subject to and subjugated by externally dictated forces.

Hamilton suggests that the naturalisation of the wifely and maternal roles particularly under Protestantism helped ward off analysis of the role of the family in Capitalism. Identifying the family as the "producer of the next generation of workers and the service unit for the present was seen as an attack on the 'cult of true womanhood'" (Hamilton 1978:26). However, the family was not the unit of production only, it was (and remains) the unit of consumption, and women's roles within the economy thus become obscured. Hamilton shows how most pre-modern¹¹ households were self sufficient, but with the rise of Industrialisation and Capitalism, middle-class women were encouraged to buy everything they needed. Women had to be taught how to become consumers. Middle-class women were targeted as a whole new market or units of consumption. The most overt focus of this target was their appearance, they had to turn themselves into reified objects.

¹¹ Hamilton uses the rise of Industrialisation as the beginning of what she defines and identifies as the beginning of the 'modern' period.

Roberta Seid (1994:80) shows that, by the Victorian period, food and sex were linked to the female psyche. Women were often presented as slaves of their bodily appetites, whereas the ideal physique symbolised the rejection of such carnal appetites – for to reject these appetites was a sign of virtue. The expectation placed upon women was to control their appetites (both those of hunger and lust) to such an extent as to encode their bodies with the correct social message. The increased societal wealth of the middle class had ended the association between thinness and poverty; now it became a symbol of status. Slenderness became a ‘moral’ concern.

Thorstein Veblen in his *Economic Theory of Women’s dress* (1894), recognised the role fashion and ownership played in the lives of women; that the more ornate and uncomfortable the wife, the greater her husband’s status and power (cited in Greene 1983:112). By the 1880s women’s shoe sizes had become standardised, thereby giving society a weapon with which to measure desirability – smallness came to be equated with refinement. As clothes became manufactured (rather than tailored or home-made) the sizes became standardised, creating external, fixed and homogenised measurements for the human body – in particular the female body. It would seem that smallness and thinness (as opposed to fleshy, full and reproductive bodies) became appealing fashionable ideals for the first time in history. The ideal however, fluctuates according to fashion, which is an artificial construct created to support consumerism.

As literacy and the economic viability of printing grew in the nineteenth century, so the media replaced the more traditional academic paintings as social tools for representing or communicating ideas and ideals to the masses and the printed medium had, and still has, a far wider reaching influence. Women turned to magazines as a voice of cultural and social identification and representation to help them construct an identity. However, external economics dictated this identity to the susceptible consumer. The socio-economic and political needs projected onto women were reflected in commercial advertisements. An overview of the twentieth century illustrates that, while women fought for emancipation and

equal rights, each time women's movements gained ground, there would be a backlash in the form of changing physical ideals or a heightened level of physical objectification.

Women began gaining ground in the field of education during the nineteenth century, with the establishment of women's colleges such as Girton, Newnham, Vassar and Radcliffe, including other institutions of higher learning. Women's magazines kept pace with women's advances. The mass production of beauty images aimed at women were being perfected. *The Queen* and *Harper's Bazaar* were established, and the circulation of Beeton's *English Women's Domestic Magazine* doubled to fifty thousand. As Naomi Wolf shows in *The Beauty Myth* (1992)¹², the increasing number of women's journals and fashion magazines in the early twentieth century served to propel the commercial commodification of women even further (see fig. 15 & 16). Wolf (1992:62) demonstrates how "[t]he rise in women's magazines was brought about by large investments of capital combined with increased literacy and purchasing power of lower – middle – and working-class women: The democratization of beauty had begun". Now all women could feel the pressure to be perfect, whether physically, morally or socially. Like French, Wolf asserts that changes in the representation of the female body is a political reaction to women's liberation:

As soon as a woman's primary value could no longer be defined as the attainment of virtuous domesticity, the beauty myth redefined it as the attainment of virtuous beauty.

It did so to substitute both a new consumer imperative and a new justification for economic unfairness in the workplace where the old ones had lost their hold over newly liberated women. (1992:18)

Through the Feminist movement, women became aware of the underlying misogyny in the representations of the female body; that it did not in fact represent greater freedom for women, rather greater viewing freedom for the male gaze. The Seventies and Eighties were decades of militant Feminist activity

¹² Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* (1992) formulates the theory that the commodification of women, or rather the pressure on women to be 'perfect' is a political construct which supports Capitalism and the dominant political ideologies. She shows how the appearance of women changed as politics changed. This served two purposes – to keep undermining women's self-confidence, and through fashion, to keep the economy fuelled by the purchasing power of women.

against male control over the representation of the female body. Wolf explains that

[f]or every feminist action there is an equal and opposite beauty myth reaction. In the 1980s it was evident that as women became more important, beauty too became more important. The closer women come to power, the more physical self-consciousness and sacrifice are asked of them. 'Beauty' becomes the condition for a woman to take the next step. You are now too rich. Therefore, you cannot be too thin (Wolf 1992:28).

In summary, with Wolf and French showing that as women receive better education and greater employment opportunities, I shall now demonstrate that the representation of the female body in reaction to these advances is being subjected to extreme ideals – that of the super-fit 'super-woman' and the anorexic androgyne.

1.2 A BRIEF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In *Feminism and Empowerment: A critical reading of Foucault*, Monique Deveaux examines the way in which Feminist scholars have appropriated Foucault's theories to come to a better understanding of women's subjugation. I shall highlight a few of the central arguments from Deveaux to guide this thesis, particularly in the investigation of images of women's bodies used by the commercial advertising media and the effect that these images have on women. While there is what Deveaux identifies as a first and second 'wave' of Foucaultian theory, Foucault, like Hamilton, identifies the seventeenth century as period of great social transformation and transition from sovereignty to modernity. The following quotation from Foucault, on modernity and power, describes what feminist scholars of the 'first wave' of Foucaultian theory have used to define the 'techniques of femininity' of self surveillance and discipline, in which women internalise the images they see in order to survey and control themselves:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be at minimal cost (Foucault cited in Deveaux 1999:238).

This model is defined as Panopticonism, and is used by feminist scholars to account for women's collusion with patriarchal standards of femininity. Deveaux shows how Sandra Bartky acknowledges Foucault's model of power while cautioning and challenging his construction of the "docile-body". Bartky points out how Foucault "treats the body... as if bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life." She therefore asks: "Where is the account of the disciplinary practises that engender the 'docile-bodies' of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men? ...[Foucault] is blind to those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine" (Bartky cited in Deveaux 1999:238). Deveaux outlines Bartky's theses on femininity as firstly socially constructed and enforced through the control of the female body and shape and, as secondly self-disciplinary processes (Panopticonism), which are a symptom of modern patriarchal power (Bartky cited in Deveaux 1999:238). The three practices which contribute to the construction of femininity as identified by Bartky are: exercise and diet regimes aimed at an 'ideal' body size and shape; behaviour (which is examined in Chapter Two), which includes "gestures, postures and movements", and techniques that display the feminine body as an "ornamental surface", as used for the display of cosmetics. These three areas combine to "produce a body which in gesture and appearance is recognizably feminine" and reinforce a "disciplinary project of bodily perfection" (Bartky cited in Deveaux 1999:238) Bartky asks *who* the disciplinarian in all of this is. Her response is that we need to look at the dual nature of feminine bodily discipline, encompassing its "socially imposed" and "voluntary" (or self-disciplining) characteristics. Bartky accounts for the voluntary, self-disciplining dimensions of these techniques of femininity in two ways: firstly that women internalise the feminine ideal so profoundly that they lack the critical distance necessary to contest it and are even fearful of the consequences of 'noncompliance', and secondly, that ideals of femininity are so powerful that to reject their supporting practices is to reject one's own identity (Bartky in Deveaux 1999:245).

Deveaux shows how Bartky's use of the 'docile bodies' and Panopticon theses is problematic for it has the effect of diminishing and delimiting women's subjectivity, at times "treating women as robotic receptacles of culture rather than as active agents who are both constituted by, and reflective of, their social and cultural contexts" (Deveaux 1999:239). But when Bartky's appropriated Panopticon theory is combined with her later discussions on shame, it allows for the agency of the viewer: "[i]ndeed, much feminist literature now stresses the importance of seeing women not as passive victims uniformly dominated but as active agents mediating their own experiences" (Deveaux 1999:245). Bartky's work on shame shows how "[t]he heightened self-consciousness that comes with emotions of self-assessment may become, in the shame of the oppressed, a stagnant self-obsession. Or shame may generate a rage whose expression is unconstructive, even self-destructive. In all these ways, shame is profoundly disempowering." However, unlike her earlier "woman-as-Panopticon" analysis, Deveaux shows how "Bartky's theorizing on shame posits women as active subjects capable of a range of responses to social power" (Deveaux 1999:245).

Susan Bordo, in *The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity*, also takes up Foucault's "docile-bodies" thesis to demonstrate how women's bodies serve as a locus for the social construction of femininity:

Bordo argues that anorexia nervosa and bulimia are located on a continuum with feminine normalizing phenomena such as the use of makeup, fashion, and dieting, all of which contribute to the construction of docile, feminine bodies. Thus, 'anorexia begins, emerges out of ... conventional feminine practice,' the docile feminine body becomes, in the case of the anorectic, the ultimate expression of the self-disciplining female caught up in an insane culture (Bordo in Deveaux 1999:239).

Deveaux shows how Bordo's thesis includes accounts of women's understanding of their experience of subjugation (1999:240). She describes how a teenage girl, feeling familial and societal pressure to conform, will both suppress and resist her feminine body by controlling her eating habits (Bordo in Deveaux 1999:240). Bordo posits this as self-empowering, although this is just one understanding of the factors contributing to eating disorders. I shall demonstrate that it is a response to a media-created imperative. Therefore, both Bordo's thesis (which

posits that cultural practices are inscribed onto bodies) and Bartky's 'woman-as-Panopticon' position, promote an understanding which does not preclude women's insight in and resistance to their experience.

Deveaux shows how the problem in the 'docile-bodies' paradigm derives from:

Foucault's early reluctance to attribute explicit agency to subjects in his portrayal of individuals as passive bodies, constituted by power and immobilized in a society of discipline. Significantly, this analysis gives way, in Foucault's later works to a more complex understanding of power as a field of relationships between free subjects (Deveaux 1999:240).

The Second Wave of feminist theory using Foucault's theories focuses on his later agnostic model of power¹³ – the notion that “where there is power there is resistance” – as well as on the assertion that:

... individuals contest fixed identities and relations in ongoing and sometimes subtle ways. This power paradigm has proven particularly helpful for feminists who want to show the diverse sources of women's subordination as well as to demonstrate that we engage in resistance in our everyday lives... . By demanding that we look to the productive character of power and to the existence of multiple power relations rather than dualistic, top-down force... (Deveaux 1999:242).

Deveaux demonstrates that power is thus experienced constitutively. She proposes a number of approaches for feminist scholars to take, suggesting that “[f]eminist projects ... take the delineation of women's oppression and the concrete transformation of society as central aims.” (Deveaux 1999:236) Furthermore feminists, according to Nancy Hartsock, need to “develop an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and constitutive of the real world” (cited in Deveaux 1999:243). Hartsock argues that women need to be viewed as active agents and not passive victims, and that “feminists need to look at the inner processes that condition women's sense of freedom or choice in addition to external manifestations of power and dominance” (Deveaux 1999:245). However, this would involve presumption – the theorist would have to presume to understand or speak on behalf of the inner

¹³ Agnostic power – defined by Foucault as power which circulates – “is a network of relationships of power among subjects who are at least in some minimal sense free to act and resist” (Deveaux 1999:253).

processes of other women. As such I am therefore not focusing on agency / reception, but rather the final media product, although I speculate on the possible negative effect and consequence that these types of images produced by the media have on women. As Virginia Held directs:

Addressing women's freedom requires that we reflect upon internal impediments to exercising choice as well as the tangible obstacles to its realisation – and this means considering practices and conventions that may have disempowering effects not easily discernible to theorists who focus exclusively on political power (cited in Deveaux 1999:246).

Held cautions Feminists to approach Foucault's notions on the free subject and agnostic power with great caution, for Foucault's analysis does not consider women's internal barriers to agency and choice (as demonstrated by Bordo's example of shame) and also because he sets up a false dichotomy between power and violence (as I shall show in Chapter Three as illustrated by the continuum of anger and physical abuse experienced by women). Finally she criticises Foucault because he does not question the fact that men's freedom (privilege, etc.), in many societies, is contingent upon women's nonfreedom (as in the case of rape, which will be discussed in Chapter Three).

The feminist writings of Held, Hartsock, Bartky and Bordo suggest the need to place women's interpretation and mediation of their experiences at the center of inquiries into the how and why of power. I am guided by Deveaux, who shows how a feminist analysis of power would avoid the omissions and problems of Foucault's understanding of power, by conceptualising women's relationships to their bodies as both a reflection of social construction and of their own responses to (and mediation of) the cultural ideals of femininity. This would avoid the pitfalls of a static, "docile-bodies" paradigm of subjectivity, while it would take seriously the issue of women's empowerment, their capacities for self-determination and freedom, and the conditions in which these flourish. By questioning certain aspects of Foucault's agnostic model of power, including his assertion that all relations are permeated by power, and the simplistic, false dichotomy of power versus violence or domination, we could then instead attend to the myriad sources of disempowerment and oppression experienced by women

(Deveaux 1999:253). As such I shall now investigate how this is experienced through images of the ‘perfect’ woman projected upon women by Popular Culture sources.

1.3 PYGMALION – THE MYTH OF THE PERFECT WOMAN

Many cultures share the meta-narrative of perfection and the ‘ideal’. In Western culture this takes the form of a mythological narrative involving man as creator of the ‘ideal / perfect’ woman. In the Western world, the best known example is that of Pygmalion and Galatea¹⁴ and, in its modern regeneration, as *My Fair Lady*. Pygmalion is a young and handsome sculptor. He yearns for ideal love (see figure 11a), and can find no woman who can fulfil this ideal. He then sculpts a woman so beautiful and perfect (figure 11b), that he falls in love with ‘her’. The gods take note of this pure love, and transform the sculpture into living flesh (figure 11c). Pygmalion names her Galatea and marries her (figure 11d). The story is essentially about the male fantasy of a woman formed / sculpted to his specifications, so that she will be perfect, and ultimately perfectly under his control.

The 2003 film *Simone*¹⁵ tells the story of a film director whose career is failing. An advanced computer program which can create virtual reality or simulated reality is then given to him. He uses this program to create the ‘perfect’ woman from an assimilation of many different women’s characteristics and he names her Simone (see figure 16a). He digitally inserts her into his films alongside real actors and presents her to the world as real. She is his to control, since he speaks and acts for her (figure 16b). Eventually he comes to believe in his creation so completely that he falls in love with her. (At this point it is not necessary to discuss the rest of the plot.) Pertinent to this discussion is the idea of a computer generated image which can ‘create’ a perfect woman. This implies that no real woman is perfect enough. Contemporary computer technologies are now so sophisticated that our ability to identify images that are computer generated /

¹⁴ (Grant & Hazel 1994:289)

¹⁵ A contraction of “Simulation one”.

manipulated is impaired. The illusion that advertisers are now able to present to us is completely and utterly convincing. Real women cannot compete with this 'simulation' and yet we believe in the reality of these artificial, 'ideal' women.

By examining images within Popular Culture, this thesis demonstrates that the media still uses the myth of Pygmalion as a mirror to hold up to woman – a *vanitas*¹⁶, presenting her with an image of unobtainable 'perfection'. This creates an insecure, susceptible, malleable buying public, one that believes in its own inferiority (French 1992:173). An insecure public serves Capitalism, as demonstrated by Berger:

Capitalism survives by forcing the majority, whom it exploits, to define their own interests as narrowly as possible. This was once achieved by extreme deprivation. Today in the developed countries it is being achieved by imposing a false standard of what is and what is not desirable (Berger, 1986:154).

If a woman does not conform to standards of representation within Popular Culture, she feels that she is therefore unworthy of love, and thus her position of subjugation to her own self-loathing is guaranteed, thus exploiting her need to acquire the advertised products.

1.4 THE FEMALE BODY AS COMMODITY¹⁷

In *Ways of Seeing* (1986)¹⁸, John Berger argues that the tradition of Western painting has been replaced by advertising in this century and demonstrates that not just the art itself, but also the subject matter of most Western art, represents commodities designed to appeal to a male buyer. Berger defines the role of advertising (which he refers to as publicity) within Capitalism as follows:

Publicity exerts an enormous influence and is a political phenomenon of great importance. But its offer is as narrow as its references are wide. It recognises nothing except the power to acquire. All other human faculties or needs are made subsidiary to this power. All hopes are gathered

¹⁶ *Vanitas* – a mirror – the device of the mirror is often used in adverts for women as it serves as a symbol to remind them of their position as objects, as well as the folly of vanity.

¹⁷ Commodity – 1 “Commerce an article or raw material that can be bought and sold, esp. a product as opposed to a service.” (*The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 8th Ed 1990:228,229) Women must turn themselves into products so that they will be 'bought' by men.

¹⁸ John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing* (1986), gives a detailed and accessible account of the equation between advertising and Capitalism.

together, made homogenous, simplified, so that they become the intense yet vague, magical yet repeatable promise offered in every purchase. No other kind of satisfaction or pleasure can any longer be envisaged within the culture of capitalism Publicity is the life of this culture – in so far as without publicity capitalism could not survive – and at the same time publicity is its dream. (Berger 1986:153,154)

The ultimate consumer is usually presumed to be male, even in advertisements directed at women: women are urged to buy products that will make them more attractive commodities to male buyers (Berger 1986:150-153). Women collaborate unwittingly in the process that converts them into produce – the ultimate object the world has to offer to male buyers. Their sexuality, motherhood, beauty, and labour are displayed as items available to men with enough money (French 1992:163).

Models are either born with slim bodies, are anorexic, or they ‘work out’¹⁹ a couple of hours a day, something the average woman does not have the ‘luxury’²⁰ to do. The images of these models are often manipulated by computer programs thus presenting a physical unreality, a fantasy construction of how the female body should be. Figures 13 to 15 are all full page advertisements for various fashion labels. These images are clearly computer manipulated and stretched, resulting in impossibly long-legged, thin and lithe models. But if you did not know about the limitations of anatomy and the possibilities of computer manipulation, you might take these images at face value. They would then present an artificial image of reality that would undermine the susceptible viewer into believing that, if she dieted enough, she too would be able to look like these images, and thus obtain the level of sophistication and supposed desirability that these images offer.

¹⁹ Just as advertising co-opted the terminology of warfare with phrases like ‘germ warfare’ in the 1950s to convince women of the importance of their domestic roles, the language of work ethics in the 1980s was co-opted to convince women of the importance of exercise; it was work, it was your job to be fit, thin and beautiful.

²⁰ Being thin, fit and beautiful was the privilege of the wealthy – or so advertisements would tell the consumers. Most working women just do not have the time in the week to do all they are supposed to do, and exercise is elevated to an expensive privilege – it is presented as a luxury of time for oneself, rather than the hard effort it is.

When the average female looks at an image of a woman in a magazine or on a television or movie screen, the image she sees rarely equates with the one she has of herself. The media reinforces this comparison, which ensures her compulsion to improve her own image and seals the success of the advertised product. Berger is clear on this point: “One could put this another way: the publicity image steals her love of herself as she is, and offers it back to her for the price of the product” (Berger 1986:134). He also alleges that “Publicity is the culture of the consumer society. It propagates through images that society’s belief in itself” (Berger 1986:139). In order to have a susceptible consumer society, it is therefore necessary to make individuals believe they are lacking and deficient without the product, which in turn offers the consumer the promise of perfection.

1.4.1 Drop dead gorgeous – why women are dying to look good.

Advertisers refer to women’s magazines as “cash cows”. Gloria Steinem exposed the fact that advertisers exert huge pressure on women’s magazines, dictating or at least guiding almost their entire content.²¹ Images that consciously and unconsciously inform and shape the way we see ourselves and the world around us are presented to us through the media everyday. Wolf shows how magazines reflect and create the changing position and perceptions of women:

Though many writers have pointed out that women’s magazines reflect historical change, fewer examine how part of their job is to determine historical change as well. Editors do their jobs well by reading the *Zeitgeist*; editors of women’s magazines – and, increasingly, mainstream media as well – must be alert to what social roles demanded of women to serve the interests of those who sponsor their publications. Women’s magazines for over a century have been one of the most powerful agents for changing women’s roles, and throughout that time – today more than ever – they have consistently glamorized whatever the economy, their

²¹ (Steinem, “Sex, Lies, and Advertising,” MS., July/August 1990 online) Steinem shows how *Estee Lauder* withdrew their advertisements and funding from *Ms. Magazine*, for the magazine promoted independent free-thinking women, whereas *Estee Lauder* appealed to the “kept woman” as their target audience. *Revlon* followed suit after *Ms. Magazine* printed a cover showing four Russian women who had been exiled for their Feminist activities; their objection was that the photograph of these woman featured them without make-up. They argued that the magazine had to portray women as dependent on make-up for their self-esteem, and since they did not, they would no longer be associated with the magazine (Steinem, “Sex, Lies, and Advertising,” MS., July/August 1990 online).

advertisers, and, during the wartime, the government, needed at that moment from women (Wolf 1994:64).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the message that is most consistently being passed onto society is that youth, beauty and thinness are the most important indicators of success and desirability. Models, actresses, news-presenters and politicians are all evaluated according to their youth and beauty. This message of youth and beauty does not only affect older women, but is increasingly affecting girls as young as nine years old who feel the pressure to be as thin as the models they 'worship', and detrimentally try to diet their 'puppy-fat' away. The continual portrayal of only thin and beautiful women in magazines and television shows has led to the average female finding herself alienated within her own body.

According to the 1998 American Medical Association survey, eating disorders ranked as the third most common illness among adolescent females in the USA, with an estimated prevalence of 4%. The National Eating Disorder Awareness and Prevention Program (EDAP) estimates that 5 – 10% of girls and women in the US struggle with eating disorders (that means 5 – 10 million girls and women) (Source: www.aboutface.com). Eating disorders²² have a number of psychological roots, but the most prevalent is the belief by the victim that they are just not good enough, that if they could just be a little bit thinner, then they will be loved and accepted (Source: www.aboutface.com). Liz Dittrichs cites the study conducted by Lucas and Associates (1991) which found that the incidence of anorexia nervosa among 10 to 19 year-old girls paralleled the change in fashion and its accompanying idealised body image over the last 50 years. During periods where thinness was idealised, the rates of anorexia nervosa were the highest. The female body ideal, as portrayed in the 1920s and late 1960s issues of *Ladies Home*

²² The most recognised eating disorders are anorexia and bulimia. Anorexia is characterised by starvation dieting, excessive exercising, weight below what is considered normal, and an intense fear of weight gain. Bulimia is characterised by intense fear of weight gain and episodes of dieting and bingeing, as well as purging of the food from the body by vomiting or emetic use, fasting, dieting, diuretics, diet pills, excessive and compulsive exercise. Women represent 90-95% of all anorexics and bulimics (Dittrichs 2000: online).

Journal and *Vogue* reflected a slimmer image which correlated with the increase in the number of women in managerial and professional positions (see figure 23) (Silverstein et al cited in Dittrichs 2000:online).

Body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders occur more among females than males; over 90% of admitted patients with anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa are female (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, cited in Dittrichs 2000:online). The American Anorexia and Bulimia Association estimate that approximately 1000 American women die of anorexia each year – that is from deliberately starving themselves (Dittrichs 2000:online). “It’s true that the standard in Hollywood is thinner than ever,” says local psychologist Dr Dorianne Weil. “But it’s an unhealthy trend which can influence women, particularly young girls, putting them at risk for picking up anorexia and bulimic behaviours” (Longevity 2000:46). “Indeed, a John Hopkins School of Public Health study of Miss America winners shows that since the 1920s, their body fat has withered from a healthy 20 to 25 body mass index (BMI) to less than 18.5, below what the World Health Organisation defines as undernourished... some of the recent winners had BMIs as low as 16.9” (Longevity 2000:46). This shows that the body image that is being promoted is one of approved anorexic proportions.

Dittrichs cites studies conducted in the early 1980s, focussing on models from fashion magazines, which reveals the 1980s super-models²³ were already 13 to 19% below the physical health standard of expected weight according to height and bone density. A poll conducted by Glamour magazine in 1984 found that 75% of their (female) readership even felt that they were ‘too fat’, in comparison to the ‘ideal’ body type (Dittrichs 2000:online). The average weight standard dropped even lower in the 1990s. Figures 17 to 20 illustrate the relentless commercial

²³ “At that time – the ... 80s – the media craved alternative, newsworthy, flashbulb-popping stars because Hollywood’s most successful actresses were ‘actors’ and wouldn’t go near a glittering gown unless that role demanded it. So the media created new ones instead – and the supermodel sisterhood was born” (Webb 1999:78). Thus the media created the phenomenon of the supermodel – the personalised ‘perfect’ model with superstar status to replace actresses who had become too empowered.

media portrayal of young, underfed bodies as a representation of the female body. Dittrichs explains how

[t]he media promotes and reflects the current mainstream culture's standards for body shape or size and importance of beauty. The media reflect images of thinness and link this image to other symbols of prestige, happiness, love and success for women. Repeated exposure to the thin ideal via the various media can lead to the internalization of this ideal. It also renders these images achievable and real. Until women are confronted with their own mirror images they will continue to measure themselves against an inhuman ideal (Dittrich 2000:online).

A large-scale survey conducted by Garner in 1997, found body dissatisfaction had escalated among both men and women. This is no doubt due to the increasing portrayal of younger and more muscularly toned men in men's magazines, and the younger and thinner women in women's magazines in the 1990s (Dittrichs 2000:online). Dittrichs also cites a study conducted by Andersen and DiDomenico in 1992, which found that, when comparing the ten most popular magazines, women's magazines contained 10.5 times more articles and advertisements relating to dieting and weight loss than the men's magazines. Dittrichs also cites Silverstein, Peterson, Perdue and Kelly, in a study conducted in 1986 comparing 48 issues of the four most popular women's magazines (including *Home Journal* and *Cosmopolitan*, etc.) to the four most popular men's magazines (*Popular Mechanics*, *Sports Illustrated*, etc.) concerning the number of advertisements for diet foods. In the women's magazines there was a total of 63 diet food advertisements compared to the men's magazines, of which only one was a diet-related advertisement (Dittrich 2000:online).

Dittrichs cites countless other studies from sources such as Richins (1991), Stice and Shaw (1994) which found a direct relationship between media exposure and eating disorder symptoms. The studies also show that the greatest pressure to be thin comes first from media, and only then from peers and family. Thinness, in Western society, has not only come to represent attractiveness – sexual or social,

but also has come to symbolise success, as it is seen as the marker of self-control and is also related to the image of a higher socio-economic status ('You can never be too rich or too thin!'). Marketdata Enterprises, Inc. showed that the estimated size of the weight loss industry for 1994 was \$32,680 billion (cited in Dittrichs 2000:online). Pressurising women to lose weight is an extremely lucrative business.

The White Western cultural standard, as portrayed by the media, now extends across cultural boundaries, as indicated by a 1996 American national health study involving 2 379, nine- and ten-year old girls. The demographics of the group included an equal number of girls from European and African-American backgrounds. This study found that 40% of the girls reported that they were trying to lose weight (Striegelmoore et al., in Dittrichs 2000: online). A survey conducted by the largest African-American women's publication in the US (*Essence* magazine) and an analysis by Pumariega, Gustavson, Gustavson, Stone Motes and Ayers, in 1994 (cited in Dittrichs 2000:online) shows that discontent with one's body shape and size is no longer confined to white women alone. African-American women have adopted similar attitudes towards body image, weight and eating to white Western women. Black South Africans are absorbing white South African's attitudes towards their bodies (Pate, Hester & Garner, 1992; Rosen et al., 1988; Root, 1990; Storey et al., 1995; cited in Dittrichs). Increased social, vocational and economic opportunities are available to all women, especially to those women who can conform to the dominant culture's norms. Women of colour may become vulnerable, and thus conform to the pressure to be 'perfect' in the context of upward social mobility. This perfection may be pursued by shaping one's body to fit the mainstream culture's female body ideal. Black female stars in the film, music and fashion industry are now just as thin as their white counterparts.

Women's magazines also relay mixed messages. To provide just one example: the inaugural edition of *Longevity* magazine (2000) contains an article titled *Why Women are dying to look this good*. This is a feature that represents the editorial

voice of the magazine. It is informative and well researched and advises women on the dangers of plastic surgery. However, the article is flanked by a full-page image of a model with perfectly toned and sculpted thighs. The written warning is over-shadowed by the psychological impact caused by the accompanying visual image. This article is immediately followed by a full-page advertising promotion titled *Uplifting solutions*, advertising *Elizabeth Arden's Ceramide Retinyl* range (for similar advertisements please refer to figures 24 and 25) which promote beauty products that offer the same anti-ageing solutions without the pain of plastic surgery. This is then followed by a feature called *Venus Envy*, which is a personal account by Barbara Grizzuti Harrison who counsels that true beauty comes from within. Next a survey titled *A head for figures* compares four of the most popular and attractive Hollywood starlets of the moment: Elizabeth Hurley, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jennifer Lopez and Calista Flockhart (see figures 29b, c, d & g). The 'judges' called upon to give their opinions within this 'survey' are a panel consisting of a social columnist, a financial journalist, a beauty editor, a model boss, a fitness instructor and a 'regular guy'. The survey centres on examining the Hollywood thin ideal. Their various comments all re-enforce that women are judged on appearances, that these women are where they are through their physical appearance and that these are the types of women that men love to look at, and women aspire to be. This is an example indicative of the battle for a balance between editorial comment, pressure from advertisers and the beauty and fashion industry to maintain control over the way in which women perceive themselves. While *Venus Envy* and *Why women are dying to look this good*, try to be the voice of reason, the advertising content and the beauty features hit back to re-impose that youth and beauty are the ultimate goals and to achieve the goal and the 'youthful body perfect', women are compelled to purchase the advertised product.

1.4.2 'Working-out' – The imperative for perfection

While the viewer, on the one hand, is pressured to slim down to absolute thinness, there exists yet another form of body-conscious conformity; that of the super-toned, super-fit body. In the 1980s, film star Jane Fonda was touted as a fitness

guru, with her exercise videos on sale everywhere. The super-toned, super-fit body was the new standard for the body-conscious brigade. The commercial pressure was to purchase these or any home exercise videos, which were not promoted on any medical expertise. Under the banner of sport and fitness, women felt that it was no longer good enough just to be slim, they had to manage a visit to the gym in their already tight work schedules. Sharon Douglas, in *Where the Girls are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media* (1995), shows that:

The women's fitness movement, too, was a site of resistance, as women sought to break into sports previously restricted to men and other women simply sought to get strong. **But one of capitalism's great strengths – perhaps its greatest – is its ability to co-opt and domesticate opposition** (my emphasis), to transubstantiate criticism into a host of new, marketable products. And so it was with fitness (Douglas 1995:260).

Women began achieving new levels of physical performance in many major sports fields (figures 22a & b), earning points for the feminist movement. This meant, however, that women now felt the pressure to display the same toned 'buns of steel' they were seeing on their sports sisters; home-shopping networks showed round the clock advertisements for machines that supposedly "in just 15 minutes" could achieve the same effect as a full body workout. The pressure to be perfect was matched with promises to help you achieve this physical ideal.

Most women 'suffer' from cellulite, which generally manifests itself at the onset of puberty in girls. Cellulite became woman's worst enemy, but one that 'could and should be conquered' (Douglas 1995:258). Cosmetic companies offered ranges of creams, gels and capsules that could in "just 8 weeks" could reduce *cellulite*; a term the cosmetics industry came up with in the 1970s. Science and Technology were co-opted into the realm of beauty products, to give credibility and weight to the manufacturers' claims, thus endorsing the need to purchase the products. To conquer cellulite became instant, automatic evidence of self-discipline, self-denial and control for the working woman. As Jane Fonda put it, "Discipline Is Liberation." As Douglas shows, the basis for this imperative was commercial:

The key to huge profits was to emphasize beauty over health, sexuality over fitness, and to equate thin thighs with wealth and status. Thin thighs

and dimple-free buttocks meant you worked hard, took yourself seriously, and were ready to compete with anyone. They were indicators of a woman's potential for success (Douglas 1995:260).

