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RHETORIC AND SEMIOTICS IN CONTEXT:
EXPLORING THE GENRE OF FEMALE-TARGETED ADVERTISING

by

Lorelei Lingard

B.A., The University of Western Ontario, 1991.

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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in the Department
of
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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between genre, gender, and ideology through a rhetorical study of female-targeted advertising. Using as representative anecdotes eleven diverse advertisements from *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, and *Glamour*, this study explicates a cultural ecology of genre by examining the intersection of genre and gender and how that intersection facilitates an ideological regeneration of the culture out of which the genre grows.

New concepts of genre as social process facilitate a critical perspective for understanding the relationships between generic patterns of discourse and women's acts of self-expression, self-definition, and self-composition. That this genre has an impact on female subjectivity is undeniable: what this study explores is the semiotic ingredients of that impact and its rhetorical foundations. Through Barthes' semiotic theory of myth as metalanguage, Burke's conceptions of form and rhetorical identification and division, and Bateson's and Wilden's theories of analog and digital communication and double binds, this exploration illustrates the regenerative power of genre, the power of language as imaginal action, and the impact of cultural rhetoric on the (re)-definition of "Woman".

Female-targeted advertising uses language to sell ideologies and identities as well as products. This is manifested in language as symbolic action, in terms which embody social values and acceptable responses, in examples of advertising "literature" as equipment for living. This genre is rhetorically successful, a premise which is examined through a rhetorical study which illustrates this genre's masterly control of and identification with audience and explores its rhetorical motives and effects. This thesis also seeks to explore and substantiate two hypotheses: that each advertising "text", despite its visible uniqueness, partakes of a larger, ongoing cultural narrative which continually defines and inscribes gender and subjectivity, and that this genre and the context of situation it responds to and regenerates is ecologically unsound in Gregory Bateson's sense.

Dedication

To my Self,
that she might not destroy me.

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Preface

To me it doesn't seem a good method to take a particular science to work on just because it's interesting or important or because its history might appear to have some exemplary value. If one wanted to do a correct, clean, conceptually aseptic kind of history, then that would be a good method. But if one is interested in doing historical work that has political meaning, utility and effectiveness, then this is possible only if one has some kind of involvement with the struggles taking place in the area in question.

(Foucault, Power/Knowledge 64)

What Foucault says about "history" seems an appropriate starting place also for this work because it raises two pertinent issues. The first is my personal involvement indeed my struggle, with female-targeted advertising. This research is not just academic and, for the integrity and success of both the academic and the personal journeys within this paper, I must acknowledge my own motives before undertaking an examination of the motives involved in the rhetoric of this genre. It is important for readers to understand my perspective and my purpose in order that they fully comprehend both the choice and the working out of this project. For I am not just the researcher and the writer of this paper: I am also the spectator and consumer that it seeks to understand. On the mornings when I can't get out of bed because my hatred of my body makes me loathe to throw the sheets back and expose it, in the moments when I find myself surrounded by love and potential yet consumed by guilt

and fear, when hopes recoil and words offered in love unleash strange pain, I am reminded that this project is really not just academic, but also intensely personal. Over the past decade I have slowly recognized that my selfhood is endlessly entangled with the ongoing narratives I engage on billboards, on early morning transit walls, in magazines enjoyed in the bathtub. This research, among other things, is the attempt to achieve a critical perspective for understanding, unravelling, and exploring my selfhood by unravelling and exploring the genre of female-targeted advertising.

The second issue evolves out of this struggle and concerns my critical perspective, and my voice in this work. As a woman presently involved, not only as researcher and writer but also as spectator and consumer in this subject, my critical perspective cannot be, I feel, entirely detached and my voice must be, in order to clearly communicate my complex relationship with this subject, more speculative than omniscient, more subjective than authoritative, more like a harmony of various strains than a distinct, single melody. Like the myths that it studies, this work may proceed both synchronically and diachronically: that is, while it moves forward logically as an argument, an unfolding of analyses and theories, it must also unfold synchronically, studying the layers of possible themes and messages at any given point in the advertisements.

As well, while I will write, following the tenets of the thesis genre, towards a conclusion and this paper will inevitably come to a close, my own voice must be synchronic as well, allowing diverse perspectives at any given moment, in relation to any image or theme. I hope in this way to retain both clarity and integrity, and to achieve not only a theory of how this genre constructs the female Self but also a better understanding and acceptance of my own.

INTRODUCTION: "FEMALE-TARGETED ADVERTISING AND CULTURAL ECOLOGY."

This study of female-targeted advertising as it appears in such prominent adult women's magazines as Vogue, Glamour, and Cosmopolitan is built on two premises: that advertising markets more than just products and that advertising is a rhetorically successful genre. The purpose of this study is to substantiate two hypotheses, both of which relate to the cultural ecology of this genre. The first hypothesis, that many of these advertisements are "ecologically unsound" and detrimental to the continued survival of the female population, I adapt from Gregory Bateson's seminal work, Steps to an Ecology of Mind. The second hypothesis arises from my own experience as a female spectator/consumer: I wanted to study these advertisements and how they manipulate a female audience in order to check the validity of my sense that, however diverse they may seem as individual cultural texts, they all have something in common, are somehow connected as parts of a larger, ongoing cultural narrative which arises from and perpetuates our context of situation as women in a capitalist patriarchy. As such, it seems most useful to approach them as generic, despite their diversity, in order to examine whether or not they do indeed have more

in common than just their marketing purpose and their female audience.

In order to study and chart the formal elements of the advertising narrative, a popular form of marketing for female-targeted products, I have selected eleven advertisements from magazines published between August and April 1993: three perfume ads, two ads from the multi-dimensioned *Donna Karan/DKNY* campaign, a feminine hygiene ad from the *Kotex* series, a pharmaceutical ad from the *YeastGard* campaign, a *Hanes* hosiery ad, a *Request Jeans* ad, a *Tretorn* footwear ad, and a *General Motors* automobile ad. My formula for this choice was twofold: to gather specimens which both market a wide range of female products and present a diverse set of female images.

The examination of the formal elements of this genre concentrates on themes and purposes: this paper will define the semiotic and rhetorical content that the genre communicates, considering the context of situation that the genre of female-targeted advertising is responding to and constructing.

M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan theorize that

any piece of text, long or short, spoken or written, will carry with it indications of its context. . . . This means that we reconstruct from the text certain aspects of the situation, certain features of the field, the tenor, and the mode. Given the text, we construct the situation from it. (cited in Devitt 12)

Hence an analysis of recurring themes and images in these advertisements should reconstruct aspects of their context of situation.

The study of themes and images in this chapter cannot lead directly to an unveiling of situation. The formulation of these themes into a genre must precede the study of situation, for, as Devitt insists,

we do not construct the situation directly through the text, however; rather, we reach the situation through the genre. Since genre responds to recurring situation, a text's reflection of genre indirectly reflects situation. Thus the act of constructing the genre--of creating or perceiving the formal traces of a genre--is also the act of constructing the situation. (13)

With this progression in mind, this paper will deal with themes in specific advertisements, discuss possible generic terms, and attempt to chart the "grammar" of the myth of Woman in our culture as manifested in these "texts". These three perspectives will be continually concerned with and informed by the notion that what is most interesting and disturbing about the relationship between this genre and its audience is the fact (borne out not only by spectators' testimony, but also by the success of these ads and the magazine industry as a whole) that

these stories still provide pleasure for women viewers who are critically aware of how alienating they are and who have located the mechanisms through which their work is carried on. We cannot simply ignore the appeal and the pleasure (however bitter-sweet it may be when it

goes hand in hand with a social and political awareness) produced by these fictional products of the cultural industry. There is a problem here, and one hitherto scarcely tackled.

(Mattelart 15)

My own precarious, volatile relationship with these cultural "stories" not only testifies to the validity of Mattelart's observation but also provides the personal impetus for this academic study. For my problematic experience of my self-worth, my self-image, and my social purpose is just one example of an overwhelming social trend: in today's developed countries, a large population of women are facing a crisis. As middle class, Caucasian, working women from North America we have been liberated to a great extent from our past position as chattel, as women without choices, and we now face a new challenge: the (re)definition of who and what we are. No longer defined solely in relation to our male kin, no longer simply daughter, sister, wife, or mother, women today now have the choice of many roles outside the domestic realm. The possibilities are seemingly endless: doctor, politician, athlete, writer, etc., all must be part of the new definition of "woman", as well as others such as lover, lesbian, soldier, and friend. But many of our culture's new definitions of "Woman", albeit new to some extent, are almost as narrow and deconstructive as the old categories, perhaps even more destructive when considered in an ecological framework. Often, in fact, these new definitions are simply the remodelling of old

archetypes for the purpose, not perhaps primarily of the continued subordination of women, but of the continued survival of our culture which, by its very definition as a patriarchy, cannot withstand the redistribution of power that a real redefinition of "Woman" demands. Women, therefore, have become confused by the onslaught of new roles and definitions that insist upon a destructive adaptation that either accepts the new without discarding conflicting aspects of the old or obliterates the old and narrows the new.

The media, especially advertisers, use these archetypes, these mythical female figures, to promote products. The promotions take various forms: some products are offered as a "cure" for an ailment caused by one or more of these roles, some are offered as armour against the ills that these roles can inflict, some are offered as tools to aid you in the successful fulfillment of the role(s) you have chosen, and some are offered as a reward for the successful fulfillment of one or more of them. As well as their overt economic purpose, the more covert social purposes of these ads must be recognized. Erving Goffman, in his text, Gender Advertisements, argues that "in one sense the job of the advertiser and the job of a society are the same: both must transform otherwise opaque goings on into easily readable form" (vii). "Easily readable" does

not, however, mean explicit or logical: for the mythical narratives of ads operate on the same level as id, dream, and fantasy, and, as Bateson insists, "the vast majority of both metalinguistic and metacommunicative messages remain implicit" (178). Goffman also recognizes the unique nature of the archetypal or iconic elements relied upon for the analog communication of these advertisements. He states that

advertisements depict for us not necessarily how we actually behave as men and women but how we think men and women behave. This depiction serves the social purpose of convincing us that this is how men and women are, or want to be, or should be, not only in relation to themselves but in relation to each other. They orient men and women to the idea of men and women acting in concert with each other in the larger play or scene or arrangement that is our social life. That orientation accomplishes the task a society has of maintaining an essential order, an undisturbed on-goingness, regardless of the actual experience of its participants. (vii)

Necessarily, each advertisement aligns its product with particular archetypes in order to address or invoke a particular audience so that, taken as a whole, these female-targeted advertisements present an extremely distorted, fragmented, and contradictory image of Woman. There is an effect on female subjecthood; just what that effect is and how it is communicated is less clear. Becker's insight into the effects of this problem of subjecthood and the (re)definition of "Woman" occurring in our culture is useful

for its perception of the anxious confusion that women are experiencing. She recognizes that

A woman who decides to stay home with her children may feel anxious because she fears her marketability in the work world is slipping away. She may also feel depressed because although her conscience tells her she is doing the "right thing", she is still unable to validate the importance of this role to herself. Or a woman may choose her career as primary and still feel that no matter how good she is at her job, she is nonetheless doing something wrong in making it central. This ambivalence will invalidate the importance of her choice. She may be depressed--filled with self-hatred and unable to approve of her chosen self-image. And she may also be anxious, anticipating the often unknown consequences of having perhaps made the wrong choice. (8)

Becker does not discuss the woman who tries to do everything, but in her article, "Overworking the Working Woman: The Double Day in a Mass Magazine", Nona Glazer's study reveals that

portrayals of how employed women combine paid work and unpaid domestic labor in Working Woman magazine show women engaged in activities that support existing social relations between women and men, and between workers and employers. . . . Women are portrayed as pursuing male-type patterns of success in the workplace: (1) while continuing traditional female work in the home; or (2) forgoing marriage and/or motherhood or minimizing personal attachments. Social solutions through co-operative actions or by reliance on the state are abjured for personal solutions that offer no or little challenge to existing social relations in either the public or the private realm. (79)

Glazer also coins labels for these new archetypes, such as "The Sponge Woman" and "The Deputy Woman". Judith

Williamson, in her study of femininity as it is represented in our culture, echoes Goffman as she recognizes the political nature of these archetypes and contends that "it is not just a range of feminine expressions that are shown but the process of the 'feminine' as an effect, something acted on" (Consuming Passions 101). She explains that photographs can construct a story and an identity simultaneously, that

as we piece together, or guess, or assume, some meaning in the narrative, we find that the meaning *is* the woman [italics mine]. She appears to express the meaning of events. How like every narrative and photographic medium this is, and also how like actual life, the 'they've got it, she wears it' of personal relations. (101)

"Woman", the product, and the female role represented in each of these ads become inextricably tangled together for the spectator piecing it all together, a feat which is accomplished not only by rhetoric but also by the semiotic system of myth. Bateson contends that this symbiosis is common "in human behavioral systems, especially in religion and ritual and wherever primary process dominates the scene: the name often is the thing named. The bread is the Body, and the wine is the Blood" (402). Equally, in these ads we will find that the perfume is sexual freedom, and the shorts are the feminine mystique.

All of these diverse roles are part of the grammar of the complex myth of Woman in modern culture, a grammar fundamental to the success of female-targeted advertising. Any study of these mythical, perhaps generic characters must, therefore, be aware that "the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction (an impossible achievement, if as it happens, the contradiction is real)" (Levi-Strauss 229). If the cultural myth of Woman manipulated by advertising is an attempt to overcome the contradictory nature of many women's modern roles, then, as Kenneth Burke warns,

before taking this stock character at face value, as evidence of a correspondingly prevalent social type, one should certainly consider the possibility that the role is the sentimentalizing of a situation quite different. . . . In brief, might the part be featured in this popular art precisely because it did not directly reflect the motives in the social situation itself . . . ?"

("A Dramatistic View" 239-40)

Modern media does not provide a myth of Woman in the sense of the kind of "myth" of the Oedipus story or the stories analysed in Levi-Strauss' anthropological texts. The myth which this study chases is much more "anonymous and slippery, fragmented and garrulous" ("Change the Object Itself" 165). Indeed, as Roland Barthes recognizes,

contemporary myth is discontinuous. It is no longer expressed in long fixed narratives but only in 'discourse'; at most, it is a phraseology, a corpus of phrases (of

stereotypes); myth disappears, but leaving--so much the more insidious--the mythical.

("Change the Object Itself" 165)

In his discussion of myth as a "metalanguage", "a second-order semiological system" (Mythologies 114), Barthes describes how the materials of mythical speech (language, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects) are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by myth: it wants to see in them only a sum of signs, a global sign, the final term of a first semiological chain. He theorizes that the relation which unites the concept of the myth (the signified) to its meaning is essentially a relation of deformation--in myth the meaning is distorted by the concept, but this distortion is not an obliteration. The meaning, for example, the idea of "woman", remains here, the concept needs it; it is half-amputated, it is deprived of memory, not of existence: it is stubborn, silently rooted there, yet is a speech wholly at the service of the concept. The concept literally deforms, but does not abolish the meaning: a word can perfectly render this contradiction: it alienates it (Mythologies 123). The sense that a spectator has of duality in many advertisements may be a recognition of this mythical quality.