Yet another capitalist co-option of the feminist ethic was the to 'be strong on the inside; you need to be strong and fit on the outside' message, as illustrated by figures 21, 22a & b. Figure 21a states "I have risen above what pain can deliver, let myself go. Put my dream to the test, *heard my body plead no and my spirit cry yes*²⁴ (my emphasis). I have felt the Goddess that beats in my breast. I am the spirit of Nike. The Goddess of Victory. And I am a woman." Here we witness a further co-option of feminism with the 'internal goddess' ideology. However all three images are far more healthy alternatives to the thin ideal, they are women, not girls, but their bodies are those of women who work out professionally. Figures 22a and b are for a sports brand and figure 21 for a nutritional supplement. We are assured that the photographs of Nicolle (figure 21) are untouched, and in the fine print you read that it took three months' worth of *EAS* nutritional supplements, a controlled diet and exercise for Nicolle to have transformed herself from slouch to superwoman. All of this required the purchasing of products and the adherence to strict self-disciplinary regimes of eating and exercising.

Most magazine images are photo-shopped or airbrushed to erase all signs of cellulite. Figures 24 and 25 are advertisements for products that promise to "visibly reduce cellulite". Both show images of thin, well-toned and cellulite-free female bodies – both are backed up with various scientifically patented formulas. To make the image in figure 24 even more compelling, they have contrasted the 'real' (although air-brushed) image of the photographed model with a painted image of a woman whose body is a realistic portrayal of a naturally proportioned female²⁵ – yet is presented as the unattractive cellulite laden alternative.

²⁴ This phrase creates a disturbing association with rape, as many men have excused their actions by saying that although the woman 'said no' her body was saying yes, or they could tell 'she really wanted it'. The association between fashion and rape will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

²⁵ The figure in the painting is a representation of a body type considered desirable in the period in which it was painted.

It is only since the nineteenth century that Western society has come to worship the thin woman. Most other cultures, including pre-modern Western Culture, venerated the full-bodied woman, for it emphasised fertility. A very thin woman would struggle to fall pregnant, and could die in or after childbirth. The twentieth century has seen the rise of women from her purely reproductive role to a more active economic role. While many feminists have embraced the strong and fit female image, there is a darker side to these representations as well – to have a muscular body is to have a more masculine body: “So here we have one of the media’s most popular and pernicious distortions of feminism: that ambitious women want, or should want, to be just like men” (Douglas 1995:262). The ideal, toned and youthful rump bears none of the markers of age or sexual maturity, just as swimsuit features never reveal that other marker of adulthood – pubic hair. Again we find conflicting messages: “So, under the guise of female fitness and empowerment, of control over her own body, was an idealized image that infantilized women, an image that kept women in their place” (Douglas 1995:262). The emphasis placed on the smooth thigh becomes another misogynistic form of representation and control. Aside from being an unattainable ideal, Douglas shows that:

These buns of steel urged women to never stop and to be all things to all people: to be both competitive workaholics *and* sex objects, to be active workers in control of their bodies *and* passive ornaments for the pleasure of men, to be hard-as-nails superwomen *and* vulnerable, unthreatening, teenage beach bunnies. (Douglas 1995:263)

To not have the perfectly toned body, the perfect job and the perfect relationship caused guilt complexes or, to conclude, “that we don’t have that badge of entitlement; that we don’t really have enough self-respect and dignity; that we aren’t enough like men; and worst of all, that we’re adult females in a culture that still prefers, by and large, little girls” (Douglas 1995:264).

1.4.3 The beauty industry

After World War Two women had to be convinced to leave the workplace and return home, advertising had to keep the post-war economy from collapsing, and women had to be re-educated as consumers. Advertisements co-opted the language of science and technology to convince women of the importance of their role in “germ warfare” (Oakley 1987:9, Wolf 1992:64). For the last two decades²⁶, we have been living in an age of technological innovations, and again this means that the consumer must spend more in order to support the advancement of industry. Real women can now look like the sex goddesses of Vargas’ World War Two bomber girls (see figure 12b) or advertisements of the 1950’s that copied the curvaceous form of Marilyn Monroe (for a representation of this type please refer to figure 12a). Their over-inflated breasts, tiny waists and long cellulite-free legs became a living, breathing reality in the form of ‘Playmates’ such as Pamela Anderson, whose clones proliferate the pages of *Playboy* and *Hustler*. The ‘perfection’ of these ‘bunny bodies’ (see figure 28) is obtained through silicone breast implants, another form of dangerous, unnatural, physical body manipulation²⁷. There is no watchdog to keep track of “unintended results from vanity surgery or the many other anti-ageing efforts. But according to a recent study in the leading plastic surgery journal, the reported liposuction mortality rate – one death per 5224 procedures – might be ‘just the tip of the iceberg’” (Gross 2000:40).

Gross continues to show how “A recent LA Weekly newspaper carried 10 plastic surgery ads in its first 12 pages, and 15 more within – one offering ‘vaginal rejuvenation’. New York’s Village Voice carries ads for surgeons alongside those for spas and hairdressers. ‘The Five-Minute Face-Lift ... Fast ... Painless ...

²⁶ “Procedures that involve going under the knife have increased dramatically in the past few years. According to the National Clearinghouse of Plastic Surgery Statistics²⁶, the number of plastic surgery patients has steadily increased by 153% from 1992-1998, the overwhelming majority of the patients (91%) is female” (Source: <http://www.plasticsurgery.org/mediactr/trendsc099.htm>).

²⁷ By a conservative estimate, at least two million American women have had breast implants in the last 25 years. It has been established that small amounts of silicone fluid seep from implants, even when they are not ruptured. Many women who have had silicone leakage have reported symptoms ranging from arthritis-like pain, swelling of the joints, skin, hands and feet, and hair loss to lupus and other immune system diseases” (Cooke 1996:129).

Affordable,' says one" (Gross 2000:42). Figure 27 is a one-page advertisement from the back of a popular woman's magazine, which contained approximately twenty other such pages, all advocating the use of plastic surgery as the means to get the body of one's dreams. "Rock-hard abs might take you years in a gym and it can be done in an hour and a half through liposuction," said one doctor. But as Gross points out "It's hard to achieve society's idea of perfection without surgical interventions – or airbrushing" (2000:42). Figure 26 is the image of a woman holding a liposuction syringe against her perfectly toned, thin, cellulite-free thigh. This full-page image accompanied a plastic surgery article titled "*Does liposuction suck?*" by Kathy Koontz. The article weighed up the advantages, disadvantages and dangers of liposuction. The tone, which was light-weight yet serious, is undermined by the accompanying image of the thin model. This is an example of the constant balancing act women's magazines have to maintain between editorial comment and the demands of their sponsors. While magazines carry articles that warn against the dangers²⁸ of plastic surgery, the images of models in the very same articles re-enforce the message, that to look like them, you will probably have to turn to artificial methods of body shaping.

Another example of scientifically assisted beauty being promoted at the cost of health and well-being, by a market driven economy, is the frightening addition of the new anti-ageing product, Human Growth Hormone. This is clinically termed as HGH, and comes from the pituitary gland and serves to supposedly increase muscle and decrease fat. While the use of HGH²⁹ can retard the process of ageing, it has serious side-effects seldom revealed. These include risk of cancer, diabetes and heart failure, but the so-called benefits are being touted as the new fountain of

²⁸ "Liposuction isn't the only anti-ageing procedure with possible dangers. Injected agents like collagen, which fill out wrinkles and small lines, can shrink or distort your face. Botox – or, more precisely injections of diluted toxin, extracted from the bacteria that causes botulism – can migrate and cause your eyelids to temporarily droop. Skin resurfacing with acid and lasers can go too deep and cause inflammation and discoloration. Blepharoplasty – eyelid surgery – can leave you with eyes that won't close. Face-lifts can be overdone, creating a windblown look, or can go wrong, leaving entire scars, causing hair loss, or... injuring nerves" (Gross 2000:42).

²⁹ "Cells protect themselves against cancer naturally and, in doing so decrease their reproduction. Growth hormones increase cell reproduction and a side-effect of that process may inhibit an important defence against cancer. HGH supplements may also cause ailments like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart failure. And those who buy HGH on the black market (where it is harvested from human cadavers) risk developing neural degenerate disease" (Gross 2000:42).

youth. It is not only magazines that constantly promote youth and beauty, it would seem that the greatest pressure for plastic surgery comes from Hollywood.

Actresses dare not age unless they would like the role of the background mother or grandmother. Aside from having to keep their weight down³⁰, they also have to minimise any signs of ‘character’ (ageing) from their bodies and going under the knife eventually becomes the only option between work and obscurity. Figures 29a, e g and h are photos from magazines showing how thin many of Hollywood’s leading actresses have become in order to have their acting contracts renewed.

Susan Bordo, a professor at the University of Kentucky who studies the impact of media on self-esteem, says that Americans believe they can remain “forever young”. Songs such as Bryan Adams’s 2000 hit *Eighteen till I die* endorse this statement. Cultural influences such as the manipulated, airbrushed images of fashion models and the Lollipop brigade of actresses, are so pervasive “that we’ve lost a sense of our own physical limits. They get to us via desire, advertising, entertainment, medical technology, each in its own way is telling us we don’t have to get old” (cited in Gross 2000:40).

1.5 THE VOICES IN OUR HEAD – THE EFFECT OF ADVERTISING ON WOMEN’S SELF-ESTEEM

Women respond to the message of the magazine because of the guilt – pleasure – punishment relationship it presents, as Wolf shows in *The Beauty Myth*:

‘A magazine,’ says one editor, ‘is like a club. Its function is to provide readers with a comfortable sense of community and pride in their identity.’ Because people trust their clubs and because this voice is so attractive, it is difficult to read the magazine with a sharp eye as to how thoroughly ad revenue influences the copy. It is easy to misread the whole thing – advertisements, beauty copy, images of models – as if it were a coherent message from the editors telling women, ‘You should be like this.’ Some of the harm done by the magazines to women comes out of that misunderstanding (Wolf 1992:75).

³⁰ Of female television characters, 69% are thin and only 5% are overweight (Silverstein, Peterson, Perdue & Kelly, 1986 cited in Dittrichs 2000: online).

The advertisers dictate what the magazine promotes to the commercial benefit of both parties. “What editors are obliged to appear to say that *men* want from women is actually what their *advertisers* want from women” (Wolf 1992:73). Many readers fail to recognise how the messages are influenced by needs other than their own. However, like all guilt based relationships, the reader is made dependent on the voices that seem to represent both support and authority; to reject this voice is to reject it’s support as well. Women’s magazines, to many readers, are a form of major cultural identification. Most women relate closely to their favourite women’s magazine, although images of ‘real women’, seldom feature. The editorials, mainly written by women for women, do take women’s issues seriously and thereby are able to empower some social change.

Women react so strongly to their inconsistencies since they probably recognize that the magazine’s contradictions are their own Like its readers, the magazine must pay for its often serious pro-woman content with beauty backlash trappings; it must do so to reassure its advertisers, who are threatened by the possible effects on women’s minds of too much excellence in women’s journalism. The magazine’s personalities are split between the beauty myth and feminism in exactly the same way those of their readers are split. What is seldom acknowledged is that they have popularized feminist ideas more widely than any other medium – certainly more widely than explicit feminist journals. Seen in this light, they are very potent instruments of social change (Wolf 1992:71,72).

In a telephone poll conducted in 2000, *People* magazine asked 1,000 women about their bodies and how the images of Hollywood's svelte stars influenced their self-esteem. I shall summarise their findings in order to demonstrate the degree of influence that media imagery exerts on women’s self image. Ten percent of respondents said they were satisfied with their bodies, while 80 % said images of women on TV and in movies, fashion magazines and advertising made them feel insecure about their looks. Only 10% felt media had no influence upon them, indicating that most of the candidates interviewed were affected adversely by exposure to media. Ninety-three percent of the respondents said they felt sufficiently envious to try and lose weight – 34% would even consider the pain, danger and expense of plastic surgery in order to feel better about themselves. Thirty-four percent admitted willingness to try a diet, just to help them feel acceptable, even if it posed a health risk. When asked how satisfied they were

with their body on an overall basis, only 9% had a healthy self-image (the other 93% had all dieted), every second woman (48,5%) was not really happy with herself, there was something they felt could be changed about their bodies, while 22% felt alienated from themselves. (*People Magazine*, Dam 2000:online) Significantly, the body parts that caused the greatest distress were the stomach, thighs, hips, buttocks, and breasts – all sites of female physical and sexual identity.

These women were all able to identify that it was images in mainstream media that caused them the greatest anxiety and depression regarding their own bodies. Yet it was self-criticism that generated the greatest insecurity about their bodies; spouses, family and friends formed a small percentage of what contributed to a sense of insecurity. A third of the women polled felt sufficiently insecure to avoid attending social functions. A smaller percentage had limited their performance at work and at school, allowing their physical appearance to count more than their intellectual abilities. Most frightening of all, though, were the women who had remained in unhealthy relationships, facing possible consequences of detrimental physical and emotional abuse, rather than being alone.

There were also approximately one hundred respondents who admitted that they had put off medical examinations for fear of ridicule or reprimand from their doctors. Only 40% of those polled had felt unhappy enough to consult their doctors about weight loss, and of these only 51% were advised to lose weight. While this poll reveals the extent of psychological damage caused by the beauty myth, it is encouraging that most of the respondents managed to maintain at least some healthy perspectives in that the main reason cited for wanting to lose weight was the desire to feel healthier. Forty-one percent of those polled said they wanted to look better and only 8% cited looking good for their spouses. Therefore, it was about wanting to feel better about themselves for themselves. Most of the women declared that they had not and would not follow a diet that was endorsed by a celebrity, indicating a healthy realisation that the celebrity probably followed other means of weight control. Only 19% of the respondents

did no exercise, 44% worked out three or more times a week and 37% exercised twice a week or less. The primary reason for exercising was given as health reasons, 30% wanted to lose weight, and only 12% declared that it was fun (*People* magazine, Dam 2000:online).

As yet cosmetic surgery is not turned to as an easy alternative – only 4% of the women had resorted to this drastic means, with 22% having had breast reductions rather than enlargements (although 42% of the 4% had had this). A third of the women said they would consider cosmetic surgery, but as only 4% actually had such surgery, it seems to remain within the realm of fantasy. When asked which celebrity's body they would most like to have, only 1.5 % of respondents chose Calista Flockhart's, while over 50 % believe Courteney Cox and Gwyneth Paltrow were too thin. Fifteen percent chose the very curvaceous, womanly bodies of Cindy Crawford, Halle Berry and Jennifer Lopez (15 %), with Drew Barrymore being chosen as a good model for teenagers (*People* magazine, Dam 2000:online).

As these surveys show, women never feel good enough, as Berger explains this creates a susceptible consumer who will buy in order to fulfil her needs. As we progress into a new century it would seem that these circumstances are not changing, but intensifying, as men, too, are facing ever increasing pressure to 'work-out', be super-toned and muscular (see figures 30 to 36). It would seem that capitalism has suddenly realised that it has been neglecting half its potential market. Men are now becoming the next susceptible consumer target market, which means that they may begin to experience the same feelings of anxiety and depression, that they too 'are just not good enough'.

1.6 ALTERNATIVE MODELS

There are certain advertising campaigns which have focused on the ideology of feminism to promote a broader, more positive definition of women (see figures 37 to 44). The set of images in figures 37 are all from the cosmetic company *Elizabeth Arden*. Figure 37a reads "laughter is my reality check", one may interpret the image as a mother giving her daughter a piggy-back ride. The text for

fig 37b is “the sum of my whole is greater than the sum of my parts”. The text for figure 37c reads “my best feature is my big beautiful sexy brain”. Both 37b and 37c make statements that counteract how women are usually presented; as an objectified body part, or merely an object without identity or intelligence. Both 37a and 37b are African-American women who are expressing themselves joyfully and in situations that do not objectify them socially, physically or sexually.

Figure 37d features a slightly older woman, perhaps in her late thirties or early forties in age. The text reads “for all the laughter that lies ahead of me”. Usually laughter lines around eyes are airbrushed away, here they are celebrated as markers of life’s experience. The text for 37e is “free your mind and your beauty will follow”. The examples of figures 37e, 38 and 39 are most unusual in that they feature women over the age of 40 to advertise general beauty products. Although these ultimately are advertisements for cosmetic products, the image and the message being projected is one that celebrates all ages of women, intelligence and the freedom of expression and joy. Figure 38 shows a very dignified and sophisticated older grey-haired woman. She carries herself with the dignity and authority usually reserved for men of her age, as Wolf shows: “... a powerful man is an individual, his individuality created through his gray hair, lines, odd features etc, his maturity is part of his power” (Wolf 1994:34). The model in figure 39 is caught in mid-laughter, expressing a joy and youthfulness not usually associated with older people. These examples therefore acknowledge and co-opt feminist ethics and the complexity of women to sell their products. This alternative is a far more welcome representation that offers a mirror for self-identification.

Figures 40, 41 and 42 are advertisements that all feature and celebrate the fuller-figured woman, or rather they represent the greater reality of what women really look like. They are presented as beautiful, sensual and sexual without demeaning them to sexual objects. In a *Body Shop* advertisement (figure 43) which reads “There are 3 billion women who don’t look like supermodels and only 8 who do”, we see a photo-shopped image of *Barbie*, which turns the tables as the normally

skinny *Barbie* has been enlarged to represent the reality of the fuller-figured female body. Figure 44, advertising *The Encarta Encyclopaedia*, is another advertisement which also challenges gendered norms. It features two little girls pleading with their father to forget about telling them fairytales but to rather teach them philosophy. On a personal note, I find these images more appealing and convincing as they include me within their scope of representation. In conferring with my friends (who are all 'fuller' figured women, compared to fashion models), it is the clothing within our size range that is always sold out of first. It would then make commercial sense to accept that most women fall between the sizes of 12 and 18 and make more clothes in these sizes, and to use more realistically proportioned models to sell them. However, this would require a paradigm shift not only in marketing strategies, but also in terms of women refusing to be shamed, but to be met on their own grounds in terms of self-representation.

1.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter One has demonstrated that the image or ideal of the 'perfect' woman is presented to women on a daily basis in advertising, television and magazines. I have also demonstrated by means of surveys, that this has resulted in women never feeling good enough, as Berger demonstrates; this creates a susceptible consumer who will buy in order to fulfil her needs. From examining magazine images of models, it would seem that the average weight standard has dropped even lower over the last decade. As this ideal is unachievable for most women, it is likely to lead to feelings of self-devaluation, anxiety, depression and helplessness. The Body Mass Index (BMI) of most models is so low that they would qualify as victims of famine. They have less than 5% body fat, while most Olympic athletes have an average of 5 to 10% of body fat. However, in the case of models this is achieved through deprivation and not exercising (www.aboutface.com). Computer programs are able to manipulate images, make models thinner, taller, legs longer, breasts bigger, thighs cellulite free, buttocks smaller. They are able to erase any slight 'imperfections' until the image we see is so polished and perfected that it has become an artwork, and not a representation

of reality. However, it is presented as obtainable and as a standard to be achieved. Women have been taught to hate and fear their own bodies – all the signifiers of mature adult sexuality are removed – leaving a society that idolises youth, and women alienated within themselves. To make matters worse, the fantasy Vargas female has walked off the pages of men’s magazines into breathing reality as cosmetic surgery can present women with silicone-inflated breasts, remove ribs to make tinier waists, and nip, tuck and suck all fat and cellulite away.

As *The Body Shop* advert in figure 43 states “There are 3 billion women who don’t look like supermodels and only 8 who do”. Advertisements do not represent the average woman, in fact they generally eliminate huge sectors of society, presenting a narrow definition of the ideal. However, as the *Elizabeth Arden* (figures 37) and *Lane Bryant* (figure 42) campaigns illustrate, it is possible to create advertisements that are more representative, that do not sexually objectify women; it is possible to celebrate and represent the diversity of women’s shapes and personalities. Figure 44 debunks the myth that all little girls want to be princesses, rather it represents them as curious about the world and hungry for knowledge. As demonstrated by these advertisements, it is possible to sell products without limiting, objectifying or abusing the female body and persona. It is also possible to co-opt Feminist ethics to inform images that will then portray the varied live realities of female corporeality and, in turn, to celebrate the female body rather than distort and contort it to fit into an idealised form.

CHAPTER TWO – The Virgin versus the Voracious woman

This chapter explores the sub-text of the virgin-versus-the-whore binary that perpetuates female stereotypes in contemporary popular culture. In essence, the virgin / whore binary is a presentation of women as either passive and surrendered or active and aggressive. The media presents the passive virgin as waiting to surrender her autonomy and sexuality to the male³¹, while the voracious woman is the sexual devourer of men. One is the devoured, the other the devourer. Essentially, both portrayals are sexual constructs that serve to keep women in a subjugated position within patriarchy. Woman is measured in terms of her body, behaviour and her sexuality. She is expected to be ‘good’ – the virgin, and if she is not, she is ‘bad’³² – the whore, and then, by extension, the voracious woman. This chapter will explore the connotations of these terms, and the various explanations for the existence of this binary.

The various arguments or theories investigated include Gerda Lerner’s historical perspective on this dominant binary which focuses on the role of women in patriarchy³³, particularly the difference between free and enslaved woman. This investigation of the virgin and whore persona is intrinsically an investigation of female sexuality and reproductivity and the ownership thereof. I was primarily informed by Foucault’s assertion, as cited in Greene (1983:120), that men fear the power women have as the bearers of life. Taking this as the starting point to understanding the regulation of women, I show how this fear of female sexuality is still felt and expressed. The advertising images will be deconstructed using a

³¹ Marriage is presented as one of the greatest achievements for a woman to attain – her marriage is her coming of age ceremony where she is granted the status of being a wife. I see the ceremony as a public ritual of bestowing approval on a woman for conforming to expectations. It is also a type of coronation whereby she is given respectability and her position within the *pater familias*.

³² Chapter Three will investigate how ‘bad’ is becoming the new ‘good’ i.e. sexually available is good.

³³ This is a philosophical, political, social and religious framework which created, surrounds and supports Western civilization. Patriarchy asserts that all men are superior to women and some men are superior to many other men. In other words, it places the white, western male as the central subject and all women and people of other races as the *other*. Patriarchy enforces its position by engendering behaviour with very defined expectations of masculinity and femininity, which supports this paradigm. To not behave within these prescribed gendered codes, such as to be homosexual or a feminist, is to be deviant and dangerous (Lerner 1986: 212 – 229).

psychoanalytical approach, focusing on Freud's theories of castration anxiety. Other contributing factors and influences include Greek philosophy and mythology, and Judeo-Christian doctrine.

As mentioned in the introduction, my primary perspective is informed by a variety of feminisms. Firstly, the encompassing connotations that surround this term virgin and the implications thereof will be explored, followed by an analysis of representations of the 'virgin' stereotype. These include the myths that surround the ideology of the virgin and are manifested in fantasy types that permeate culture in stories, films and little girls' dolls. These fantasy types I have termed *The Ice Maiden* and *The Celestial Being*. Lerner distinguishes between the virgin and the whore by showing how free women were veiled, while slave women had to bare their heads. Using this understanding of visual difference and distinction, I look at examples that portray the *Veiled woman* as a representation of the conforming virgin.

The *virgin* in the most simplistic sense is a female who has not yet had sexual intercourse. The act of penetration is literally seen as 'activating' her potentially dangerous sexuality. The central message within the virgin ideology is one of conformity and submission to patriarchal expectations.

The subsequent investigation focuses on the voracious woman, who has her sexuality released but who does not surrender this to patriarchal authority. In Feminist terms this would mean that she has become autonomous, but, as shown in Chapter One, Capitalism is quick to co-opt its opposition and has thus learnt to embrace and exploit female sexuality. Thus I have found two things happening within the context of the voracious woman. Firstly she is portrayed as sexually available to satisfy the implied male viewer / owner; and secondly, the fear of empowered female sexuality is still manifested through the portrayal of the voracious woman as the *Phallic* woman and the *Castrator*. My thesis demonstrates that in order to allay the fear of female sexuality, the sexually powerful woman is often 'bound' by fetish elements. As with the virgin

stereotypes, the portrayal of these voracious women types might be consciously or unconsciously created. I have, therefore, adopted Freudian psychology to analyse the images used in commercial advertisements. It must be kept in mind that Freudian theories are formed and framed within a phallogocentric world and this point of view needs to be understood before an alternative analysis may be presented.

Finally, I shall discuss the *Walt Disney* animated film adaptation of Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* as an example of a fairy tale that conveys the paradigm of patriarchy and the virgin / whore binary. *Disney's* version presents the paradigm as a battle between good and evil as personified through the virgin / voracious woman binary. The virgin assists in maintaining the patriarchal system, and ends with her surrendering to patriarchal authority and assistance, for which she is rewarded with marriage. The voracious woman in many *Disney* animated films is invariably a post-menopausal woman who will not surrender her sexuality or her hunger for phallic power. This transgression is severely punished and, in *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, results in the death of the voracious woman.

To conclude, I shall discuss a fashion story that places the virgin / whore binary within the context of the teenager group. The battle between the virgin and the voracious woman has mostly been played out as a battle between youth and age, but this is now becoming a battle amongst peers. This will lead to Chapter Three, which will show how 'good' is now being presented as boring and therefore 'bad'; and 'bad' is now exciting and desirable and therefore 'good'.

2.1 A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO WOMAN AS THE VIRGIN OR THE WHORE

To understand how and why these binary models developed, it is necessary to place the argument in a historical context, and for this thesis I shall briefly mention a few of Lerner's central points³⁴ concerning how patriarchy impacted on

³⁴ Lerner's central points regarding the position of women within patriarchy focus on the connections between: "(1) ... structural changes in kinship relations and changes in the division of labor on the one hand and women's positions in society on the other. (2) ... the establishment of private property and monogamous marriage, and prostitution. (3) ... economic and political dominance by men and their control over female sexuality. [and] (4) By locating 'the world

women as a gender.³⁵ However, for a detailed account of the development of patriarchy and women's legal and social position within this history, please refer to Gerda Lerner's *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986). Specifically, Lerner shows how women came to be seen as property³⁶ or objects (1986:212, 213). For a person to be seen as an object, such a person must be seen as less human, as the 'other',³⁷ to the observer. This determines not only that person's worth in terms of a capital sense, but also his or her social and self-worth. Lerner shows how this happened progressively and specifically in terms of animal husbandry³⁸ and trade (1986:46,106). The rise of an agricultural society saw women becoming the property of their kinsmen – specifically in terms of their reproductive worth. Lerner also points out that, as agricultural settlements³⁹ became more established and developed, laws were needed to control and regulate people's behaviour. There were long, lengthy, detailed and varied laws regarding the sexual regulation of women, including how they should behave and dress (while there were barely any for men). These laws also separated and defined some rights for the free woman and barely any for the enslaved woman. The free woman was the virgin who would become the legal wife and mother; the enslaved woman was the

historic defeat of the female sex' in the period of the formation of archaic states, based on the dominance of propertied elites, ..." thus giving the subjugation of women historicity (drawn from Engels cited in Lerner 1986:23). Although Engels limited the discussion to single cause factors, he defined the major theoretical questions that Lerner has used to investigate the history of women's subordination.

³⁵ Sex is the biological difference between men and women and is primarily located in the difference between the genitalia. Gender is a social and cultural construct that institutionalises the differences between men and women and makes the category of man and of woman homogenous and intransmutable wholes, totally separated from one another with different worths and characteristics. "Many feminists argue that the limited number of proven biological differences among the sexes has been vastly exaggerated by cultural interpretations and that the value put on sex differences is in itself a cultural product. Sexual attributes are a biological given, but gender is a product of historical process. The fact that women bear children is due to sex; that women nurture children is due to gender, a cultural construct. It is gender which has been chiefly responsible for fixing women's place in society" (Lerner, 1986:21). Men and women are biologically different (**biological differentiation**) from one another. Although as a species, the human being is the most similar in terms of the two sexes. Our differences primarily lie in our hormones and reproductive organs. **Biological determinism** sees men and women in terms of gender which specifies that a woman is the child's primary caregiver because she is biologically determined to perform the act of nurturing. Men are hunters and warriors because they are biologically stronger and more aggressive. It does not look at the differentiation of roles as a historical or societal construct (Lerner, 1986:6, 16 – 23, 41,42).

³⁶ The Danish anthropologist Peter Aaby explains that "the first appropriation of private property consists of the appropriation of the labor of women as *reproducers*" (cited in Lerner, 1986:52).

³⁷ 'other' is placed in italics to show that it has a different meaning to the word 'other' in the dictionary – I use it here to mean that within the patriarchal construct the white European male is the central subject position and therefore everyone else is inferior. Other has connotations of difference, inferiority and threat.

³⁸ Once the process of procreation was understood through observing animals in domestic captivity, female procreativity was no longer seen as a mysterious or mystical process, but understood, particularly in terms of the role that men play as the inseminators within the process (Lerner, 1986:46).

³⁹ As farming developed, having more wives and many children to do the labour meant increased wealth, and women and children came to be seen as possessions and wealth. You could also trade women from other tribes, family groups etc, to strengthen ties and create peace (Lerner 1986:212, 213).

whore, valued especially in terms of her sexual availability (Lerner 1986:109–111).

Women's sexual subordination was institutionalized in the earliest law codes and enforced by the full power of the state. Women's cooperation in the system was secured by various means: force, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges bestowed upon conforming and dependant women of the upper classes, and the artificially created division of women into respectable and not-respectable women. ... The division of women into 'respectable' (that is, attached to one man) and 'not-respectable' (that is, not attached to one man or free of all men) is institutionalized in laws pertaining to the veiling of women. (Lerner, 1986:9)

The "respectable" woman would have to veil herself in public, while the "not respectable" woman would uncover her head. This actively signified the role and status of these two groups of women. It is at this point that the virgin and the whore became socially instituted and enforced concepts, and this occurred, at least historically, in the Middle East, approximately by the third millenium B.C. (Lerner, 1986:133). Furthermore, the implication of this distinction is that women were then divided amongst themselves, and jealousy, insecurity, and competition for the attention of the male as a source of security became institutionalised. This is the basis of Divide and Rule: women were not united in their oppression, for their value and worth had been separated into two different categories: the wife (virgin) and the slave (whore).

The 'free' woman was initially the property of her father and brothers, and became the property of her husband, once married (Lerner, 1986:101 – 122).

Hypergamy depends on the enforced chastity of lower-class girls prior to marriage. The purity of a daughter or sister might make her eligible to become the wife or concubine of a nobleman. ... Thus, female purity became a family asset, jealously guarded by the men in the family...[and] suggests that this explanation makes the woman's co-operation in her own subordination plausible. (Lerner, 1986:94)⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Even though Lerner is referring to hypergamy here – marrying up for economic purposes, same class marriages also required female chastity to ensure patrilineal descent.

Once the process of reproduction came to be understood (and therefore the implications of patrilineal descent⁴¹), the woman had to remain a virgin before marriage and faithful to her husband once married to ensure that *his* children were *his* alone. This extended further into enforced monogamy on the part of the woman; "... men enjoyed complete sexual freedom within and outside of marriage" (Lerner 1986:170). The double standard, however, meant that men were allowed to have more than one wife⁴², have sexual congress with female slaves and concubines, and with temple and secular prostitutes (Lerner 1986:170). A woman found guilty of not being a virgin, through adultery or rape, faced dire consequences: at the very least shame (and societal, familial and spousal rejection), at the worst, torture and death (Lerner 1986: 115 117). To summarize: from the earliest period of *written history*⁴³ two types of women were identified: 'free' and enslaved. The 'free' woman was the virgin who surrendered her behaviour, sexuality and reproductivity to the men of her family and thus to the patriarchal system (Lerner 1986:75). The enslaved woman could not surrender herself, for she was already surrendered. She had no rights over her own body (Lerner 1986:213, 214). Her worth was measured entirely according to her sexual availability, which relegated her to a position outside the safe confines of society.⁴⁴

As Lerner is writing about early Middle Eastern cultures, she also focuses on the constructs of Hebrew society and early Judaism. Here she calls attention to the fact that:

⁴¹ Patriarchal society featured patrilineal descent; property laws guaranteeing the inheritance rights of sons, male dominance in property and sexual relations, military, political and religious bureaucracies. These institutions were supported by the patriarchal family and in turn constantly recreated it (Lerner, 1986:106).

⁴² "Polygamy, which was widespread among the patriarchs, later became rare except for royalty, and monogamous marriage became the ideal and the rule" (Lerner 1986:170).

⁴³ The relatively short history of Western civilisation has been written from a male perspective, it in fact only begins with the invention of writing "History-making,...is a historical creation which dates from the invention of writing in Ancient Mesopotamia, ca. 3100 B.C." (Lerner, 1986:4, 200), more specifically it reflects only 'his' story.

⁴⁴ Another important aspect of Lerner's argument concerns the rape of women, which I will discuss further in Chapter Three.

The preoccupation with fighting the cult of Baal and Asherah, which persisted into the monarchic period and after and which, apparently, had its greatest and most persistent strength among women, may explain the increasingly sharp regulation of women's behaviour, the excessive language of censure against women's 'whoring' in Prophets and finally the pervasive use of woman-the-whore as a metaphor for the evils of sinning society (Lerner 1986:177).

The term 'whore' is used in association with the worship of the fertility goddess, and ultimately in association with female sexuality, which is presented as 'whorish' and evil; "And in the story of the Fall, woman and, more specifically, female sexuality became the symbol of human weakness and the source of evil" (Lerner 1986:201). The emergence of Hebrew monotheism took the form of an attack on the widespread cults of the various fertility goddesses (Lerner 1986:9). In the writing of the *Book of Genesis*, creativity and procreativity were ascribed to an all-powerful God, whose epithets of "Lord" and "King" established him as a male god. Female sexuality other than for procreative purposes became associated with sin and evil (Lerner 1986:10). As Lerner shows, the mother-goddess cults persisted in the Middle East, especially amongst women. The mother-goddess figure represented a much more empowering and embracing ethos for women. In the dethroning of the mother goddess and the dissemination of her power, the encompassing image of woman as an amalgamous whole was split. The mother goddess was married off to the most prominent male deity (generally a war god), and her status and power would be reduced to that of consort. I believe it was a crucial aspect in the subjugation of women that the mother goddess was disinvested of her position and her power⁴⁵, while her homogenous nature was furthermore divided into separate aspects. This portrays symbolically the division of women into the categories of virgin "[s]he was praised and celebrated for her virginity and her maternal qualities" (Lerner 1986:148) and whore; she was the protector of prostitutes, "[f]emale sexuality was sacred to her service and honored

⁴⁵ "The dethroning of the powerful goddesses and their replacement by a dominant male god occur in most Near Eastern societies following the establishment of a strong and imperialistic kingship. Gradually the function of controlling fertility, formerly entirely held by the goddesses, is symbolized through the symbolic or actual mating of the male god or God-King with the Goddess or her priestess. Finally, sexuality (eroticism) and procreativity are split in the emergence of separate goddesses for each function, and the Mother-Goddess is transformed into the wife / consort of the chief male God" (Lerner, 1986:9).

in her rituals” (Lerner 1986:148) This process would have been necessary in order to dis-invest women of the power that they held as procreators. To convince women of their inferiority, it was necessary to destroy the symbolic portrayal of women as powerful. The subjugation of women was achieved through social, legal and religious doctrine. This perception of women carried over into the Catholic Church. “Its ideas about women, far from mirroring ideas of equality, concern rather their evilness, their potential threat to men, their general uselessness to men except in procreation” (Hamilton 1978:19).

Robert Hamilton, in *The Liberation of Women* (1978), explains how the transition from woman as corruptor (whore) to woman as moral guardian (virgin) occurred with the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism in seventeenth century England. Protestant preachers changed the image of woman to one of domesticity, loyalty, helpfulness and purity: “women were now the custodians of morality and spirituality; men were tarnished by the dirt and corruption of the world” (Hamilton 1978:20).

Hamilton shows how the Church, more than any other institution, was responsible for forming and conveying ideas about the nature of men and women and the appropriate relations between them. The Church was the primary institution of education in Feudal and early Capitalist society. The Church had always been a Patriarchal institution, and the Protestant reformers did not change this fact, they merely redefined Patriarchal ideology and the position of women within it (Hamilton 1978:20). Like the Catholic Church, the Protestants held that man should be the dominant gender and that a woman was subject to his rule – the family became an example of a ‘little church’ (Hamilton 1978:21,22).

By the Victorian period, the virgin / whore binary was a completely entrenched dualism in the understanding of women. Since women were aligned with nature⁴⁶, they were potentially dangerous, capable of creating chaos and undermining

⁴⁶ Lerner shows how Sherry Ortner in her 1974 essay, *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture*, reveals how, as women are aligned to nature and nature is devalued, women, too, become devalued (cited in Lerner, 1986:25).

order. Their sexuality was seen as a root cause of this inherent danger and therefore had to be kept in check with coded messages of right and wrong behaviour. One of the greatest transmitters of these social messages were women's journals. The implication of not conforming and the disgrace it would entail was so great that women complied by 'behaving' themselves.

2.2 THE VIRGIN

In advertising, the stereotypes of the virgin and the whore are widely produced for different moral, social and commercial reasons. Guilt and desire are major motivational tools in convincing women to buy products. The manufacturer of the product being advertised needs the consumer to be vulnerable to suggestion and willing to conform to the image that is promoted. Perfume advertisements often select very young⁴⁷ models who portray innocence, purity⁴⁸, and the intimation virginity⁴⁹ to promote their products. The fairy-tale princess, Ice maiden, the angel or celestial being and the veiled woman are all categories of representation that may be identified within the virgin context.

Figures 51 to 58 were selected as representative of the fairy tale type of messaging. Figure 55 advertising the *Chloè* brand of perfume is pertinently named *Innocence*. The styling of the type of perfume as represented by advertisements (as represented in figures 51, 53, 54 & 55) are unified with soft lighting, 'fade-out' edging, pastel colour palettes, and the unblemished, 'perfect' faces of young women. Minimal soft make-up has been used to create a 'clean' look, emphasising that their beauty needs no enhancing. If one applies the *Oxford*

⁴⁷ Youth is equated with virginity. The age group of the models featured in these advertisements would appear to be between 13 and 18.

⁴⁸ **pure** –n. **3** chaste. **4** morally or sexually undefiled; not corrupt. **5** guiltless. (*The COED* 8th Ed 1990:970) **purity** n. **1** pureness, cleanness. **2**. freedom from physical or moral pollution (*The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 8th Ed 1990:971). Purity has connotations of cleanliness so that one might draw the conclusion that a sexually experienced woman is therefore 'dirty' – the idea that women's bodies and sexual organs are in themselves 'dirty' will be examined in Chapter Three.

⁴⁹ ³ **virgin** –n. **1** a person (esp. a woman) who has never had sexual intercourse ... **4** a naive, innocent, or inexperienced person (*The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 8th Ed 1990:1370). It is interesting to note that virginity is classified according to women, not men – the categories of sexual activity are thus differentiated.

definition of chaste⁵⁰: they are unadorned, and simply attired. Their expressions are gentle, wide-eyed; there is no ‘come hither’ look, which would suggest sexual awareness or experience. The buy-line for *Anaïs Anaïs* (figures 51, 52 & 53) is “One day tenderness will move the world”, associating the product with the gendered aspects expected of the ‘virginal’ woman.

The motivational power of attraction conveyed in these perfume advertisements is the desirability of youth, purity and innocence. As Wolf shows:

Competition between women has been made part of the beauty myth so that women will be divided from one another. Youth and (until recently) virginity have been ‘beautiful’ since women grow more powerful with time...older women fear young ones, young women fear old, ... (Wolf 1992:14).

What must be added to this is that the more powerful a woman becomes, the more men fear her. The woman who embraces the power of sexuality becomes the phallic woman. Fear of their own empowerment leads the older woman to become fearful and resentful of the younger woman who has what she believes she has lost: youth, innocence and desirability. Age is constantly promoted as the great divide. The media promotes youth as an ‘age-old’ aphrodisiac. Popular culture worships and constantly promotes youth⁵¹ as the ideal state.

The images in figures 56, 57 and 58 have been selected for their representations of extremely young girls which were featured in women’s magazines to sell make-up and clothing. The editorial of the May 1999 South African *Elle* magazine features a variety of photographers’ impressions of how they would interpret the first cover of the new millenium. Figure 58 is an example from photographer Mark Abrahams, and to quote him: “In the new millennium I think people will go back to a more healthy way of living, so my cover idea was one of purity, innocence and simplicity. Our girl was very young with a very innocent look and we styled

⁵⁰ **chaste** adj. **3** (of artistic etc. style) simple, unadorned (*The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 8th Ed 1990:971).

⁵¹ Chapter One deals with the promotion of unrealistic aspirations through the use of very young models in fashion features aimed at women over twenty and up. Primarily virginity is equated with the desirable state of youth.

her in white to fit in with the theme.” By his own admission, he is using a very young model, to sell health and morality. What is once again being promoted is the unobtainable, what she represents is the visual equivalent of a snowflake in the sun.

As the leader page for an article advising adult women on the latest make-up trends of the season, Figure 56 is a striking image of a girl who appears to be around twelve or thirteen years old⁵². The article is titled *Code Red*, and the editorial claims “Beware: be it scarlet, blood or ruby, red oozes glamour and seduction” (Toselli 1999:111). But what relevance does this image have to the article that advocates the use of red to “ooze glamour and seduction”? The use of this young, unblemished body in an article about sexual allure and glamour may be seen as an erotic device, as explained by Lucie-Smith:

One of the ways of sharpening erotic reaction to the female body is to show that body as immature, not yet fully ready for sexual experience (Lucie-Smith 1991:181).

The editorial comment presents itself in direct opposition to the image, the word choice of *red* is associated with mature women, and the idea of *glamour* and *seduction* are all associated with the ‘Scarlet’ woman – the voracious woman. This illustrates the seemingly schizophrenic nature of most women’s magazines where editorial content and commercial advertising content are often in direct contrast with one another. From a Feminist perspective, as there is not a visible trace of red make-up on her naked body, ‘Code Red’ may be read as a sign or warning of danger. This is the gratuitous use of a young, naked, female body for the viewing pleasure of an implied male audience. For most female readers the impact this would have would be to create an insecure consumer who will buy what she can to try and recapture youth and desirability.

Figure 57 is modeled by a very young, thin female. The overall impression is fairy or fey, the country maiden: an innocent. It alludes to fairy tales and fantasy.

⁵² Her hairstyle is done in a style reminiscent of Queen Amidala from the *Star Wars* series (who is a teenage queen).

However at R1 200,00, the outfit is a fantasy creation, but a designer item of clothing to be bought by an adult woman probably earning her own income. The use of such a young, thin model, rather than an older, fuller figured woman re-enforces the fantasy impact of what is being sold: the fantasy of fairy tales, where lithe, pretty girls get rescued from mundane existence by handsome princes.

It is not only fairy tales that condition little girls into becoming confused adults – little children’s toys tend to be flagrantly sexist and gender-prescriptive. Little girls’ dolls often offer very strange examples of femininity. Baby dolls are not babies at all in physique, but chubby, coquettish four year olds – they often ‘wear’ make-up and have styled hair – making them look like contestants in ‘Little Miss’ beauty pageants. The type of female adult doll created for four- to ten-year olds, such as the ‘*Barbie*’ doll, (see figure 70 a, b & c) are composed of a physique of unfeasible proportions if applied to a human being. This arguably begins the inculcation of the feeling that one’s body is not what it is supposed to be. Added to all this lack of reality is the genital area, or rather the lack of any genital detail. The pubis is the sealed mound: *Barbie* is a ‘virgin’! Without any indication of genitals, these dolls start the process of alienation many women have with regard to their bodies, their genitals, and sexuality. Young girls to adult women are constantly bombarded with images that are fantasies, that do not reflect reality, thus continuing to take sexual control out of the hands of women and keeping it in the hands of the media.

It would be naïve to assume that the media industry is advocating abstinence by adopting the ideal of the virgin. The number of images pushing sexual availability proves otherwise. What is offered to the susceptible consumer is the impossible ‘opportunity’ to regain youth, innocence and virginity, all concepts that, once lost, are gone forever. The attributes of these concepts are, however, constantly promoted as highly desirable. There is also the very colonial concept of the explorer, being ‘the first man to go where no other man has gone before’, ‘to stake your claim in virgin territory’. These are all underlined by the desirability of ‘purity and cleanliness’, the knowledge that the virgin is sexually undefiled. Many

religious conventions emphasize the importance of virginity, of ‘saving oneself for marriage’, with the emphasis placed on the girl to ‘just say no’.

Religious guilt suppresses women’s sexuality. Sex researcher Alfred Kinsey found, in the words of political analyst Debbie Taylor, that ‘religious beliefs had little or no effect on a man’s sexual pleasure, but could slice as powerfully as the circumcision knife into a woman’s enjoyment, undermining with guilt and shame any pleasure she might otherwise experience.’ Older patriarchal religions have sought ... to control as Rosalind Miles charges, ‘all women via a technique which betrays a conscious determination to deal with the ‘problem’ of women’s sexuality by destroying it wholesale’ (Wolf, 1992:131).

As shown in the historical context, the emphasis on a woman’s virginity has occurred as a result of determining patrilinearity, not as a moral issue. However, it was co-opted into religious doctrine as part of the cultural context of, in particular, the Old Testament of the Bible. The double standard reflected in the Bible still continues today with the pressure on women to suppress their sexuality, while men are allowed to freely express theirs⁵³.

2.2.1 The fairy-tale / myth / fantasy virgin persona

The concept of the Virgin extends into fantasy types: fairies, ballerinas, princess brides – fey ethereal untouchables upon which many little girls’ dolls are modelled. Figures 50a, b and c taken from the fashion spread titled *True Romance*, play with fantasy. All have elements of playing at dressing up. There is the *bride doll*, the *ballerina doll* and the *Pierrette doll*. Very few women can afford these items of clothing and so they remain a fantasy example of the designer’s creativity. Role-playing and fantasy allows for exploration within the human psyche, however it is more likely that these images represent how women are trapped by the dictates of the media in a state of perpetual child-like disempowerment.

Two categories of the virgin stereotype remain to be analysed: these can be categorised as the *celestial untouchable* (or heavenly body), and *the veiled*

⁵³ I qualify this statement by placing it within the heterosexual framework, as many homosexual people still face the pressure to conform, and the anxiety of freely expressing their sexuality.

woman. Figures 59 through to 61, 64 and 65 typify the *Celestial Being* and *Ice Maiden*. The advertisements for *Angel* perfume (figures 59a & b), *Sun Moon Stars* Perfume (figure 62), the *Sui Dreams* fragrance (figure 60) and *ICØ* body spray (figure 61) reference dreams, heavenly bodies and ice. Nearly all are intangible: we can watch the sun, moon and stars from afar, we wish on them, we dream of them, but we can't hold them. She is the object of desire⁵⁴ to be admired, like a little *Lalique* glass or ice sculpture, beautiful and fragile – to be handled carefully. The *Celestial Maiden* is the fantasy escape – away from the real issues of relationships between men and women. They want to be seen, but not touched. “In fantasy, problems of the relationships between men and women are postponed, so that the fantasy person for the viewer becomes an object of admiration or worship and physical involvement is sublimated” (Lambourne 1996:195).

2.2.2 The veiled woman

The veiled woman is suspended within desire; the veil acts to hide her desire while revealing her body, it represents the last line between resistance and surrender. *Salome*⁵⁵ (see figure 2) serves as *the* prototype of the veiled woman. The semi-naked female body covered by a drape or veil represents a form of eroticism that serves two purposes: to satisfy the male audience's desire to see the naked female form and to keep women in a subservient position, mentally and physically, as sexual objects. As Lerner shows, the veiled woman falls within the category of the 'respectable' woman, which therefore places her in the context of the virgin. The two categories of women had to be publicly distinguishable:

On closer examination we can see that the distinction between the women is based upon their sexual activities. Domestic women, sexually serving one man and under his protection, are here designated as 'respectable' by

⁵⁴ The models are all blond-haired and blue-eyed, a physical 'type' that in Western popular culture is associated with being desirable.

⁵⁵ According to various legends, she was a young and extremely beautiful virgin, stepdaughter to King Herod, who lusted after her. Her mother, realizing this, knew the power of the veil, and manipulated Herod in order to have John the Baptist beheaded. Ultimately it was Salome's dance of the seven veils that metaphorically stripped Herod of all his resistance. Huysman's hero in *A Rebours Des Esseintes*, “sees Salome not just as the dancing girl of the New Testament, for ‘she had become in some way, the symbolic deity of indestructible lust, the Goddess of immortal Hysteria, the accursed beauty exalted above all other beauties ... the monstrous Beast ...’” (cited in Lambourne 1996:199).

being veiled; women not under one man's protection and sexual control are designated as 'public women', hence unveiled (Lerner 1986:135).

The veiled woman is the next step for the virgin; her sexuality is owned⁵⁶ and the veil becomes an erotic signifier of what lies beneath and what is expected of her. Lucie-Smith notes: "The wholly undraped and unadorned female figure often has feebler powers of erotic excitation than one which is not wholly nude" (Lucie-Smith 1991:178). The wispy veil around the loins would serve "to attract attention to the primary sexual area" (Lucie-Smith 1991:178). The veil also becomes a metaphor for the slumbering sexuality of the virgin (Lambourne 1996:195). The women in figures 63 to 69 illustrate veiled woman who retain some mystery in that they await the male to remove all, either in his imagination, or in reality. Steele defines the visual distinction we may make when reading various images:

While leather and rubber favoured by the dominatrix⁵⁷ evoke power and cover most of the body, the maid and harem girl wear soft, feminine, semi-sheer fabrics that lightly veil their anatomy (Steele 1997:174).

In figure 54, the advertising campaign for *Ghost* perfume creates a desire through association – it presents an ideal, ethereal youthful and beautiful girl – the virginal woman who will surrender. A ghost is a metaphysical manifestation of the spirit or soul of a dead person – she has surrendered to death. During the 1860s to 1890s the English Victorian *Aesthetic* and the accompanying literary movement, known as *Decadence*, had a preoccupation with women who were in various pseudo-necromantic states of languor, sleep and death. Edgar Allen Poe wrote: "The death of a woman is without doubt the most poetic subject in the world" (cited in Lambourne 1996:192). Women in paintings and poems of the *Aesthetics* (see figures 47 to 49) were certainly not empowered, but in their semi-drugged states of half-sleep, balanced between the worlds of life, death and dreams, and always with an overtly erotic presence, they seem more to be slaves of their own desires

⁵⁶ Lerner shows how by the second millennium BC "prostitution was well established as a likely occupation for the daughters of the poor" (1986:134). For the daughters of wealthier families their virginity was their economy. As such it was part of their father's property. What I want to emphasise is that at this point the two different categories of women separated them into different classes, so that the virgin versus the whore became a class issue as well.

⁵⁷ This quotation from Steele may be used to distinguish the visual code of difference between the virgin and the voracious woman. The dominatrix who is referred to here, is a manifestation of the latter and shall be discussed further within this chapter.

and nerves. Or, as Dante Gabriel Rossetti wrote in *Hand and Soul*, they are “weak with yearning” (Lambourne 1996:192). In patriarchal terms, they represent an ideal, totally unthreatening, ready to surrender. Figures 67 to 69 reflect this state of surrender seen in the paintings of the pre-Raphaelites.

Figure 69 is an advertisement for the perfume ‘*Boudoir*’⁵⁸. A swirling sheet of satin or silk – fabrics associated with bed sheets, sensuality and seduction – cover her. The colour scheme and the fabric veiling her body places this image within the category of the virgin – the surrendered, sexually submissive woman. The *boudoir* is as connotative as the *harem*⁵⁹: both conjure up images of women lying about in drugged states of sexual surrender, waiting, in a dreamlike state of elevated sexual ecstasy, for the male or the master. A quotation from Gustave Moreau (cited in Lambourne) speaking of “ideal somnambulism”, may be applied to the kind of inspiration behind such an image: “They are unaware of their own movements, absorbed in reveries to the point of being carried away towards other worlds” (Lambourne 1996:139).

Figure 68, advertising perfume by Lolita Lempicka, plays with fantasy and fairy tale. The model reclines against a tree, with one hand covering an exposed breast, and the other covering her eyes, thus she does not challenge the gaze of the (male) viewer. She seems to be a nymph⁶⁰ or a tree spirit – the women of myths remain out of the grasp of mortals. She is also associated with nature and the ‘wild woman’. Within the genre of mythological narrative discourse, these ‘types’ of females are presented as objects of desire, trapped within a state of sexual solitude and longing. In feminist terms they are dis-empowered for there is no representation of autonomy, they are defined entirely in terms of their reification as sexual objects. There is no existence outside of this patriarchal construct.

⁵⁸ The boudoir being “a woman’s small private room or bedroom”, which in popular romantic fiction is the setting for seduction, is laden with sexual connotations (*The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 8th Ed 1990:130).

⁵⁹ The harem will be discussed in Chapter Three.

⁶⁰ Nymphs and goddesses, who in mythology were desired by mortal men, were not available and thus remained the mythical virgin.

2.2 THE SEXUALLY SURRENDERED WOMAN

Figure 71 was created by male art director, Tom Ford⁶¹, for the advertising campaign for *Opium*. Ford decided to come up with a “sexy and provocative” campaign. “Opium is something forbidden, something rich, so I didn’t want a skinny, starved model. I wanted someone who looked like she had too much of everything – food⁶², sex and love; a woman who denies herself nothing” (Bruning 2001:30). The campaign was inspired by Delacroix’s odalisques, in particular *Woman in White Stockings* (1825):

The odalisque is totally submissive. She awaits the man who will possess her, and every line of the pose tells us that she will not resist him, whoever he is. Her body is not her own. And when we look at her face we see that this is anonymous, a beautiful blank (Lucie Smith 1992:134).

This *Opium* advertisement features a completely naked Sophie Dahl, and may be read as an image of the sexually surrendered woman. Although her left leg is covering much of the pubic mound, enough remains visible for the viewer to see that it has been airbrushed over. The pubis has become the sealed mound – the blank pubis⁶³, which symbolises sublimated sexuality. Women are constantly presented as having little or no pubic hair in women’s magazines. Pubic hair⁶⁴ is seen as unseemly, as the signifier of maturing sexuality; it is too threatening. By denying female pubic hair, female sexuality is kept in check. Representing models as women in a virginal pre-pubescent stage⁶⁵ succeeds in alienating women from their own bodies and conditions them to be ashamed of what is natural. The fact that the vagina, hirsute or not, is on display in men’s magazines, suggests that

⁶¹ Tom Ford will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

⁶² However, Dahl rejects any accusations that she sold out to pressure by losing 14 kilograms to slim down from a size 16 to a size 12. So the implication is that a size 12 woman is seen as ‘too much’ (Bruning 2001:30).

⁶³ The blank pubis (or sealed mound) in Pre-Twentieth century artworks may be read as another form of patriarchal sexual domination. The blank pubis brings to mind a pre-pubescent state of innocence and may be likened to an unbroken, sealed vessel, waiting for the act of male penetration. The blank pubis becomes unclaimed, unexplored ‘virgin territory’. The desire to be the first man, the conqueror or claimant of virgin territory, may be read as a very western patriarchal and colonial concept of ownership and possession.

⁶⁴ Magazines are filled with advice articles and advertisements selling products that will shave, bleach, strip, pluck, electrolyse and laser beam bodily hair away. The completely naked pubis is known as “the Hollywood”, and the wax job that leaves a little strip of hair on either side of the labia is known as “the Brazilian”.

⁶⁵ While the naked pubis carries connotations of pre-pubescence, the hirsute pubis is therefore symbolic of a more threatening mature female sexuality.

only men have a right over women's sexuality, and that women should still be ashamed of being sexually or physically self-empowered.

The impression one receives from the overtly sexual image of Dahl in the *Opium* advertisement, is that she is waiting for her lover in complete surrender. The blank face and shut or averted eyes do not challenge the male gaze, therefore there is no resistance, and thus it is beautiful, although it has, in fact, been called "beautiful, erotic, porno chic, offensive, even too big to be beautiful" (Bruning 2001:30). Dahl's head is tilted back and her eyes are closed, which is indicative of a state of ecstasy. "This isn't the first time a woman's body has been used to sell a product – and it won't be the last. The sight of me writhing in rapture doesn't usually offend people. It usually has the opposite effect"⁶⁶ (Sophie Dahl quoted in Bruning 2001:30). "The shoot was surreal, total fantasy," Dahl said afterwards. "*Opium* had always seemed so dangerous and grown-up to me. During the 80's when my friends and I were wearing *Anaïs Anaïs*, *Opium* was this heady almost illegal scent. And years later, there I was under the hottest lights, completely naked with an equally naked male model – in front of all these people. I had to shut my eyes" (Bruning 2001:32). It is interesting and pertinent to note that the choice of examples that Dahl herself distinguishes between are *Anaïs Anaïs* and *Opium*. The former (as previously shown) suggests innocence, the latter is associated with the sexually active woman – "dangerous and grown-up". Thus the virgin and the voracious woman are symbolically signified through these two perfumes. The photography session for this advertisement was also 'surreal, total fantasy', for Dahl, and this is the effect of the image too: it is a construct of fantasy, reinforcing stereotypes of women's submission to men. Furthermore, she refers to a naked male model who, is absent in the final, selected image. If present, he would have provided competition for the male viewer. He would have been able to provide for her sexual pleasure, which must be left in a state of suspension, otherwise there is

⁶⁶ However "in a shock move [it] was banned in Britain just days before last Christmas" [December 2000] (Bruning, 2001:30), indicating that the public was offended by the campaign. In Paris, a militant feminist group called Chiennes de Garde – Guard Bitches, launched an Internet campaign (which gathered 10 000 signatures) "objecting to the *Opium* poster and accusing the advertising industry of reinforcing stereotypes of women's submission to men" (Bruning, 2001:32).

no 'space' for the male spectator / owner. The image represents both virginity and sexual availability for the male who is wealthy enough to afford her. She becomes an expensive, reified and desired object.

The virgin resonates in the mind of the female because she has been there from the beginning of her socialisation, in her toys and fairy tales, in her religious education and family's expectations. She is the heroine of the story, the girl who gets chosen and rescued and who marries Mr. Right. She is the girl that society pressurises women to be – for ultimately, as Lerner shows, she upholds and supports the system of patriarchy.

2.4 THE VORACIOUS WOMAN

The opposite female persona to the veiled woman is the voracious woman. Where the veiled woman represents a female who has yet to unlock her sexuality and its latent power, the voracious woman has had her sexuality released. This is her source of power, and while this might represent sexual liberation for women, it is still tied in with male desire and fantasy. She is the insatiable woman – where the veiled woman waits to be seduced, she is the active seducer.

This category may be divided into various sections: the sexual slave or the whore, the phallic woman and the castrator. Just as the virgin has a progressive path of surrender and reward (virgin – wife – mother – grandmother and, in fairy tales, the fairy godmother), the voracious woman may follow a path of transgression to destruction. As demonstrated by Lerner, there were two types of women – the free woman and the enslaved woman. As I have shown, the free woman was not truly free, for her sexuality belonged to her family and then her husband. The enslaved woman was the sexually available whore – unable to refuse any man's sexual advances. Should she appropriate sexual power for herself, she becomes the phallic woman – a sexual devourer. Progressively she could become the castrator, and the more power she assimilates and accumulates (i.e. by being a queen or witch), the more dangerous she becomes. Eventually she may manifest actual physical symbols of her phallic power (such as snake hair or horns). As her power

is made more manifest she becomes half human, half beast, and eventually she is a monstrous beast, such as the sea serpent from the legend of Perseus, who ultimately must be destroyed by a phallic man so that the 'proper order' is restored.

The voracious woman is a complex intermingling of various messages: she is the slave, the prostitute, the whore. She is the sexually liberated woman, voracious, hungry for power; she is the dangerous queen, the castrator, the dominatrix and the action woman. She is a threat to patriarchy, and is thus embraced by Feminists.

2.4.1 The whore / active seductress

It would seem that the dangerous seductress compelled and fascinated the Victorian artist, Waterhouse, as he painted the transgressive woman in many symbolic forms. Waterhouse's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, 1893 (figure 74), represents the idea of a woman's desire making her 'weak with yearning', while she gazes hypnotically into the knight's eyes as she draws him in – overpowering the man. The knight is encased in a suit of hard armour which becomes a symbol of phallic power. This depiction, like the story and paintings of *Perseus and Andromeda*, represent the gendered aspects of men and women within the patriarchal paradigm. Woman is nature: she is weak, corruptive, and capable of creating chaos with her unbridled sexuality. Man is strong: he must use his logic and reasoning to control woman and nature.

Figures 75 to 86 all depict the dangerous seductress – the whore. The colour palette is centered around hot colours such as red and burgundy, which are rich and sensuous, associated with seduction, glamour, passion: "Beware: be it scarlet, blood or ruby, red oozes glamour and seduction" (Toselli 1999:111). This grouping forms the visual opposite to the virgins in figures 51 to 58. These women know what they want and will 'hypnotise', 'poison', drug and seduce any unwitting man they can lay their hands on. The perfumes advertised in these images are *Opium* (figures 82 & 83) and *Hypnotic poison* (figure 84), thus

creating the association that these seductresses are dangerous, and like the nymphs and damsels in Waterhouse's paintings, have been overwhelmed by their own sexuality and are thus capable of overpowering and destroying a man's resistance.

The models in these advertisements are dressed in sensual velvets, satins and lace – the fabrics of seduction. Steele explains the role of fabric as one of the "... erotic aspects of fashion – its tactile sensuality, for example, its role in amorous foreplay, and its ambiguous status with regard to the body that it simultaneously conceals and displays" (1997:47) create the allusion of the seductress in a bordello or her boudoir.

The heavily made-up models all commandingly and knowingly stare out at the viewer. Like Waterhouse's women, they reveal women's nature as being sexual, destructive – dangerous. As pointed out by Buszak⁶⁷, with regard to Albert Vargas' representation of women (see figures 12a & b), the direct gaze is a statement of sexual empowerment: "...[Vargas'] women were almost invariably depicted with and celebrated for their sexually aggressive and self-aware poses, engaging the viewer with a direct gaze that underscored the subject's confident sexuality" (Buszak 1998:7). She also asserts that we may read this body language as "... the women as active subjects luring men, not as victims of the male gaze" (Buszak 1998:6).

However, while we may see their gaze as actively engaging the (presumed) male spectator, they are still presented as sexual objects, the type of women who are referred to as whores, available for male sexual use. The images in figures 78 to 80 allude to women in a brothel – the settings, clothing and poses place them in a context of the sexual *other*. The use of animal skin prints always refers to the *animality* of women's sexual natures. They are thus sexual slaves – the prostitute, glamorised and re-presented as alluring sexuality.

⁶⁷ For more information on Albert Vargas, WWII bomber girls and their cultural significance, please refer to Maria Elena Buszek's article titled *War Goddess, The Vargas Girls, WWII and Feminism* (1998) from online site www.N.Paradoxa.

Figure 86 is an *RJL* fashion label advertisement set in a cocktail bar. The narrative reverses the traditional male / female role, and shows a young woman pouring a powdered mixture from a capsule into a cocktail. The ‘doctored’ drink is for the unsuspecting young man. We suppose that the powder is either an aphrodisiac, or a sedative that would allow her to seduce him without any resistance. The scenario is presented within the context of aggressive sexual conquest.⁶⁸ As Lucie-Smith states:

Male fantasy encompasses not only rape of the female by the male but, subsuming this, the rape of the male by the female, Since this is so present and urgent a terror in the mind of the man who unconsciously fears for his own potency, it is not surprising to discover that compositions alluding to this are usually rather oblique in their message (Lucie-Smith 1991:194).

The advertisement relies on a subtle reversal of body language. The female model’s body is taut and aggressively posed, while the male model leans languidly against the bar, his body open and vulnerable. The advertisement reads “You’re going to look good. Prepare yourself.” The implication is that men who wear *RJL* clothing will be the targets of sexual overtures from women.

2.4.2 The phallic woman

While some men may fear the empowered woman – the phallic woman – there are many who find the embodiment of phallic power⁶⁹ in a woman a sexual stimulant that also allays the fear of impotence. According to the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan; “Whereas the penis is a part of the male body that may or may not be especially impressive, the phallus is the eternally erect and massive symbol of power and potency. Neither men nor women ‘have’ the phallus, but they both want what it signifies” (cited in Steele 1997:15). The phallic woman is the voracious woman who has not only embraced her sexual power, but other aspects

⁶⁸ “The image of the “bad girl” also appeals to many women. The American designer Betsey Johnson did a fashion show in the 1980s at the Mudd Club, featuring bad girls behind bars” (Steele 1997:43).

⁶⁹ Phallic power – the phallus is a symbolic form of the penis and represents patriarchal power – political, social, economic, sexual and militaristic. Both men and women may bear attributes of phallic power, it is often shown in the form of phallic shaped symbols such as weapons, cigars, armour, etc. Women may appropriate phallic power from men and in this way castrate them symbolically. Men may also wrest phallic power from other men.

of gendered phallic power. Phallic power is masculine power and as such includes sexual, social, political, physical and financial power. Her appearance will manifest the assimilation of this power and will range from power dressing (from business suits to suits of armour) to physical attributes such as an overtly muscular physique and progressively phallic emblems such as weapons, horns or tails. The phallic woman is thus more dangerous than the whore / seductress, and includes types such as the dominatrix, the devil woman, the female vampire and other mythological creatures and beasts – such as Medusa, the ultimate phallic woman.