There seem to be two different logical types of "themes" functioning in these advertisements: on one level, there is the literal meaning of the images or texts in and of themselves, and, on another level, there is the mythical

theme which uses the first level as a mere starting point. Barthes begins his essay, "Myth Today", with the claim that myth "is a mode of signification, a form" (117) and goes on to link semiology and ideology with mythology, saying that the latter "studies ideas-in-form" (121). Pointing out the dual nature of myth which characterizes these advertisements, he insists that

what must always be remembered is that myth is a double system; there occurs in it a sort of ubiquity: its point of departure is constituted by the arrival of a meaning. . . . And it is again this duplicity of the signifier which determines the characters of the signification. We now know that myth is a type of speech defined by its intention . . . much more than by its literal sense . . . ; and that in spite of this, its intention is somehow frozen, purified, eternalized, made absent by this literal sense (133-4)

Myth, or metacommunication, contributes to the dual nature of female-targeted advertising, a duality that is manifested in the contradictory responses that may be evoked in a spectator by an individual advertisement. All of the advertisements I have chosen reflect this split(ting) reaction and, I think, provide a productive starting point for studying the rhetorical power of this genre in a media-literate, gender conscious culture. For if these ads work, and a multi-billion dollar female cosmetics and fashion industry testifies that they do (Wolf), what must be explored is how they work: what cultural dialectics are they entering into and how do they entice the adult female

spectator into "buying" stereotypes and definitions of femininity which, in other circumstances, she might reject?

**CHAPTER ONE: "THE SEMIOTICS OF MYTH AND RHETORIC IN
ADVERTISING NARRATIVES."**

It may be most fruitful to begin by charting the progression by which the images and texts in these ads move from mere literal meaning to communications with mythical proportions. Claude Levi-Strauss's insistence that "a myth is felt as a myth by any reader anywhere in the world" (210), although overstating its universality, testifies to the power of myth, especially when it is communicated through the primarily visual narratives of these advertisements. Continuing his definition, Levi-Strauss asserts that the substance of myth

does not lie in its style, its original music, or its syntax, but in the story which it tells. Myth is language, functioning on an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at "taking off" from the linguistic ground on which it keeps on rolling. (210)

In all cases, these ads relate mythical narratives, some sequentially through many "scenes", some synchronically through the richness of one image. The advertisement for *Donna Karan* clothing provides a particularly seminal example of a sequential narrative, against which the compressed narratives of the synchronic ads examined later can be compared to reveal their implicit complexities.

*Permission to reproduce this advertisement was denied.

The first image of the *Donna Karan* ad introduces its literal meaning through back and foregrounded details that make up the female subject's environment. As with other visual and textual forms,

the meaning of an ad does not float on the surface just waiting to be internalized by the viewer, but is built up out of the ways that different signs are organized and related to each other, both within the ad and through external references to wider belief systems. (Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 153)

Readings are assisted by associating an object with a person who is symbolic, by associating an object with its context, by the association of two objects, or by the association of feelings with objects. In this ad, the associative qualities of the American flag, the marble pillars, and the applauding men in the background along with the foregrounded details of the bunting, the microphones, and the man wearing sunglasses, a portable microphone and directing his attention away from the central figure assist the impression that this image portrays the drama of a national, public function, likely a candidacy race for the Presidency. The background building and pillars signify the State, just as the White House symbolizes democracy, the physical dwelling of those socio-political ideals. The flags proclaim nationalism, the bunting evokes celebration, and the obvious support of the surrounding male figures calls to mind the character of political functions. Interestingly, the "Secret Service" figure with the headset hints at the

possibility of danger, but also implies that the central figure, the woman, is important and worth protection.

This female figure consolidates the associations of her environment in this photograph, as she stands triumphantly on the podium, above those around her, with her arm raised in victory, the motion carrying the formality of a salute. She is dressed just like the men around her, except for the detail of jewelry. The ropes of fake pearls and matching earrings, along with her long mane of hair, identify her as distinctly female in relation to her male colleagues.

The details in the following scenes continue this candidacy/inauguration narrative. In the second scene, four guard-like figures walk beside the woman's car in an outdoor parade, their expressions severe and concentrated on other than the woman herself. She, standing in the back of a moving convertible like a homecoming queen, is the focus of everyone else's attention, showered with confetti and expressing enjoyment. One detail stands out as incongruous: while the men surrounding her wear black ties knotted closely at the neck of their impeccable shirts, their conservative suit jackets buttoned, the woman's masculine, pinstriped suit from the image before is blown open, her Oxford shirt undone to the waist revealing a glimpse of a black lace corset.

The third overleaf scene is less jubilant: the styrofoam hat with the coloured ribbon, the sprawling rolodex, the litter of coffee mugs and pizza remains, and the five crisscrossing, active phone lines indicate the intensity and frenzy of campaign headquarters. One coffee mug provides the only text in the scene: "leave me alone! I'm having a crisis!" Once again the woman occupies a central position in the scene, but strangely her face is serene during her phone conversation while the men around her grimace and frown. As before, her Oxford shirt unbuttoned to the waist and her conspicuous jewellery proclaim her difference, her femininity.

In the fourth scene the flags and the large, open book upon which the woman's hand rests as well as the solemnity of all expressions and the woman's raised right hand signify ceremony, possibly, given the narrative that has been building sequentially, an official inauguration ceremony. For this sacred occasion the woman's cleavage is covered, as in the first image, by the masculine, pinstriped suit, but the hallmark flowing mane and jewellery continue to signify her femininity. In the last scene, the woman appears alone, flanked by the flag and a blurred, background portrait of George Washington, holding a phone away from her face and gazing dreamily into space. Open files and a pen in her right hand signify business at hand, but her exposed

cleavage and blank expression belie any sense of real activity, certainly not the diligence one associates with a President.

The images of power and the price of the designer clothing pictured here foretell that this ad addresses an audience of high income working women, a small segment of the working female population who can afford high-priced designer suits, and enjoy considerable power. It also, however, invokes an audience of women who do not enjoy these working benefits but who desire them. The ad does not "create" this desire for power in its audience; however, by using one "iconic" kind of power, the presidency, it may stimulate in its female audience semi-dormant desires for other kinds of power. Thus, it invokes an audience that might otherwise not have realized desire in this context. Most immediately the "power" inscribed in this ad seems to be power over men as men fill all the subordinate positions in these scenes, but it may also be power over society since that is the nature of presidential power.

Burke provides a productive structure for examining this and other advertisements as dramatic acts involving the prescriptive power of language and for locating in these acts biases and motives in the communicative relationship between advertiser/rhetor and audience. Common to many advertisements is a predominance of the agency-act and

purpose-act ratios which, I would contend, reflects the importance of ideology in this genre. The act of any female-targeting advertiser is always the marketing of a specific product, the scene is the patriarchal capitalist economy, and the agent is the particular promotion company. Agency and purpose, as the only unfixed variables in this "drama", are the site of variations in the ads, as well as being the site where gender and ideology enter into the equation of "how the ads work".

The *Donna Karan* ad provides a clear example of this critical predominance of agency and purpose in the communicative relationship between advertiser and audience and also acts as a case in point for my contention that these ads are selling more than just inanimate products. The agency in this advertisement, how the act is successfully carried out, is evident in the clash of traditional signifiers: female signifiers such as the long mane and the necklace are juxtaposed with male signifiers such as the dark, pinstriped suit. This agency involves tapping into a current issue facing the female audience: the anxiety experienced with the constant switching of roles between workplace and home in the "double workday" of most women, an anxiety which is generated because, as Anthony Wilden suggests, "in human communication there are often serious problems of translation [and transition] between the

two modes of language: analog and digital" (System and Structure 164). While the business world has adopted as its mode of communication the digital, denotative mode which "talks about anything and does so in the language of objects, facts, events, and the like" (164), the mode of communication demanded by the traditional roles of wife and mother is analog, which "talks only about relationships" (164). Thus, the anxiety of a "double workday" woman results from not being able to translate between or reconcile her two existences: she begins to feel torn, a phenomenon which Wilden describes as "a schizoid splitting between "mind" and "body" and "reason" and "emotion"" (109).

That the advertiser recognizes and manipulates as agency this working woman's dilemma is evident in the incongruity of the items worn by the female subject in the ad, the successful "president". In the first photographic frame and in the one which presents her apparent inauguration, she appears in masculine, conservative attire, but in the other three frames she displays underneath her pinstripes and Oxford shirt traditional symbols of femininity and sexuality: a black lace bustier and ample cleavage. Given the implicit message, "how to succeed as one of the boys and be a woman too", the ad's threefold purpose becomes clear: to sell the product, to

sell working women a particular image, and to offer that image as timely solution to a social dilemma.

All of these purposes are interwoven, as the clothes provide the image which is the solution: that is, that you can be "masculine" on the outside and "feminine" on the inside. Aside from the black lingerie being a tired, much worn version of "feminine" in our culture and the youth of this presidential candidate being unrealistic, it is clear that, rationally, wearing two kinds of clothing is not going to solve what Becker calls the working woman's "schizophrenia". It's merely an avoidance of the real issue which is that the "female" methods of communication have a legitimate place in the workplace and that it is not healthy or productive to ask women to become men for half of their day. But as I berate them, I must at the same time emphasize that these logical flaws in this drama do not detract from its rhetorical power for in these images we are dealing with analog communication. In analog, fantasy, metaphor, etc., logical truth functions and empirical causal connection do not operate, do not constrain the communication. (System and Structure 446). Consumer's motives do not need to be based on some causal connection between buying the product and achieving what the images represent, nor do all the various signifieds the images evoke in various viewers, whether addressed or invoked, need

to be consistent with each other. In the analog ad which is myth, whether the solution presented is viable or not is beside the point, for the female subject's contradictory desire for both masculine and feminine attributes is imaginable and fulfilled.

Consider, as an example of this point, the way in which the mythical possibilities of the only line of text in this advertisement, "In Women We Trust", overcome a logical contradiction. Interestingly, this line is a pun on the phrase "In God We Trust" which graces the American coins, giving it an ironic, second meaning in the capitalist context of the advertisement. But even considered outside of its symbolic context as a pun, there is something ambiguous about this statement because while the words do have a literal meaning, in women we trust, the sentence is obviously meant to signify something else, something more. Inasmuch as it is addressed to the female audience of Vogue magazine, it claims another level of signification, that of a political statement about the position of women in our democratic society. This is made even more evident in that the sentence itself does not try to signify anything to me: it tells me nothing about the basis of this trust and the sort of women referred to; its "true and fundamental signification" ("Myth Today" 125) is to impose itself on the

female reader as the presence of a political statement about equality. As Barthes explains it, this is a case of

a particular, greater, semiological system, since it is co-extensive with the language: there is, indeed, a signifier, but this signifier is itself formed by a sum of signs, it is in itself a first semiological system [in women we trust]. Thereafter, the formal pattern is correctly unfolded: there is a signified [I am a political statement] and there is a global signification, which is none other than the correlation of the signifier and the signified; for neither the [trusting of the women] nor the [political statement] are given separately.

(125)

The images in this advertisement exist simultaneously on both a literal and a mythical level in much the same manner. Taken as a whole, the images represent the successful campaigning of a female candidate for the office of President of the United States of America. This is the "meaning" of the advertisement in Barthes' terms ("Myth Today" 126). But this "meaning", this sign of the first semiological chain, becomes a signifier of something greater: that the USA is a great democracy providing equal opportunity for both sexes even at this most sacred level of government. As a mythical signification, this rebukes the female spectator's learned sense that democracy is not for women what it is for men: "it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us" ("Myth Today" 126). Had this message been conveyed solely through the literal meaning of the first semiological chain,

it might have been more likely recognized as problematic and resisted by the female spectator. But since the "knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made of yielding, shapeless associations" ("Myth Today" 129) a contentious or politically charged message is more safely communicated through mythical channels, for "myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (131).

It is "this constant game of hide-and-seek between the meaning and the form which defines myth" (128). The female President is not the symbol of the American democratic system: she has too much presence, she is experienced by the spectator as a full, indisputable image. But at the same time this image's presence is subdued, distanced, made hollow; it recedes and becomes the accomplice of a concept of greater significance, American democracy. Once made use of, the former image of a particular woman achieving a particularly incredible goal becomes unimportant: a necessary progression, since it contradicts the lived experience of almost any female spectator.

It is through this sort of mythical duplicity that this advertisement manages to lie to the female spectator and entice her at the same time. The literal meaning, that which is first grasped by the usually casual perusal of the spectator is not, strictly speaking, an impossibility in our

culture and provides an enticing vehicle for the marketing of the product. The mythical signification, which, I would contend, is the more forceful of the two communications in this ad but is also the one which functions on a less conscious level, does not cancel out this feeling of well-being and promise elicited by the images but rather appropriates it in order that the spectator more readily accept this myth of "equality". This advertisement, through the use of metalanguage, manages to successfully market designer clothing (the pinstriped suit which appears three times in the ad retails for over five hundred Canadian dollars) through the principle of "equal opportunity" despite the fact that many of Vogue's readers experience their place in Western culture and its economy as severely limited. Susan Faludi, in her book, Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women, exposes the reality that is so dextrously hidden in the mythical folds of this ad. She asks

if American women are so equal, why do they represent two-thirds of all poor adults? Why are nearly 75 percent of full-time working women making less than \$20,000 a year, nearly double the male rate? Why are they still far more likely than men to live in poor housing and receive no health insurance, and twice as likely to draw no pension? . . . If women have "made it", then why are nearly 80 percent of working women still stuck in traditional "female" jobs-- as secretaries, administrative "support" workers and salesclerks? And, conversely, why are they less than 8 percent of all federal and state judges, less than 6 percent of all law partners,

and less than one half of 1 percent of top corporate managers? Why are there only three female state governors, two female U.S. senators, and two Fortune 500 chief executives? Why are only nineteen of the four thousand corporate officers and directors women--and why do more than half the boards of Fortune companies still lack even one female member?

(xiii)

This icy breath of realism illustrates the extent to which myth can "deform" the literal and turn an impossible meaning into a seductive example of a principle which we all recognize (but experience differently)--equality. In this case, myth skillfully overcomes contradiction, even a blatant one. Williamson recognizes, moreover, that advertising such as this not only overcomes contradiction but also offers, falsely or otherwise, a choice for the female spectator. Whether the choice is possible or even helpful is not important: it is the very offer of a choice that is seductive. As she explains it,

advertising is part of a system which not only sells us things--it sells us 'choices': or, to be more precise, sells us the idea that we are 'free' to 'choose' between things. To nourish this 'freedom' advertising must, like other key ideological forms, cover its own tracks and assert that these choices are the result of personal taste. (67)

The *Donna Karan* ad offers its audience a choice in clothing for work which mirrors but does not actually satisfy their desire for a choice of communicative modes or even of kinds of work. It appeals to its audience of working women because it offers them the possibility of not

having to choose, of transcending our culture's double bind (Wilden). Using coexisting archetypes the ad presents a woman with both "male" and "female" qualities, metonymically represented by the incongruous articles of clothing, in a foremost position of success in our society.

A similarly seductive and contradictive marketing feat is accomplished in the *Hanes* control-top hosiery advertisement. Image, text, and product work together in this ad to pun on the terms "shape" and "control". What is striking about the first image is the female model's positioning: she adopts a bodily position that is striking both for its aesthetic appeal and for its narrative suggestivity. Her crouching, fetal position, with sleekly parallel legs and arms, formally highlights her slimness and the muscle tone in her long limbs while at the same time suggesting a story behind the position. Her raised arms and her hands partly covering her face imply protection, while the rounded curve of her back suggests subordination or cowering, and her ambiguous facial expressions can indicate fear of impending threat. That her shadow is cast behind her body rather than diagonally outwards from it illustrates that she is crouching against a wall, suggesting the image of someone cornered.

The silhouette and text on the adjoining page begin a sequence of puns on the ideas of shape and control. The

FIGURE ONE

Form 04.92



© 1992, Hanes Hosiery, Inc.

T H E

S H A P E

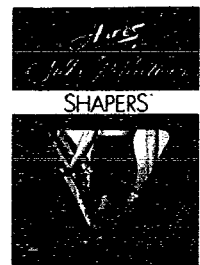
Y O U W A N T

T O B E I N.

Silk Reflections SHAPERS™ HOSIERY

SMOOTH, SLEEK CONTROL FROM WAIST TO THIGH, THAT MELTS INTO THE MOST ELEGANT LEGS.

THE LADY PREFERS *Janes*



statement, "The Shape You Want To Be In", means a number of things in the context established by the first image. First, this woman has a stereotypically beautiful physical shape or body: she is long and lean and elegant. Second, the shape her body is positioned in is aesthetically appealing: it complements her physique. Third, that shape or position evokes images of subordination and vulnerability, elements of a cultural myth of what is attractive in a woman. Fourth, the colloquial phrase, "the shape you're in", can mean readiness or emotional state, as in when someone asks an athlete what kind of "shape" she's in or one friend asks another what kind of "shape" she's in today. All of these meanings are played on and interwoven in this advertisement and all come together in the idea of "control" that is introduced in the product description on the bottom of the second page.

"Shapers" Hosiery is a control-top hose product, providing "smooth, sleek control from waist to thigh, that melts into the most elegant legs". This idea of control interacts with all of the possible meanings of "the shape you want to be in": it involves the idea that with (self-) control every woman can get the lean physique that is considered attractive in our culture; it relates to the narrative of subordination portrayed in the first image; it is often suggested as a means of dealing with emotional

issues or problems. Control, in this ad, translates implicitly into power, over oneself, over the body, over social situations. And that control exists not only in the product and the spectator's use of it, but also in the act of consumption itself. The final line of the text, "The Lady Prefers Hanes", offers a way to actualize this proffered, symbolic power through consumer choice, through preference. Just by choosing this product, its use value aside, the female consumer exercises and realizes power/control.

It seems extremely curious that an image which communicates on a literal level a woman's fear and vulnerability can successfully market a product to a female audience. Once again, though, agency and purpose predominate and lend insight into biases in the motivation for this communicative relationship between advertiser and female spectator. The agency here is an appeal to and manipulation of the female audience's experience of (and desire for) control while the purpose is dual: to sell the product and to create a specific female identity which centers on submission and fear. The image of the woman crouching against a wall with her hands raised protectively seems to represent fear, powerlessness, and threat but there are sexual undertones here too, evident in the sensually parted lips and the ample flesh revealed by the little black

halter dress. Even the name, "Silk Reflections", and the soft silhouette on the adjoining page contribute a romantic hue to what appears in the first image to be an ominous drama.

The mythical hollowing out and appropriation of the sign of the first semiological chain manages to defuse and manipulate the ad's literal meaning of fear and vulnerability at the level of metalanguage, thus transforming and incorporating these negatives into a more seductive and acceptable form, another myth of "feminine mystique". Barthes explains that the essential point of myth as a metalanguage is that

the form does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, it holds it at one's disposal. One believes that the meaning is going to die, but it is a death with reprieve; the meaning loses its value, but keeps its life, from which the form of the myth will draw its nourishment. The meaning will be for the form like an instantaneous reserve of history, a tamed richness, which it is possible to call and dismiss in a sort of rapid alteration: the form must constantly be able to be rooted again in the meaning and to get there what nature it needs for its nutriment

("Myth Today" 127)

The Hanes advertisement succeeds in using fear and vulnerability to sell women's hosiery to a female audience because it elevates these meanings to the level of myth and oscillates between referring to them and rebuking them. The meaning of the woman crouching against a wall, her fearful expression directed at some unidentified threat outside the

frame of the photograph, her hands protecting her face and covering her ears contains a whole system of values: a history, a biography, a morality, a sexuality, a politic. As the signifier for the mythical communication, however, all this richness is put at a distance and this particular story (and, along with it, the particularly negative responses it might invoke in an audience) recedes in order to make room for the mythical concept of "feminine mystique". By this I refer to the romantic notion, a sister to that which Friedan exposed, that women are naturally submissive, that they enjoy their domination, even find it sexually exciting, and that vulnerability in a woman is attractive, an asset. While this mythical concept empties the literal meaning of its strictly negative connotations, the literal sense in turn purifies the "intention" of the concept of feminine mystique. Each makes the other seem less harmful, more acceptable to the female spectator so that her probable revolt against the literal meaning is headed off by the romanticism of the mythical concept, and her recognition of the political intention defining that concept is belayed by her interest in the literal story. She will buy the product because she does not feel threatened by the literal meaning of the ad, hollowed as it is of its negative particulars by its use as a "form", a mere signifier of the mythical concept of feminine mystique.

There is another critical element at work in the success of this and other advertisements. One might wonder what the myth of feminine mystique has to do with hosiery, especially control top "Shapers", and how women can be enticed into participating in a myth, through economic consumption, which limits and debases them so. There are two dimensions to understanding this strange aspect of the relationship between advertisers, products, and female spectators. The first involves the scene of the act of advertising, the patriarchal capitalist economy and the second involves the realization that products in this scene act as ideological tools or vehicles. Of the importance of scene Williamson says that

the conscious, chosen meaning in most people's lives comes much more from what they consume than what they produce. . . . Consumerism is often represented as a supremely individualistic act--yet it is also very social: shopping is a socially endorsed event, a form of social cement. It makes you feel normal. . . . Buying and owning, in our society, offer a sense of control. If you pay for something you do tend to feel you control it. (230)

Thus, although it may seem empirically paradoxical, in buying this hosiery a female consumer can feel as though she has made the choice to assume a submissive role in line with the myth of feminine mystique, a choice that gives her control over her own vulnerability. And while her act of consumption is another form of control as she has chosen this product over another, even more seminal is the power,

problematic though it may be, involved in suppressing one's own body, in consciously submitting one's body to the restrictions of the control-top hose. Similar to the paradoxical and destructive but very real power wielded by the anorexic or the bulimic over her own body, this last kind of control that the ad/product offers the female spectator is perhaps the most magnetically seductive.

This dimension of the communicative relationship between the ad, the product, and the female spectator is heightened by the fact that

products map out the social world, defining, not what we do, but the ways in which we can conceive of doing things--rather as a building maps out space. Not that products are the originators of any ideology, rather they embody possibilities whose boundaries are more revealing than any one possible use. . . . all products are part of this material landscape, whose contours chart our very vision of life and its possibilities, and whose boundaries mark out our channels of thought. These are not fixed, but they cannot be shifted by an opposition which fits the same slots. Every society has some kind of map, a grid of the terms available to think in at any given time.

(Williamson 226-7)

Reminiscent of Burke's theory that all instances of language are terministic screens which prescribe certain ways of looking at the world, code certain responses as valid or reasonable, Williamson's theory of the nature of products as vehicles of ideological, prescriptive "terms" points to the power of ads such as this one to prescribe the purchase of the product as a valid response to reading the

ad and situating oneself within the scene that it represents.

Both the *Donna Karan* and the *Hanes* advertisement prescribe the purchase of the featured product as a solution to a current socio-political issue, but this agency which invokes the spectator's purchasing power involves more than the marketing of an individual product. In a capitalist society such as our Canadian culture, "democracy" is often a code word for freedom to buy, sell, and invest, and one of the standard social meanings of "equal rights" and "equal opportunity" is that anyone with sufficient money has an equal right to buy anything in the market. As Faludi's factual insight reveals, the ambiguity of equality is a mythic key to the discourse of bourgeois democracy. That this strategy is used in relation not only to women but also to other oppressed groups and poorer people generally indicates its power to invoke audience, as in the *Donna Karan* ad where an audience which cannot afford the suits featured is manouvered into desiring the product because it represents this "democracy" from which they experience alienation.

Thus we can understand that the capitalist economy of our culture is one of the governing factors of the context of situation which this advertising genre responds to and regenerates. The code words of "equal opportunity" and

"democracy" fuel our capitalist, political discourse and are adopted by this genre, instantly investing every product with the mythic power of "equality".

The union of purchasing power with equal rights illustrates another governing factor of this genre's context of situation: class. While audience addressed and audience invoked in the *Donna Karan* advertisement represent diverse classes, those who enjoy economic success and those who do not, the belief that buying is an assertion and exercise of equality unites the classes as one audience as far as this genre is concerned.

The analog communication of advertisements avoids the logistics of whether or not the spectator can afford the product, concentrating instead on metaphor and fantasy, which are classless. These advertisements offer the spectator a type of enjoyment which precedes and is not part of the actual enjoyment that might be procured by purchasing the product; that enjoyment is the ad itself, the story that it narrates and the momentary fantasy in which it invites the spectator to participate.

CHAPTER TWO: "SYMBOLIC ACTION AND THE IDEOLOGICAL
DIALECTIC."

In "Ideology and Myth", Kenneth Burke recognizes that there is a point at which "the 'ideological' gives way before the 'mythic'" (199) and suggests that the "ideal myth" would be "a vision that transcended the political, yet that had political attitudes interwoven with it" (201). Both the *Donna Karan* and the *Hanes* advertisement have come close to this "ideal" in that they manage to present the political in a distorted, transcendent form, rising above the literal and yet using the mythical communication for political means. Barthes insists, however, that new studies of myth must go further in their analysis than the revealing of the latent meaning of an utterance, of a trait, or a narrative, the political and historical beneath the mythical; they must

fissure the very representation of meaning . . .
challenge the symbolic itself. . . .
[interrogate] the very dialectic of the
signifier . . . [discover] the articulations,
the displacements, which make up the
mythological tissue of a mass consumer society.
("Change the Object Itself" 167)

An important factor in the "displacements which make up the mythological tissue of a mass consumer society" is the phenomenon of photography and its ability to fuel the symbolic. Through recognizing and evaluating the impact of

photography on reality, one can fissure the representation of meaning in these ads. In her study, On Photography, Susan Sontag considers the role of the photograph in the mythic narratives of our culture and contests the photograph's apparent role as a mirror of reality. Outlining what has become in our culture an inversion of the traditional artistic hierarchy which privileges the real over the artificial, the object over the image, she argues that "so successful has been the camera's role in beautifying the world that photographs, rather than the world, have become the standard of the beautiful" (85). The ramifications of this inversion for the female audience confronted with mythic narratives of the Female in the media become clear as Sontag asserts that "a fake painting (one whose attribution is false) falsifies the history of art. A fake photograph (one which has been retouched or tampered with, one whose caption is false) falsifies reality" (86).

This falsification is indispensable to myth and plays a pivotal role in an advertisement for *Request* jeans that romanticizes female vulnerability. This ad provides an example of the way in which falsifications in the advertising genre, like most ideologically effective messages, must be at least partially true to perform their rhetorical function. In this ad there is some cultural truth to the theme of female vulnerability but, through

FIGURE TWO



eroticization and romanticization, that truth is falsified and the real desires and fantasies with which it resonates are manipulated into the ideological direction that the ad needs them to go in order to market the product.

In the *Request* ad, the environment of the central figure once again discloses a synchronic narrative, the literal meaning of this scene. The oily rag tucked into her back pocket and the gas can she carries combined with the row of vehicles parked in the background of the image imply car trouble; perhaps she has run out of gas. In the distant background of the picture, a blurred cityscape of buildings, powerlines, and mountain ranges indicates that she is in the outskirts of the city, away from bustling crowds and the safety in numbers. The painted graffiti on the wall in front of her as well as the old tires and garbage littering the ground signifies a less law-abiding, and thus, we assume, more dangerous part of the city. She is unaccompanied, vulnerable, and potentially in danger, all of which are signified by her backwards glance mid-stride, her beauty, and her provocative attire. This semiotic analysis and the association that I am professing between beauty and vulnerability testify to Dawn Currie's claim that "semiotics emphasizes that images rely upon external belief systems in order to have meaning" ("Representation" 201) and illustrate what Williamson means when she refers to these systems of

cultural meaning as "referent systems" (Decoding Advertisements 26).

The photograph may not appear to have been "retouched or tampered with" in Sontag's terms but indeed it has: although external to the photo, the bright red logo and retail outlet stamp retouches this image and turns it into an advertisement directed to potential female consumers of the product. In a similar manner as that employed in the *Hanes* ad, this advertisement takes what is, in its literal context, an image that would probably repel a female spectator and elevates it to the level of myth, distorting in the semiotic process the sadistic and disguising it as seductive. Through its placement within the voyeuristic frame of the photograph and within the specific context of the advertisement, the reality of this image, which is, in essence, fear and danger, is falsified and deformed, becoming romanticized rape.

The literal meaning involves a situation common in the concerns of most women: the danger of one's car breaking down in an unsafe area far from home. Having walked to buy gas, this woman finds herself alone in an abandoned lot, followed by someone who clearly makes her nervous. The photograph falsifies reality in that the woman's facial expression is ambiguous: she is looking over her shoulder, but whether she is afraid, simply curious, or intrigued is

difficult to pinpoint. In reality, there would be no question of her reaction: fear. But this photograph, in order to colour this situation with mysticism and romanticism, presents a falsified version of an all too realistic situation, fulfilling Sontag's prophecy that "in addition to romanticism (extreme or not) about the past, photography offers instant romanticism about the present" (67). As well, the label on her shorts seems to act almost as a beacon, and its logo, "Request", contains an eerie pun in the context of this photograph. Oddly enough, this image of a woman dressed impeccably to fit the common, repulsive phrase, "She asked for it", and threatened by some unidentified element outside the photograph's frame is meant to (and does!) sell denim to female consumers. It achieves this apparent paradox directly as a result of the photograph's ability to falsify reality and the mythical narrative's ability to manipulate and distort the literal. Its success depends on these two forces being able to lead the female spectator through a chain of significations: from the message that these jeans will make her look more attractive, to the concept that attractiveness in a woman involves vulnerability, and finally to the mythical signification that being vulnerable is sexually exciting.