The artists of both the *Aesthetic* and *Symbolist* movements were fascinated with the “beauty of the Medusa and the vampire, the fascination with evil and with the idea of the fatal woman ...” (Lucie-Smith 1991:139). Biblical narratives, myths and legends provided varied stories of voracious women who used their sexuality to lure, seduce and destroy the unsuspecting male. From early history the mermaid became identified with the siren – “the seductress of souls”. Her half human, half-beast body is the physical manifestation of her transgressive nature (see figure 73, Waterhouse’s *A Mermaid*, 1901). As art historian Lucie-Smith shows, the mermaid has a long history as a symbol of phallic lust:

During the Middle Ages she was widely popular as an emblem of libidinous passion. Often she is shown with a fish gripped in her hand – the soul gripped by lust. The mermaid with the (phallic) fish in her grip is indeed a powerful image of the thieving seductress who haunts the male imagination (Lucie-Smith 1991:252).

Her tail signifies her transgressive behaviour through the appropriation of phallic power. The tail provides no access to the vagina, therefore she is sexually alluring, but thwarts the male’s lust for her doubly by being unable to provide sexual congress. The fantasy figures of the Symbolist movement may often be found in contemporary advertising. While Figures 82 to 86 relied on the words and styling of the advertisement to create the desired image, figures 88 to 94 are more overt. However, as Steele explains:

... fantasy is a complicated concept. As commonly used, the word *fantasy* denotes imagination, illusion, exaggerated or unreal images. But fantasy is not just ‘unreal’. Fantasy also has a particular psychological meaning,

involving the fulfillment of psychic needs. According to psychoanalysts, conscious sex fantasies overlie certain original fantasies on themes such as castration, seduction, and the primal scene (Steele 1997:167)⁷⁰.

The women in these advertisements predominantly wear black and, as Steele shows “... the black stocking symbolizes the branded, sinful woman. The white stocking is the symbol of purity” (Wilhelm Stekel cited in Steele 1997:132).

The fantasy based advertisement of figure 88 from the house of *Givenchy* represents Catwoman or a cat burglar. The catwoman and the dominatrix are linked in the public imagination: “...other women interpreted the dominatrix look as a positive Amazonian statement – couture Catwoman. You will recall that in the movie *Batman Returns*, Michelle Pfeiffer is costumed in skintight rubber to resemble a dominatrix” (Steele 1997:164). The masked woman becomes an anonymous phallic woman representing phallic power. However the hyper-feminised⁷¹ eyelashes act as a fetish to allay the threat and fear of castration; they signify that she will devour but not destroy. The advert is promoting a new mascara wand⁷² with a container that holds a mirror / *vanitas*, the whole of which becomes a totemic object that acts as a fetish against the fear of castration.

Figures 90 to 94 may all be interpreted as images of the dominatrix if interpreted according to Steele’s definition:

Although, in fact, a dominatrix may sometimes show an expanse of naked thigh or bosom, it is more common for her to be almost completely covered by a second skin – from the mask that partially or completely covers her face down to the stiletto-heeled boots. Her entire body, in other words, is transformed into an armored phallus. High-heeled shoes, boots, and gloves are obvious phallic symbols, as is the whip or riding crop that she often carries. In addition, the dominatrix often wears a corset, which is a phallic symbol, despite being shaped like the female torso, since its

⁷⁰ (Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, “Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality,” in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin et al. 1986:18-20, cited in Steele 1997:167)

⁷¹ I use the term ‘hyper-feminise’ to refer to overt emphasis of feminine characteristics, such as very long eyelashes, emphasised breasts, overly pouting pink or red glossy lips, long painted fingernails – the hyper-feminised woman is made artificially and overtly feminine in order to act as a fetish against the threat of castration. The overtly feminine female will not desire to castrate the male for she is a construct of male fantasy; what a woman should be. It is also interesting to note that the transvestite or female impersonator, when dressed up as women, hyper-feminise their appearance.

⁷² The word wand creates the association of make-up’s ability to magically transform one.

boning makes it hard and stiff. A corseted person stands erect (Steele 1997:169).

Valerie Steele in *Fetish: Fashion, Sex & Power* (1997) shows how the dominatrix has become a popular emblem in contemporary fashion iconography. Perhaps “[b]ecause fetish fashion often resembles dominatrix gear, it can also be read as a subcategory of ‘power dressing,’ which was the major fashion trend of the 1980s” (Steele 1997:43). Therefore Steele positions the dominatrix as an image of an empowered woman. Steele explains how fetish fashion came into mainstream fashion through photographers such as Helmut Newton (for examples of Newton’s photography please see figures 92 & 154):

Although Newton cannot be credited with single-handedly bringing fetishism into fashion, his photographs have been extremely influential because of their focus on the relationship between sex and power. His *dramatis personae* – sexual personae – included the voyeur, the exhibitionist, the prostitute, the fetishist, the sadomasochist, the transvestite, and the dominatrix (Steele 1997:38).

These *dramatis personae* have become embedded in fashion and advertising since the 1970s. One of the reasons for this, as explained by Jack Katz (a sociologist cited in Steele), is because fetishism is directly related to danger, rebellion and deviance, all of which have a certain charisma and thrill and thus exert a powerful emotional appeal. Katz explains that advertisers recognise this desire for a rebellious identity and that an “association with deviance” creates a powerful identification with the product, which in turn helps it to sell (Katz cited in Steele 1997:193)⁷³.

The dominatrix will wear certain types of clothing that, within the cult of S&M, have specific meanings. When these items of clothing are introduced into mainstream fashion, the purpose or symbolism is hidden, so that while a person might buy an item of clothing because of its more overt associations with power

⁷³ Jack Katz, *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil* (1988:358, 72, 81).

and sexuality, it's embedded meaning still exists. This is the case with the stiletto-heeled shoe that came into being specifically within S&M subculture. In the following passage, Steele explains the role of the stiletto heel within the sadomasochistic sex act:

If the dominatrix wears boots, is the slave to be trod on? Certainly this is what the pornographic stories tell us: He licks the boot, and she kicks him. He sucks on the stiletto heel, and she inserts it in his anus. The heels are hard and stiff and long ... (Steele 1997:171).

The stiletto is a phallic emblem, the appropriated penis (which is then a fetish against castration) that the dominatrix would use to insert in the anus of the dominated male 'slave' in an obvious reversal of the roles of domination and submission. The *Sergio Rossi* shoe advertisement in figure 94 shows a close-up of a woman's foot in black stockings and a stiletto sandal, which signify the 'bad' woman and the dominatrix. However the role played by the stiletto (of the heel to be inserted in the male anus) has been reversed, as the heel is positioned directly in front of her own buttocks. The model is lying on her stomach with her buttocks elevated; through the reduction of the female body to the foot, shoe and buttocks, she becomes a fetishistic symbol which reverses the act of domination upon herself.

According to Freud, the only way the adult fetishist can surmount his "aversion ... to the real female genitals" is by endowing women with certain characteristics, which makes them tolerable sexual objects (Kaplan 1991:54). As Kaplan shows:

The adult fetishist cannot introduce his penis into that temple of doom called a vagina without a fetish to ease the way (1991:54). ... The fetish may be a part of the sexual partner's body ... [or even] the sexual partner herself. For example, just as a high-heeled leather boot may represent a female with a penis – the so-called phallic women – so a woman, with or without boots, may be endowed with phallic properties by her fetishistic lover and thus become, for him at least, a fetish (Kaplan 1991:21).

While the tendency to be excited by high-heeled shoes may seem strange, Freud⁷⁴ explains that human sexuality is never just a matter of doing what comes

⁷⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*. (1953 –1975) 7:153.

naturally; it is always a psychological construction in which fantasy plays an important role. This is why fetishism is so interesting, precisely because it seems so bizarre – why would shoes sexually excite someone? Freud explains that fetishism shows how “the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together.” (Freud cited in Steele 1997:30)⁷⁵ Within S&M culture:

The overwhelming majority of fetishists are men. Most women⁷⁶ who wear fetish costumes seem to do so either for economic reasons (i.e., they are professional sex workers) or to please their husbands or boyfriends. This is not to “erase” the existence of those women who identify themselves as fetishists. In perversion (probably in all forms of sex), we are dealing with deep fantasies that should not be glibly conflated with consciously articulated gender politics. Clothing itself is generally associated with power, and nakedness with its lack (Steele 1997:171).

While the appearance of the dominatrix in mainstream culture has been seen as a manifestation of the sexually powerful woman, this idea should not be dismissed or embraced without questioning. The selection of images from figures 88 to 92 all represent the strong and sexually dangerous woman; however figures 94 and 92 show images that use the iconography of the dominatrix to subvert her position. The *Cesare Paciotti* advert (figure 93) shows a model in a dominatrix outfit sitting on a man’s lap. Their body language tells a different story to the clothing. She appears frozen and remote; he is relaxed and engaged in observing her. The power relations of the dominatrix and slave are reversed and become

⁷⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*. (1953 –1975) 7:147.

⁷⁶ When Steele discusses women who in some way express a fetish desire, they are mostly women who have become involved through the desire of their sexual partner for them to do so, or for pathological reasons. She dismisses Feminist arguments that fetishism is a patriarchal phallogocentric conception, but she does not provide the evidence to prove otherwise. In the case of women actively pursuing S&M they will often be women who offer their services as a dominatrix for financial gain, and to satisfy a male clientele. The women who are the M in the S&M configuration seem to have chosen this position at the request of their partner, or through a pathological need to be dominated similar to the male counterpart. However, Steele dismisses fetishism as being pathological, while providing evidence that many female fetishists had experienced earlier abuse or trauma. The need to be dominated has been associated with a domineering parental figure, but Steele does not equate this dominance / submission enactment as a reflection of the patriarchal order. Instead, her stance is that fetishism is an alternative form of sexuality much like homosexuality, and that it cannot be pathologised as homosexuality once was. In all the instances of people she investigates and cites, she never once goes further than a description of their particular fetish and, as such, her investigation remains very superficial.

merely a portrayal of contingent, heterosexual power relations within a patriarchal culture of dominant man and woman as sexual performer and slave.

In figure 89 the model is styled as a modern day vampire – the classic fantasy of the seductress who kills her lover in the height of passion and bloodlust. The colour palette used is almost entirely in tones of steel or gray, similar to Waterhouse's *A Mermaid*, thereby inferring that this seductress, like the mermaid, has a heart as cold as steel. The pictorial emphasis is on the red lettering of the branding, the lipstick, the red lips and their reflection. The product is a high-tech tube of lipstick with its own mirror inlaid at the tip of the lid. The revelation behind the symbolism within this advertisement is to be found in the little still-life of the product on the right-hand side of the image. We may read the red lips as associated with labial lips, that they encase vampire teeth is symbolic of the *vagina dentate*, which refers to the fear of the consuming vagina, or the threat of the castrating female. The reflection of the model's mouth in the mirror however, acts as a fetish⁷⁷, containing her power or threat. The mirror⁷⁸ is an oval shape⁷⁹, and becomes a very neat symbol of dangerous femininity. To its right is the unsheathed (therefore exposed and vulnerable) lipstick tube, which may be read as a symbol of the penis. Once sheathed, the lipstick tube becomes a potent phallic symbol of sexual power. As the vampire possesses her own phallus (in the form of the tube of lipstick), she will therefore not castrate the male.

Figures 100 and 101 represent the devil woman (the sexually dangerous woman) in a humorous context and with symbolic fetish emblems, both of which reduce the fear she represents. Figure 100 comes from an advertising campaign that stylistically draws on such images as the 1950's *Vargas girls*, (c.f. figure 12b). The she-devil wears a '50's style corset bathing costume, red stockings and platform

⁷⁷ In African fetish figure traditions, the incorporation of a mirror is most often used to ward off that which is feared – to provide it with its own reflection.

⁷⁸ The mirror is most commonly used as a symbol to denote female folly and vanity.

⁷⁹ The mirror in this instance is oval shaped, which I see as being linked to the Eastern Yoni shape, symbolic of the vagina and thus of female sexual power.

shoes with stiletto heels – she is a playmate dominatrix. Most importantly her little red horns become little phalluses – they are fetishistic – and, as she now possesses her own ‘penises’, she will not castrate. Instead of the more commonly associated black or red outfit associated with ‘devil’ personas, the model in the *Anna Sui* perfume advert (figure 101) is dressed in purple, which may be associated with feminine passion. The sheer fabric of the dress alludes back to the less threatening *Veiled woman*. The flowers, as age-old symbols of vaginas, are not the *vagina dentate*, for they are large, soft and welcoming. The flower and the horns act as the fetish symbols, while the little devil horns, red lipstick, and black nail varnish are symbols of the voracious female persona, which are non-threatening allusions to sexual empowerment which will be used to seduce, but not destroy.

The *Moschino* campaign (see figure 102) also places the phallic woman in a fantasy scenario which colludes with humour to reduce the threat of the power of the voracious woman. The fantasy is the ‘Pirate Woman’, but instead of being a mangy, fearful old salt, she is refined in appearance, and has a lithe, youthful body. She has been packaged in a manner reminiscent of a *Barbie* ‘Theme / Fantasy Doll’, with little strips of wire securing her to a leatherette type backing. She is therefore tamed and contained. The accoutrements of swashbuckling savagery are presented in the form of the blunderbuss pistol and the patent leather, stiletto heeled, winkle-picking mules: all decorative phallic emblems. She is contained in her carton (casket / castle) and she has all the phallic power she needs; she is therefore unthreatening and ultimately sexually entertaining.

2.4.3 The castrator

Lucie-Smith asserts that the most basic and central fear for most men (from a sexual point of view), is the fear of castration, and, “more specifically, that of the castrating female. This terror can in fact act so powerfully as to render the subject impotent So deeply rooted is it, that direct expression of it must necessarily be rare” (Lucie-Smith 1991:227). The Biblical story of Samson and Delilah creates a narrative discourse that presents Delilah as a bad wife who uses her powers of

sexuality to seduce her husband into surrendering his potency to her. Lucie-Smith shows why the story of Delilah continues to hold such fascination:

Altogether, the Samson legend must have had a deep emotional significance for our ancestors: Samson's physical strength is brought to nothing through the operation of the sexual urge (a man is least capable of copulation at the very moment when he has just satisfied himself); and the cutting of his hair is itself a symbolic castration, the shears with which it is done a metaphor for the *vagina dentata*. ... a loss of potency. The loss of eyes which follows can not only be read as a loss of testicles, but tells us that this is also a version of the Oedipus story (Lucie-Smith 1991:189,219).

The fear of female sexuality and self-empowerment has therefore seemingly led to the transposal of this fear into the embodiment of the castrating woman.⁸⁰ She desires to destroy that which suppresses her. To act against this desire she is 'bound' in metaphorical terms by symbols that fetishise her sexuality and desire, thereby rendering her harmless and available for objectification. She caters therefore for the male masochist's desire to be dominated, but she also triggers primordial fears.

While figures 88 to 94 all represent the dominatrix who serves the masochistic impulse of sexuality and sexual fear, figures 95 to 98 may be interpreted as scenes of castration – however the fear of castration is expressed through symbolic displacement (Lucie Smith 1991:227). It is not the penis that is threatened but phallic power. Figures 95, 96 and 98 show women slicing into objects. Figures 95 and 96 show the female model using clippers to cut phallus-shaped objects. The cigar, in particular, is packed with associations of phallic power and potency. The advertisement for Jean Paul Gaultier's perfume (figure 97) may be interpreted as an image of a castrating woman for her skin itself has become patent leather (her arm is lacquered black). The 'gloves' and black lips signify that she is a dominatrix, furthermore her 'hat' is the lid of the tin that contains the perfume bottle. It is made of metal and its edges are dangerously serrated; it would

⁸⁰ It was Freud who contextualised the fear of castration as a fear of women – or, more particularly, of the *vagina dentata*. The fear of female sexuality and self-empowerment has therefore seemingly led to the transposal of this fear into the embodiment of the castrating woman.

effortlessly slice through skin. The bottle is encased in a metal corset, further creating the allusion that this woman is dangerous and destructive: there are no soft edges.

Figures 98 and 99 from *Dolce & Gabbana* are two parts of the same story. In figure 98 a sexually voracious woman enacts castration as she very demonstratively slices through tomatoes. In figure 99 the threat of castration is assuaged as the woman surrenders, with closed eyes, beneath the man who presses her down onto the tomatoes as he mounts her from behind. Her loss of control is further accentuated by her bra-strap slipping off her shoulder. The knife is nowhere to be seen; she has submitted her sexuality to his control.

The fashion feature shown in figures 91a and b revolve around the dominatrix persona and the idea that female sexuality is dangerous, and in this instance presented as repulsive. The model is pale and thin, the make-up and styling cold and alienating. Of particular interest is the image of the model holding a black snake. As Lucie-Smith notes: "... the snake is usually phallic – and aggressive and destructive – in the European art of the Christian era. This is the role the creature plays in representations of the Fall, where sexuality and evil are identical, and the serpent embodies both" (1991:242). Here is the ultimate presentation of the danger of women's sexuality – the link with Eve and the mother-goddess⁸¹, presented not in a manner that is alluring, but as a cold reminder of women's position within patriarchy.

The story of *Perseus and Andromeda* (see figures 45a & b and 46) may be read from a variety of viewpoints – principally it tells us of the 'order of things': men are strong and women are dependent on their strength and heroism to rescue them. This is the central principle around which most fairy tales revolve; it is also the

⁸¹ "If we understand the snake to be the symbol of the fertility goddess, this condition is essential to the establishment of monotheism." The snake as symbol of the fertility goddess had to be seen as the essence of evil, the cause of sin, and cast out of society (Lerner 1986:197).

primary example of the virgin in Western culture. Fairy tales are the first socialising tool whereby little girls are taught 'the proper order of things'. The male-female relationship of domination and submission revolves around rescue, and therefore the story of Perseus rescuing Andromeda has remained an evocative and powerful example. The fantasy of bondage is combined with a fantasy of rescue, allowing for the presentation of the binary opposites of gendered relationships. In Ingres's *Ruggerio and Angelica*, (1819 – figure 46), the hero is spearing the beast's mouth. Jung would see the hero's action, of rescuing the maiden from the danger that faces her, as symbolising the freeing of the anima (or essential self) from the 'devouring' aspect of the mother (Lucie-Smith 1992:213). We may also read it as a symbolic representation of the fear men feel toward women and the power they hold. "There is too, the implied symbolism of the dragon which threatens to devour the maiden; its gaping jaws, ... may be thought of as another version of the *vagina dentata* – the composition hints that we are to think of the beast's aggression as directed less at the woman than at the man" (Lucie-Smith 1992:213). In Ingres's painting, the hero is actually shown thrusting his immense lance straight into the monster's mouth. The representation of the pubis shows the archetypal sealed mound and with the threat of the phallic serpent we may also read that she is being rescued from her own sexuality, or from any other phallic force able to claim her. Perseus in his suit of armour is also phallic. Andromeda was an Arabian princess, therefore the *oriental other*, so it may also be seen as the civilised west taming the east. The presentation of gender as binary characteristics may be read in Perseus representing logic versus the nature of Andromeda and the sea monster, order/control vs. disorder/chaos, and patriarchal sexuality of domination versus the sexuality of the female which must be surrendered or it may become transgressive. Andromeda's bounds represent the captive woman (within patriarchy) and the choice she will have to make between surrendering to Perseus in marriage, or surrendering to the sea monster, which may be seen as symbolic of the extreme presentation of transgressive, dangerous female sexuality.

Within the *Legend of Perseus*, Perseus also does battle with one of the epitomes of the mythological voracious woman – Medusa, a Gorgon. Medusa has been turned into a hideous creature whose face can petrify a person into stone. This was punishment meted out by the gods for her transgressive behaviour (she had become too powerful). Furthermore, her hair is a physical manifestation of her phallic power, for it is a mass of writhing snakes (and here we may refer back to Lerner’s association of the snake with the Mother-Goddess and evil). Perseus is instructed to chop off her head (a reverse castration), and to use it to freeze his enemies. He disempowers Medusa by showing her, her own reflection in his shield; in seeing the monstrosity she has become she is destroyed by her own reflection. Her vanity becomes her destruction – thus it serves as a warning to other women.

2.5 THE VIRGIN VERSUS THE VORACIOUS WOMAN

As previously shown by French, women must be represented as constantly in competition with one another to attract male attention, in order to nullify the growing threat of the Feminist movement. From a very early age women are fed the message that beauty, youth and, by association, virginity are the ultimate weapons in this battle. Advertisements re-enforce the message that older women should perceive younger women as a threat and vice versa and perpetuate the impression that the virgin and the voracious women are at war with one another.

Little girls are nurtured on *Walt Disney’s* animated motion pictures, starting from the 1937 release of *Snow White*, followed by *Cinderella*, *The Little Mermaid* and various other fairy tales reworked in the Disney machine. The evil protagonist is generally an evil woman who will be portrayed as older, post-menopausal, mean, manipulative, wicked and capable of doing anything to get that which she desires. A younger, beautiful, sweet and innocent female invariably foils her. If another older woman is portrayed, such as a fairy godmother, she will also be post-menopausal, but having relinquished her claim to sexuality, and having become comfortably tubby and genial, she will come to the aid of the younger woman to help her take her place in ‘the order of things’.

In *Snow White* and in *Cinderella*, *Disney* portrays marriage as the ultimate reward for female piety, beauty, modesty and housekeeping skills. “The most important quality of these characters remains their beauty, followed closely by their selflessness and their ability to sing. There are gestures to feminism ... overwhelmed by the age-old narrative that selfless, beautiful girls are rewarded by the love of a prince they barely know” (Douglas 1995:297). Berger explains their existence and the pull these stories still have in society, and why they still influence advertising:

Publicity principally addressed to the working class tends to promise a personal transformation through the function of the particular product it is selling (*Cinderella*); middle-class publicity promises a transformation of relationships through a general atmosphere created by an ensemble of products (*The Enchanted Palace*) (Berger 1986:145).

They promise the consumer the fantasy of a perfect life, far removed from reality, obtainable through the purchase of the advertised product.

While the *Disney* movies of nineties have co-opted a more feminist voice, allowing their heroines, Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* and Jasmine in *Aladdin*, more defined and feisty personalities (including real names), the stories still revolve around marriage as the ultimate goal. *The Little Mermaid* story is also particularly sadistic, especially in the Hans Christian Anderson original, which the *Disney* writers have toned down and given a happy ending: marriage. On Ariel’s 16th birthday she falls in love with a prince and saves him from drowning. In order to be able to see him again she has to transform herself from a mermaid to a human (a reversal of the mythological mermaid, thus an undoing of her threat). She consults the sea-witch Ursula for help. Here we have the older post-menopausal woman versus the young virgin. Ursula is half woman, half octopus. Ursula’s face is drag-queen / female impersonator masculine and over made-up, she is buxom and her lower body consists of the tentacles of an octopus, thus representing both phallic power and the dreaded *vagina dentate* – the castrating woman. Her powers of castration take the form of cutting out Ariel’s tongue in the original; in the

Disney version Ariel drinks a potion that takes away her power of speech. As Douglas elaborates:

...the silencing of the female voice, the amputation of voice from desire. Feeling voiceless, and experiencing a severing between their true feelings and their own voices, is also, it turns out, a central psychological drama for adolescent girls in America. But the culprits are hardly individual women. Rather, they are an entire system, buttressed by media imagery, that urges young girls to learn how to mute themselves (Douglas 1995:303).

Furthermore, Ursula wishes to acquire the phallic power of Ariel's father, King Triton. She sends her emissaries, two moray eels (her evil consorts are emblems of her transgressive nature) to steal his trident from him. She then uses it to turn Triton into a small, shrivelled, little worm. This is an obvious display of symbolic castration of phallic power. Ariel has a stipulated period in which she must win the love of the prince. This she does by being meek and cute, she has no voice with which to express herself or her opinions, which could chase him away. Once she has won the prince and revealed Ursula for the monster she is, Ursula becomes furious and transforms herself into a huge sea monster. The prince manages to get the trident away from her and, in a symbolic reversal, destroys her with its power. Order is restored.

To conclude I should like to refer to the fashion story illustrated in figure 72. This fashion feature revolves around the battle between the 'good' girl (the virgin) and the 'bad' girl (the voracious woman). However, the battle is not between the youth and age, but has been placed within the context of the same age group – teenagers. The 'good' girls are represented by the ballerinas who are surrendered and conforming: they all mirror one another. Within the context of this story the 'good' girl is presented as the safe and boring option while the voracious girls are supposedly exciting and daring. The 'bad' girls, however, are categorized in terms of sexual and social transgression – not self empowerment: they look like street prostitutes. The one girl wears a T-shirt with the face of Madonna on it – the ultimate voracious and phallic woman in today's society. The message is that the sexual woman is transgressive and bad, which is the new good, as this image has gained a certain charisma. Chapter Three will look at how the influence of

pornography on mainstream culture has generated this 'bad' girl appeal and the impact this has had on women's sexuality.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Chapter Two illustrates how Popular culture abounds with representations of the virgin / whore binary. Myths and fairy tales have informed the sexual stereotyping of female roles in the media today. The link between youth and fairy tales is exploited by the advertising industry, which sees it as an opportunity to play on unfulfilled dreams and fantasies. By extension, women's magazines promise the (female) reader the opportunity to become the princess of the fantasy themselves.

As both Hamilton and Lerner show, women have been seen either as whorish or virginal; how women were perceived was determined by their sexuality. Male sexuality, however, has been shown as part of their private persona, and has not determined how they were perceived. Historically, the virgin has been portrayed as the young, beautiful and innocent girl of fairy tales, she is rewarded for her submission and compliance. The opposite female persona to the virgin is the voracious woman who is sexually transgressive, as she does not surrender her sexuality. Her sexuality is presented as dangerous and deviant, whorish by nature and capable of disrupting order and causing chaos. Advertisements play on these stereo-types and use them with creative license to portray women as witches who would hypnotise, poison, drug and seduce any unwitting man they can lay their hands on. Freud explains this perception as arising from the basic fear of the male; that of castration, and more specifically, that of the castrating female. It would appear that the media industry has successfully appropriated fetishistic phallogentric⁸² symbolism, in a manoeuvre couched in terms of sexual liberation.

⁸² Because Freud interpreted fetishism in terms of phallic symbolism, he is often accused of 'phallogentricism' (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1986:89-90). For many feminist theorists, the fetish is interpreted as "a symptom both of capitalism and patriarchy, in its double aspect of glorifying objects and objectifying women: a perspective which means, yet again, that the fetishist is always male, while the woman becomes the fetish itself, the perfect object" (Papoulias 1993:89-90). Other feminists, however, have observed that this analysis 'can end up leaving women's desire out of the picture.' Therefore the newer theory states that "while emerging within the framework of the phallic order, the fetish disrupts that order by fixing sexuality away from its 'proper'... focus of attraction – that is, the genitals of the opposite sex – and ultimately away from the gendered body altogether. It moves sexuality towards a preoccupation with the fragment, the inanimate ... and

The language of representation remains within the paradigm or discourse of male heterosexual desire; an alternative representation of a female orientated or non-gendered desire remains extremely marginal. This binary role is prescriptive and limiting, allowing women to have one or the other persona, not both. While women probably do recognise that neither of these types 'fits' their self-image, it can thus result in creating a sense of alienation within self or of self from society when there is no mirror in which to see an image that truly represents the whole scope of the individual.

since the fetish is an object out of place, its power erupts outside a hierarchy of 'normality'... . Fetishism is classified as a perversion in that it pushes to the limits and disrupts a phallogentric, or penis-focused, sexual order" (Papoulias 1993:90). However, Steele counteracts this reading as she asserts that "[t]his type of feminist critique is frustrating because of the way it combines trenchant analysis with ideological posturing (sic). Yes, women *are* frequently objectified, treated as 'tits and ass.' And yes, it *is* inadequate to regard women as solely as victimised objects, since they are also sexually desiring subjects. But it is naive to imagine that sexuality could be moved 'away from the gendered body altogether.' Are we hermaphrodites? Nor is it apparent that women's lives would be improved by moving sexuality 'towards the fragment, the inanimate.' The concept of disrupting the 'phallogentric ... sexual order' is much beloved by certain academics, but the fact remains that fetishists themselves tend to be intensely 'penis-focused'" (Steele 1997:45-46).

CHAPTER THREE – Flesh for Fantasy: The influence of pornography on the portrayal of female sexuality in women’s magazines

This chapter deals with the infiltration and effect of pin-up and pornographic type images in women’s magazines. This will include decoding the body language and the gaze in fashion magazine layouts and advertisements. The discussion begins with selected examples of images that intimate pseudo-lesbian scenarios, then continues to include the presentation of the isolated female body as a sexual object. Thereafter I look at the ambiguous presentation of sexuality in a heterosexual context. Finally, I discuss images that imply harm to the female body, her sexuality and her persona. I identify images that use hard-core pornographic insinuations including representations that imitate S&M, pornographically styled body language, violence, sexual violence, and rape scenarios. Advertising campaigns, designers and photographers who have deliberately created and added to this body of sexual objectification, will be identified.

In this chapter I aim to show that the public display of female sexuality does not liberate women: rather it results in the complete opposite as the female body is portrayed as sexually enslaved. This then becomes an extension of the representation of women as sexual slaves that, as established in Chapter Two, are public property, she has no autonomy – her sexuality is available to all men. The distinction between the ‘public’ display of sexuality and pornography is that the latter is supposedly for private consumption. However, in defining what constitutes a pornographic image, I will show how the latter has infiltrated mainstream media and informs images in popular culture. As such I define various aspects regarding the public display of female sexuality and what the implications of this may be. Firstly, the female body is regarded as public property – the male body is private and subject only to his own authority. Thus it follows that the sexual slave does not involve a statement of autonomy, but availability for male consumption – therefore within the contemporary patriarchal paradigm, sexual availability is the new ‘good’. This becomes a statement of male

authority over the female, which includes the surrender to physical violence which, in turn, is equated with sexuality. Lastly, the glamorisation and sexualisation of violence and rape of women in the media serves to perpetuate this message in society.

Primarily I propose that the representation of female sexuality in the media is not a statement of positive sexual empowerment or liberation, but rather reveals how female sexuality is still regarded as deviant, dangerous and whorish. This representation also implies that women must surrender their sexuality and become the sexual slave, or she will be taken by force.

3.1 TOWARDS A BRIEF DEFINITION OF PORNOGRAPHY

In this thesis I do not deal with pornography directly, as I do not wish to promote or legitimate it in any way. I do, however, show how the visual language of pornography has entered mainstream media, and I shall speculate on the damage it does. “In the United States, the pornography industry is larger than the record and film industries combined” (Dworkin 1996:298). As technology grows, so the market widens and the demand for pornography increases. The Internet has spawned hundreds of pornographic websites, offering from highly graphic stills and videos to real-time voyeuristic viewing: “The technology by its very nature encourages more and more passive acquiescence to the graphic depictions. Passivity makes the already credulous consumer more credulous The technology itself legitimises the use of women conveyed by it” (Dworkin 1996:299).

The arguments around pornography are contradictory – because women have had to fight for sexual liberation, they are reluctant to collude with conservatives who fight against pornography on moral grounds. Catherine MacKinnon differentiates: “Morality deals with good and evil, politics with power and powerlessness: Obscenity is a moral idea; pornography is a political practice. Obscenity is abstract; pornography is concrete” (MacKinnon in French 1992:167). Pornography may be regarded as a specific campaign to disempower woman.

MacKinnon asks why “prurience counts but powerlessness doesn’t”: why “sensibilities are better protected from offence than women are from exploitation” (French 1992:167).

MacKinnon and Dworkin are two well-known feminist anti-pornography activists. Their description of what constitutes a pornographic image will be used to justify my selection of images in order to show how women’s magazines have been infiltrated by pornography. “The word pornography, derived from the ancient Greek word *porne* and *graphos*, means ‘writing about whores.’” *Porne* means whore, specifically and exclusively the ‘lowest’, cheapest and least protected of women, a sexual slave. “It means the graphic depiction of women as vile whores. In ancient Greece, not all prostitutes were considered vile: only the *porneia*” (Dworkin 1996:299).

Whores exist to serve men sexually. Whores exist only within a framework of male sexual domination. The fact that pornography is widely believed to be ‘sexual representations’ or ‘depictions of sex’ emphasises only that the valuation of women as low whores is widespread and that the sexuality of women is perceived as low and whorish in and of itself. The fact that pornography is widely held to be ‘depictions of the erotic’ means only that the debasing of women is held to be the real pleasure of sex The idea that pornography is ‘dirty’ originates in the conviction that the sexuality of women is dirty and is actually portrayed in pornography; that women’s bodies (especially women’s genitals) are dirty and lewd in themselves (Dworkin 1996:299).