Enlarging on Marshall McLuhan's celebrated remark that "the medium is the message", Sontag asserts that "because

each photograph is only a fragment, its moral and emotional weight depends on where it is inserted. . . . As Wittgenstein argued for words, that the meaning is the use, so for each photograph" (102). These ads are communications which manipulate the issues of power in our culture and the implications in real women's lives of the struggle to define what is "Female". Each advertisement adopts a strategy already prevalent in the present political currents and from these strategies evolve the grammatical elements which make up the many myths of the "Female" in modern advertising. Advertising does not create these political currents, but, in appropriating and manipulating them within a media context, it enters their ideological dialectic, perpetuating and perhaps even strengthening it. Williamson insists that

it is on this 'cultural economy' that advertising feeds its endless appetite for social values. Ads are in the business, not of creating, but of re-cycling social categories, relying on systems of value already in existence as sources for the 'auras', at once intangible and precise, which must be associated with the goods for sale. (68)

It is because of this cultural foundation, this dialectic, that one cannot simply brush these myths off, for their power within this genre becomes unignorable with the recognition that

in the choice and scope of terms that are used for characterizing a given situation there are implicit corresponding attitudes and programs of action. . . . In the selection of terms for describing the scene, one automatically

prescribes the range of acts that will seem
"reasonable", "implicit", or "necessary".
(Burke, "Dramaticism" 341)

These ads are not only selling products: they are actively and persuasively engaging in the cultural struggle to (re)define the "Female", and as such they present a rhetorical and political force that must be reckoned with for they continually impact on our context of situation. Mattelart's insistence on the "bitter-sweet" nature of what I will call the female spectator's schismatic reaction to these ads provides evidence of the power and effect of the "prescriptive" dramatic terms that Burke identifies as the source of much linguistic persuasion. The unique nature of the female spectator is such that she is perhaps more vulnerable to these prescriptive terms in ads than a male spectator for the simple reason that the special space of the female subject is "at the same time inside and outside the ideology of gender, and conscious of being so, conscious of that twofold pull, of that division, that doubled vision" (de Lauretis 10) and that causes her to be at once "within and without representation" (de Lauretis 10) "at once woman and women" (de Lauretis 114). The implicit double bind that is often created by these prescriptive terms is a powerful coercive force where a modern female spectator experiencing confusion about the nature of her own subjectivity is concerned. That the choice and scope of terms in a female-targeted advertisement are delineated most strongly by the

definition of the "feminine gender" inscribed in our culture illustrates that these ads, as dramatic acts, are predominantly scene-motivated, not product-motivated as one might initially suspect. This also helps to account for the importance of target audience here, and reveals the importance of the concept of spectatorship, since, as de Lauretis contends "the ways in which each individual spectator is addressed . . . the ways in which his/her identification is solicited and structured . . . are intimately and intentionally if not usually explicitly, connected to the spectator's gender" (13).

Thus, it seems most useful to understand these advertisements not as asserting propositions, true or false, accurate or inaccurate, but as symbolic action embodying attitudes, strategies for encompassing situations. I.A. Richards speaks of incipient or imaginal action and Burke reminds us "that images can have the force of attitudes" (Grammar 243). Clearly the symbolic action in these ads wields such power and we can "discern the lineaments of potentiality, or incipient action, in [their] attitudes, images, or sentiments" (Grammar 269). We have already seen the mythical figures of Woman-as-Victor and Woman-as-Victim and the potential action in their attitudes has been shown to involve not only the action of purchase but also the

action of manipulating the female spectator's perception of self.

Another archetypal figure in female-targeted advertising is the traditional Woman-as-Domestic, whether mother, wife, or daughter. The Kotex feminine hygiene promotion from the October issue of Glamour entitled, "Kotex understands what it means to be a woman", manipulates all three of these traditional figures as mythemes, components of the mythical narrative of "Woman". Each scene represents one of many rituals within our culture which both define and punctuate the stages of womanhood that a patriarchal ideology has privileged as legitimate and important: the onset of fertility, mating procedures or dating, and marriage. The next of this ad series features motherhood as a fourth ritual stage. In the terms of this ad sequence, "what it means to be a woman" equals or at least includes fulfilling the roles that society sets up for women, satisfying, and not straying from, the progressive ritualistic stages of the mythical narrative. Although on the surface the ads present an atmosphere of female solidarity, the dominating male figure so prominent a decade ago in female-targeted ads withdrawn from these scenes, they all represent rituals in which the male figure and the

*Permission to reproduce this advertisement was denied.

traditional male/female relationship involving heterosexuality, monogamy, sexual division of labour, etc., figures prominently. As a result of this, men are not only part of the purpose in each image, to again use Burke's Pentad, but they are also implied as co-agents. This is a ratio characteristic of all of these advertisements, from the Woman-as-Victim to the Woman-as-Victor to the Woman as Domestic.

Goffman's discussion of "picture frames" provides a helpful entrance into the dynamics of the Kotex advertisement. He argues that

a feature of drawings, paintings, sculpture, and especially photographs, is that these artifacts allow for a combination of ritual and relic. The rendition of structurally important social arrangements and ultimate beliefs which ceremony fleetingly provides the senses, still photography can further condense, omitting temporal sequence and everything else except static visual arrays. And what is caught is fixed into permanent accessibility, becoming something that can be attended anywhere, for any length of time, and at moments of one's own choosing. (10)

Goffman continues, establishing the relationship between this quality of photography and possible motives and effects:

Something like self-worship can thus be accomplished. The individual is able to catch himself at a moment when--for him, he is in ideal surroundings, in association with socially desirable others, garbed in a self-enhancing way, . . . poised for a promising take-off, terminating an important engagement, and with a socially euphoric look on his face. A moment

when what is visible about him attests to social matters about which he is proud. A moment, in short, when he is in social bloom, ready, therefore, to accept his appearance as a typification of himself. (10)

While Goffman divides pictures into two types, private and public, and the discussions reproduced here are from his section on private pictures, one of the most powerful tools that advertising wields is the production of public pictures for marketing as private pictures, as glimpses into private realities. Thus, not only is the subject of the picture "ready to accept his appearance as a typification of himself" but also the entire audience is tricked into accepting the appearance of one photographed individual as a typification of "man" or, in the case in point, "woman".

Goffman defines private pictures as "pictures taken . . . in order to commemorate occasions, relationships, achievements, and life-turning points, whether of a familial or organizational kind" (10). This definition accurately describes the nature of the photographic images in the Kotex advertisement, and hints at both the ad's motives and its effects. The first frame of this ad sequence seems to address a primary audience of women who are mothers with daughters and as its agency it attempts to resonate with their fantasies about intimacies with their daughters. This first image has, as its foreground and central element, two women embracing and smiling calmly. They appear to be mother and daughter, not only because of their striking

physical resemblance but also because the white picket fence in the softly blurred background metonymically implies a yard, a house, a family. The daughter's face, although smiling, is almost expressionless: it would be difficult to describe her feelings, other than happiness, at the moment of the photograph. The mother's smile, however, contains resonations of pride, satisfaction, and fulfillment, and her hand over her daughter's along with their closeness points to the daughter as the source of these emotions.

Because of the previously introduced focal role that the product plays in agency, as a spectator I suspect that the strong attachment of these two women is a result, at least in part, of their biology. That is, they are colleagues in the reproductive cycle and that reproductive sexuality provides the foundation for their intimacy. Similarly, the look of pride on the mother's face, as there are no signs that it relates to an achievement exterior to the immediate scene, seems related to the product and its use: the daughter is continuing the reproductive heritage. Presumably, the mother has initiated her daughter into this ritual of womanhood and passed on product knowledge as fathers pass on to sons a preference for a certain brand of automobile or lawnmower in other ads. If, as the look of security and satisfaction on the two faces suggests, the daughter continues to use the product her mother has always

trusted, it becomes a symbol of both the reproductive functions they have in common and the emotional bond that this shared function has fostered between them. Other values and ideologies associated with reproduction also surface in this first frame: the white picket fence metonymically represents bourgeois family values, a suburban yard as the softly focussed background similarly represents the patriarchal notion that a woman's role is that of wife and mother, that her place is in the home.

The second frame also contains metonymic inscriptions of ideology which add meaning to the photograph's representation of "what it means to be a woman". The young, blond girl in this image is bent over a vanity to apply lipstick in a mirror. She appears to be in her bedroom, with sun shining through soft organza curtains and clothes and toiletries scattered about. Her youth is signified not only by her attire, tight jeans and a T-shirt, but also by the textbooks beneath the toiletries on the vanity. The acts of self-beautification represented here by the wet towel, the assorted toiletries on the dresser, the lipstick, and, of course, the mirror, allude to preparation for something or someone, perhaps a date. The particular product featured in this frame also hints at preparation and self-beautification for someone else: this particular maxi-pad is "curved to fit your body and protect like nothing

flat", so that nobody else will know that you're wearing it. This drama implies, as the first one did, the presence of an absence: a male figure, a male gaze in the near future for which the lipstick is necessary to attract him and the curved maxi is necessary in order that he not discover that she's menstruating.

Similarly, in the third frame of the Kotex sequence, both agency and purpose involve the product and an implied male figure, specifically a fiance. Once again, the objects and their associations provide the narrative of this image. The rack of colourful, formal dresses in the background indicates that these three young women are in a boutique, and the headpiece and veil that the central woman is trying on signify that the purpose of this shopping trip is a wedding. This frame may address an audience of women who actually are engaged or, since the central female figure is not wearing an engagement ring, it may even more seductively address a female spectator who wants to be engaged or invoke that desire in a spectator who hadn't consciously considered it previously. The image involves, once again, preparation for a ritual which involves both a male figure and a particular set of ideological values.

The rhetorical content of this Kotex campaign is powerful and precise. It is particularly skillfull

in its use of the method explained by Burke as the inherent relationship between identification and division, agreeing with your audience on more, or more basic, levels than those on which you may disagree and are trying to persuade them.

(Rhetoric) Beneath each of these images is the caption, "Kotex understands what it means to be a woman", and in the bottom right corner of each page is the bold slogan, "**Kotex Understands**". This personification of the brand name "Kotex" develops the message that Kotex is "one of us", that is, part of the female community which these ads both address and invoke. Thus, the traditional rituals presented in these scenes, these mythemes familiar to all modern Western women, allow this shared, common understanding of "what it means to be a woman". This identification on the fundamental level of myth is a necessary basis from which to persuade about a point upon which many women might differ, both from each other and from the Kotex company: which feminine hygiene product is best? The rhetorical tool of identification, however, does more than just help to sell a product for

if identification is 'not simply one psychical mechanism among others, but the operation itself whereby the human subject is constituted', . . . then it must be all the more important, theoretically and politically, for women who have never before represented ourselves as subjects, and whose images and subjectivities-- until very recently, if at all--have not been ours to shape, to portray, or to create.

(de Lauretis 130)

A pattern that develops throughout all of these mythical scenes depicting female subjectivity is the importance of sexuality and the actual or implied male presence. In the *Donna Karan* advertisement, the female figure may be running for President, but she is at least two decades younger than any President on record, she is surrounded by a host of supporting male players, including George Washington in the blurred background of the final image, and, most incongruously, she is flaunting her sexuality as represented by a standard symbol of female promiscuity, black lace cleavage. In both the *Hanes* and the *Request* advertisements, the absence of a male presence is conspicuously implied by the frightened gaze of the female "victim" which is directed outside the immediate photographic frame of reference. Sexuality figures prominently in all ads, as do standard symbols of femininity: thinness, ample bare skin, and a flawless face. In the *Kotex* scenes the absence of a male presence is also acutely obvious.

It is critical to understand that these representations of femininity are

not all form and no content. The emotions that bounce between the narrative and the woman in each picture, though unclear, are nearly all suggestive of fear, suspicion, vulnerability, anxiety, or at best uncertainty. . . . [They] show how this vulnerability is linked with eroticism, not always through explicitly

"sexual" poses. . . but through performing femininity at their intersection.
(Williamson, Consuming 101)

While Williamson's subject is the work of artist Cindy Sherman, her explanation succinctly describes the relationship between femininity, vulnerability, and sexuality that figures so prominently in the *Hanes* and *Request* ads and by indirect reference in the *Karan* ad which raises similar issues through its unrealistic portrayal of femininity, sexuality, and power. These ads hit a raw nerve of femininity in linking the erotic and the vulnerable: they partake of and perpetuate an "imaginary, fragmentary identity found not only in photos and films but in the social fabric of our thoughts and feelings" (Williamson, Consuming 102).

Even the *Kotex* ad, although its images do not evoke it, revolves around the concept of vulnerability. Phrases like "you need to feel secure", "your protection needs", "protect [sic] like nothing flat", "protection that fits the way you are", "added protection", and "no show protection" pervade this advertisement, and recognizing what is under erasure in the enthymeme of "protection" and its partner, "security", is necessary to understanding the link between vulnerability and sexuality here. Enthymemes are used for two purposes:

first, it is often good tactics to leave premises unstated, either because the premises are so obvious that readers would feel 'talked down to' or because the premises might be rejected if stated overtly. Second, and more

important, the unstated premise is, according to Aristotle, often an attitude shared by the audience. (Coe, Process 131-2)

In this case the latter suggestion seems appropriate, especially in terms of the particularly feminine product being marketed. The female audience recognizes, consciously or otherwise, that what is under erasure in the enthymeme of "protection" is the premise that being a member of the female sex in our society automatically renders you subordinate and vulnerable. Unlike the feminine mystique ads such as *Hanes* and *Request*, this campaign does not romanticize this vulnerability into eroticism: rather, it simply assumes it and uses it as a vehicle for promoting the product. The metaphor of protection has become an automatic one but it is nevertheless a metaphor because what a feminine pad actually does is absorb--the prevention of soiled clothes or public knowledge of the menstrual condition is secondary to the act of absorption, or a product of that act. "Protection" actually means "prevention from injury or harm" and the use of this term allows *Kotex* to play on the female audience's learned sense of their sexual and social vulnerability in our culture without representing that vulnerability overtly and possibly spoiling the serene nature of the mythical narrative they wish to present.

Use of the enthymeme is equally critical to the success of the *Donna Karan* advertisement as its one line of text,

"In Women We Trust", participates in two unstated syllogisms. In this case the enthymeme is used not for solidarity or identification, but "because premises might be rejected if stated overtly" (Coe, Process 131). This narrative claims triumphantly that women can become president, that "in women we trust", aligning, through the use of the inaugural oath, women with God. God and the President are, aside from being male figures, the most powerful entities in a democratic Christian society, enjoying the ultimate respect and trust of its citizens. Thus, the first syllogism created by this alignment is:

Men can be president.

Women are equal to men.

Therefore, women can be president.

In the advertisement, the first two premises of the first syllogism are unstated since, while most female spectators would agree automatically with the first premise, they would probably argue that the second is true only in principle, which means of course that it is not true in most actual situations.

The second syllogism is as follows:

In God We Trust.

In Women We Trust.

Therefore, Women are equal to God in trustworthiness.

While the first premise in this second syllogism is unstated but implied by syntactic imitation, the conclusion of this syllogism is unstated because most female spectators would disagree with it. While one might agree, in a patriarchal society, with the syllogistic conclusion, "Therefore, men are equal to God in trustworthiness", its feminine counterpart as implied in this advertisement is problematic. Not only are women not accorded the governing power in North American Christian society that men and God enjoy, but also "God" is perceived by our religious myths as a male figure, often represented as "our Father" and "our King". As well, part of the traditional female stereotype centers on the idea that women are untrustworthy, even deceptive, rendering the enthymemic conclusion of this second syllogism even more incompatible with the female spectator's experience of her actual position in our social hierarchy and, consequently, compatible with her desired position.