MacKinnon and Dworkin drafted a bill in the early 1980s to prevent pornography from being displayed in a Minneapolis family neighbourhood (at the request of the residents). The code they drafted defined pornography as:

graphic, sexually explicit subordination of women, in pictures or words, that also includes the following:

- (i) women are presented dehumanised as sexual objects, things or commodities; or
- (ii) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or
- (iii) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped; or
- (iv) women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt;
- (v) women are presented in postures of sexual submission, servility or display; or

- (vi) women's body parts – including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, and buttocks – are exhibited, such that women are reduced to those parts; or
- (vii) women are presented as whores by nature; or
- (viii) women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals; or
- (ix) women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual (Catherine A. MacKinnon *Pornography: Not a Moral Issue* in *Radical Voices* cited in French 1992:166).

If these definitions are considered in the light of the media industry, particularly the fashion layouts and advertisements carried in women's magazines, it becomes evident that pornography is no longer limited to adult-only movies and stills, but has entered the daily representations of the female body. As Marilyn French in *The War Against Woman* (1992) highlights: "The real attitudes of a society often lie buried from view, and can be extricated only by close analysis of behaviour, language, and images" (1992:157). Therefore in analysis we see that "men's long standing war against women is now in reaction to women's movements across the world, taking on a new ferocity, new urgency, and new veneers" (French 1992:19). If Dworkin is correct in claiming that pornography is about portraying women as sexual slaves, as objects without dignity or worth, for the use of and abuse by men; then it is clear that this has become an underlying pervasive meaning in many photographic representations of women advertising perfume, make-up, clothing or any commercial commodity.

3.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INFILTRATION OF THE PIN-UP AND PORNOGRAPHY INTO MAINSTREAM MEDIA

In the nineteenth century, tabloids such as the *National Police Gazette* began printing overtly sexual images of women for the male gaze, without the pretence of allegory or other subject matter (Buszek 1998:1). The present day pin-up with the complete sexual objectification that she represents really came into effect through men's magazines such as *Esquire* in the late 1930s and 1940s (Buszek 1998:1). Buszek also quotes Abigail Solomon-Goddeau, who asserts that the contemporary pin-up has its origins in the nineteenth century, when modern printing and photographic methods could meet the need for representations of the female form. While advertising emphasised women's procreativity (the virgin

persona), 'pin-ups' and pornography emphasised women's sexuality. Although the explicit depiction of the sexualised woman already existed in pornography, what emerged in the pin-up was what Solomon-Goddeau calls "an image type ... predicated on the relative isolation of its feminine motif through the reduction or outright elimination of narrative, literary, or mythical allusion ... [and a] decontextualization, reduction or distillation of the image of femininity to a subject in and of itself" (cited in Buszek 1998:2). This new genre succeeded in breaking away from the artifice of Academic painting and the restrictive morality of Victorianism by using models that were already classified as sexually transgressive:

As a popular image of contemporary female sexuality, these early pin-ups represented that which was accepted within societal limits of such sexual imagery: working-class women, dancers and actresses. These women's transgressive display of self-aware sexuality was viewed as both part-and-parcel of their class or trade, and distinct from the Victorian construct of the domestic bourgeois 'true woman', whose passionlessness and asexuality were virtues that the pin-up genre was ill suited to idealise (Buszek 1998:2).

These images quickly gained public popularity because a "representational distinction was made from privately and guardedly consumed pornography" (Buszek 1998:2). This was achieved by portraying the women with the sealed mound / the blank pubis – it was either hidden from view through artful posing, or it was 'erased'. This allowed these images to be "widely and openly reproduced, distributed and displayed: qualities which would later lead to the genre's WWII christening as the 'pin-up'" (Buszek 1998:2).

The pin-up remained in the public eye, and therefore available for women to view. The genre presented women with an image of what men found sexually desirable. What was delegated to the men's locker room, or men's magazines, has since infiltrated women's magazines. Current fashion lay-outs of bathing costumes and (certain) perfume advertisements, are virtually indistinguishable in appearance from pin-up images.

Before the cultural, sexual and political revolution of the 1960s, Naomi Wolf shows how the terms ‘good’ and ‘bad’ when applied to women meant ‘virgin’ and ‘whore’ or, as she puts it “nonsexual or sexual”. However with the sexual ‘half⁸³ revolution’, ‘good’ began to mean ‘beautiful-(thin)-hence-sexual’ and ‘bad’ meant ‘ugly-(fat)-hence-non-sexual’ (Wolf 1992:163). She attributes the sexual revolution of the sixties to various causes: the Pill was publicly sold in 1960 in America and 1961 in England, and legal abortion was written into law in 1967 in England and 1973 in America (with most European countries following suit by the mid 1970s). Women now had more rights to their own bodies and its sexuality. While this freedom was hard fought for, it was rapidly counteracted. *Playboy* was first published in 1958, bringing soft-core pornography onto the magazine stands next to fashion magazines. This was followed by a relaxing of censorship laws in America in 1967, allowing what was printed on the inside of sealed publications to infiltrate all other forms of media (Wolf 1992:163). Furthermore, as Steele explains: “the cultural radicalism of the 1960s not only did not vanish, but diffused throughout the wider society. In particular, the sexual revolution became a mass phenomenon. Legal restrictions on censorship weakened, and the commercialization and commodification of sex accelerated” (Steele 1997:40).

Wolf explains why the covers of soft-core pornography magazines played on women’s psyches; because they were “her models undressed” (Wolf 1992:148). She shows how the relaxing of censorship laws, which came about during this period when women were experiencing greater autonomous sexual freedom, ultimately acted against this freedom by re-asserting women’s position as the sexually subordinated object. To elaborate; for the first time women were beginning to experience sexuality on the same terms as men. The media picked up on this spirit of sexual freedom. However, it was the naked female body which became public property and men retained their right to privacy. “A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude (the sight of it as an object

⁸³ Wolf refers to the ‘sexual revolution’ of the 1960s as a half revolution as she identifies that the sexual liberation experienced by women during this period, was appropriated by capitalism and used to re-present women with the beauty myth.

stimulates the use of it as an object)” (Berger 1986:54). As Steele explains “Clothing itself is generally associated with power, and nakedness with its lack” (1997:171). Thus the naked female body is a powerless body. Furthermore, as Wolf identifies:

[T]he 1970’s jolted women into positions of power. As they entered the work force and were caught up in the women’s movement, the nature of what women would desire became a serious issue and a serious threat. The feminine sexual style of the 1960’s was abandoned in popular culture, because for women to be sexual in that way – cheerfully, sensually, playfully, without violence or shame, without dread of consequences – would break down complete institutions that were tottering crazily enough since women had merely changed their *public* roles. In the decade during which women became political about womanhood, **popular culture recast tender, intimate sex as boring** (my emphasis). Anonymity became the aphrodisiac of the moment (Wolf 1992:132).

Photography, in particular fashion photography, played an increasingly important role in the creation of erotic images. Fetish fashion and S&M culture entered mainstream fashion photography only in the 1970s, but the build-up to this phenomenon started in the 1960s. Both Wolf and Steele attribute this to Helmut Newton, an art and fashion photographer, who brought “a strong undertone of perverse eroticism and sadomasochistic violence” into seventies fashion (Steele 1997:38). Various scholars have described Newton’s work as “terrorist chic”⁸⁴, and “new brutalism” (cited in Steele 1997:39). Steele elaborates on this by showing how “Even department-store windows featured mannequins that were blindfolded, tied up, and shot, and magazines emphasized perversity and decadence” (Steele 1997:38). Georgina Howell, reporting in *Vogue* magazine, described how fashion stylists working with Newton had to find the accessories that Newton demanded for his fashion shoots from shops that catered to prostitutes and S&M fetishists. She claims that Newton made “fetishism chic” and that while this was still *avante garde* in the seventies, it has since become mainstream: “high fashion had come around to his point of view of the modern woman” (Howell cited in Steele 1997:39).

⁸⁴ See for instance: Selzer, M. *Terrorist Chic: An Exploration of Violence in the Seventies* (1979).

The 1970s was a period of mass political feminist campaigning. It was also the period that the sexual objectification of women in contemporary popular culture began to increase exponentially as pornography began to infiltrate women's magazines. The effect was to create imagery that Wolf terms '**beauty pornography**' and '**beauty sadism**'. Steele shows how the sex/porn debates began with the fashion photography of the 1970s as feminists came to identify the "aggressive aspects of the 'male gaze', and the way fashion objectified women" (Steele 1997:42). The infiltration of pornographically styled body language served to reassert the female sexual slave. As Colin McDowell⁸⁵ shows:

Fashion coverage that shows women as primarily sexual, even masturbatory fantasy figures has had an effect upon how all women are viewed – an effect no less powerful because it is insidious; an effect no less dangerous because its medium is fashion (cited in Steele 1997:42).

The '**beauty myth**'⁸⁶ serves to show women how they must look and behave, and implies that without being thin, beautiful and sexually available, they will never find happiness. She proposes that the 'beauty myth' was created to "put the guilt, shame, and pain back into women's experience of sex" (Wolf 1992:132).

3.3 BEAUTY PORNOGRAPHY

The public display of the naked female body gave women

the graphic details of perfection against which to measure [themselves], and introduced a new female experience, the anxious and minute scrutiny of the body *as intricately connected to female sexual pleasure*. Soon 'perfection' was represented as woman's 'sexual armour' ... (Wolf 1992:134).

The taut, toned, airbrushed body of the model has created an unreal and almost inhuman beauty, which I have identified as the Pygmalion complex. The conventions of high-class pornography as epitomised in *Playboy*, *Hustler* and *Esquire* were portrayed in fashion layouts. Many of the photographers worked in both fields. These men's magazines were catering to a more sophisticated and moneyed class of male who wanted the layouts to be glossy and glamorous, to

⁸⁵ See McDowell, C. *Dressed to Kill: Sex, Power & Clothes*. London: Hutchinson 1992:168.

⁸⁶ The "beauty myth" as identified by Wolf is explored in Chapter One and Two in terms of what is portrayed as physical perfection and desirability.

present him with the ‘perfect’ / model woman as part of the fantasy of ownership, as identified by Berger. Many supermodels and actresses did ‘bare-all’ photo spreads for these men’s magazines. In a swap-over of styling – where fashion photography had lifted the level of beauty, class and glamour in men’s magazines – the image of the sexual playmate now entered women’s magazines. The visual cues of beauty pornography served to reshape female sexuality. Wolf elaborates:

This made the beauty thinking that followed crucially different from all that had preceded it. Seeing a face anticipating orgasm, even if it is staged, is a powerful sell: In the absence of other sexual images, many women came to believe that they must have that face, that body, to achieve that ecstasy. Beauty pornography looks like this: The perfected woman lies prone, pressing down her pelvis. Her back arches, her mouth is open, her eyes shut, her nipples erect; there is a fine spray of moisture over her golden skin. The position is female superior; the stage of arousal, the plateau phase just preceding orgasm⁸⁷ (Wolf 1992:132).

The expression of sexuality as represented in fashion features, advertisements, films and television programmes all feature beautiful women in beautiful ecstasy: “The reader understands from them that she will have to look like that if she wants to feel like that” (Wolf 1992:133). We may see the use of what I term the ‘orgasmic’ mouth cue in both the *Gucci Envy* (figure 140) and *Rush* (figure 139 & 141) advertising campaigns, which clearly work on the ‘sex sells’ ethos. The male body in figure 140 is merely a sign for any male to place himself within this context. The *Rush* advertising campaign features both male and female models simulating sexual ecstasy as they are portrayed in poses which display the signs of this state – their heads are thrown back, their eyes are closed and their mouths are open in an orgasmic moan. The idea of sexual passion is further effected by blurring the image, as though the viewer is looking at it through half open eyes – we thus become the implied vicarious lover.

In her important essay *Pornography and Fantasy*, Elizabeth Cowie writes, “What is portrayed [in fantasy] is not the object of desire, but a scenario in which certain wishes are presented.” The pornographic image of a woman touching her genitals does not trigger “an automatic stimulus-response” in a heterosexual male viewer.

⁸⁷ This description could refer directly to Sophie Dahl in figure 71.

Rather, it is the staging of “a scene of desire” and a “sign” whereby the “image of female genitals stands for something else, the man’s pleasure.” Among the wishes expressed in this image, Cowie suggests, are the following: “She waits for me, she is already excited, she is showing me her genitals because she wants to see mine” (Cowie 1993:137-139). In women’s magazines, the fantasy that is presented adopts the same language. The image reads as a sign of sexuality and sexual ecstasy; the viewer reads ‘she feels ecstasy, she is beautiful therefore she is desired’. What this serves to do is to create a visual image in a woman’s head of what sexual desirability looks like, and she comes to survey herself: “In only twenty years, the myth has slid a pane of imagery to separate women from their bodies during the act of love. . . . It inhibits in her something she needs to live, and gives her the ultimate anaphrodisiac: the self-critical sexual gaze” (Wolf 1992:149).

As shown in Chapter One, most women are not happy with their bodies, most feel some level of discomfort or even hate towards parts of their bodies, specifically their breasts, hips, thighs, stomach and face. Wolf asserts that this:

is not aesthetic distaste, but deep sexual shame. The parts of the body vary. But what each woman who describes it shares is the conviction that that is what the pornography of beauty most fetishizes. Breasts, thighs, buttocks, bellies; the most sexually central parts of women, whose ‘ugliness’ therefore becomes an obsession (Wolf 1992:150).

Finally Wolf shows how the use of beauty pornography in women’s magazines leads to feelings of low self esteem and finally to women suppressing their sexuality – thus women then oppress themselves (Wolf 1992:150). We may see this as a further exposition of Foucault’s Panopticon self-surveillance theory.

Wolf reminds us that what is being sold is not sexual satisfaction, but images which enforce and create sexual dissatisfaction. The sexual act itself as presented in popular culture also creates a scenario that does not fit reality, therefore the real experience will seem an empty failure – either it will not be romantic enough, or not passionate enough, or the critical self gaze removes any pleasure from the experience, creating anxiety and frustration. Sexual frustration may be assuaged

through consumption of other pleasures that advertisers persuade us will fill this psychic black hole (Wolf 1992:150): food, clothes, shoes, etc. The sexually dissatisfied consumer will consume more, presuming either that the problem lies within themselves, or that the ecstasy promised in the advertisement will become available to them through the purchase of that product.

3.3.1 The sexual slave

Ingres's *Le Bain Turc*, (1862 – see figure 3), is a variant of the slave or captive woman theme as identified by Lerner. Ingres heightens the erotic tension of the painting through various devices: firstly we see a mass of naked bodies, then we become aware of the implication of the erotic 'deviance' of lesbian sexuality, and finally we realise that we are the voyeurs within the scenario. "We can also read the composition as something kinetic. Instead of being in a crowd of women, this is one woman displaying herself before us in every conceivable variety of pose" (Lucie-Smith 1991:181). Ingres had already learnt how to distort, manipulate and elongate the female figure for erotic sensual purposes. We see this manipulation of the female form in the illustrations of Albert Vargas in the mid-twentieth century and then again in the latter part of the century through airbrushing and 'photo shopping' of women's bodies in fashion magazines.⁸⁸ Nicolas Mirzoeff claims this physical distortion is a visible manifestation of the sexual transgression of the female sexual slave. "Ingres had achieved what the medicalization of women's bodies in the nineteenth century would later struggle to do, in making the deviancy of women physically visible" (Mirzoeff 1995:110). Ingres's distortion is a visible sign of women's *otherness*.

Within the context of the *harem*, the slave woman had no choice but to surrender. The isolation of women within the *harem* was "on the assumption that the woman is a powerful and dangerous being" (Mernissi cited in Mirzoeff 1995:109). The *harem* represented a place where women's sexual power could be contained through captivity. The term *harim* means forbidden in Arabic, and at the centre of the erotic sexualised fantasy of the *harem* was the imperial harem of Istanbul,

which no western visitor had even seen (Mirzoeff 1995:108). The *harem* may be read as a fantasy construction of repressed sexual desire where the relationships of domination and submission may play out on the most simplistic level; the slave woman may not refuse her master or his guests (Mirzoeff 1995:108). As stated previously, the sealed mound desexualises the female and removes her threat. We may say that this operates as a fetish.

Woman is desexualised at the very moment when she is stripped naked. We may therefore say that we are dealing in a sense with a spectacle based on fear, or rather on the pretence of fear, as if eroticism went no further than a sort of delicious terror, whose ritual signs have only to be announced to evoke at once the idea of sex and its conjuration (Roland Barthes cited in Mirzoeff 1995:130).

Entry into the harem was permitted only to the Sultan and the harem servants, of whom a degree of physical mutilation was required – either they were castrated, deaf or dwarfs (Mirzoeff 1995:08). As Mirzoeff observes, the angle of the gaze within Ingres's *Le Bain Turc* is from the viewpoint of someone standing above, looking down on the women at his feet (Mirzoeff 1995:111). Furthermore, the circular shape of the canvas re-iterates the ocular aspect of looking.⁸⁹ We may also read the shape as connotative of spying, through a lens or a keyhole. We are the voyeurs within this context – the uninvited, prohibited guests. As Mirzoeff notes, many travellers would try and gain access to the harem dressed as women, which in itself has implications of impotence and castration, and even though they might gain access they would be unable to act (Mirzoeff 1995:113). The very presence of these women desexes the male.

It was presumed that harem women were supposed to have same-sex encounters. The painting depicts the women as naked and in close proximity to one another; a few of the women are caught in sexual embraces. This takes on the aspect of a performance, it extends to playing musical instruments, dancing, or, more

⁸⁸ The visual distortion of the female body may be seen as ultimately leading to the dramatic increase of plastic surgery.

⁸⁹ Freud associates scopophilia, or the pleasure of looking, with objectification, through the controlling and curious gaze, which we may see as made manifest through paintings or the visual representation of women (Mulvey 1989:16,17).

importantly, writhing in an enactment of desire⁹⁰ (Mirzoeff 1995:125). As we shall see, there is a similar physical space and a contorting towards the viewer which allows for *his* inclusion within this scenario in images of contemporary pseudo-lesbian scenarios. This portrayal of lesbianism also operates on another level, that of the fetish. Within the context of the lesbian encounter the phallus is redundant, and thus the need for the penis. Therefore the threat of castration is removed, it is allayed through the fetish. Freud sees the fetish “as a displacement of sexual desire away from the female lack of the penis on to the fetish object”⁹¹ (Mirzoeff 1995:114), in this case the object being the ‘lesbian’. “A woman who acts as if she already possessed a penis is for the watcher, a reassuring spectacle, in that she is less likely to try and rob him of his own” (Lucie-Smith 1991:202).

Lucie-Smith argues that the portrayal of female lovers (which he refers to as sexual deviation) would have served to satisfy the male’s curiosity about what two women would do to one another “when they are alone together” (Lucie-Smith 1991:204). He is supposing that the female homosexual sex act is played out on the same terms as the heterosexual sex act, that the lesbian lover would ‘have her own penis’ or penis-like substitute, thus assuming that the penis is still relevant within this sexual act. Should a male voyeur try to insinuate himself into a lesbian scenario, he is more likely to be ‘castrated’, if by no other act than rejection. Although the exclusion of the male from the lesbian sex act seems to be understood socially, there is an increasing representation of heterosexual women depicted as freely engaging in sexual encounters with other heterosexual women.⁹²

⁹⁰ Not dissimilar to the way in which female pop stars writhe and moan in music video performances.

⁹¹ According to Freud, “the fetishist adopts as a fetish that which he sees in the last moment in which the woman could be still regarded as phallic” – thus the shoe for instance becomes an object filled with phallic connotations. Mirzoeff notes that the term ‘fetish’ comes from the Portuguese word *feticaria*, which was used to name African figure carvings, so that particularly within the aspect of discussing the *oriental other* it is interesting to note that “fetishism was literally unimaginable without the colonial intervention of Europeans into Africa” (Mirzoeff 1995:114).

⁹² The opposite display, of heterosexual men engaging with one another in a pseudo-homosexual exploration would never be displayed as the portrayal of homosexual men engaging sexually with one another in mainstream media is practically non-existent. Lucie-Smith explains: “The tabu against male homosexuality being so much stronger than the tabu against lesbianism, homosexual feelings between men have mostly been forced to express themselves in much more devious ways. One way is through an interest in the androgyne” (Lucie-Smith 1991:204). Ultimately the display

This is then a performance for the male spectator and speaks more of his sexual desires than the desire of the females involved.

The advertisement for Alexander McQueen's perfume *Kingdom*⁹³ (figure 106) may be seen as a contemporary example of the *harem* and *Le Bain Turc*. Like the women who populate Ingres' world, the models in this advertisement are all naked and drape themselves languidly over one another. This languidness may be read as sexual satiation or drugged anticipation, or they are consumed by their desires and made weak by them. In either event, their body language speaks of their sexual submission, they will offer no resistance. The perfume bottle in both shape and colour is a representation of the vulva, while the overlapping forms of the female body may be read as the labial lips. The name of the perfume refers to the ownership of women within a kingdom or *harem*; within this context all women are sexual slaves at the service of the male.

Gustave Courbet's painting *The Sleepers* (see figure 103) is not a representation of lesbianism, rather it revolves around the idea of women performing for the male spectator and, more importantly, allows access for his inclusion within this performance. Should the women involved be lesbians there would be no room for the inclusion of the male within the sexual act, as they would have no desire for the male. Therefore I have termed this a portrayal of pseudo-lesbianism.

Courbet's painting of a lesbian act is echoed in figure 104, which is an advertisement for a radio station. There is no text to explain or justify the image, just the logo for the radio station. Both models in figures 104 and 105 are the physical 'types' associated with men's soft porn magazines – lithe, blonde-haired and 'sexy'. The two women are entwined in a naked embrace in a bath without water. They illustrate a titillating male sexual fantasy, which serves to imprint the

of women engaging in any kind of sexual activity is part of her objectification within the patriarchal paradigm.

⁹³ I am interested by the fact that MacQueen's surname contains 'Queen', yet he has named his perfume – for women – Kingdom.

anatomy of male desire on the female reader: ‘this is the performance expected of you’.

Figures 107a to e presents a series of images to advertise the fashion house *Versace*, which is now headed by Donatella Versace⁹⁴. The story is coded to read that these are prostitutes who have just finished a sexual performance for a client in a hotel room. Sociologist Jack Katz would identify the black stockings and suspenders, black satin and black patent leather jackets and ultra short mini skirts modelled as suggestive of dominatrix gear or fetish fashion associated with the deviance of ‘being bad’:

all the provocatively sensual evils of ‘the night’ are powerfully charismatic. Sneaky thrills are exciting. Looking tough, evil, alien, and ‘bad’ has a broad appeal, especially to young people. As a result, images of deviance, ‘whorish styles...torn shirts and motorcycles,’ permeate popular culture because advertisers recognise that an ‘association with deviance’ helps sell products (Katz cited in Steele 1997:193).

One of the models remains with her back facing the camera throughout the ‘story’, presenting her buttocks to the viewer, which, as McKinnon, Dworkin and Dittrichs show, is a device which reduces the person to a sexual object (Dittrichs 2000:online, Dworkin & MacKinnon cited in French 1992:166). The model who faces the camera never actively engages with the viewer – she therefore does not deny his gaze. Her body language reads as tired and depleted, the heavily ringed eyes (known as “heroin chic” in the fashion world) imply that she has taken drugs.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Since the death of her brother and company director, Gianni, Donatella has made major changes to the company’s image. This may be seen in the change from European, Baroque extravagance, which Gianni favoured, to an embracing of pop culture and pornography by Donatella. It is not uncommon to find women embracing patriarchal concepts without challenging or questioning them. Female pop stars such as Madonna, Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears have all used the lesbian spectacle as part of their video and stage performances – most likely to boost their popularity and record sales. Donatella took over from Gianni after his murder on 15 July 1997. http://www.vogue.co.uk/whos_who/Donatella_Versace/default.html.

⁹⁵ The connection between prostitution and drug addiction is well documented. However, in most cases it is presented as condemnation; that women want money for drugs, therefore they become prostitutes, or that they earn such good money as prostitutes that they have no need to live and work in ‘normal’ society – thus they are condemned, stigmatised and cast out of society where they are seen as dangerous and destructive of ‘family values’. Why they become prostitutes in the first place is never investigated, nor is it possible that they might become drug users as a way of coping with prostituting themselves. Often it is suggested that they have become prostitutes because they are nymphomaniacs. What is never dealt with, or looked at, is the men who are

The *Dior* campaigns featured in figures 108, 109, 110, 111 and 112 are all characteristic of beauty pornography or the “porno chic” style that John Galliano⁹⁶ has brought to the *Dior* fashion house since becoming head designer. Looking at these advertising campaigns we see Wolf’s beauty pornography in action. Figures 108a to e play out the ‘girl on girl’ fantasy common to pornography. The body language reads as contortions of desire: mouths are open in orgasmic breathlessness, positioned close to one another but lips not touching. The models embrace one another and hand gestures intimate sexual congress; hands nearly slide into pants, fingers into mouths, hands around necks, legs ride up bodies. It is all an expression of sexual performance for the male spectator-owner. The positioning of the female model’s body allows for the inclusion of the male within the embrace; by turning the body towards the viewer or by looking at the camera, they invite him in.

The picture is made to appeal to *his* sexuality. It has nothing to do with her sexuality. ...The woman’s sexual passion needs to be minimized so that the spectator may feel that he has the monopoly of such passion. Women are there to feed an appetite, not to have any of their own (Berger 1986:55).

The images are presented close-up, often cropping parts of the body or the face from the image, leaving behind a distilled essence of sexual desire and ecstasy.

3.3.2 Glamour / beauty pornography

involved, the customer, the pimp and the abuser who often foreshadows a woman becoming a prostitute.

⁹⁶ John Galliano graduated from London's St Martins College of Art & Design in 1983. His style was described as modish costumes combining “romance & androgyny”. Galliano then secured a contract with luxury conglomerate LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton). In 1995 Galliano was appointed chief designer for Givenchy (part of the LVMH company). “He grabbed headlines with a series of risqué designs aimed to transform the profile and fortunes of the back-dated company”. A year later, October 1996, Galliano became head designer for Christian Dior (also part of LVMH). *Dior* was characterized by a more genteel and classic elegance, but in order to revive the companies image and sales, Galliano brought in a range of ready to wear fashion that seems to have taken its inspiration from street hookers. In 2000, he described his artistic inspiration came from the “*les clochards*, the homeless people,” that he would jog by daily in Paris, adding that he “hoped to expose the pure decadence of the couture by ‘turning it inside out’”. http://www.vogue.co.uk/whos_who/John_Galliano/default.html.

Contemporary advertising and fashion stories often use conventions associated with pornography such as the camera angle and the cropping of the figure in the picture format. According to Dittrichs:

Women's appraisal of self-worth is determined by appearance, particularly as revealed by the female body or body parts. Hiding or severing a person's features, particularly facial features (which often reveal clues about a person's identity/uniqueness), enables the observer's attitude to shift towards objectification: treating and thinking about the subject as an object without needs, feelings or humanity (Dittrichs 2000:online).

This is a device which is regularly used in pornographic films and photo-shoots for men's magazines such as *Hustler*, *Penthouse* and *Playmate* where the image of the female is often cropped down to the genitalia. If we follow the idea that women are supposed to wish to be the models they see, this kind of cropping serves to re-enforce for women their status as sexual objects, that they are just bodies, and not personas.

The advertising campaigns presented in figures 109 to 112 further illustrate Wolf's exposition of "beauty pornography". The models are oiled up, slick and glossy, a 'look' one associates with soft-core pornography. Their hair appears stringy with perspiration. Figures 109, 110, 111 and 112 work with the association of the party girl and the street hooker. This is even more overt in figures 111a and b, as the model is photographed outside on a street at night. She is made anonymous by bright back lighting which casts her features into deep shadow. It appears to be a characteristic of Galliano's *Dior* campaigns to crop the image and confine the model's body within a tight claustrophobic space, which makes the viewer feel that he/she is being pushed right up against the model. Many of the campaigns feature on double-page spreads within the first few pages of a magazine, presenting an 'in your face' assault. It is not only the bodies that are glossy, the images themselves are slick with their richly coloured and thick glossy paper, thus increasing their tactility, and therefore the impact they have on the viewer.

In the 2003 February edition of *The Face* magazine, photographer Miles Aldridge and stylist Anthony Unwin have created a fashion story titled “discarded/regarded”, employing the same coding, body language and styling as soft-core pornography. The models, wearing designer clothing and jewelry, are positioned in transgressive sexual poses. The fashion story was printed as posters pasted onto the walls in a garage-like setting (see figure 113a), the corrugated sheeting of construction sites (see figure 113b), shop windows and even page 3-type newspaper fish and chips wrappings illustrating posters of calendar girls and X-rated sex service advertisements. This campaign illustrated a variety of facts: that soft-core pornography is everywhere in society, and that these types of images sexually objectify the female and present female sexuality as ‘whorish’ and ‘dirty’. It also demonstrates that images once seen as kitsch and low class are now being reviewed as socially ‘cool’ because of their transgression and associated deviance. Finally, it shows that women might choose not to buy pornography, but that they still cannot avoid the images of soft-core pornography which have infiltrated their magazines. In this way women are being taught to find their own sexual objectification ‘cool’, sexy, funny, glamorous, transgressive and therefore exciting.

For at least the past four years *Buffalo jeans* (please refer to figures 114a to c) have featured a ‘Lolita’ type teenage girl – sexually innocent while being sexually provocative – in their advertising⁹⁷ campaigns. The girls are either placed in a confined space, such as a corner or countertop, or the image is cropped to confine her within the picture frame, which creates the illusion that she is backed into a corner by the presumed male spectator / predator; her jeans are presented as the sexually provocative last line of resistance. The association between sexuality, jeans and resistance was created in the mind of the consumer audience by Calvin Klein.⁹⁸ A pubescent Brooke Shields was photographed by Richard Avedon, for

⁹⁷ Figure 114c is a poster from a bus stop, the sexually provocative and sexually available woman is illustrated everywhere, the image follows women around, they can never escape its message.

⁹⁸ Dubbed ‘Calvin the Conqueror’ by *WWD* and listed as one of America’s 25 most influential people by *Time*, Klein has helped shape the casual wear industry and has played a key role in modern advertising http://www.vogue.co.uk/whos_who/Calvin_Klein/default.html.

his now famous 1979 jeans campaign with the slogan, "You know what comes between me and my Calvins? Nothing."

As a fashion industry leader, Klein's campaigns are always pushing the limits of what is permissible, while also being an expression of the *zeitgeist*. Most advertising campaigns create an 'image' for its product, Klein's advertising campaigns, however, center around a persona who becomes the product icon. The 1980s featured South African model Josie Borain; these, too, were controversial in that her 'look' was one of wiry, athletic, lithe androgyny, playing into the unease of the period over gender divisions. The 1990s featured model Kate Moss who became the icon for a range of *Calvin Klein* perfumes and underwear. In figures 115a and b, Moss represents the object of obsession in a campaign for 'Obsession' perfume for men, the images constituted a photograph album through which one follows her around, casting the viewer in the role of voyeur.

Supermodel Christy Turlington also became attached to the Klein brand name. Figure 116 depicts her in black underwear and a sexually provocative pose. The use of supermodels in campaigns such as these create a sense of familiarity among the consumer audience. This draws the female consumer into the world of representation and the story it is telling, for, as Wolf shows, these "are her models".

The *Sisley* advertisement in figures 117a and b⁹⁹ consists of two photographs of a young model, taken outside at night. The girl is modelling a body-hugging see-through dress, which reveals that she is not wearing underwear. She poses on a reclining lounge in sexually provocative and available positions. The first image shows her touching her pubis through the dress, while the other hand pulls up her dress, she is directly engaging the viewer, thereby inviting him in. The second image shows her lying on her stomach, spreading her legs and lifting her buttocks,

⁹⁹ She appears about 15 or 16 years old. The consistent portrayal of very young models in images that portray overt sexuality is, I believe, leading to more and more young people feeling the pressure to become sexually active before they are mature enough to deal with their own sexuality. Not only does this leave them vulnerable to emotional distress, anxiety and depression, but also to the possibility of AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.

she looks over her shoulder at the viewer. The pictures have a snapshot immediacy to them, creating associations with the amateur photographer, the voyeur, the paedophile, and even the drugging of teenage girls at parties and the ensuing 'date' rape.

In figures 118a and b, the model is once again a very young teenager in a night-time scene, and is an even more overt *Sisley* advertisement featured in a German magazine. The first image is a close-up, cropped view of the girl's buttocks; she is riding a male leg, while 'his' hand is placed on her buttock, pulling her towards him. Her dress is pulled up, revealing her buttocks and exposing her underwear. Her clothing is wet and is covered in bits of grass. The second image is a frontal shot of 'the couple' but just shows her face as she looks up. His face has been cropped out of the image. Once again it appears to be an amateur snapshot, with a flashbulb highlighting the figures and isolating them in surrounding darkness. The male in the image stands behind her and holds her possessively at the hip, but the exclusion of his head allows for the appropriation and ownership of her sexuality by the male spectator. These are not fantasy soft-porn stories in men's magazine, but advertisements for clothing in women's magazines.