The *Bijan* campaign is another interesting example of both this combination of vulnerability and eroticism and the role of advertisements as symbolic action embodying attitudes, strategies for encompassing situations. The case of *Bijan* is a useful one because it is one of many companies now marketing both male and female products in the same advertisement. Both *Bijan* ads show the feminine as an

effect, something acted upon and arising from the intersection of eroticism and subordination.

The first *Bijan* ad begins with an image of two similar fragrance bottles, one identified as "Bijan women" and the other as "Bijan men". The ad identifies itself as a member of a new and growing genre that markets both female and male products to a female audience with the accompanying logo, "bijan perfume for women & cologne for men". It emphatically makes its point that the fragrances and the sexes are complimentary items by handcuffing the two fragrance bottles together.

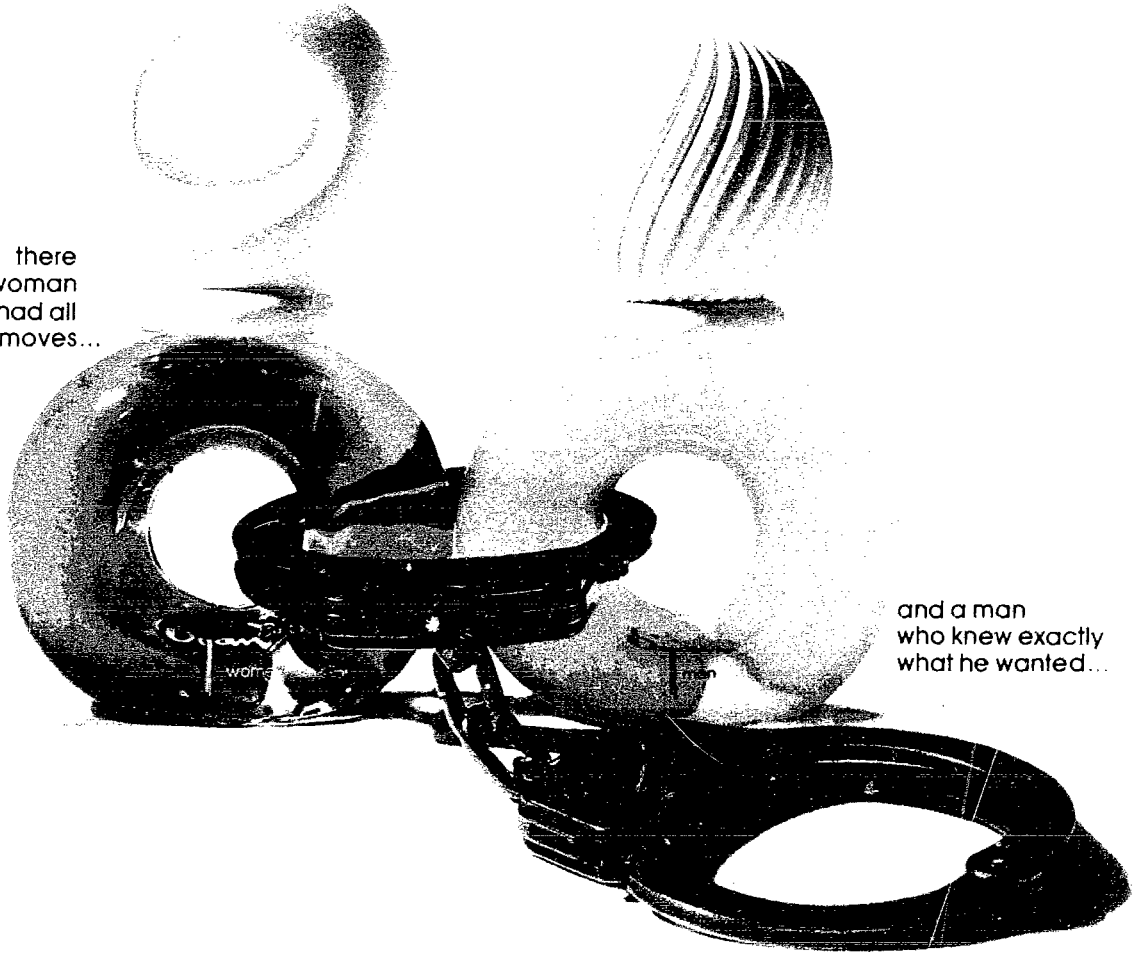
The handcuffs develop into the main thematic motif of this sequential narrative, as the overleaf introduces the embodiment of "Bijan woman" in the form of a woman undergoing arrest and photo-identification to document the charge of "Violation #487". The plunging, tight black dress, the overdone make-up, and the pouty red lips of the woman called "Niki" hint that this violation may be prostitution. Interestingly, only one of her hands is cuffed, and the unused cuff falls outside of the photograph's frame, not revealing the presence or absence of the "Bijan man" symbolized by the cologne bottle on the first page.

The short narrative in this first ad, of the "once upon a time" fairytale romance genre, describes a man's chance

FIGURE THREE

Once upon a time...

there
was a woman
who had all
the right moves...



and a man
who knew exactly
what he wanted...

bijan
perfume
for
women
&
cologne
for
men

bijan fragrances... available at the finest stores nationwide and bijan boutiques, beverly hills • new york

59b

Sometimes you meet
the right woman...



NEW YORK POLICE DEPT.

VIOLATION #487

24597-8

BIJAN
PERFUME FOR WOMEN

MANHATTAN
N.Y.P.D.

...on the wrong night.

held without bail!

Niki was allowed only
one phone call.

1-800-99-BIJAN



NEW YORK POLICE DEPT. VIOLATION #487

24597-8

BIJAN MANHATTAN
PERFUME FOR WOMEN N.Y.P.D.



bijan
perfume
for
women

meeting with "the right woman" and provides definitions of "Woman" and "Man" which indicate not only the target audience but also the belief system that Bijan wants to associate with its products. The woman "[has] all the right moves" and the man "[knows] exactly what he [wants]", thus setting up the power dynamics of the narrative and sparking the tension that surrounds the images in the rest of the advertisement.

Interestingly, the narrative addresses a male spectator with the phrase "Somtimes [sic] you meet the right woman" even though the magazine's readership is almost exclusively female. This becomes important with the realization that the ad, from the point of view of a female audience, is built on a paradox: your sexuality will attract men--a good thing, but it will also get you punished--a bad thing. A male spectator would not feel so acutely this contradiction, although he might recognize the sexual double standard at work here. By addressing a male spectator while advertising in a woman's magazine, this ad avoids having the female audience relate sympathetically to the female figure in this ad: instead, the attention is focused on what the male speaker dictates is "right" in a woman. The paradox he presents becomes secondary, since, while the female spectator will certainly wonder why the "right" woman is being arrested, she will not consciously recognize the

double bind that the images echo, and, almost before she is aware of it, she will have been implicated in that same double bind that modern, post-sexual revolution society imposes on women: sexual availability is necessary to attract men, but society condemns it with harsh consequences.

The link between eroticism and cultural vulnerability is acutely obvious here, as the woman's hair, attire, and facial expression communicate eroticism while her position is one of vulnerability: she is being controlled and censured by the law, a patriarchal institution run predominantly by men. She becomes a symbol not only of the actual paradoxes inherent in our culture's fluctuating concept of female sexuality but also of the ideal (mythical) woman: sexually available but vulnerable enough not to be threatening to the male ego. On the surface, through the figure of the prostitute and the reference to her as "the right woman", this ad seems to promote the product by associating it with female sexual freedom. However, it avoids contradicting the cultural dialectic in which it is engaged by featuring that sexuality in a restricted environment that maintains the conventional associations of public humiliation, punishment, and social condemnation.

This advertisement is much more than a proposition about female sexuality and desirability: it offers a

strategy for encompassing the problematic situation in which women find themselves in modern society in relation to their sexuality. The product is offered as a substitute for action, for sexual freedom. With this perfume, the female consumer can feel as though she is flouting tradition, exercising her own sexual freedom, without having to expose herself to the consequences depicted so vividly in the advertisement. In accepting this as a substitute for action the female consumer accepts the belief system portrayed in the ad, accepts to a certain extent that depiction of "Femininity" rather than rebelling against it and perhaps threatening political change in her own sphere. This ad, along with the *Donna Karan* example, realizes Williamson's point about choice: it sells the idea that women are free to choose between sexual alternatives when, in fact, the power to choose itself may be only a fantasy for many female spectators caught in constrictive or dangerous sexual situations where looming consequences co-opt an opportunity for free choice.

The problematics of choice are evident in what I have contended is this advertisement's manipulation of a current social double bind. Wilden's concept of the double bind offers a unique vantage point from which to study the prescriptive power of this and many other advertisements. He contends that

a true double bind--or a situation set up, coerced, or perceived as one--requires a choice between (at least) two states or situations that are so equally valued and so equally insufficient that a self-perpetuating oscillation is set off by any act of choice between them. A double bind is thus not a simple contradiction, but rather an oscillating contradiction resulting from the strange loop of a paradoxical injunction. (Man and Woman 96)

In the case of this *Bijan* advertisement, the two states of sexual aggressiveness and sexual passivity, of availability or chastity, represent two equally valued and equally insufficient situations of female sexuality which, when sparked by a paradoxical injunction such as "if you want men to be attracted to you", or "if you want to be happy", become the two poles between which women oscillate, unable to choose and thus unable to escape the double bind. The inability to choose results from the fact that "there is an oscillation between the level at which one alternative is the correct or necessary response and the level at which another is" (Man and Woman 96). In fantasy, however, this inability to choose is transcended, as, synchronically, one can have both sexual aggressiveness and sexual passivity without violating the paradoxical injunction. What is most interesting about the nature of a double bind and what the advertising genre has recognized and manipulated, consciously or not, in its attempt to target a female audience, is that

some double binds are universal . . . whereas others are cultural or subjective, or peculiar


to a class, race, or sex, depending for their efficacy on the way they are interpreted, or on the way a person has been taught to interpret them. (Man and Woman 97)

Given our culture's sexual double standard, this particular double bind would not successfully market a product to a male audience, and success is indeed what this ad achieves as it cunningly offers the female spectator a way to transcend the double bind through not consciously choosing promiscuity or purity but through choosing something entirely different: perfume. While metaphorically the perfume may represent a fantasy of promiscuity, it remains a fantasy and the double bind is transcended as the critical choice is never actually made.

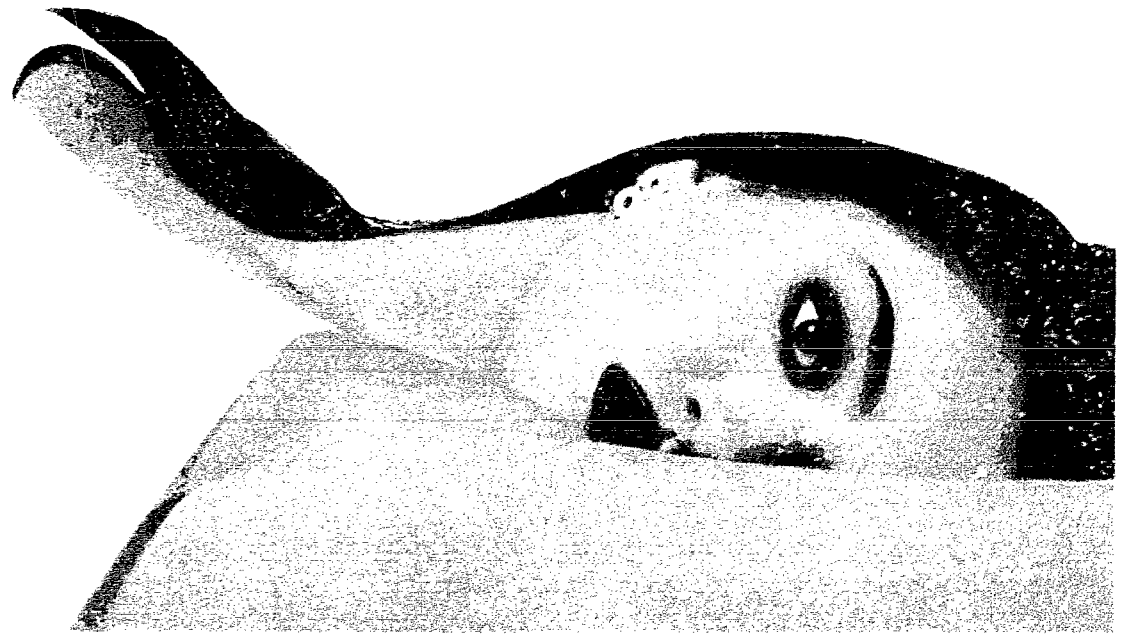
The second *Bijan* advertisement illustrates another important characteristic of the link between eroticism and vulnerability, the illusion of empowerment. As the October ad balances the paradox of celebrating female sexuality and punishing it, revealing its vulnerability, so too does the April ad simultaneously empower and disenfranchise the female protagonist. The image focuses on a prostrate woman, dressed in white lace stockings and silk chemise and lying on one side so that the curvaceous lines of her hip, waist and breast are prominent. Her right (top) arm is invisible, blocked by her body, while her left arm stretches over her head, partly concealing her expressionless but beautifully painted face. The text in this ad is minimal, with only the

FIGURE FOUR

to order bijan fragrances and become a member of the ONE HUNDRED % BIJAN CLUB call 1-800-99-BIJAN! ©1993

dangerous curves ahead... 

bijou
perfume
for
women
ESTABLISHED 1982



warning, "dangerous curves ahead...", beside a miniature fragrance bottle in the space above the passive woman and the *Bijan* logo announcing "perfume for women".

This reference to "dangerous curves ahead" creates a pun which oscillates between describing the shape of the fragrance bottle, implying a cautionary transit sign, and referring to the position of the prostrate woman. The latter reference to the woman as "dangerous" seems to empower her, just as the prostitute's "right moves" seem a positive comment on her sexual autonomy. But vulnerability creeps in again, as the spectator recognizes the implicit metaphor: this woman has dangerous curves like a mountain road, so the man who *drives over her* had better take care. She has been metaphorically transformed into an inanimate object and both her body position and her facial expression belie any sense of power or threat one might have inferred from the text. This ad also continues a long tradition of constructing female sexuality in terms of what the perfect woman is, as Goffman states, supposed to do: she should just be beautiful and, more importantly, be passive. The implication is that only ugly women have to be active, sexually or otherwise, thus connecting this ad thematically with the October *Bijan* ad. This image and the one of the prostitute define femininity in terms of seduction, eroticism, and danger, but returns always to the image of

vulnerability and passivity, the feminine mystique of the cringing Hanes woman.

The advertisement for *DKNY* "Coverings" from the April 1993 issue of *Vogue* takes this incongruous mixture of eroticism, empowerment, and passivity/vulnerability to a dramatic level that balances dizzily between the obscene and the fantastic with a more overt representation of violence and vulnerability than even the *Hanes* or *Bijan* ads. The dominant image presents the disconcerting photo of an apparently naked woman with one leg of a stocking over her head. Her raised arms and her hands beneath the hose, pulling it away from her mouth and chin, signify her struggle to escape this situation, and her exclamatory expression, unidentifiable as terror or glee, evokes a sense of panic or at least surprise. This dominant image is accompanied on its left side by four smaller "negatives" which document the woman's escape from the hose.

This ad provides an excellent example of the uses and powers of the unique properties of photography that Sontag recognizes, for the ad protects itself from crossing the line between fantasy and obscenity by its emphasis of the fictional/photographic nature of these images. By including the numbered proof frames, right down to the "Kodak" emblem

*Permission to reproduce this advertisement was denied.

and the adhesive tape which has allowed the construction of this particular collage of images, this ad calls attention to itself as artificial: it does not make the covert claims to "reality" that underline the other ads studied, by their posture as pictures of "real people" in "real situations". The small proofs taped to the left side of the page not only call attention to the technical process involved in creating an image, but also provide the necessary, compensatory vision of the woman escaping the disturbing situation in the dominant photo.

As if the imagery were not complex enough, the text of this ad revolves around an implicit contradiction: told to "use your head", a phrase usually referring to realizing one's full mental capacity and acting reasonably in a given situation, this woman instead does something completely unreasonable and related to various sinister echoes such as asphyxiation: she puts her hose on her head. While this can be seen as an attempt by the marketers to demonstrate the sheerness of the product--they are, after all, selling "microfibre", and we do have a clear picture of her apparent distress through the hose--it hardly seems worth all the negative associations spawned in the process of such a demonstration as this one. The ad must also resonate in some positive manner with its target audience in order to succeed, but it does not seem to work in the same manner as

the *Hanes* or *Kotex* ads as the product is involved in rather than protecting from the threat. Even the woman's facial expression seems deliberately ambiguous--is she laughing, just goofing around, or is she screaming in terror?

Like many other ads, this one uses punning to both condense and complexify its literal meaning. The pun on "use your head" reveals not only the rhetorical motivation behind this scene but also the characteristics of the addressed audience. The female subject within the advertised drama obeys the imperative command, "use your head" literally, demonstrating the sheerness of the hose by stretching it over her head. The female spectator is meant to obey the command in its figurative sense: she's asked to understand that this is not "real", that the negative implications of this scene are not meant to be taken literally, that this is just an intellectual joke. This message allows the image to become not sadistic but playful and witty. The female subject is frivolous and carefree, a state which many women covet but avoid, perhaps because they fear it would imply that they cannot "use their heads". The binary oppositions set up in our culture between intellect and emotion, mind and body, seriousness and frivolity, etc. align men with the former and women with the latter. These and other binary oppositions have made it difficult for our society to treat women with dignity and

respect, and, now that a tentative respect is beginning to flourish, women are afraid to acknowledge their emotional or frivolous needs and desires in case they "prove" the old oppositions correct.

In, "Pathologies of Epistemology", Bateson argues that erroneous premises such as these bipolarities

work only up to a certain limit, and, at some stage or under certain circumstances, if you are carrying serious epistemological errors, you will find that they do not work any more. At this point you discover to your horror that it is exceedingly difficult to get rid of the error, that it's sticky. It is as if you had touched honey. (Steps 479)

Our culture, thanks to the Women's movement, is beginning to realize that many of its myths and the binary oppositions they are built on are erroneous but change is a slow and arduous process made more difficult by the fact that our culture mistakes the Imaginary for the real, privileging it and thus distorting relations. Wilden argues that

in so far as the predominance of the Imaginary in our culture results in a reification of the natural and ecosystemic relations between human beings--in my own terminology, the conversion of interdependent similarities and differences (between "man" and "woman", for example) into pathological identities and oppositions (as between the images of man and woman in our culture)--the Imaginary order does not fulfill its function as an instrument of the Symbolic, it subverts and subjugates it.

(System and Structure 25)

He goes on to insist that these oppositions are not only epistemologically erroneous but also epistemologically

dangerous, since "real people can only fit these images by denying or disavowing a part of their analog-and-digital humanity (their 'bisexuality')" (System and Structure 296-7). Finally, Wilden charges that

such a relationship of opposition is pathological, not just because it is exploitative (which does after all provide a simple ethical justification for calling it pathological), but rather because it substitutes short-range survival value (competition) for long-range survival value (cooperation). (116)

The DKNY "Coverings" ad can be interpreted, based on its punning of the phrase "use your head", as a manipulation of this dialectic of epistemological oppositions and their effect on society in general and women in particular. It seems to challenge, converge, and make comical our cultural system of opposition, thus addressing itself to a female spectator who can, does, and must use her head.

CHAPTER THREE: "AUDIENCE, MOTIVATION, AND THE MYTHICAL PRINCIPLE."

Portrayals of femininity have powerful rhetorical content in that they provide the female spectator with not only definitions of Self, of female identity, but also motivation and, as already mentioned, beliefs which either lead to or substitute for action. In his Grammar of Motives, Burke discusses motivation in a capitalist society in a manner which is particularly applicable to this study of a capitalist cultural phenomenon. Beginning with religion as motive and moving to money, he theorizes that

the greater the diffusion of motive (be it the One God or the Gold Standard and its later variants) the greater its need to adopt modifications peculiar to specific local scenes. For though a doctrine proclaims a universal scene that is the motivation common to all men whatever their diversities, this "substantial" term must also have "adjectival" terms that adapt it to more restricted purposes. . . . But we would also recognize that monotheisms (in which we would include any secular title for a universal spring of action, such as "nature" or "the profit motive") can prevail only insofar as they are "incipiently" polytheistic, containing motivational terms ("saints") that break down the universality of the motive into narrower reference. (44-5)

Over and above the profit motive, the substantial term in these advertisements is "Femininity" and it would seem that some of the possible adjectival terms are "vulnerability", "sexuality", "maternity", and "domesticity". To what

extent, though, are these motivational terms of the monotheistic doctrine of "Femininity" "false"? For Burke recognizes the

persuasiveness of false or inadequate terms which may not be directly imposed upon us from without by some skillful speaker, but which we impose upon ourselves, in varying degrees of deliberateness and awareness, through motives indeterminately self-protective and/or suicidal.
(Rhetoric 35)

This may provide some insight into the workings of the *DKNY* "Coverings" ad. This odd scene may be an attempt to dramatize one woman's escape from the many "false terms" that the exploration of the *Hanes* ad showed hose representing, including our culture's entire obsession with body shape, size, hairlessness, and the passivity that is a basic component of this sort of beauty or femininity. As we watch, through the small proof frames, her struggle to emerge from the suffocating confines of the false terms which she has absorbed from her culture and imposed on herself, represented by the hose strangling her head, this narrative becomes one of liberation from false terms instead of asphyxiation by them. Thus, these particular hose become associated with a mythical theme of escape from cultural restrictions even as their very nature allows them to perpetuate these same restrictions. Once again, a contradiction is overcome, as the final proof frame reveals

a smile on the woman's face to contrast with the ambiguity of her state in the first, dominant frame.

Such "false" terms as those that Burke discusses and this advertisement manipulates can be accounted for if one remembers that "femininity, like any representation, needs to be defined against something else; and as that something else shifts, so does our image of femininity" (Williamson 21). The image of emergence, of cocoon-like rebirth used in the "Coverings" ad uses a common dialectic to define this era's femininity in terms of a shedding of repressive traditions that creates an image of a "new" woman freed from past patriarchal constrictions. Contrastingly, in her study of "Women, Media and Crisis: Femininity and Disorder", Mattelart reveals what femininity has traditionally been defined against:

By the mere hidden power of the image, by its simple insinuations, a woman's face . . . calls to mind non-aggression, security, legitimacy and compromise. . . . [It] equates the idea of woman with the negation of change. . . . This antagonism between the concepts woman\change essentially goes back to the fact that, in all cultures, myths associate the image of woman with the life-giving elements: earth and water, elements of fertility and permanence. The image of woman is linked to the idea of continuity, perpetuation, timelessness. Against the transient nature of upheavals, crises and chaos, corresponding to the concept of change, is played and contrasted the cyclic timing of woman, which traces concentric lines leading forever back to the starting point, unifying past, present, and future. This is a time which flows, in which the eternal roles are performed: marriage, home, motherhood. (36)

The Kotex advertisements attempt to maintain this sense of the female, as do many other ads, particularly, it would seem, those that promote feminine hygiene products or products directly associated with the female physical functions.

For millenium, the social restrictions placed on women have been justified in terms of biology; their reproductive and physical functions have been used against them to rationalize binary oppositions and sexual hierarchies. The *Yeast-Gard* advertisement from the October 1992 issue of Cosmopolitan continues this trend. This marketing campaign blames the medical condition which it treats precisely on this antagonistic relationship between women and change in its text, while its background images of soft, Victorian memorabilia proclaim its non-medicinal "relief" for the ailments of the female body: the tradition, stability, and permanence of a past era and a past definition of femininity. The advertisement contains an incongruous but powerful combination of practical, scientific elements and romantic, mythical ones. Against a background of lace handkerchiefs, antique black and white photos in ornate, aged-copper frames and crystal eau-de-toilette bottles is juxtaposed the text which splices scientific terms such as

*Permission to reproduce this advertisement was denied.

"gynecologically-tested" and "Benzocaine" into a common "backlash" message:

Today's woman balances career, family and friends while struggling to maintain time for herself. This stressful lifestyle can quickly take its toll on her health. Today when feminine problems do arise, a larger selection of over-the-counter treatments are available.

Once again, as in the *Bijan* ad, the female consumer is informed that the answer to her problems (both the physical one and the social one from which the text states it has evolved) is a product, not more daycare, not better wages, not more equal division of domestic labour, not any political solution that would upset the patriarchal hierarchy. Again, we are reminded that capitalism (and related issues surrounding the division of labour) is a governing factor in the context of situation to which this advertising genre responds and that, in responding, the advertisement regenerates or (re)constructs that aspect of its context. As well, this ad, along with the *Bijan* and *Kotex* ads, reveals the third governing factor of this genre's context of situation: patriarchy. Male interests figure prominently in this genre for both social and economic reasons, whether manifested metonymically or more overtly in these narratives. Keeping the female population subordinate means that men can maintain their political stronghold on our culture: they can continue to create, manipulate, and enforce various cultural "rules", such as

the sexual double standard treated in the *Bijan* ad, with male interests in mind. Perhaps even more powerful, though, are the economic benefits, albeit with only short-term survival value, associated with patriarchy and female subordination. For, by insisting that women assume responsibility for both productive and reproductive labour, our capitalist culture creates a cheap productive labour pool while maintaining a free reproductive labour pool. Without entering into a debate about the ideological issues surrounding paid, cheaply paid, and unpaid labour, one can recognize that, through prescribing a mere product for the ideologically based ailments of the "woman [who] balances career, family and friends", advertisements like *Yeast-Gard* not only avoid the real issues but also contribute to the precarious position of women in modern culture.

Interestingly this advertisement uses the enthymeme of the "guard" which, because of both the sexual nature of the condition of yeast infections and the relationship between female sexuality, the condition, and social roles established in the opening lines of the text, implicitly assumes the same attitude of sexual vulnerability that the *Kotex* enthymeme of "protection" involves. The imagery in this case, however, allows this advertisement to offer another solution than just the product and that solution involves a reversion to an old definition of femininity that

did not involve this multiplicity of roles. In essence, the ad blames the infection on this very modern multiplicity itself, when, in fact, the source of most female stress is economic, sexual, and social inequality and vulnerability, things which this product cannot "guard" against.

Adapting to this trend and incorporating it into a completely restructured advertising campaign, automobile companies are successfully targeting a whole new consumer base in the last two decades: women. The *General Motors* ad marketing its new "Geo Prizm" provides a representative anecdote of this new trend in automobile sales. Forced to relinquish its traditional portrayal of the car as a phallic symbol as it ventured into the realm of women's magazines in an attempt to entice its newfound buying majority, GM has ingeniously adopted the vulnerability trend in advertising to its product. The greater part of this ad is set up as an instructional diagram that points out the most important features of the photographed car and, interestingly, the items mentioned all partake of the enthymemes of "protection" and "guard" revealed in the *Kotex* and *YeastGuard* ads. The informative blurbs accompanying the image of the car boast of "Standard Driver's-Side Air Bag. To Give You An Extra Measure Of Safety", "4-Wheel Anti-Lock Brakes (ABS) For Safe, Controlled Stops", and "24-Hour Roadside Assistance. One Toll-Free Call Brings Help, Anytime,

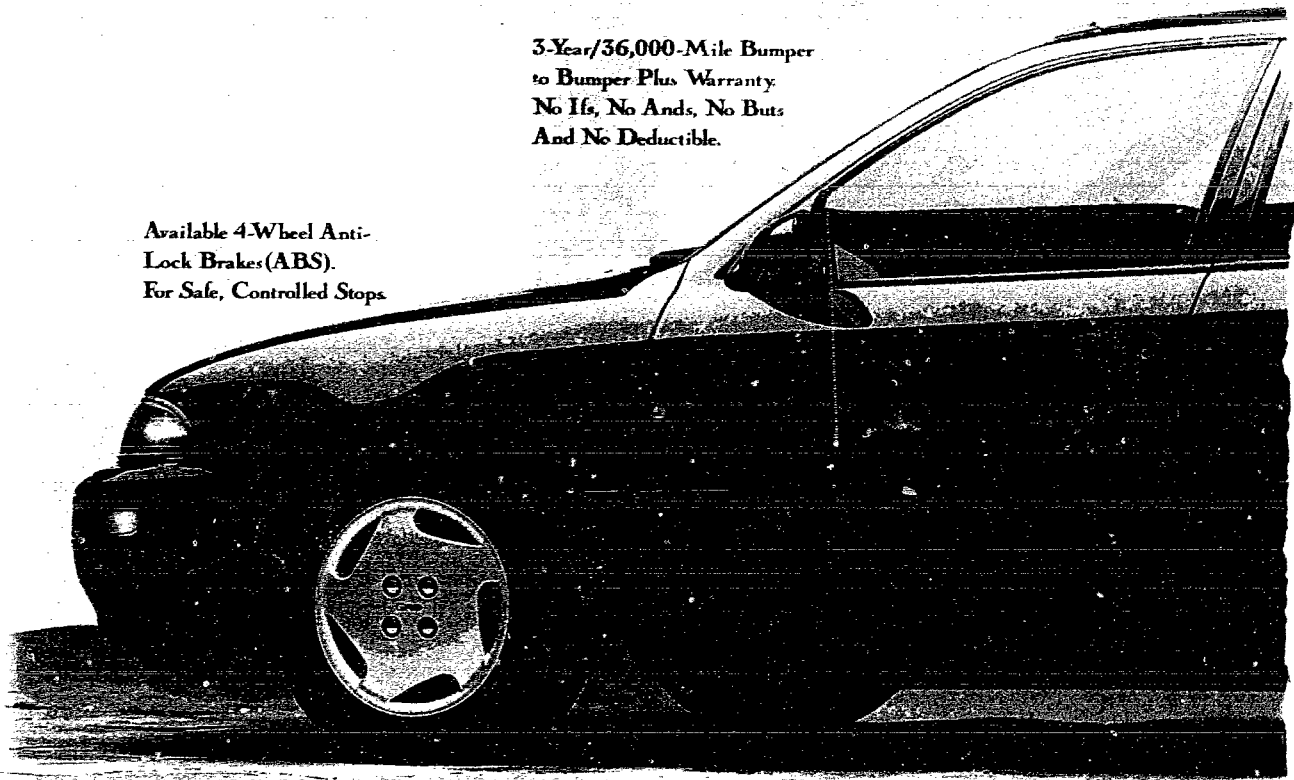
FIGURE FIVE

And Now For

Standard Driver's-Side Air Bag
To Give You An Extra Measure
Of Safety

3-Year/36,000-Mile Bumper
to Bumper Plus Warranty
No Ifs, No Ands, No Buts
And No Deductible.