The orgasmic mouth, cropped body or facial features, closely confined physical space and 'crotch shot' are all devices used to create these erotic images in the advertising media. The poses and body language are the most commonly repeated devices within the contemporary pin-up genre and are instantly recognisable codes and signs. Figures 119 to 125 feature an isolated female positioned frontally towards the spectator with her legs spread apart. The markers of mature female sexuality are absent, as most of the models are young, thin and hairless, as Berger explains: "Hair is associated with sexual power, with passion" (1986:55). The lure of these advertisements is not the reality of female sexuality, but 'availability and surrender'. "Women are there to feed an appetite, not to have any of their own" (Berger 1986:55).

The passive female sex object is played out in a very surreal context in the *Patrick Cox wannabe* advertisements (figures 126a, b¹⁰⁰ & c) photographed by David La Chapelle. He has presented the models as plastic and perfect: they are sexual mannequins. In figure 126a the male model is also presented as a sexual object; his back is towards the viewer and his buttocks are outlined by white straps, presenting them as the primary focus, which makes this a very homo-erotic image. His dark skin is oiled and glossy, a visual antithesis to the pale, matte, airbrushed coolness of the female body. She is shown in a state of sexual reverie. Her eyes are closed and her head tilts back as she slowly pulls the strap off her shoulder. The whole scene is played out in a men's changing / locker room – culturally a site loaded with sexual connotations. However, the whole image has an 'unreal' feeling to it, making it an enactment of a sexual fantasy.

David La Chapelle is a highly recognised and sought after photographer. Figures 127, 128 and 129, taken from a book on his photography, demonstrate his personal style, which is characterised by surreal settings and the presentation of women as sexual mannequins, dolls or fantasy objects. In figure 127 La Chapelle's models are dressed up to look like 18th or 19th century brothel girls; one model stares in shock at the viewer, while the other, laughing maniacally, squeezes her breast so that a stream of milk showers into a bowl of cereal. The story seems to refer to a kind of sexual decadence and madness – the hysteria¹⁰¹ of women. Figure 129 is of rap artist Lil' Kim. La Chapelle has posed her, open mouthed, to look like a blow-up doll, inviting the use of her as a sexual object.

¹⁰⁰ Figures 191a and b feature model Sophie Dahl – her association as a sex object now being fixed through campaigns such as the *Opium* advertisement previously discussed. While she is a recognisable face and name, it has become fixed to a passive display of sexual availability – she is now a mannequin, an icon of the sexual object.

¹⁰¹ Hysterical, from the Greek word *hustera* meaning womb, *hustericus* – of the womb, so to be hysterical is classified or engendered as female behaviour – from hysteria which means, a **wild uncontrollable emotion** or excitement, a functional disturbance of the nervous system, of psychoneurotic origin – thus once again women's emotions or states of mind are pathologised and seen as excessive and uncontrollable (*The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* 8th Ed 1990:582). The hysteric was part of a group which included the insane, the delinquent and the homosexual, who were divided off from society as part of the "dividing practises" of discipline and normalization, starting in the Seventeenth Century, as defined and identified by Foucault (cited in Deveaux 1999:237).

Figure 128 features supermodel Naomi Campbell, posed naked and crouching in front of a poster of a snarling jaguar, juxtaposed in such a way that it appears as though the jaguar is about to mount her from behind. Both Naomi and the cat are snarling. The positioning of a naked black woman within the context of a jungle theme aligns the sexuality of black women as *other* within the discourse of colonialism. The use of animal print fabrics (also refer to figures 121 & 125) insinuates that the female is unable to control or rationalise her animal passions.

Figures 130a and b are advertisements for *Emanuel Ungaro* and feature a pale blond model with a white dog. The dog wears studded collars and harnesses which insinuate S&M fetishistic sexual practises and bestiality. The dog licks her foot in 130a and is posed in 130b to appear as though he is mounting her from behind. In both images the model closes her eyes and appears to be in a state of sexual ecstasy. One may apply many of the definitions MacKinnon and Dworkin have stipulated as to what constitutes a pornographic image. We may also see Wolf's definition of glamour pornography at work – the image is artistic, sophisticated, stylish and shocking. As demonstrated by these examples, the advertising industry is creating and getting away with images that are increasingly sexually abusing the female persona.

3.3.3 The voyeur: viewing as action.

The story of *Susannah and the Elders* (as presented in Titian's painting in figure 1) revolves around sexuality and morality and hinges upon voyeurism; the display of the female nude is made more exciting by the fact that she is being watched. As Lucie Smith explains:

The story of Susannah can be treated in a number of ways. For example, the girl can be as yet unaware that she is observed, though this fact is obvious to us who look at the composition. Alternatively, she can be frightened, and her shame at being seen naked can be used to heighten our sense of sexual arousal. The treatment of the elders can also be given a variety of inflections. They are sometimes shown as impotent dotards, as powerless to move from lust to action as the spectator himself (Lucie-Smith 1992:174).

In some examples of the story, Susannah is portrayed as watching herself in a mirror – thus re-enforcing the aspect of the spectacle and the position in which women find themselves of surveying their own femininity. While the subject is supposedly unaware of the voyeur's gaze, the viewer is active in looking and therefore, as Lucie-Smith asserts, "there is one thing which any work of art with an erotic content does to us[, i]f we are stirred by it in the slightest degree, we find ourselves playing the role of the voyeur. The essence of the voyeur's position is his removal from action. He watches and participates in fantasy" (1992:171).

Figures 131a and b are representative of the contemporary voyeuristic 'Big Brother' syndrome of reality TV, real-time internet web-sites, satellite surveillance, security cameras and high-tech spy equipment such as fibre optic cabling. A model lies on a table and is surrounded by cameras and television monitors, which fragment her and divide her up into body parts. She gazes into one of the cameras, which creates a mirror repetition of looking and seeing herself being reflected over and over. The second version of the advertisement takes the fragmentation of her representation even further as her head is cropped from the image but is shown repeatedly in monitors behind her – thus it succeeds in removing her persona from the object of her body. The models appear emotionally detached from their bodies as they bend their legs and spread them apart. In both images the scenarios suggest a clinical medical / gynecological examination. The studded leather she wears and the stiletto heeled shoes are all visual cues for the dominatrix, and are characteristic of the team of *Dolce & Gabbana*¹⁰² designer signature of "fetishism meets femininity". However, in a reversal of visual semiotics, the dominatrix is now controlled through the detached lens of the camera. Female viewers associate with the female model; by

¹⁰² Partners both in life and in business, design duo Domenico Dolce (b. 1958, near Palermo, Sicily) and Stefano Gabbana (b.1962, Milan, Italy) are known for making "stars look like stars". Their 'sexy' styles are often to be seen on the likes of Madonna, for whom they created the costumes for her *Girly Show* in 1993. Taking inspiration in particular from Italy's prestigious film history, "When we design it's like a movie," says Domenico Dolce. "We think of a story and we design the clothes to go with it." *D&G* trademarks include underwear-as-outerwear (such as corsets and bra fastenings), and the predominant use of the colour black. Meanwhile their fetish-meets-femininity collections are always backed by powerful advertising campaigns. Described as "fundamentally making women look, quite simply, devastatingly sexy and dubbed the "Gilbert and

placing themselves within her context they place themselves on display and, as these images re-enforce, they then survey their own femininity (Berger 1986:63).

Figures 133 and 134a and b represent the street-wear fashion label *Miss Sixty*. These were all taken from the same advertising campaign that followed consecutively in folded over, double-page spreads. The act of opening out the folded image becomes in itself an active ‘peeping Tom’ act. Figure 133 shows a more typical soft-core pornographic representation of heterosexual intimacy – the man pulls the woman towards him, however figures 134a and b represent a reversal of typical gendered positions. In both cases the female model is lying over the male. Both models are topless; in 134a the male model’s jeans are unbuttoned and seem torn open; he is busy pulling off her shorts. In figure 134b the female dominates the male, pinning his arms down to the bed where he lies, with his jeans pulled down below his knees, beneath her. She leans over him with her knee positioned directly in front of his groin; her breasts just above and obscuring his face as he strains his head up towards her. The female body has become a sign for the dominant subject position. The reversal of roles has created an erotic sexual performance which we, the viewers, watch in a series of installments. Our role as voyeur is secured through the desire to see what happens next as we are drawn into the intimacy of the scene through the act of opening up each page.

The South African fashion group *YDE*¹⁰³, has established a reputation for themselves through shocking and controversial publicity campaigns; their buy-line is *Why? – because we can!* Figure 132 shows their use of the conventions of soft-core pornography – featuring one male with two blonde buxom females – to inform this advertisement. The obvious intimation is that the male model and the seated blonde are about to have sex (either intercourse or oral). Their genital area has been blocked out by a large white blank with a dot- to-dot game on it (which

George of Italian fashion", by 1997, their company reported a turnover of £400 million..." proving that sex really does sell http://www.vogue.co.uk/whos_who/Dolce_and_Gabbana/default.html.

¹⁰³ They are one of the influential sponsors behind an annual art event staged in Cape Town, providing further motivation for Berger’s assertion that advertising is the art of the twentieth century.

when you join the dots forms the word ‘Why’). The ‘game’ gimmick censors the image making it ‘decent’ enough to by-pass censorship. However, enough remains visible for the viewer to connect the ‘dots’ behind the blank to form a picture in their mind’s eye. Thus, without our permission, the advertisers enter the privacy of our minds and create a pornographic image with an imprinted meaning and message.

Berger regards the act of looking as a choice. We can only see that which we look at. As a result of looking we are brought into contact with that which we see. However, being unable to touch a person in an image allows us to distance and objectify the image, for “[t]o touch something is to situate oneself in relation to it” (Berger 1986:8).

If we combine Lucie-Smith’s hypothesis of the frustrated voyeur with Wolf’s assertion that:

Ads do not sell sex – that would be counterproductive, if it meant that heterosexual women and men turned to one another and were gratified. What they sell is sexual discontent. But sexual satisfaction eases the stranglehold of materialism, since status symbols no longer look sexual, but irrelevant. Product lust weakens where emotional and sexual lust intensifies. (Wolf 1992:143, 144)

Therefore keeping us sexually frustrated makes for a greater consumer society; where sexual satisfaction disappoints, product lust can take over. Sexual discontent can be created in the following ways: firstly by presenting an image of sex as a completely wild and passionate fantasy that reality has a hard time living up to or, as the next section will demonstrate; by presenting sex between couples as a boring ‘reality’.

3.3.4 The ambiguous portrayal of heterosexual intimacy

Although my previous discussions have included male models, the focus was primarily on the isolated motif of the female model presented as performer and sexually available object for the male spectator-owner. Where included, the male models in these previous examples were not an active part of the image and were

presented either with their heads cropped off, or with their backs to the viewer – as such I did not discuss the portrayal of sexual or relational dynamics. I now look at the portrayal of heterosexual intimacy and the ambiguous message that is emerging. “[P]opular culture [has] recast tender, intimate sex as boring (my emphasis). Anonymity [has become] the aphrodisiac of the moment” (Wolf 1992:132).

Figures 135, 136 and 137 all show advertisements for *Cesare Paciotti* and feature similar models to those of the *Patrick Cox* campaigns. Figure 135 shows a woman lying on a couch; a man sits next to her and lifts up her leg while looking at her crotch. Figure 136 is set in a bedroom; a woman is getting undressed in the manner of a striptease, positioned in such a way that she is baring her crotch to the man lying on the bed across the room from her. However, he is ignoring her, and is watching the television. Figure 137 is set in a corner of a room and features a man sitting on a chair with a woman standing over him, straddling his legs. She presses her hands against the wall and leans her head back with her eyes closed. Her crotch is directly in front of his face, but he appears to be looking down at his own lap, his hands by his side. One can either read that he is uninterested in her sexual performance, or the art director is relying on the viewer’s knowledge of the ‘lap dance’ where the male customer is not allowed to touch the female performer. All three images have a feeling of suspension and detachment with a certain lackluster pathos. These scenes reveal the estrangement of relationships¹⁰⁴ within contemporary society; the female believes she has to perform sexually for the male, but the fantasy never fits the reality. As Wolf explains:

So even those women who take men’s beauty pornography to heart and try, and even succeed, in looking like it, are doomed to disappointment. Men who read it don’t do so because they want women to look like that. The attraction of what they are holding is that it is not a woman, but a two-dimensional woman-shaped blank. The appeal of the material is not the fantasy that the model will come to life; it is precisely that she will not,

¹⁰⁴ An alternative scenario may be that of the pairing of the beautiful heterosexual woman and the good-looking gay man. This has become a popular new pairing in movie and television story lines. It presents a story of unrequited love which has a pathos that many can relate to. In general, however, the impact of the homosexual man in fashion and advertising presents an interesting and complex field of study which is far too great for this thesis to tackle, but bears further investigation.

ever. Her coming to life would ruin the vision. It is not about life (Wolf 1992:176).

We are sold the lie that this is freedom of speech, but as Wolf shows, the representations of sex that we see in advertisements, films and TV are a staged mock-up of desire. The viewer is left feeling confused, frustrated and perhaps even isolated, wondering why their life does not compare, and this, as both Berger and Wolf have shown fuels a need to consume in order to satiate product lust.

One of the most influential designers in the contemporary fashion world (previously mentioned with regards to the *Opium* advertisement of figure 84) is Tom Ford¹⁰⁵, head designer for both the *Gucci* and *YSL* fashion houses. He oversees every aspect of these label's including the *Gucci Envy* (figure 140) and *Rush* (figure 139 & 141) advertising campaigns. Figure 138 features Ford's latest offering for the *Gucci* label. The model stands against a wall (her head cropped off) and is pulling down her panties to reveal her pubic hair shaven into the shape of *Gucci's* 'G' logo. A male model kneels in front of her, holding her legs as he looks at the 'G'. This image does not display the same libidinous passion seen in the *Rush* and *Envy* images, but portrays the same lassitude as displayed in figures 135, 136 and 137. The photograph was taken by photographer Mario Testino¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Born in Texas in 1962, Tom Ford has become one of the most influential designers of the last decade, having joined Gucci in 1990. Ford was hired as chief women's ready-to-wear designer, and later appointed design director. When, in 1994, Gucci was acquired by a Bahrain-based investment firm called Investcorp, Ford was promoted to creative director and moved to Milan with his partner, journalist Richard Buckley. In his first year he was credited with putting the glamour back into fashion. "In 1995, he brought in French stylist Carine Roitfeld and photographer Mario Testino to create a series of new, modern ad campaigns for the company. By 1999, the house, which had been almost bankrupt when Ford joined, was valued at about \$4.3 billion." Gucci then bought a controlling stake in Yves Saint Laurent, where Ford was appointed creative director of YSL, too, and communications director of the house's ready-to-wear business, while continuing to design for Gucci. "Historically, [Gucci] is Sophia Loren. Yves Saint Laurent is Catherine Deneuve. They're both sexy," he told British *Vogue* in February 2001. "It's just that Gucci is a little more obvious than Saint Laurent. **The YSL woman might tie her boyfriend up and drip hot wax on him before they have sex, for instance. The Gucci woman is just going to have sex.**" (my emphasis) In his present role at Gucci, he designs shoes, watches, luggage and men's and women's wear, and plans the company's advertising campaigns and overseeing the development of their two new fragrances, *Envy* and *Rush*
http://www.vogue.co.uk/whos_who/Tom_Ford/default.html.

¹⁰⁶ "Though often classed among the Luxury Realists of fashion (along with Steven Meisel, Craig McDean and David Sims), Testino refuses to analyse his work, preferring to see it as a visual rather than an intellectual endeavour. However, his fashion photography is so well studied that it has widely been granted the status of art, and has been the subject of countless exhibitions.

who is known for his controversial and sexually explicit fashion photography. Both Testino and Ford defend the image as being tasteful and humorous, explaining that the 'G' stands for both the brand logo and a woman's 'G-spot'. They claim that it is a turn-around representation of female pleasure and that the male model is there to submit to the woman's sexual needs.¹⁰⁷ But, as mentioned, the male model appears disinterested and unaroused. The appearance of her body also contributes to this strange alienation, as she is thin and flawless – like a mannequin. As Wolf asserts, “[i]mages that flatten sex into “beauty”, and flatten the beauty into something inhuman ...” (1992:143) create an artificial construct. “In suggesting a vision in place of a woman, it has a numbing effect, reducing all senses but the visual, and impairing even that” (Wolf 1992:174). The female body becomes another branded, labelled, created and designed object, with Ford and Testino playing Pygmalion. Ciar Byrne of *The Mail & Guardian* reports that this advertisement was brought to the attention of the Advertising Complaints Commission, but that the number of complaints were not sufficient to withdraw the advertisement.

<http://media.guardian.co.uk/advertising/story/0%2C7492%2C902911%2C00.html>

To conclude this discussion: the images in this sub-section have portrayed heterosexual coupling as stilted, emotionally crippled, frozen and boring. I have demonstrated that Popular Culture portrays tender intimate sex as boring. It is seldom that we see any representations of sex between established loving couples. When presented with these images the viewer is encouraged to seek other forms of excitement. Sex is either in the form of frenzied one-night stands or, as the next section demonstrates, within the context of violent abusive encounters.

Perhaps his most famous works include his super-sexy ad campaigns for Gucci, his black and white Burberry posters starring Kate Moss and Freddie Windsor and a shoot for Vogue's Millennium souvenir issue in silver...”

http://www.vogue.co.uk/whos_who/Mario_Testino/default.html Here is another exposition of Berger's assertion that advertising is the painting of the Twentieth Century.

¹⁰⁷ Ciar Byrne *Furore as Vogue ad hits the 'G' spot* Wednesday January 15, 2003
<http://media.guardian.co.uk/advertising/story/0%2C7492%2C902911%2C00.html>

3.4 BEAUTY SADISM – PRESENTING VIOLENCE AS SEX

Two conventions from pornography have entered women's culture. The first simply objectifies the female body, the other does violence to it. Here we see the advertisers 'pushing harder' to shock the public into noticing their product and the associated image. As Naomi Wolf explains:

Speaking about the advertising trend of more shocking images, advertising executives told *The Boston Globe*, 'You have to push a little harder ... to hold, shock, break through. Now that the competition is fiercer, a whole lot rougher trade¹⁰⁸ takes place. Today, business wants even more desperately to seduce It wants to demolish resistance.' Rape is the current advertising metaphor (Wolf 1992:79).

As both Wolf and French show, women's subjugation has become more devious as representations of women have taken on new 'veneers'. If we look beneath the surface of the contemporary representation of glamour, a frightening picture emerges of a society trying to promote the sexual violation, degradation, torture and death of women as a normal part of life. Women are fed these images until they think that being raped or beaten is a normal cause of events. As Wolf explains:

Images that ... subject her to eroticized torment, are politically and socio-economically welcome, subverting female sexual pride and ensuring that men and women are unlikely to form common cause against the social order that feeds on their mutual antagonism, their separate version of loneliness (Wolf 1992:143).

The infiltration of pornography into mainstream popular culture has seen a steady increase over the last 30 years. Wolf argues that one is denied a choice when pornography follows one home in so many forms; in music videos, television programmes, comics, movies and magazines.

"Pornography institutionalises the sexuality of male supremacy, which fuses the eroticization of dominance and submission with the social construction of male and female" (MacKinnon cited in French 1992:168). Wolf explains the effects these types of images have on a woman's psyche:

¹⁰⁸ Rough trade is gay male slang for a sadistic heterosexual partner (Wolf 1992:79).

In *Tatler* and *Harper's and Queen*, designer rape sequences (women beaten, bound and abducted, but immaculately turned out and artistically photographed) appear The woman learns from these images that no matter how assertive she may be in the world, her private submission to control is what makes her desirable. These images ... evolved with history. Sexuality follows fashion, which follows politics (Wolf 1992:133).

Thus women learn the politics of domination and submission from their own media, their own voice of cultural representation. Figure 144 presents an image that illustrates a fashion story called “breathing space” for which the female models have been tied up, gagged and forced into containers. Figures 146a to e are all taken from an Italian fashion magazine which illustrates a make-up advertising feature. The model is shown with a belt gagging her mouth, a bruised eye, bleeding nose and bound legs. She is even shown scratching herself and thus inflicting pain on herself. In many cases of abuse and rape, women know their attackers and are often in a relationship with the abuser. It is ironic that these women will then hide their abuse beneath make-up, to hide their shame as well as to protect the abuser. These images present the battered and abused woman as a casual and ‘sexy’ thing. This make-up feature does not draw attention to or highlight the abuse of women; it merely makes use of an existing social condition to legitimise the presentation of violence and degradation as linked to sex – it makes violence ‘chic’.

The representation of violence and rape is insidious:

Even if we never seek out pornography, we often see rape where sex should be. Since most women repress our awareness of that in order to survive being entertained, it can take concentration to remember (Wolf 1992:136).

In figure 147, female vulnerability and the threat of rape is used for a fashion feature called “Road show” – the model poses in the boot of a car that is parked on a lonely, dirt road in the middle of nowhere. The image in figure 148 also plays out on a level of similar connotations. It is a jeans advertisement and shows a model with an expression of panicked fear, attempting to get out of a speeding car on a darkened road in the countryside.

These fashion stories are built around the implied connotations of the situation.

Wolf believes that the purpose behind using fear tactics linked to women's beauty is to teach women to fear their sexuality:

A more pervasive effect of this atmosphere, the prevalence of sexual violence and the way it is linked to women's beauty, is that women – especially, perhaps, young women who grew up with such violent imagery – are made to fear and distrust their own beauty and feel ambivalent about physically expressing, in dress, movement, or adornment, their own sexuality. Today, perhaps more than ever before, when young women dress in a sexually provocative way they are made to feel that they are engaged in something dangerous (Wolf 1992:162).

Figure 149 presents a *Joop* advertisement of a very pale-skinned model wearing a bikini, reclining like an odalisque with eyes closed, on scaffolding. She is surrounded and contrasted against the dark figures of construction workers who are covered in grease and grime. They loom up from behind and drape their arms casually and possessively over her. As Wolf shows:

Sex just wasn't sex anymore without violence. ... [G]uilt and angry fear surrounded the sense that women were getting out of control, the public quickly lost interest in ordinary unharmed nakedness. Presented as more compulsively engaging to the attention of men and, eventually, women, was imagery that played out anxieties from the sex war, reproducing the power inequality that recent social changes had questioned: male dominance, female submission. Female nakedness became inhuman, 'perfected' beyond familiarity, freakishly like a sculpture in plastic, and often degraded or violated (Wolf 192:136).

The whole scene becomes a metaphor for subject and object, active and passive, domination and submission – playing out the anxieties, as Wolf shows, of the sex (and gender) war in society.

The upsurge in violent sexual imagery took its energy from male anger and female guilt at women's access to power. Where beautiful women in 1950's culture got married or seduced, in modern culture the beauty gets raped (Wolf 192:136).

Television programming is filled with police, detective and legal shows, with the 'body of the deceased victim' shown *in situ*, or naked in the morgue – a beautiful dead object. The rape, murder, abuse or victimisation of women is a constant part

of their content. During investigation interviews, which take place in bars or night clubs, topless women wearing tiny g-strings 'dance' in the background. This casual display of the female body in relation to the plot serves to emphasise the vulnerability, object status and abject nature of women, a reminder of what happens when you transgress social boundaries.

Figures 150a to c are from a fashion story that poses the models as victims of a serial killer. The models are presented as beautiful, glamorous corpses. The killer has written on their foreheads phrases such as "uh-uh", "oops" and "I've been a bad boy" – the phrases are so childish and inane that one dismisses the seriousness of what is being portrayed. Figures 150d and e continue the story: 150d shows a woman being pushed over the edge of a very tall high-rise building by a man, and 150e shows a woman walking down a street with the shadow of her stalker creeping up behind her. Serial killers targeting beautiful women represent a common and favourite thriller-movie theme. To watch a movie in which this is the central theme is an act of choice. But when it is a repeated subplot in so many television shows, and now is even presented as part of fashion stories, women cannot escape the presentation of rape as a perpetual fear in the female subconscious.

Pornographic videos that show scenes of women being raped make no pretence as to their reason for including such scenes; they are there for viewer enjoyment. They may also reinforce social constructs, allay castration anxiety and fear of impotence. But one should examine the main-stream movie industry's use of rape as a device. As one rape victim puts it, it does not help her get over her rape, rather, it causes her to relive it. Movie makers argue that including the scene is integral to the plot, supposedly to vindicate the following consequences within the plot. The presentation of rape as part of entertainment enforces women's subjugation in society.

An elite's primary need in establishing and maintaining domination is to divide men from women. Fostering male sadism promotes this division. American culture – movies, books, songs, television – teaches men to see themselves as killers, to identify the act of murder with sex, and the sex act

with violent conquest. This is why so many men find it difficult to distinguish between rape and lovemaking (French 1992:176).

Figures 147 to 154 show that many fashion stories and advertisements feature women in situations that intimate rape, sexual violence and murder. Women are being taught to perceive their victimisation as 'sexy' and glamorous. Wolf explains that beauty pornography claims that women's beauty is their sexuality, while beauty sadism claims that women like to be beaten and abused, "and that sexual violence and rape are stylish, elegant and beautiful" (Wolf 1992:136).

Rape has existed for a very long time (throughout recorded history). Rape has existed as long as there has been war; 'to rape and pillage' was the soldiers' reward for battle. It was and is an act of violence and domination on the side of the victors to show who had the right to take all.

Sadistic violence is not inherent in men's natures; it is indoctrinated in men by a host of institutions. Government bodies do not merely tolerate male sexual sadism against women, they foster and endorse it – in every male-dominated culture in the world (French 1992:177).

An extreme exposition of endorsed violence against women occurred during the war between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Here pornography emerged as a tool of genocide; rapes and/or executions in prisoner-of-war camps were videotaped while they were happening:

Xenophobia and misogyny merge here; ethnic hatred is sexualized; bigotry becomes orgasm. Whatever this rape does for the rapist, the pornography of the rape mass-produces. The materials become a potent advertisement for a war, a perfect motivator for the torturers, who then do what they are ordered to do and enjoy it (MacKinnon cited in Ms. 1993:27).

The rapes and tortures by Serbian soldiers of Muslim and Croatian women, were arranged as sexual spectacles to be watched by other soldiers. In the televised rapes, viewers could see the legs and boots of soldiers as they stood around watching what was happening. One of the rape victims is quoted in MacKinnon's *Ms. Exposé Turning Rape into Pornography; Postmodern Genocide* (1993):

These soldiers would invite their friends to come and watch the rapes. That was like in the movie theatre. All sit around while others do their job

... . Sometimes those who were watching put out their cigarette butts on the bodies of the women being raped (MacKinnon 1993:29).

Eyewitness accounts reported that tanks, barracks, living quarters and offices of the soldiers in the rape camps were plastered with pornographic images. Rape survivors described their tortures depicting scenes that chillingly reproduced pornographic videos, particularly sado-masochistically styled scenarios. The pornography market in pre-war Yugoslavia is described by MacKinnon as one of the “freest in the world”. She goes on to describe a major newspaper – *Start*, with a *Newsweek*-like format and the politics of *The Nation*, had *Playboy*-type covers and a centrefold section showing naked women in postures of sexual display and access. When pornography becomes the norm, men are primed “to dehumanize women and to enjoy inflicting assault sexually” (MacKinnon 1993:28).

Many people do not take up an active opinion regarding pornography, believing that censorship infringes on freedom of speech, and that everyone is entitled to their own point of view. However, French counteracts this succinctly:

Anti-pornography feminists, however, believe that the safety and well-being of over half the human race is of greater value than the freedom to create degrading images of women that, at the least, legitimate and, at worst, promote sadistic violence against them (French 1992:168).

An advert by *YDE*, figure 155 presents the final image I wish to discuss. This features a ghostly pale, anorexic model. Her breasts have been covered by surgical tape, obliterating the nipple, which I see as a similar act of censure against female sexuality as the device of the blank pubis. The model draws a large pair of scissors across her belly, out of which pours a swathe of red satin fabric. This wound is reminiscent of the ritual slashing of women in the stomach to create a wound reminiscent of the vagina.¹⁰⁹ The gash that the model inflicts on herself is indicative of the hatred and repression women are inflicting on themselves due to the mass messages they receive on a daily basis. These images arise out of a

¹⁰⁹ Glen Wilson, ed. (1987) in Preface to: *Variant Sexuality: Research and Theory*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University (cited in Steele 1997:30).

socio-political agenda that creates its own version of desirability. The way to instil social values, writes Susan G. Cole¹¹⁰, is to eroticise them.

Images that turn women into objects or eroticize the degradation of women have arisen to counterbalance women's recent self-assertion...they act to keep men and women apart, wherever the restraints of religion, law, and economics have grown too weak to continue their work of sustaining the sex war (cited in Wolf 1992:142). Leaving aside the issue of what violent sexual imagery does, it is still apparent that there is an officially enforced double standard for men's and women's nakedness in mainstream culture that bolsters power inequities (Wolf 1992:139).

The display of the naked female body through various art-making processes has served to keep women subjugated to and by their bodies; their physicality and sexuality has been objectified in order to keep women in a position of powerlessness.

3.5 CONCLUSION

I have identified various fashion labels that consistently portray a stereotyped message regarding the female sexual persona within their advertising campaigns. These have included the fashion label *Bebe*, which associates its branding with the sexually voracious woman; *Dior*, which constructs its campaigns around the hooker / stripper / nightclub performer; *Buffalo jeans* and *Sisley* who rely on the sexual provocation of the *Lolita* persona. Designers Tom Ford, Calvin Klein and Dolce & Gabbana consistently apply the 'sex sells' ideology to their product campaigns. Photographers such as Mario Testino, Steve Meisel and David La Chapelle are highly sought after artists who have a particular style and, like Helmut Newton, seem to bring a symbolically loaded agenda to their work. When one is able to repeatedly identify that the same designer / fashion house / photographer consistently creates work that sexually objectifies women at the least, and at the worst promotes sadistic violence against them, it begs the question why they are not being held accountable for the images they produce.

¹¹⁰ Cole, Susan G. (1989) *Pornography and the Sex Crisis*. Toronto: Amanita.

As shown by various surveys and by Wolf, it is their breasts, thighs, buttocks or tummies, the most sexually central parts of women, that women find fault with and hate the most. These are also the parts most often battered by abusive men, the parts that sex murderers most often mutilate and that are defiled in pornography and snuff movies. It is also these body parts that ‘beauty’ surgeons most often cut open. These are the parts of a woman that define her as reproductive, that manifest the signs of sexual maturity, that bear and nurture children; these are the definers and signifiers of her sexuality and gender. And these are the parts of her body that are being made to feel pain instead of pleasure. “A misogynist culture has succeeded in making women hate what misogynists hate” (Wolf 1992:150).

A woman’s sense of self-worth is often formed by how she is perceived and appreciated by others; she has to place herself outside of herself to determine how she is being seen, and then has to interiorise it. Berger asserts that the ‘ideal’ spectator is always situated within a male framework; the female depicted is designed to pander to the male ego and confirm his prowess,¹¹¹ therefore she passively surrenders to him. A woman’s social presence must express what can and cannot be done to her, it must be controlled by how she perceives herself and, as Berger shows,

... this has been at the cost of a woman’s self being split into two. A woman must constantly watch herself From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually ... [a]nd so she comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman (Berger 1986:46).

¹¹¹ Berger defines the difference of the socially constituted roles of men in the following way: “A man’s presence is dependant upon the promise of power which he embodies,... the promised power may be **moral, physical, temperamental, economic, social, sexual** – but its object is always exterior to the man. A man’s presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you”(my emphasis) (Berger 1986:46). These aspects also constitute phallic power.

Burger argues that a man will consider how a woman sees and treats herself first, as to how he will then in turn treat her; “her treatment of herself by herself constitutes her presence” (Berger 1986:46). He continues to explain:

Every woman’s presence regulates what is and is not ‘permissible’ within her presence. Everyone of her actions – what ever its direct purpose or motivation – is also read as an indication of how she would like to be treated. ... One might simplify this by saying: *men act* and *women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight (Berger 1986:47).

What we accept then is how things become, therefore it follows that how women allow themselves to be represented is how they will be viewed.

I am not arguing for the elimination of representations of sexuality, neither is Wolf; I agree with her that we as a society would benefit from real representations of sexuality. “Sexual ‘explicitness’ is not the issue. We could use a lot more of that, if explicit means honest and revealing; if there were a full spectrum of erotic images of uncoerced real women and real men in contexts of sexual trust, beauty pornography could theoretically hurt no one” (Wolf 1992:135). The argument between decency and indecency is blurred; defenders of pornography base their position on the idea of freedom of speech, justifying pornography as a form of speech and artistic expression. However, Wolf shows that both in pornography and in mainstream media,

[s]omething striking emerges about the representation of women’s bodies: the representation is heavily censored ... we are asked to believe that our culture promotes the display of female sexuality. It actually shows almost none. It censors representations of women’s bodies, so that only the official versions are visible. Rather than see images *of* female desire or that cater *to* female desire, we see mock-ups of living mannequins, made to contort and grimace, immobilised and uncomfortable... (Wolf 1992: 135).

Wolf shows how sex is not shown between established couples, nor is it shown as loving and intimate; that has been classed as boring or even too intimate. So rare is it to see sexual explicitness in the context of love and intimacy on screen that it

seems our culture treats tender sexuality as if it were deviant or depraved, while embracing violent or degrading sex as right and healthy. “This leaves the sexual stage, in men’s and women’s minds vacant and pornographic images are free to take a starring role. The two leading actors on this stage are the sadist, played by man, and the masochist, played by woman” (Wolf 1992:136). Debbie Taylor writes: “So powerful is pornography, and so smoothly does it blend in with the advertising of products ... that many women find their own fantasies and self-images distorted too ...” (Taylor 1985:66). If women find their self-image distorted and their notions of sexuality confused, so do men, and as I have shown a large contributing factor to the sexual dysfunction of society comes from the mass of images that are constantly levelled at them.

CONCLUSION

The most perfunctory purpose of an advertisement is to sell a product. However, most of that which is produced and then consumed is not actually necessary for one's basic needs. Therefore a need has to be created. Capitalism is not a self-sustaining system, it can only be maintained through production and consumption. To continue with production, one needs a cheap and disempowered work force. To increase consumerism, one needs a society one can control and manipulate. Capitalism constantly promises deliverance from the system of existence it has created, and mostly through the purchase of a product, and what the product promises to deliver. 'You too, can be as young, desirable, beautiful, thin, successful, super toned and sexy as our model, if you just buy this...'. However, the benchmark is lifted higher and higher.

After the Industrial Revolution in England, a new class structure emerged, together with a new buying public: the middle-class white woman. Women's journal printing and publications increased exponentially as society tried to create a role for this 'new woman'. Journals instructed women on how to behave themselves, what their expectations should be, how they should look, and which products they should buy in order to be the perfect woman. They functioned in much the same way as religious instructional pamphlets did. At the end of the twentieth century, magazines are still targeting women (although the racial spectrum has been increased, not so much as a reflection of democracy, but rather as an incorporation of new buying markets), with the same intent. Magazines still remain the largest form of cultural and social identification for women, all the while informing the reader as to what they must think, how they must act and what they must buy in order to support and maintain the dominant socio-political and economic framework of the society in which they live.

When dealing with the issue of appearance, I discovered that advertisers have appropriated the role of Pygmalion. The *Pygmalion* story tells us that perfection does not exist in the real world, yet perfection is demanded, so it must be created. *Galatea* is formed and her perfection warrants adoration and devotion. This myth

is held up as a promise, and this creates a need. We are told 'you desire love and adoration, but you are not perfect, therefore you are not good enough; if you were, you would receive all the love you could desire'. Manifestations of the Pygmalion story may be found in the booming cosmetic surgery industry; pertinently most cosmetic surgeons are male.

Women experience the pressure of the ideal while mediating these messages through subtle forms of resistance. One understanding of anorexia is that it is a form of resistance. However, I demonstrate that anorexia is still a form of subjugation, as most anorexics feel ashamed of their bodies. Their eating habits thus become an enactment of self-discipline. Although it *is* a form of self-power and control, what it does to their persona and physique is highly destructive. I also show that, although women are able to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy physical ideals, the consistency of the messages portrayed has created a situation in which most women hate a part of their feminine body. The *People* magazine survey demonstrated that advertising has succeeded in not only making women hate themselves, but also to impose self-surveillance and discipline upon themselves.

Since the 1980s and with the development in computer technology, more and more images are computer manipulated to give the appearance of perfection, or to enhance or extend physical features to proportions that are not physically possible. Added to this are advances in medical technology which help women to slow down or temporarily erase the 'effects' of ageing of the natural female body. The pressure on women to conform to the unrealistic images projected at her on a daily basis has resulted in most women rejecting their own bodies and feeling totally alienated within themselves.

Women are represented as constantly being in competition with one another over the male. Women have been taught from childhood to constantly survey themselves and one another. They are taught to position themselves outside of themselves and to constantly observe their behaviour and appearance. The

ultimate consumer is always the male. The woman must therefore turn herself into produce to be consumed. By extension, the viewer is always male, so when a woman looks at an image of another woman, not only is she looking at it through her own eyes, but through the eyes of the male consumer / owner.

In Chapter Two I identified the *Anais Anais* and *Opium* perfume campaigns as consistently presenting a specific message to the consumer audience: the one presents the mythology of virginity, the other the sexually available woman. The female is presented with two options, either she surrenders her sexuality to patriarchy and becomes the wife, the housewife, mother and then the grandmother. Or, the female who claims her sexuality for herself becomes the whore, or the voracious woman. Just as there is a progressive path along which the submissive virgin travels, so too, I have observed, is there the path of the voracious woman. In essence the voracious woman is the female who owns her own sexuality and seeks sexual pleasure on her own terms. In patriarchal terms, all power is phallic whether it is sexual, social, financial, political and / or physical. As I have shown, the voracious woman in modern media is hyperfeminised; her sexuality is safe and unthreatening, and the primary object of her desire is the male. Should the voracious woman not be hyperfeminised, she becomes the phallic woman, with appropriated phallic symbols such as weapons. Her most overt persona is the Dominatrix who will always wear black signifying her as the sinful, branded woman. The primal fear of the male is the threat of castration, and therefore of the castrating woman. The appropriation of phallic power and the symbolic portrayal of this, acts as a fetish to allay the threat of castration, for the woman with phallic power no longer has a need to castrate the male, either metaphorically or literally. The problem with this, however, is that all power remains phallicentric and women are defined in terms of submission to this power or the appropriation thereof.

The more power the phallic woman appropriates and assimilates, the more dangerous, deviant and ultimately monstrous she becomes. This is inevitably met with a violent death at the hands of the phallic male and his weapons. This path

does not always lead to this inevitable conclusion, but is held as the ultimate outcome, and therefore threat. It is very seldom that the voracious woman is allowed back into 'normal' society and this, too, is held as a threat against deviant behaviour. Furthermore, the voracious woman is held as the ultimate threat to the submissive virgin; they will often be presented in combat with one another, particularly over a man. The virgin will win and the threat of the voracious woman will be extinguished, whereupon the virgin will once more retire to her submissive role, having ensured that the equilibrium of patriarchy, which holds her captive, is restored. Patriarchy has succeeded in making women at war with one another, and not with patriarchy. I should, however, like to extend this to include that this same system suppresses men, therefore this is not about the battle to liberate women from men or even a power struggle between the genders. It does, however, identify the cultural project and ideology of Patriarchy and how it ultimately impacts on both sexes.

The visual representation of the vagina is still almost exclusively presented to the male viewer within pornography, thus the vagina remains the property of patriarchy. In women's magazines, the vagina is never shown, nor is the other signifier of mature female sexuality – pubic hair. We may see this as a continuation of the denial of women's rights to own their own bodies and the representations thereof. This may be read as the continual infantilisation of women, so that society worships the young female while rejecting the more mature woman.

Chapter Three demonstrates that the representations of sexuality and the sexual body are not real, they in fact present a lie to society. The media industry may be seen as not promoting sexual satisfaction, but sexual dis-satisfaction, for a sexually dis-satisfied audience is a needy audience who can be turned into consumers. We are promised a satiation of our desires through the products we consume. Safe, loving and intimate sex has been cast as boring and the only sexuality we see is explosive and often violent. I have shown that the amount of images that portray women in situations where they are beaten, abused, raped and

murdered aims to counteract the ground that feminism has gained in liberating women, and to put the fear back in women. This is the fear of and shame concerning their bodies, a fear of sexuality, a fear of men and a fear of actually presenting themselves as empowered for fear of finding themselves cast out.

The messages are many and confusing. A fractured and fragmented society is a society one can manipulate and control; women are being caught in a maelstrom of conflicting messages as the governing ideology seeks to keep women separated from men, at war with one another and, most importantly at war with themselves.

I am taking as a given fact that we live in a society which is defined by a patriarchal paradigm. I am also stating that this paradigm has created gendered roles of masculine and feminine as a result of biological determinism (see figures 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10, which all present men and women as separate gendered constructs). I state that men are presented as subject and women as *other*, with the implication that the *other* is inferior to the subject. I am also taking as a given that women were subjugated to their roles and that the virgin-whore binary underpins this as a socially and historically created fact. We live in a society where feminism has supposedly freed women. However, I have shown through an investigation of contemporary advertisements, that women are still having to conform in the way they think, look and behave, in order to serve the needs of a capitalistic and patriarchal society.

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Figure 1



Figure 2

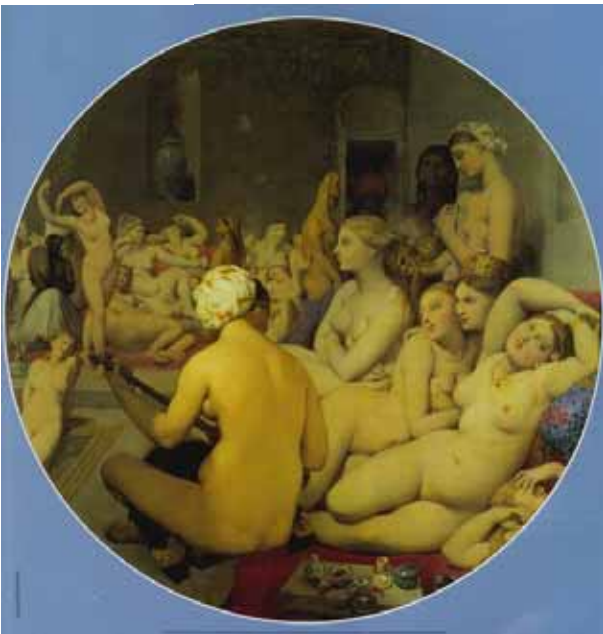


Figure 3

All the women in these paintings are sexual objects on view, but their own sexuality is denied through the eradication of any genital detail – the sealed mound may be read as a means of controlling female sexuality. Myths, legends and narratives from the Bible re-enforced and justified the presentation of women as the sexual *other*. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Europeans were fascinated with the exotic and mysterious east. This provided artists with the opportunity of painting women as the *oriental other*, which included the presentation of women as sexual slaves. Classical myths also presented women as nymphs and sexual goddesses.



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

Gender stereotyping is continuously re-asserted in advertising; boys must be active, the heroes; girls must be passive – fig. 5. Fairy tales and children’s toys constantly re-enforce gender divisions of masculinity and femininity.

Fig. 9 refers back to the tradition in European paintings of depicting men clothed and women naked, as in Manet’s *Le Dejeuner Sur L’Herbe*

As Steele explains “Clothing itself is generally associated with power, and nakedness with its lack” (Steele 1997:171).



Figure 7



Figure 8

These advertisements reveal the binary opposites of male and female gender. The man is equated with reason, order, logic and power, he is in control. In “Design your dream” the colours are cool and metallic. The architecture surrounds the man. The woman is equated with nature, passion, procreation. In “Create your dream” the colours are warm and passionate golds and reds. It is more of a fantasy as the woman is planting a giant tulip on top of a skyscraper. She is linked through the colours with the sky, and she is also mirrored in her own reflection. This device serves to illustrate that women must constantly survey themselves as others see them.



Figure 9



Figure 10

Man is depicted as being in control of the world around him, even the outer reaches of space “beyond infinity” – he is associated with science, technology, intellect and exploration. The perfume bottle itself is very ‘masculine’ with its metal wrap, bold geometric shape and solid center of gravity. Woman is seen as nature, sensuality; she is wrapped up within herself. The shape of her silhouette, the perfume bottle and the shifting slopes of the sand dunes all echo one another. The name of her perfume is *indecence*.



Figure 11a



Figure 11b



Figure 11c

Many cultures share a myth of the perfect woman, the best known in the Western world being that of *Pygmalion*, known in its modern regeneration as *My Fair Lady* and *Simone* (fig. 16a & b). Pygmalion is a young and handsome sculptor, he yearns for love (fig. 11a), but can find no woman who can fulfil his ideal. He then sculpts a woman so beautiful and perfect (fig. 11b), that he falls in love with 'her'. The gods take note of this pure love, and transform the sculpture into living flesh (fig. 11c). Pygmalion names her Galatea, and marries her (fig. 11d). The story is essentially about the male fantasy of a female formed / sculpted to his specifications, she is then perfect, and perfectly his to control. The 'ideal' woman is presented on a daily basis in magazines. This creates a susceptible consumer who will never feel good enough, and will therefore buy in order to fulfil her needs.



Figure 11d



Figure 12a & b: Illustrations by Albert Vargas. Like Ingres' exaggeration of the female form for sensual purposes, Vargas emphasised the female anatomy for erotic sensual purposes in a manner that would have been physically impossible with the 'normal' human body.

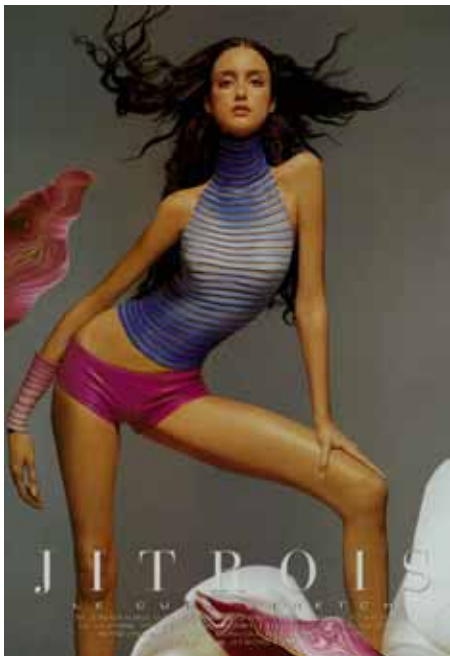


Figure 13a



Figure 13b



Figure 14



Figure 15

Computer programs are able to manipulate images, make models thinner, taller, legs longer, breasts bigger, thighs cellulite free, buttocks lifted and tucked. They are able to erase any slight 'imperfections' until the image we see is so polished and perfected that it has become an artwork, and not a representation of reality. However, it is presented as obtainable and as a standard to be achieved. Women have been taught to hate and fear their own bodies.



Figure 16a



Figure 16b



Figure 17

The National Eating Disorder Awareness and Prevention Program (EDAP) estimates that 5-10% of girls and women in the US struggle with eating disorders (that means 5-10 million girls and women) (Source: www.about-face.com). Eating disorders have a number of psychological roots, but the most prevalent is the belief by the victim that they are just not good enough, that if they could just be a little thinner, they will be loved and accepted (Dittrichs 2000:online).

According to a study conducted by Lucas and Associates (1991) cited by Liz Dittrichs, over the last 50 years, the incidence of anorexia nervosa among 10- 19-year-old girls paralleled the change in fashion and its accompanying idealised body image. During and following periods where the emphasis would be on a thin ideal, the rates of anorexia nervosa were highest.

The Body Mass Index of most models (weight according to height and bone density) is so low that they would qualify as famine victims. They have less than 5% body fat.



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21

Women began achieving new levels of physical performance in many major sports fields (see fig. 22b), earning points for the Feminist movement, however this meant that women now felt the pressure to display the same toned “buns of steel” they were seeing on their sports sisters, once again losing sight of the fact that these women’s jobs are to ‘work out’ and be fit. Figure 23 portrays the morphing of the female silhouette over the twentieth century – as a reflection of changing ideals and social politics.



Figure 22a

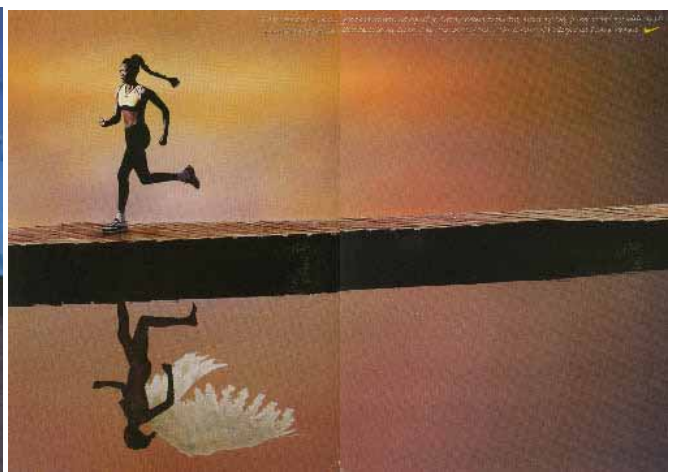


Figure 22b

bodiesbeautiful

Would you like to go back to the days when men were men and women were women? Like many things, the “ideal” women’s body is susceptible to current trends and quite often historical and political influences...

'10 '20 '50 '60 '80 '90 '00

<p>Colonial times – Sturdy Strong and fertile women are both desirable and practical, for working the land and bearing lots of helping hands.</p>	<p>1920s – Boyish Ruler-thin, flappers fight for women’s rights. The flat look, which was sometimes achieved by binding the breasts, is very popular.</p>	<p>1950s – Curvy A slender woman with a large bust and hips is considered most attractive. Think Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield.</p>	<p>1960s – Thin Again Women are burning bras and demanding equal rights. Twiggy arrives and slenderness becomes the prime indicator of attractiveness.</p>	<p>1960s – Fit Jane Fonda is the queen. The ideal body is tanned, toned, large breasted and is achieved by more than just dieting.</p>	<p>1990s – Heroin Chic Gaunt, wafer thin models in stupor-like poses are all the rage. TV star Calista Flockhart causes controversy with her ultra-thin body.</p>	<p>2000’s – Toned The ideal body is less extreme with the influx of yoga and Pilates; fitness of the mind is just as important as fitness of the body.</p>
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Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28

“It was the slim, dimple-free buttock and thigh that became, in the 1980’s and 1990’s, the ultimate signifier of female fitness, beauty and character” (Douglas 1995:258). Cellulite became woman’s worst enemy, but one that ‘could and should be conquered’ (ibid.). The 1980s yuppie work ethic meant that thin thighs and dimple-free buttocks became instant, automatic evidence of discipline, self-denial, and control. You, too, the message went, can achieve perfect thighs through dieting and exercise. By a conservative estimate, at least 2 million American women have had breast implants in the last 25 years (Cooke 1996:129). Liposuction isn’t the only anti-ageing procedure with possible dangers. Injected agents like collagen, which fill out wrinkles and small lines, can shrink or distort your face. Botox or, more precisely injections of diluted toxin extracted from the bacteria that cause botulism can migrate and cause your eyelids to temporarily droop. Skin resurfacing with acid and lasers can go too deep and cause inflammation and discoloration. Blepharoplasty – eyelid surgery – can leave you with eyes that won’t close (Gross 2000:42). It is not only magazines that are constantly promoting youth and beauty, it would seem that the greatest pressure for plastic surgery is coming from Hollywood. Actresses dare not age. Aside from having to keep their weight down (69% of female television characters are thin, only 5% are overweight (Silverstein, Peterson, Perdue & Kelly, 1986 cited in Dittrichs 2000: online)), they also have to minimise any signs of ‘character’ (ageing) on their bodies, and at last call, going under the knife becomes the only option.



Figure 29a



Fig. 29b

Fig. 29c

Fig. 29d

Courtney Thorne Smith (29e & f) reported that the female cast members on *Ally MacBeal* (29g – Calista Flockhart, and h – Portia de Rossi) were pressurised to loose weight before their seasonal contracts were renewed. Eventually Thorne Smith resigned from the show, as the pressure to remain unnaturally thin began to affect her health and self esteem. Fig. 29e portrays her at the weight she had to maintain for the show, fig. 29f is the weight at which she feels her body is its healthiest.



Figure 29e



Figure 29f



Figure 29g



Figure 29h

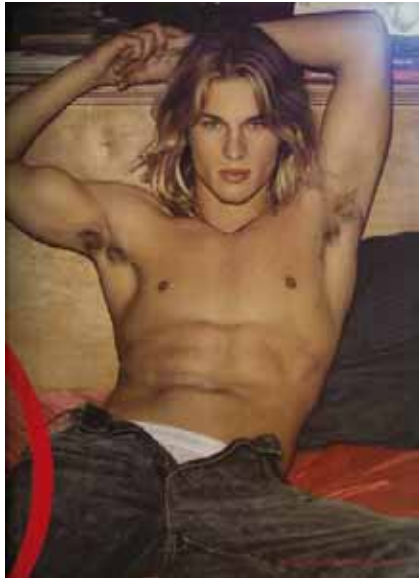


Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32

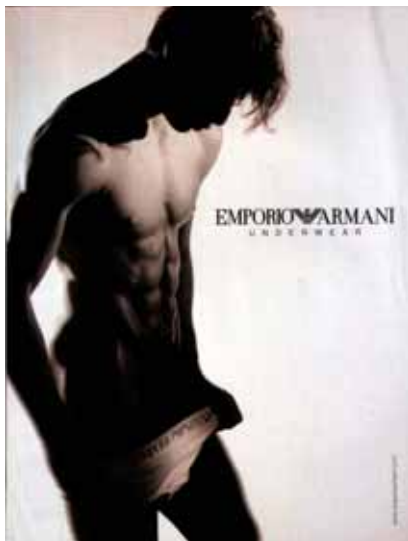


Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35

Men are now being subjected to the same physical and sexual objectification that women have been subject to. Interesting to note is that the language of the gaze has become the same, for in many instances men in advertisements do not look directly at the camera (figs. 32 & 33), or their heads are cropped off, reducing them to an object (fig. 34). Fig. 36 shows a small naked figure of a man holding onto a rising air bubble in a *G&T* advertisement. This would normally have been a female figure, but here it is the male that is associated with fantasy, fun and spontaneity – feminine characteristics. Figure 35 reverses the position of the male subject and female object, the observer and the observed. The man is now being ‘taught’ how to position himself externally to himself, to observe and objectify himself, in terms of the same economy that women have always been held in.



Figure 36

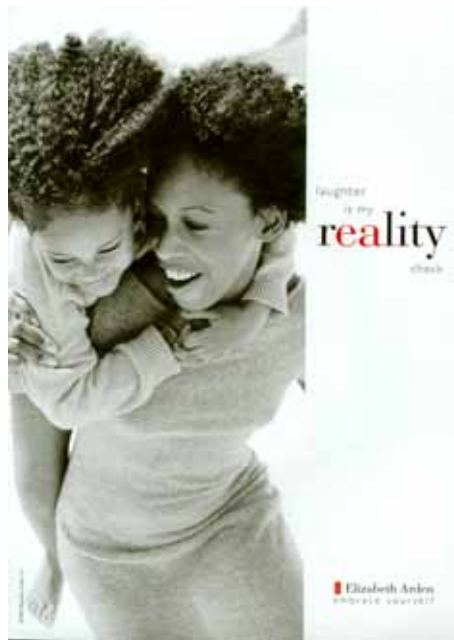


Figure 37a

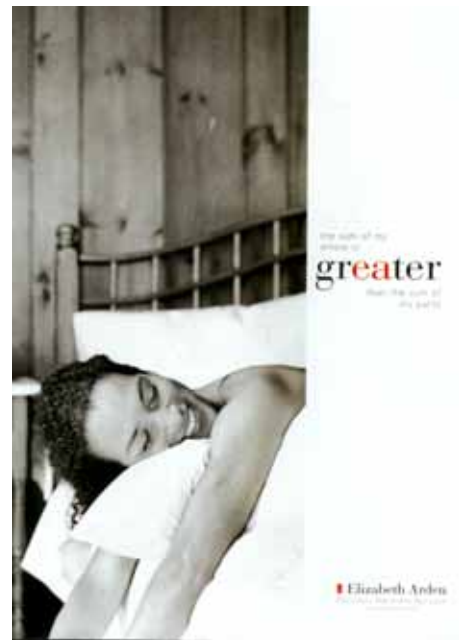


Figure 37b



Figure 37c



Figure 37d



Figure 37e



Figure 38



Figure 39

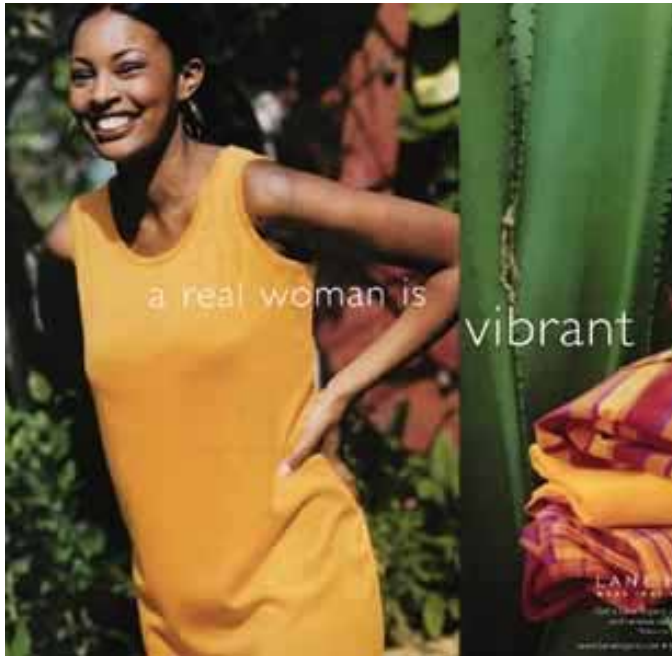


Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42

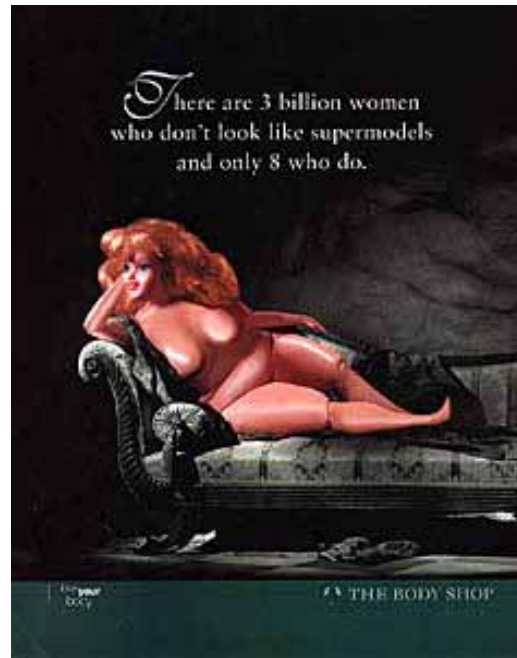


Figure 43

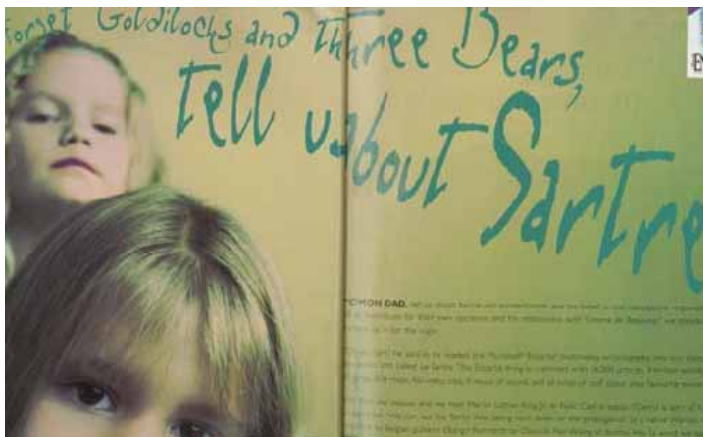


Figure 44

The Body Shop advertisement (fig. 43) states “There are 3 billion women who don’t look like supermodels and only 9 who do.” Advertisements do not represent the average woman; in fact they generally eliminate huge sectors of society, presenting a narrow definition of the ideal. As the *Elizabeth Arden* (figures 37) and *Lane Bryant* (fig. 42) campaigns illustrate, it is possible to create advertisements that do not sexually or physically objectify women, while celebrating and representing the diversity of women’s shapes and personalities.

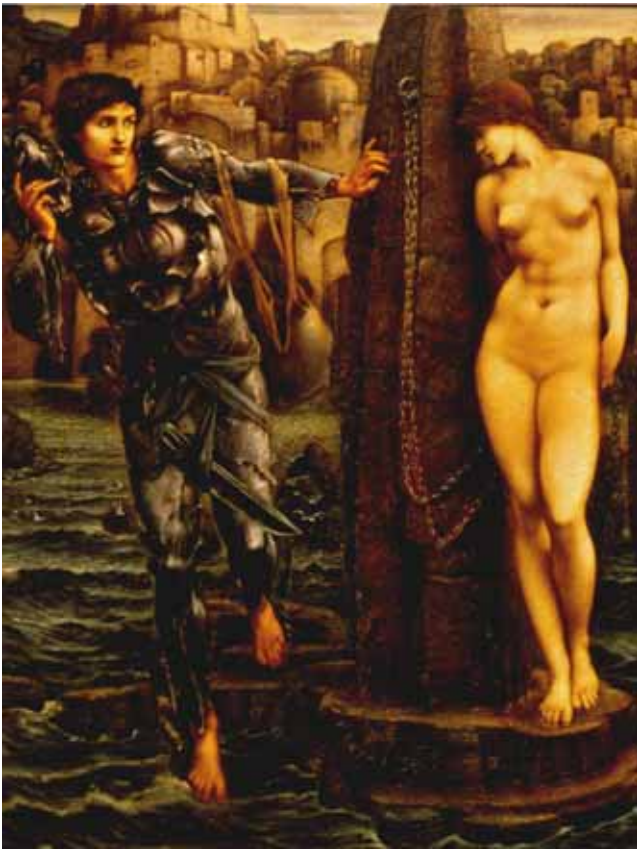


Figure 45a



Figure 45b

The myth of Perseus, which included his rescue of and marriage to Andromeda, became a powerful representation of the gendered roles expected of men and women within the construct of patriarchal society. Perseus's suit of armour and weapons are phallic emblems of masculinity. Andromeda; naked, bound and submissive, is an emblem of femininity. Furthermore it is also a pictorial justification of the white, western, civilised male as the central subject, having power over, rescuing and controlling the uncivilised East or *other* – it becomes a metaphor for colonization.



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48



Figure 49

One of the greatest themes of the 19th Century Victorian *Pre-Raphaelite* movement was the preoccupation with women who were in various states of languor, sleep and death, as reflected in Edgar Allen Poe when he wrote; “The death of a woman is without doubt the most poetic subject in the world.” The women are presented in states of balance between the worlds of life, death, and dreams, always with an overtly erotic presence, they seem more to be slaves of their own desires. Or as Dante Gabriel Rossetti wrote in *Hand and Soul*, they were “weak with yearning”.



Figure 50a



Figure 50b



Figure 50c



Figure 51



Figure 52



Figure 53



Figure 54

The models in figures 51 to 58 all propagate the myth of virginity – the story of young, beautiful, innocent girls in fairy tales. These types of images serve to re-enforce and engender what it is to be a young woman – demure, submissive, gentle, unassuming and unthreatening – ‘feminine’. They are ‘innocent’ and filled with ‘tenderness’. Figs. 50a - c play with dress-up and fantasy, girls as dolls, or like the dolls that little girls play with – the bride and the ballerina.



Figure 55



Figure 56



Figure 57



Figure 58



Figure 59a



Figure 59b



Figure 60



Figure 61

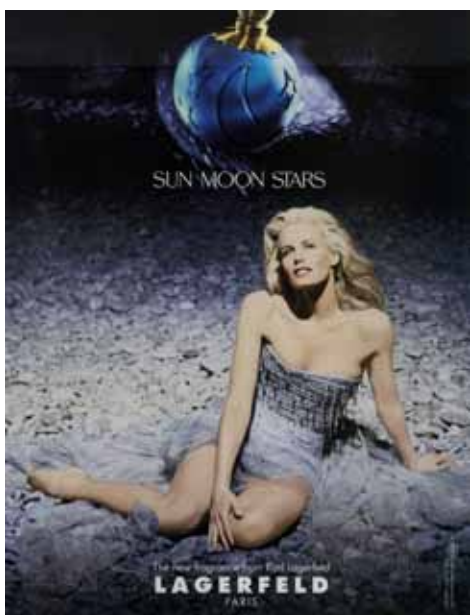


Figure 62



Figure 63a



Figure 63b

Figures 58 to 62 represent the fantasy of the virgin – *the ice maiden*, the angel or *celestial untouchable*. These women are worshipped from afar – they remain untouched and remote. The colour palette of cold icy blues changes to warmer tones in figures 63 to 69 as women begin to surrender to their sexuality. Figures 66 to 69 represent the sexually surrendered, *veiled woman*, they are still submissive, their sexuality is not transgressive / dangerous. The ‘veil’ represents the last line of resistance while acting as an erotic device.