Available 4-Wheel Anti-
Lock Brakes (ABS).
For Safe, Controlled Stops



Introducing The Newest Geo, Geo Prizm.

We interrupt for a very important announcement: the new Geo Prizm is here.

Precision engineered to be strong and silent, this elegant new Geo Prizm is beautifully equipped to handle the real world. With a rugged safety cage concealed beneath its aerodynamic new body, available anti-

lock brakes (ABS) to help you steer clear of accidents, plus a standard driver's-side air bag, Prizm's like a security system on wheels.

Inside, relax in comfort as Prizm's 16-valve DOHC engine and 4-wheel independent suspension team up to deliver a big car ride with sports car response. Want more good news? Prizm comes with

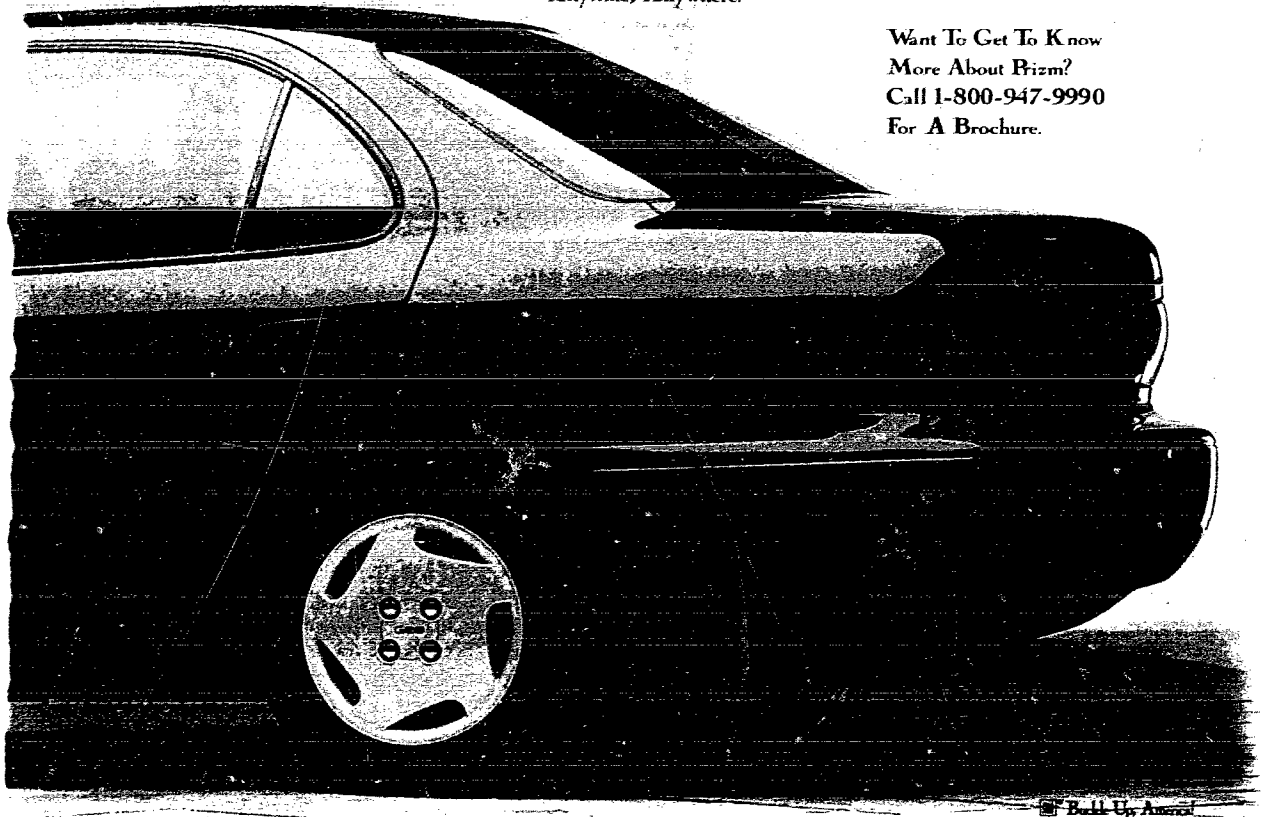
Geo. The Most Successful New Line

82a

Some Good News.

24-Hour Roadside Assistance.
One Toll-Free Call Brings Help.
Anytime, Anywhere.

Want To Get To Know
More About Prizm?
Call 1-800-947-9990
For A Brochure.



24-hour Roadside Assistance.* And a 3-year/
36,000-mile bumper to bumper, no deductible
warranty**—on a car so well-engineered, you may never
need it. So get to know the newest Geo, Geo Prizm. It
could be the best news you've had in a long time.

*Available on select models with air bags. **See your Chevrolet/Geo dealer for details. ***See your Chevrolet/Geo dealer for terms of this limited warranty.
**Warranty covers majority of total U.S. registrations for the first three years

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GET TO KNOW
Geo
AT YOUR CHEVROLET GEO DEALERS

Of Cars And Trucks Ever Introduced.™

Anywhere". In the larger text is another implicit reference to the female driver's vulnerability and the necessity to protect her: this is a "security system on wheels".

Even more interesting in this ad is the absence of a male presence, or, perhaps, the presence of a male absence. This absent presence contributes to the ad's manipulation of another dominant theme, female passivity. While this automobile ad does not seem to commit the old faux-pas of a beautiful woman passively draped over the car or the man who owns it, traditional, patriarchal gender dynamics are metaphorically portrayed here as they were metonymically in the *Kotex* and *Hanes* ads. The car, upon closer study, is still a phallic symbol in this narrative but the parallel is established more subtly by using the enthymeme of protection rather than the immediate theme of male potency or prowess. For the vulnerable female consumer the car is marketed as a (male) protector: the car is, in effect, the man in this ad. The text relates that the car is "strong and silent", "rugged", and "equipped to handle the real world". Even the slogan, "Get To Know Geo" implies a relationship between two people, not between a woman and her car. This advertisement, amazingly, manages simultaneously to address the female spectator as an active, buying consumer and to invoke in her the predominant quality of passivity.

The distinction, initiated by Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, between audience addressed and audience invoked, introduces the complexities of another critical rhetorical element which I have been exploring: audience. The *General Motors* advertisement's intricate combination of this rhetorical either/or (either you address an existing audience or you invoke a created one), is not unique in the genre of female-targeted advertising, and this characteristic may allow us to account for the dualistic response to these ads experienced by female spectators. Many of the ads studied so far approach the rhetorical element of audience in a manner similar to the dualism of the *General Motors* ad. The *Donna Karan* ad for businesswear addresses an elite, advantaged, and tiny segment of the female population in North America but, in order, perhaps, to widen its client base and entice a more general audience, it invokes or creates a female audience based on "possibility" and the myth of equality. Similarly, the *Kotex* ad addresses an audience of mothers, teenagers, and brides-to-be in its three frames but also invokes, via myth and fantasy, an audience of loving mothers and daughters, beautiful teenage girls, and engaged young women which may not actually exist except in the wistful ideals of mothers whose daughters ignore their advice on anything, teenagers

who never date, and young women who can't seem to find or secure "Mr. Right".

To be successful, all ads must both address some aspect of reality that the target audience experiences in their lives and invoke in them some created desire, usually based on some mythical narrative of our culture which does not necessarily "exist" in our daily lives. Burke might have termed this "false" basis a myth that only exists "in principle" or, a mythical principle. The *Hanes* ad follows this formula, addressing the very real element of female vulnerability and victimization and invoking or creating in its audience the romantic, mythical idea of mysticism or eroticism that it wishes to align its product with. So too do the *Bijan* ads, addressing the very real population of female spectators that experiences our modern culture's sexual double bind and simultaneously invoking an audience of women who would rather safely assume the product as a substitute for political action than actively upset the status quo.

Detailed knowledge of audience and the ability to successfully solicit and structure both its characteristics and its responses are critical to the success of these ads as embodiments of symbolic action. In this time of female identity crisis, manufacturers are realizing the power of, as Mattelart calls it, "the cyclic timing of woman", "the

eternal roles [of] . . . marriage, home, motherhood" (36) and are using the image of a woman torn between modern choices as a marketing tool. It is not so much the agony of the choice which provides a powerful vehicle for their promotion but rather the relief of resolution, romantic and impossible as that may be in reality. In fact, its impossibility may enhance its seductiveness as a sales pitch.

The *Tretorn* canvas shoe ad from the April 1993 issue of Vogue manipulates the common working woman's dilemma of when to take time out from their careers to have children in order to associate its product with this relief of resolution. The main image does not focus on shoes but on a mother-and-child scene accompanied by the text, "There Will Never Be A Right Time". The image uses the popular ideology of "nature", through the beach setting and the child's nakedness, to imply the patriarchal tradition that aligns woman with Nature, with its cycles and its fertility, and restricts her to, or at best privileges, her natural biological function as childbearer. The setting seems critical, as the lapping waves of the ocean are associated with lunar cycles in the same way that women are associated with their reproductive cycles. The product, a canvas shoe,

*Permission to reproduce this advertisement was denied.

is featured outside of the frame of the first scene, beside the imperative phrase, "Let go". The text resonates with a large population of female spectators facing the dilemma of whether, or when, to have children. Not an issue even three decades ago, "the right time" has now become a huge factor in the lives of working women trying to create a secure niche for themselves in a workplace that is still not welcoming maternity leave and motherhood with open arms. This ad plays on this female dilemma, notably to market a casual shoe, not one suitable for most work places, and admonishes women with the truism that "there will never be a right time". Cashing in on both the female spectator's desire to have children and her guilt for not immediately doing so, this campaign works whether the spectator is convinced by the serene mother/baby scene that now is the right time or not, simply by recognizing and manipulating a prominent cultural dialectic. That the maternity/career issue must be inferred by the audience does not reduce the ad's impact, for, as Bateson reminds us, "the vast majority of both metalinguistic and metacommunicative messages remain implicit" (178). Indeed, the analog communication of all of these advertisements may be a particularly accessible mode for the targeted female audience since that is what most of us, as a result of our cultural training, are most familiar with.

As the female situation in our culture has become more and more the site of upheaval, change, and even chaos, many advertisers have begun to define femininity against another principle than change: they have begun to manipulate an antagonistic relationship between women and power/security. Thus, the images of vulnerability and autonomy, the victor/victim contradictions, the double binds, the paradoxes even within single ads and company campaigns. But this does not stop the consumer from buying: indeed, *Liz Clairborne's* advertisement for "Realities" perfume successfully plays throughout on the perceived contradiction between reality and fantasy. Recalling Barthes' insistence that "myth is a type of speech defined by its intention . . . much more than by its literal sense", one can understand how the apparent logical contradictions in this ad do not weaken it, in fact, do not even necessarily reveal themselves to the spectator. Rather, it is the intention of this narrative that is important, and its intention is to promise satisfaction and fulfillment regardless of which of the roles proffered is your reality and which your fantasy. Unlike the *Tretorn* advertisement which restricts its addressed and invoked audience by positing one solution to the dilemma of female (self)-definition, the "Realities" ad widens its addressed audience to include every possible experience of female "reality" and female "fantasy". And

FIGURE SIX

REALITY IS THE BEST FANTASY OF ALL.







A F R A N C E S E P R I M O

ESSENCE OF

while it does declare that "Reality is the best fantasy of all", it does not singularly define that reality (indeed its very product name insists on plurality) but provides three possible options: motherhood/domesticity/marriage (symbolized, as in the *Tretorn* ad, by the sensual image of the naked baby), sexually liberated heterosexuality (free from any visible sanctions such as those depicted in the *Bijan* ads), and female solitude or "self-satisfaction", artfully depicted by the ambiguity of the source of the woman's pleasure in the third scene.

Interestingly, within each of these three scenes which appear to be set up as options, the elements of reality and fantasy are doing battle, creating a tension that does not allow any of these dramas to surface as "reality". The first scene, while it represents the reality of bathing, of marriage and children, is distorted by numerous fantastic elements: this father is active in, and enjoying, the caretaking of the child, allowing the mother time off for a leisurely bath; this is a leisurely morning scene in which a mother has time to relax in the tub, baby has time to run naked, and dad has time to play in casual attire; and this family bathroom is immaculate--no clothes, toys, and towels scattered across the floor in the rush to meet the demands of reality. Fantasy creeps into the second scene as well, as the female subject enjoys the undivided attention of not

one but two smitten suitors. The third scene appears to overtly represent the reality of a woman fantasizing, explicitly representing the implicit opposition which characterizes the entire photo sequence.

It may be the case that this advertisement provides an almost post-structuralist critique of the empirical distinction between "reality" and "fantasy" and understands that both aspects are interwoven into all of these scenes. "Myth" necessarily consists of both real and fantastic elements, as do the three scenes in this ad. The way in which this advertisement plays with and contrasts the various mythemes found in other advertising narratives: the wife and mother from *Kotex*, *Yeast-Gard*, and *Tretorn*; the sexually desirable and available woman from *Kotex*, *Bijan* and *Request*; and the autonomous woman from *Donna Karan* and *DKNY*, suggests that this ad, like the *DKNY* "Coverings" ad, is metacommunicating with its viewers not only about myth but also about our culture's ongoing (re)definition of Woman.

The interesting point about this metacommunication is that, while it is neutral or positive in relation to the ad's primary purpose of selling the fragrance and does not threaten that purpose, it introduces a shift in the genre whereby the oppositions examined in the other advertisements become appositions. (Burke, "Fact" 161) Reality and fantasy are no longer oppositions, but are revealed in terms of

their equivalencies. Similarly, the inaccuracy and the inadequacy of the three most common, oppositional definitions of woman (wife/mother, sexual commodity, and autonomous individual) are exposed in this ad which plays on inter-relationships and equivalencies. The female subject is different but similar in each of the three scenes in this ad: none of the three models are wearing much makeup, all are brunettes, all are smiling, and all are similarly attractive with high cheekbones and flawless skin. That these are different but similar-looking women furthers the play on opposition/apposition: their roles are very different in each scene, but their expressions and physical appearances are equivalent to one another. This equivalence suggests not only that these three figures are inter-related but also that these three definitions are only partial, revealing that the ways in which the "definitions" are related are more important than the ways in which they are opposed.

CONCLUSION: "HARNESSING THE ECOLOGICAL POWERS OF GENRE."

Female-targeted advertising is an influential genre, reaching a vast audience of "wordlings" and exercising profound rhetorical power over that audience. The intersection of genre with gender in female-targeted advertising facilitates an ideological regeneration of the cultural context of situation within which the genre is acting. The concept of genre as social process provides a critical perspective for understanding the relationships between generic patterns of discourse and women's acts of self-expression, self-definition, and self-composition.

Female-targeted advertising uses ideology to sell identities as well as products. This rhetorical motive is manifested in language as symbolic action, in terms which embody social values and acceptable responses, in examples of advertising literature as equipment for living in Burke's sense. This genre's masterly control of and identification with audience, and its ability to manipulate and participate in the ideological dialectic of our culture results in its undeniable rhetorical success. This study has outlined, through semiotic analysis, the formal patterns of the genre of female-targeted advertising with specific attention to this genre's mythical proportions. A number of factors make up the formal patterns of the genre, including a

predominance of enthymemic propositions, particularly the enthymeme of protection, and punning. Punning often arises as a synecdochic representation of an enthymeme, as in the case of the *Request* logo on the scant denim shorts which creates a pun within the context of the visual narrative of the advertisement but also implies the unstated premise, "She asks for and/or desires this dangerous situation". A reliance on traditional binary oppositions also characterizes this genre, as well as an engagement in an ideological dialectic as a means of identifying with the audience's lived experiences and concerns. Furthermore, many of the advertisements reveal this genre's reliance on a metonymic and metaphoric male presence and a tension between falsification and partial truth.

Myth plays a critical role in this genre, as it both facilitates rhetorical identification, as in the *Donna Karan* ad's clever use of the mythical principle of "equal opportunity" to both address and invoke audience, and provides the background for the many definitions of "Woman" in advertising. Both *Donna Karan's* Woman-as-Victor and *Bijan's, Hanes',* and *Request's* Woman-as-Victim are mythemes manipulated in this genre, along with the Woman-as-Domestic of the *Kotex* and *Tretorn* campaigns. Variations on the Woman-as-Victim theme are the most common element of the myth of Woman in these ads, and the eroticization of

vulnerability makes this theme of the victim popular as a vehicle for promoting a variety of products, from control-top hosiery to automobiles.

The rhetorical motive of this genre, to sell both female products and female identities has been established; the rhetorical effect of the genre on its female audience is more complex, however, than just the induced consumption of goods and ideas. For beyond the genre's effect on the individual woman, what is its effect on cultural ecology?

When Bateson pronounces ecological unsoundness, he is referring to an inaccuracy or inadequacy in the environment that causes dysfunctional behaviour, resulting in the eventual destruction of organism and/or environment. My claim that this advertising genre is "ecologically unsound" arises from the relationship between the genre and our culture's present economic and social climate. Early in this century, when the international economy did not demand a massive, paid, female workforce for Canada's continued market survival, the majority of middle class women maintained an exclusively domestic existence and, while Betty Friedan has documented the psychological ill-effects of this one-dimensional female lifestyle, the long range survival of both women and our culture was not threatened in biological terms. The strictly domestic, female role of that era fit, in ecological terms, the cultural context. As

a result, however, of a shift in its context, its economic environment, our North American culture recognized that restricting women to domestic, unpaid labour alone had only short-term survival value in economic terms, and the movement of women into the workforce began, sporadically before and during each World War and then increasingly in the 1950's.

While the restrictive domestic role demanded of women earlier in this century was not dysfunctional to the extent that it threatened the evolutionary survival of the culture, the contradictions inherent in the complex roles required of women today do involve pathologies of epistemology that are potentially destructive in ecological terms. The moral and psychological problematics of the position of women in our culture has been thoroughly and continually documented; however, it is the ecological problematics of the situation, impacting the continued economic and biological survival of our species, which must now be not only understood but also resolved.

The paradoxical position of the female in our culture, trapped between two irreconcilable modes of communication, results in the working woman feeling like a foreigner in the digital world, even when she is successful, and a traitor in the analog world, especially if she is digitally successful. The double day woman is essential to the survival of our

culture, as she is responsible not only for the socialization of its children but also for the economic success of its workforce; but our society's pathologies of epistemology, especially its many binary oppositions, are making it increasingly impossible for her to adequately fulfill either role. Carol Becker, in The Invisible Drama: Women and the Anxiety of Change, documents the double day woman's experience of acute schisms in her sense of subjecthood as a result of her attempt to assimilate two contradictory types of communicative relationships, and the pathological binary oppositions that accompany them, into her daily experiences. She is forced, in modern society, to adopt the "new" role of breadwinner while not being allowed by the society to delete or change aspects of her "old" role of family nurturer. Becker refers to a "new checklist still taken from the world of men, and still capable of making most women feel inadequate" (65). In order to accept these "new" definitions of Woman, most women have to reject or repress important elements of themselves because fulfilling everything on this new checklist is more unrealistic than fulfilling all of the expectations of the old checklist of obedience, compassion, maternal instincts, and domestic skills.

Becker compares the impact of this new archetype of the superwoman to the phenomenon that Friedan exposed in 1963 as

"the feminine mystique". Friedan describes the "stagnating state of millions of American housewives [as] a sickness" and names the source of this depressions as

the mystification and misunderstanding of the "needs" of women, which led to the illusion that women would be satisfied with the domestic life of the housewife, fulfilling herself in happy service to the daily needs of her family. Friedan reveals this "mystique", asserting that women needed to know they were useful apart from the home, to develop other aspects of their own creativity, to have a place in history, to become producers in their own right outside the reproductive role. (Becker 7)

The economy of the last thirty years has bred a new "feminine mystique", equally illusionary but far more ecologically dangerous than that exposed by Friedan. The modern mystification and misunderstanding of the needs of women has led to illusionary archetypes such as the superwoman, the woman who can handle everything, the old roles and the new, without letting a stitch drop somewhere in between, without a reconstruction of the roles themselves. This new role has inherent in it all of the pathological epistemologies of our society, the suppositions, the oppositions, the contradictions. The superwoman can still be the nurturing, compassionate mother/wife figure at home, excelling at analog communication, and yet she climbs the career ladder effortlessly with her confidence, aggressiveness, competitive nature, and digital skills. What is at one

moment introduced as "the right woman" in the *Bijan* ad suddenly becomes a prostitute being punished by laws governing morality and sexuality. A female consumer with enough economical success to be a potential *General Motors* customer is simultaneously characterized as an active, autonomous client and a passive woman in need of protection. The *Donna Karan* woman can achieve the power of the Presidency and still, underneath (literally and figuratively), she must be feminine, with all the contradictory qualities that the business suit and the black lace bustier entail.

The myths dramatized in these advertisements are ecologically unsound in that they substitute short-range survival value for long-range survival value by resolving, through fantasy, pun, and metaphor, the social contradictions inherent in the new definitions of "Woman", definitions which force women into paradoxical and pathological situations. The ecological danger of these ads is that, through this mythical resolution of social contradictions such as power/femininity and vulnerability/eroticism, through communicating that by buying a business suit or a perfume one can feel she has come to terms with an unresolved social paradox, they might encourage the continuation of dysfunctional behaviours which evolve from pathological epistemologies.

However oppressive the female domestic role was before the shift in economic environment in developed countries, it was still ecologically sound in that it fit the cultural context of that era. Now, trapped within contradictory roles that retain the past, domestic duties but also include new, economic responsibilities, women are not being allowed to adapt to the shift in their cultural context. The result of this failure to adapt to the environment has ramifications far exceeding the feelings of inadequacy documented by Becker. The mythical resolution of these social contradictions in advertisements could be seen to encourage both women and society that contradictions can be ignored or that they do not exist, resulting in the maintenance of dysfunctional roles that do not fit the culture's changed environment. In the short term, women continue to struggle, unable to adequately fulfill either the domestic or the economic element of their role, but in the long term, this refusal to allow women to adapt to a changed environment threatens the economic viability of the culture as a whole. In order that our culture survive in the global economy that has evolved in the last decades, women's roles must evolve too.

The intricacies of the *Liz Clairborne* advertisement provide the basis for another implication of this study of genre; that is, can the genre of female-targeted advertising

play a positive role in the necessary evolution of the female role in our culture? As the female-targeted advertisement responds to and perpetuates its context of situation as I have described it, a patriarchal, capitalist culture struggling with the task of (re)defining the concept of "femininity", it might also be possible that by changing this genre a restructuring of that very context of situation itself might occur, as it were, from the inside out. Within this study of genre we have seen that the elements of capitalism, patriarchy, and class are governing factors in what is happening, who is involved, and what role language is playing since they provide the cultural foundation out of which women's magazines have evolved. The element of patriarchy seems most seminal, since, as Mary Daly emphasizes, "patriarchy includes the language that we use to describe reality, drawing attention to the ways in which language reimposes the patriarchal order" (Currie and Raoul 13). As both the textual and the economic backbone of women's magazines, advertising participates in this re-imposition of patriarchal values as it participates in language. The possibility that this genre might be used to impact positively on its context of situation, rather than simply responding to it, is one implication of this study that can be explored further.

This study joins the ongoing theoretical discussion of genre by both supporting and demonstrating existing claims about the nature of genre and extending the existing concept of generic "process" into a theory of genre as an act which participates in and perpetuates a social cycle. Recently, the field of genre studies has widened considerably with the understanding that genre is not just a classification system but it is also, and more importantly, the dynamic patterning of human experience, and scholars have called for a study of genre as both form and process, as a social act representing typified rhetorical action. The study of genre, as this thesis illustrates, is also a study of the rhetoric that surrounds us and the situations in which we find ourselves as participants in a culture based on language.

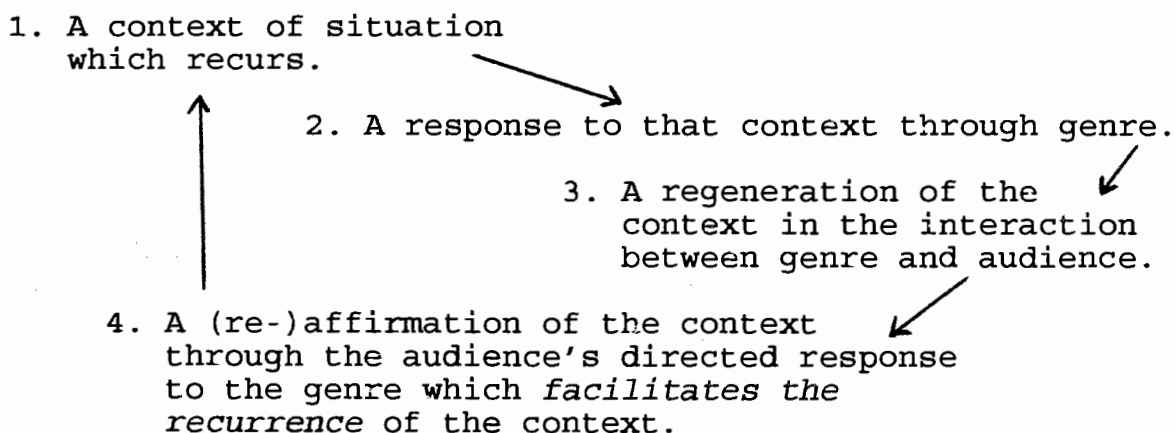
Specific theoretical positions, such as Kathleen Jamieson's discussion of antecedent genre as rhetorical constraint, are supported by this exploration of an advertising genre, especially in examples such as the automobile ad that, although visually new, echoes the traditional automobile ad format through metaphor and enthymeme even at the expense of alienating its target consumer. The (phallic) tradition of this discourse functions as a constraint upon any new response in the form, creating a tension between audience addressed (the

autonomous, female buyer) and audience invoked (the passive, vulnerable Woman).

Another important implication of this study for rhetoric and genre theory is its impact on the reconception of genre that is taking place in English departments. This thesis provides a model for how genres can serve not only as tools for exploring the achievements of particular writers or texts, but also as an index to cultural patterns. Traditionally, English scholars have reduced genre to a classification system, concentrating only on the product and, as a result, frowning on studies such as this one as "non-literary", cultural studies that do not belong in a literature department. This definition of the "literatures" of a culture is not only reductive, it is also dangerously ignorant of the importance of context to all symbolic acts. This work attempts to illustrate the benefits, to both cultural and literary studies, of critical attention to not only writer and product but also the rhetorical constraints on that writer, the cultural context of her work, the dynamic patterning (and the social motivation for those patterns) of the genre in which she communicates, and the rhetorical effect of that communication on her audience. Every linguistic act, every act in the Symbolic, is one of communication, and an approach that combines rhetoric and

genre theories can perceive most successfully that communication as a social act.

The genre of female-targeted advertising works particularly well as a demonstration of Devitt's claim that genre both responds to and reconstructs situation, but my study of this genre leads me to want to extend this concept of a process into a theory of a generic *cycle*. This cycle continues from Devitt's claim that genre regenerates situation but includes another rhetorical level: the effect of the audience's response to the genre. The cycle I am proposing looks like this:



This rhetorical model outlines, in simple terms, the complexity of response to generic patterns; it is not meant to reduce the act of response to pure reinforcement. We can see the complexity of this cyclical motion at work in Burke's understanding of form as "an arousing and fulfillment of desires. A work has form in so far as one

part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence" (Counter-Statement 124). As Carolyn Miller puts it, "form shapes the response of the reader or listener to substance by providing instruction, so to speak, about how to perceive and interpret; this guidance disposes the audience to anticipate, to be gratified, to respond in a certain way" (159). It is my contention that this response is crucial to the continuation of contexts: by responding to ads in certain ways, we allow, even support, the recurrence of the cultural context of situation that initially spawned the genre. In so doing, we also facilitate the survival of the genre, for if the context were to change, then the genre that is a correct response to that context would also have to evolve. As readers of advertisements, we have come to expect certain generic patterns: we want to see our current reality reflected here, but falsified into myth and fantasy; we expect this myth to pronounce some judgement or cure which we can apply to our cultural reality; we expect puns and enthymemes, tangled metaphors and symbols, myth and fantasy; and, as Leiss, Kline, and Jhally report. we have become extremely adept at decoding these many levels of meaning. Responding in the correct (manipulated) manner, we facilitate the recurrence of context of situation that first effected the generic response.

A complete examination of the cultural and ecological implications of this rhetorical study of genre must be left for another project: for now, it is enough to point out that both the *DKNY* "Coverings" ad and the *Liz Clairborne* "Realities" ad illustrate this genre's (re)constructive potential in the way that they manipulate and challenge epistemological conversations in our culture. While neither ad may actually transcend the flaws in those cultural epistemologies, (after all, they do sell lace hosiery and perfume, products which have evolved from the Imaginary opposition between images of femininity and images of masculinity), both ads at the very least acknowledge and play on the problematics of these created binary oppositions and even, in the "Realities" ad, challenge them by restructuring them appositionally. These two advertisements reveal the ecological potential of this genre to both confront and, perhaps, begin to resolve the pathological social contradictions that flourish in the mythical narratives that presently constitute the genre of female-targeted advertising.

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