Figure 63c



Figure 64

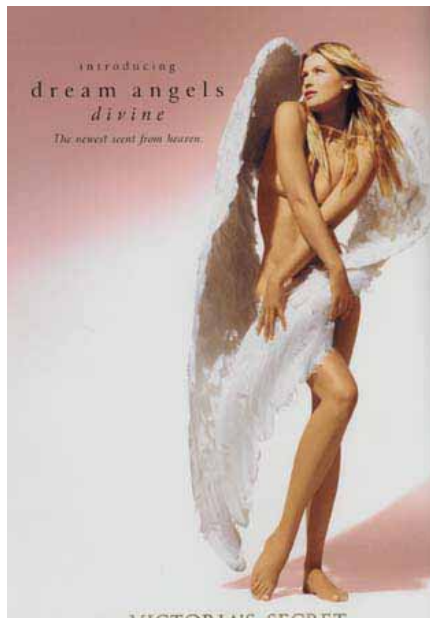


Figure 65



Figure 66



Figure 67

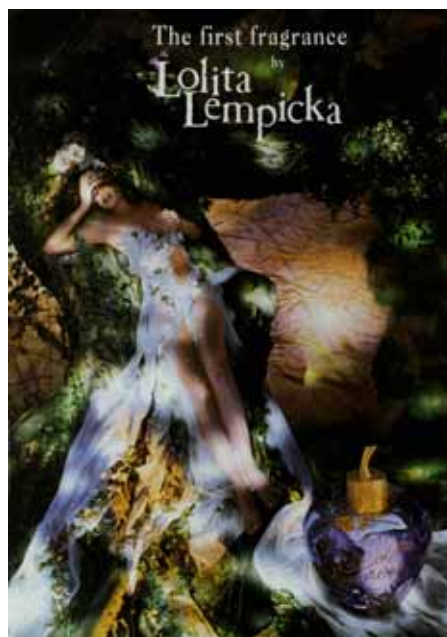


Figure 68



Figure 69



Figure 70a, b, & c *Barbie* was inspired by a German sex toy for adults called *Lilli*. She was then marketed by *Mattel* in America as a fashion doll for little girls. *Barbie* is characteristic of the strange adult figurines of little girls' toys. Her genital area is a smooth surface thus it is the sealed mound, therefore she is an archetypal virgin. The changing image of *Barbie* parallels the changing fashions and thus the changes in the presentation of women from decorous, decorative object representing the 'good' woman to the 'bad' girl who is more sexually available. Here *Barbie* is paired with another fashion 'doll', Sophie Dahl.





Figure 71: Sophie Dahl, the model in this advertisement, is quoted as saying: “*Opium* had always seemed so dangerous and grown-up to me. During the 80’s when my friends and I were wearing *Anais Anais*, *Opium* was this heady almost illegal scent.” Dahl thus distinguishes between the images these different perfumes portray. Here she represents the completely sexually surrendered woman, by closing her eyes she submits to the gaze and ownership of the viewer.



Figure 72: The battle between the virgin and the whore – the ‘good’ girls versus the ‘bad’ - played out between peers.



Figure 73: *A Mermaid*, Waterhouse, 1901



Figure 74: *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, Waterhouse, 1893

Two stereotypes of women, that of the *Femme Fatale* and the *Damsel in Distress*, feature predominantly in the artworks of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the one totally reliant on male assistance for her ‘freedom’ and survival, the other the seductress out to destroy some unsuspecting male.



Figure 75



Figure 76

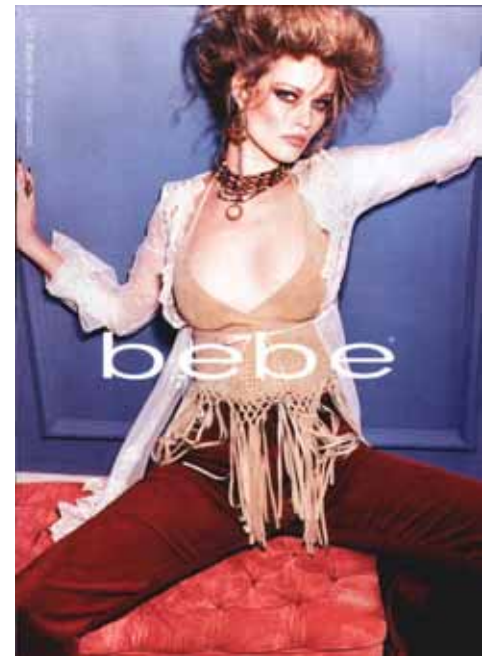


Figure 77



Figure 78



Figure 79

The whore is transgressive for she has not surrendered her sexuality, which is presented as dangerous and deviant. We may see how (in figs. 75, 76 & 77) “fashion models adopted from violent pornography the furious pouting glare of the violated woman” (Wolf 1992:134). The voracious woman is the contemporary version of the sexual slave (figs. 78, 79 & 80). Fig. 81 represents the voracious woman. Her sexuality is dangerous to men, here the gendered power relations have been turned around, and man has become the bound captive.



Figure 80



Figure 81



Figure 82

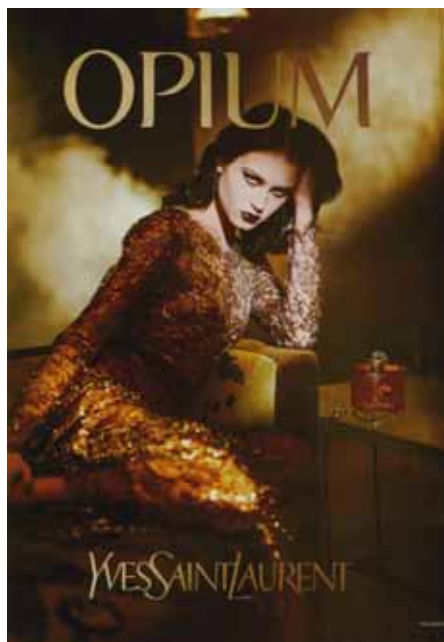


Figure 83



Figure 84



Figure 85



Figure 86

These are voracious women who know what they want, and they will use whatever means they can to get it; they will 'hypnotize', 'poison', drug (fig. 86) and seduce any unwitting man they can lay their hands on. The perfume names are *Opium* (fig. 82 & 83) and *Hypnotic poison* (fig. 84), thus creating the association that these seductresses are dangerous and capable of destroying a man's resistance. The voracious woman is characterised by heavy make-up and the use of strong, passionate golds, purples and reds. Black, signifies the 'sinful' woman. Patent leather (fig. 87) and stiletto heels are indicative of the dominatrix.



Figure 87



Figure 88



Figure 89



Figure 90



Figure 91a



Figure 91b



Figure 92



Figure 93

Figures 88 to 91 all represent the powerful phallic woman. The clothing imitates the dominatrix and fetish fashion of S&M culture. Figures 92, 93 & 94 use the same language, but through devices such as cropping the image, removing the face and averting the gaze and body language, the message is subverted – the threat of the voracious woman is removed. The mirror and phallic emblems also act as a fetish to ward off castration and to contain the appropriated phallic power, in possessing these emblems the threat of castration is removed as the woman now possesses her own phallus.



Figure 94



Figure 95

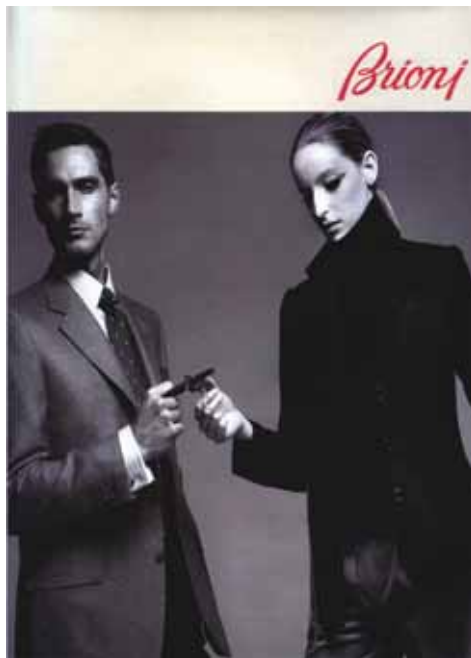


Figure 96



Figure 97



Figure 98



Figure 99

The whore persona progresses along a path of transgression from whore to voracious woman to dominatrix and then castrator. In a patriarchal paradigm all power is phallic, the more power she lays claim to the more phallic she becomes. Phallic emblems range from skin-tight clothing, corsets, stiletto heels, vampire teeth, horns and weapons. The fear of castration is so great that it is mostly represented symbolically; such as cutting or slicing into phallic objects. The threat in fig. 98 is allayed in fig. 99, 'order' is restored as the woman submits to the man.



Figure 100



Figure 101



Figure 102



Figure 103



Figure 104

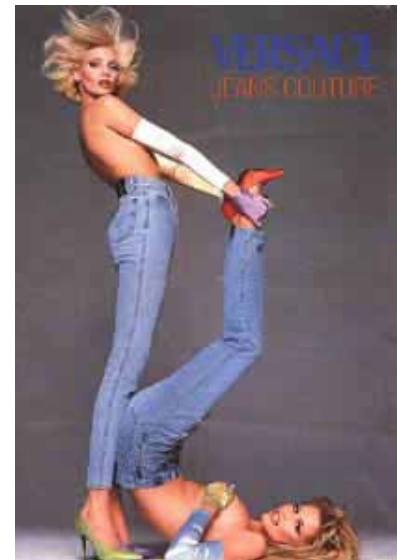


Figure 105

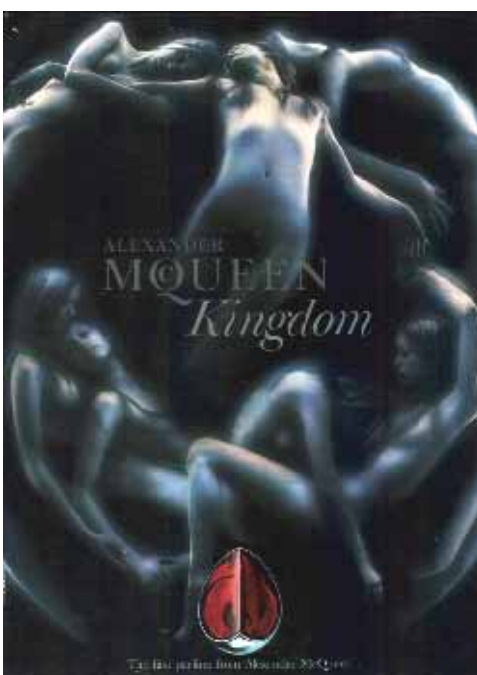


Figure 106

The current presentation of 'girl on girl' action is not a representation of sexual freedom for lesbians. Rather it re-enforces the long history of women as sexual slaves performing for the male spectator owner – who will be allowed to enter the performance.

In Freudian terms this performance also acts as a fetish to allay castration anxiety – the woman who acts as though she possesses her own penis will not need to acquire one through castration.

These women are merely the Twenty-first Century equivalent of the harem sexual slave. We may thus equate the advertisement for Alexander McQueen's perfume *Kingdom* (fig. 106) with Ingres painting *Le Bain Turc* (fig. 3). They both present women as slaves to their own sexual desires. They present no resistance – their sexuality is surrendered.



Figure 107a



Figure 107b



Figure 107c



Figure 107d



Figure 107e

The black stockings, suspenders, ultra short mini skirts, satin and patent leather are all suggestive of dominatrix gear. Sociologist Jack Katz would identify this as fetish fashion, associated with the deviance of 'being bad': "all the provocatively sensual evils of 'the night' are powerfully charismatic. Sneaky thrills are exciting. Looking tough, evil, alien, and 'bad' has a broad appeal, especially to young people. As a result, images of deviance, 'whorish styles ... torn shirts and motorcycles,' permeate popular culture because advertisers recognise that an 'association with deviance' helps sell products" (Katz cited in Steele 1997:193).

This series of images may be read as an expression of sexual performance for the male spectator-owner. "The picture is made to appeal to *his* sexuality. It has nothing to do with her sexuality. ...The woman's sexual passion needs to be minimized so that the spectator may feel that he has the monopoly of such passion. Women are there to feed an appetite, not to have any of their own" (Berger 1986:55).



Figure 109



Figure 110

The *Dior* campaigns illustrated in figs. 108, 109, 110, 111 & 112 all feature the pictorial language and devices of pornography - the models' bodies are slick with oil, their hair seems sweaty from exertion, and their mouths are open in orgasmic groans. The clothing is inspired by street 'walkers' and 'ladies of the night' according to designer John Galliano - he has taken the idea of being a 'whore' (also illustrated in figs. 113a & b) and made it chic.



Figure 111a



Figure 111b

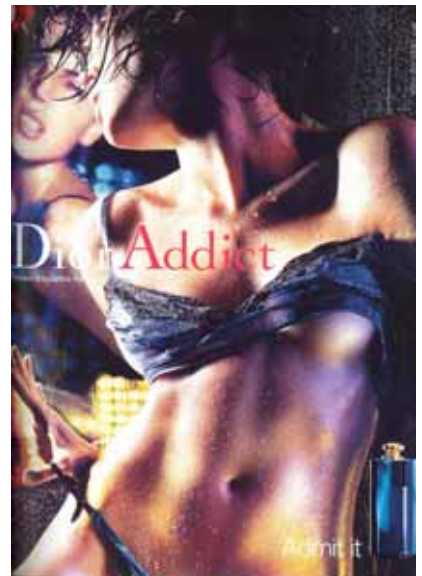


Figure 112



Figure 113a



Figure 113b

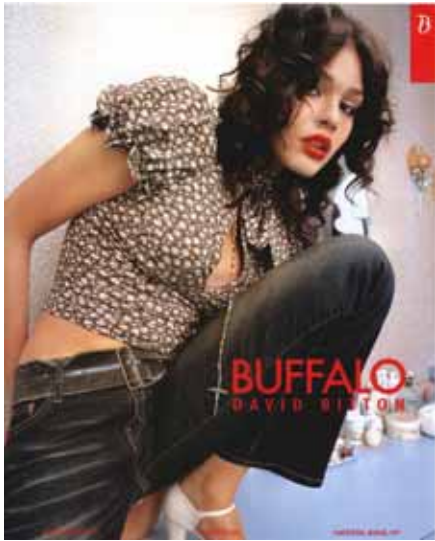


Figure 114a

Figure 114b

Figure 114c

These *Buffalo* jeans advertisements present a consistent campaign with young *Lolita*-esque models in contexts of sexual seduction. They are pushed up into corners and on countertops with no room for escape. One cannot escape these images as they follow you around – fig. 114c shows a poster on a bus shelter.

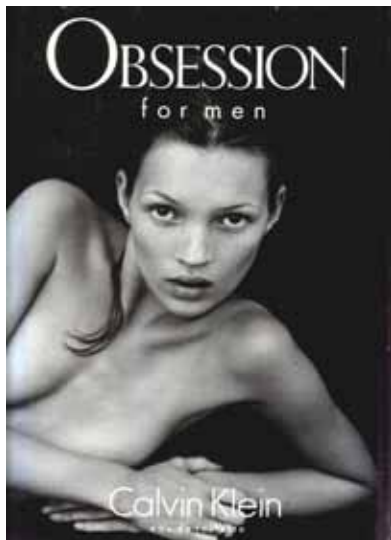


Figure 115a

Figure 115b

Figure 116

The use of supermodels in *Calvin Klein* campaigns create a familiarity with the consumer audience, as Wolf shows, these 'are her models'. The language of beauty pornography now informs most fashion stories.

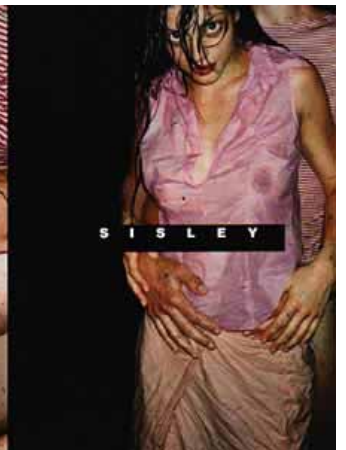
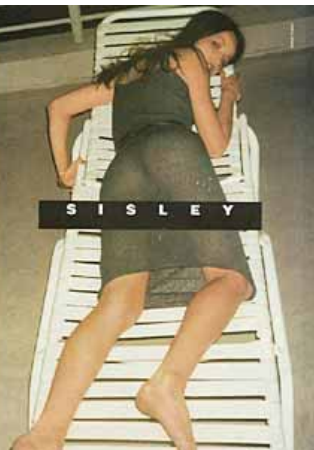


Figure 117a

Figure 117b

Figure 118a

Figure 118b

Both these *Sisley* campaigns have a snapshot 'feel' to them, creating associations with the voyeur, the paedophile, even the drugging of teenage girls at parties and the ensuing 'date' rape.



Figure 119a



Figure 119b

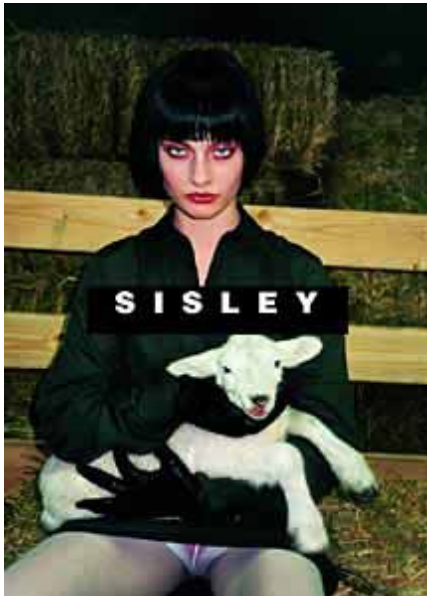


Figure 120

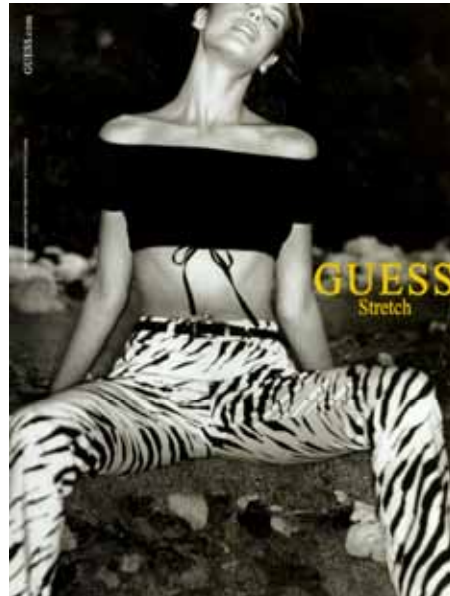


Figure 121



Figure 122



Figure 123



Figure 124



Figure 125

These figures show a selection of the many examples of the ‘crotch shot’ found in women’s fashion magazines. Previously these types of images were only seen in men’s magazines – now the same pictorial language presents women with images that reduce the female body to an available sexual object. The female stands as a symbol, in many cases her identity is obliterated with the cropping of the face from the picture frame. The other signifier of mature female sexuality – pubic hair – is also removed, the woman is thus infantilised and unthreatening.

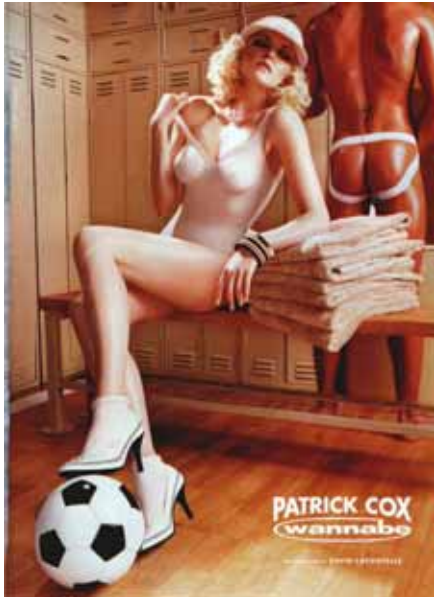


Figure 126a



Figure 126b



Figure 126c



Figure 127



Figure 128



Figure 129



Figure 130a



Figure 130b

Figures 126 to 129 represent the work of photographer David La Chapelle, a highly sought after and acclaimed photographer. However when grouped together one begins to see an agenda informing his work, through surrealism and humour he creates scenarios that represent women as sex toys and objects. The advertisements for *Emanuel Ungaro* (figs. 130a & b) are informed by S & M, bestiality and fetish fashion.

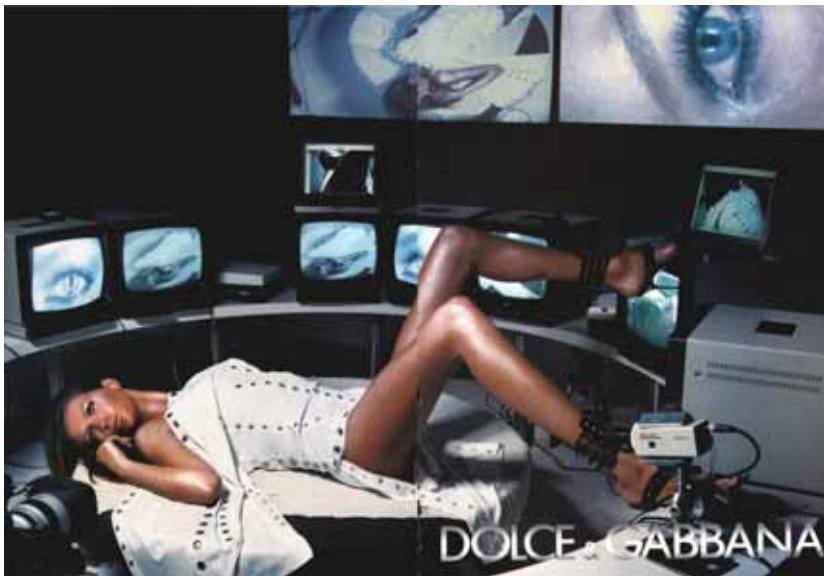


Figure 131a



Figure 131b



Figure 132

Figures 131a & b represent the contemporary voyeur 'Big Brother' syndrome of reality TV and security cameras. The model watches herself in the monitors, thus re-enforcing the aspect of the spectacle and the position women find themselves of surveying their own femininity. Figure 132 and 134 make us complicit in the act of being a voyeur, for we form a picture in the privacy of our minds for the blank space in 132, and perform the act of opening up the double-page spreads of 134.



Figure 133



Figure 134a



Figure 134b



Figure 135



Figure 136

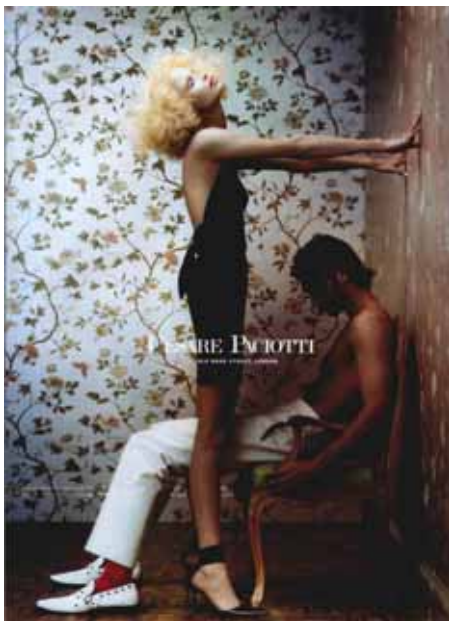


Figure 137

A strange lassitude has crept into representations of heterosexual intimacy (see figures 135 to 138). The male models appear to be disinterested and unaroused. The female models also contribute to this strange alienation as they are thin and flawless – like mannequins, an artificial construct. The female body becomes another branded, labelled, created and designed object. Figures 139 to 141, however, still use the language of lust.



Figure 138

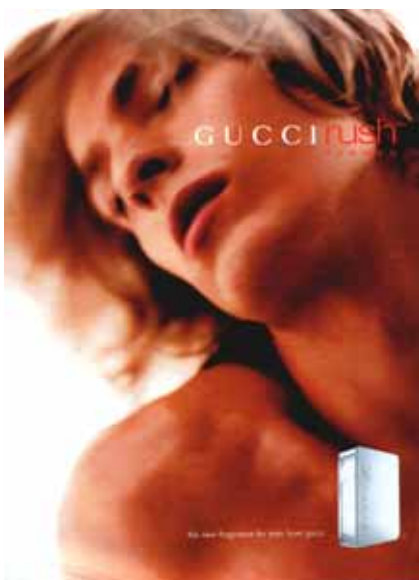


Figure 139



Figure 140

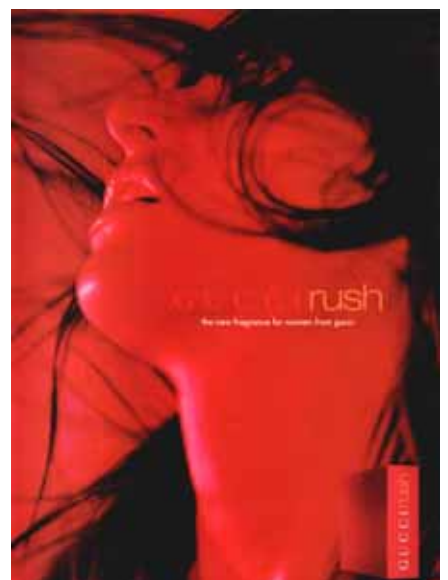


Figure 141



Figure 142



Figure 143



Figure 144



Figure 145

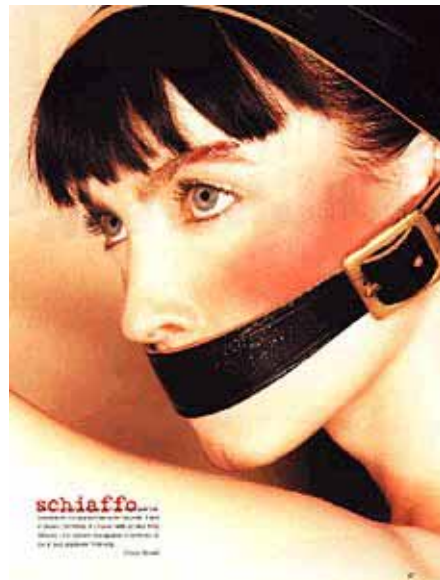


Figure 146a



Figure 146b



Figure 146c



Figure 146d



Figure 146e

“The woman learns from these images that no matter how assertive she may be in the world, her private submission to control is what makes her desirable. These images ... evolved with history: sexuality follows fashion, which follows politics” (Wolf 1992:133).

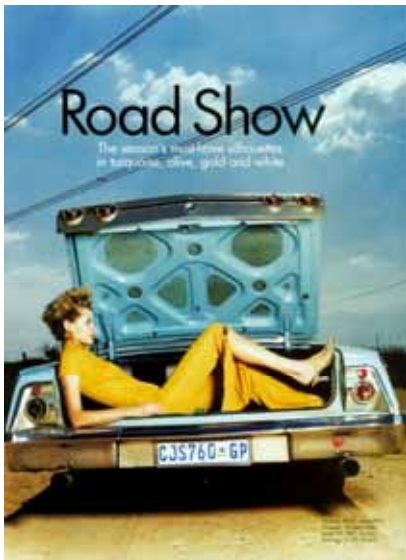


Figure 147



Figure 148

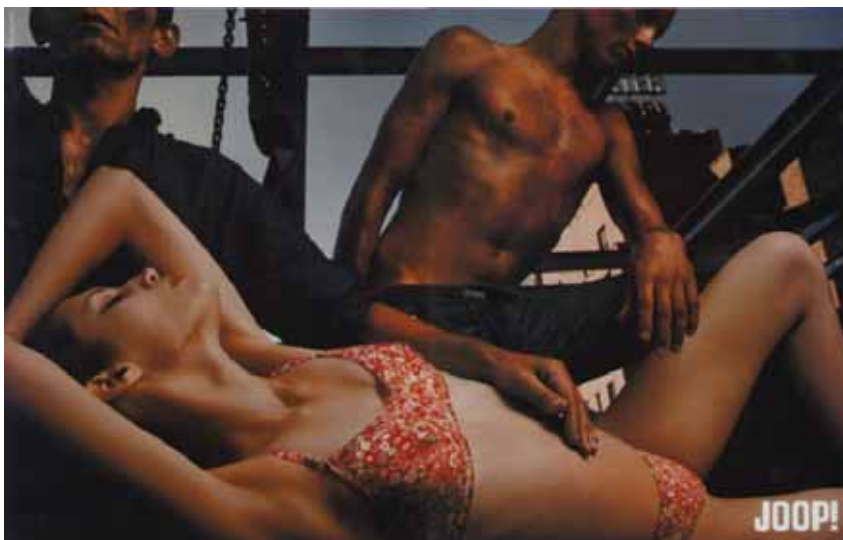


Figure 149

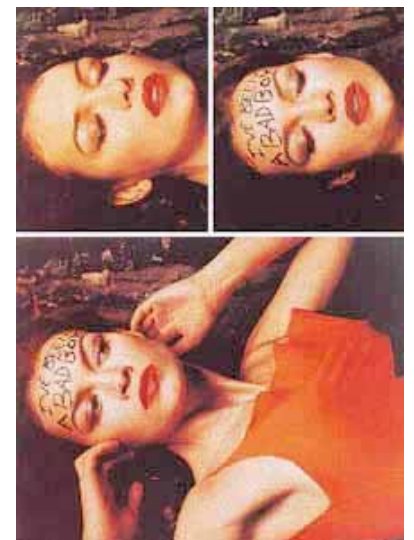


Figure 150a



Figure 150b

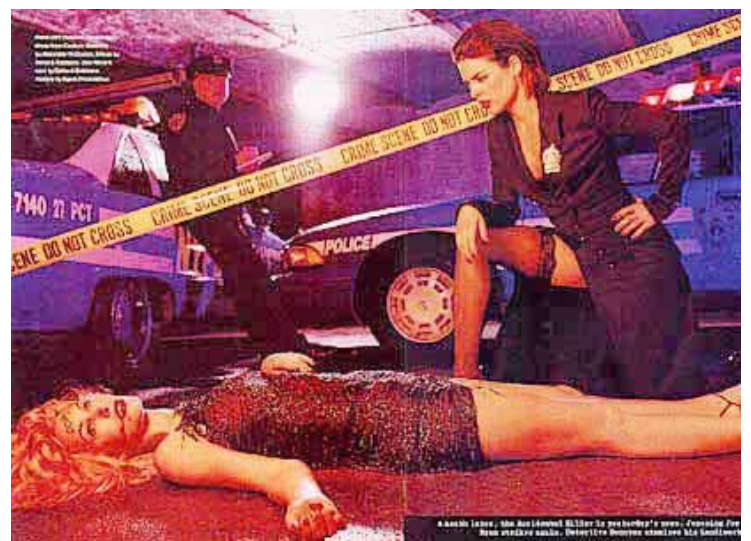


Figure 150c

These images all play on the fear of many women; that of being abducted, raped and murdered. The theme of rape has taken a central role in Western entertainment, forming either the main or sub-plot in many movies or detective dramas. Women are constantly reminded that to step out of line might result in a form of punishment – particularly sexual punishment for sexual liberation. When sexual abuse and violence is equated with entertainment, it makes it a hard to distinguish unacceptable behaviour.

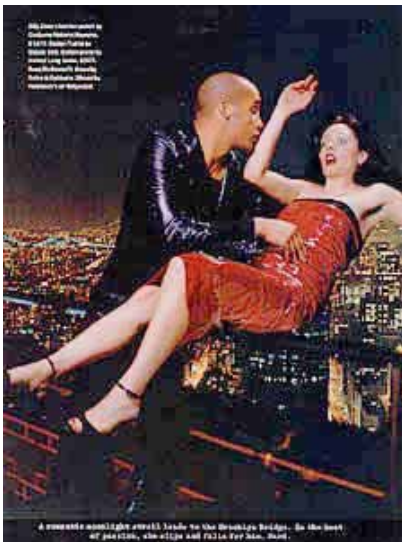


Figure 150d



Figure 150e



Figure 151



Figure 152

“Images that flatten sex into “beauty”, and flatten the beauty into something inhuman, or subject her to eroticized torment, are politically and socio-economically welcome, subverting female sexual pride and ensuring that men and women are unlikely to form common cause against the social order that feeds on their mutual antagonism, their separate version of loneliness” (Wolf 1992:143).



Figure 153



Figure 154



Figure 155