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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Made-Over: Consumerism, Desire and Feminine Subjectivity

By

Kathryn R. Fraser

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

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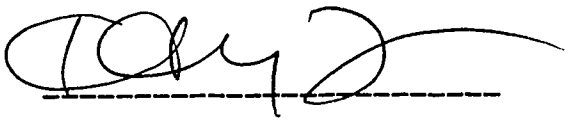

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Made-Over: Consumerism, Desire and Feminine Subjectivity" submitted by Kathryn R. Fraser in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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July 27, 1995

ABSTRACT

"Made-Over: Consumerism, Desire and Feminine Subjectivity" is an interdisciplinary work in both approach and scope, and reads the construction of feminine desire and subjectivity through the paradigm of what is known as the "make-over." The narrative of the make-over, so prevalent in women's magazines and advertising, works to effectively inscribe women into consumerist practices by soliciting and constructing feminine desire through product promotion and self-commodification. In addition, the make-over is explored in terms of how it might be seen to provide a model by which to understand the workings of late capitalist culture as a whole. Approaching this subject through a variety of media from George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*; to women's magazines and advertising and finally, to what might be called the "make-over film," the work explores the status of women's subjectivity and desire in a culture which relies increasingly on their spending 'power.'

At issue is the discursive problematic of feminine desire and subjectivity as negotiated in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, as well as the historical construction of subjectivity and desire as explainable by Marxian commodity theory. It is only by means of examining the objects which cater to feminine subjectivity and desire that we may be able to understand this "culture of the make-over" and women's place therein.

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I am very fortunate to have so many names to mention here since it means that the same number of people contributed in some significant way to the project's gestation.

Firstly, I am deeply indebted to Jo Ann Wallace, my thesis advisor and mentor, not only for seeing me through every step of this project with always challenging yet never discouraging counsel, but also for her encouragement and guidance throughout my studies. Her intellectual rigour and generosity will always be the goals to which I most aspire.

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Introduction

Commodity Fetishism or, Why I'm a Cosmo Girl

Feminine subjectivity has long been considered a problem, a condition in perpetual need of consultation, explanation, transformation. It has been a problem for androcentric thinkers who have sought to define and therefore contain 'woman,' and it has been a problem for feminists who can't seem to agree on what, exactly, feminine subjectivity might be. Traditionally considered in terms of masculine desire, women have been constructed as objects with little recognition that they may have desires of their own. Yet, paradoxically, when questions arise regarding woman's subjectivity, they are usually connected to questions regarding her desire. "What does woman want?" Freud asked, and this articulation seems to have found its answer in the consumerist ideology of late twentieth-century capitalism: to consume, and be consumed, endlessly. Of course, this solution is never offered in such unambiguous terms; rather it disguises, in the form of commodities, the various discourses that address what women might *really* want, i.e., social power, pleasure, or possibly access to the very subjectivity that has been denied them.

An approach to feminine subjectivity informed by theories which argue woman's status as an object of consumption[1] becomes more complicated with the peculiar co-emergence in the nineteenth century of mass consumerism and the call for women's suffrage. With women agitating increasingly for greater access to both public discourse as well as social power, capitalist ideology, which proposes that all dissatisfaction can be remedied in the form of commodity consumption, offered women the greater public participation they were seeking in the form of shopping. But shopping, as Judith Walkowitz (1992) has argued, as much as it allowed women greater mobility, also reinforced women's objectified existence, reinscribing them as "decorous indicators of social distance" and as "signs of the social system" (47). The world of consumption, she maintains, consolidated women's passivity by "addressing them as yielding objects, subordinate to a powerful male subject who formed and informed their desires" (48). But this is increasingly more complex when we consider advertising in women's magazines which represents consumption as a means of acquiring not a product, but an identity. An explicit, and exceedingly pertinent example of this tendency is to be found in the popular women's magazine *Cosmopolitan*. As a commodity, *Cosmopolitan* markets itself in relation to women's desire for subjectivity, so that readers become aligned not only with the discourse of consumerism which sustains the magazine, but also with the ideology which sustains consumerism. That is, the

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[1] Lévi-Strauss's positioning of woman as the 'Ur-object' of exchange, and materialist feminist arguments such as Luce Irigaray's "Women on the Market," for example, have been utilised in the attempt to interpret the status of woman in patriarchal capitalism. What these two positions also have in common is the argument that woman's subjectivity is never immanent, but is always dependent upon her status as a commodity providing the foundation for human society and culture.

consumer of *Cosmopolitan* is encouraged to identify herself as a "Cosmo girl," a subject position identifiable not only by the magazine from which it takes its name, but by the products it solicits on nearly each of its glossy pages. As a consequence, women are told that the answer to the problem of their subjectivity, as well as to their desire for greater public access and social power, lies not in political or collective action, but in personal renovation, commonly known as 'the make-over.'

The make-over is perhaps the most blatant illustration of the basis of consumerism, and it is everywhere - talk-shows, soap-operas, films - but it has its origins in the woman's magazine and the advertising campaigns therein.[2] We can recognize the make-over by the 'before' and 'after' images which are supposed to encourage, first, agreement on the need for transformation, and second, approval of the end result which should stimulate a desire to undergo a similar renovation. The make-over, then, is about more than just the 'before' and 'after' images by which it has become identifiable. The make-over, like advertising, is about the promotion of commodities and what they are used to represent. The commodity itself is equally about transformation. It is bought to improve on or to transform an existing state. But, in a product's designation as a commodity, it might also be seen to have undergone a kind of 'make-over.' That is, an object is never immanent as a commodity, but undergoes a transformation by which it is endowed with special characteristics making it desirable, or, in more Marxian terms, fetishized. Prior to its status as

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[2]Of course, if we view the make-over as simply a transformation, then obviously it would encompass almost everything culture produces. For the purposes of this project, the concern is with reference to commodity discourse, and the ideology of consumerism which it necessitates.

a commodity, an object has only *use value*; it is when it becomes accepted as having an *exchange value* that its status as a commodity is confirmed. The aura assumed by the commodity - what makes it fetishized - is what gives it the power to structure all human relationships under capitalism. It determines how subjects will relate to one another, as well as to themselves. If we take up the argument which defines woman as a commodity in patriarchal capitalism, and if we consider this in relation to the solicitation of woman as a consumer, then it is easy to see how the make-over is also an invitation to self-commodification. In this way, the make-over promises to invest woman with the authority or subjectivity of the consumer at the same time as it reinscribes her status as the consumed.

The success of the make-over's encouragement of self-commodification relies on the woman's investment in the phantasy of the 'after' prefigured by identification with the unsatisfactory image of the 'before.' That is, the woman must be able to picture herself as a subject capable of transforming her self as an object. In his important work, *Ways of Seeing* (1972), John Berger suggests this dual subjectivity is a result of men's tendency to visually objectify women, and of women's complicity in that same objectification. "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves" (47). What positions men as ideal or archetypical viewers is their privileged position within the patriarchal structures of capitalism. As Thorstein Veblen (1918) observed, men have traditionally controlled capital, that is, they have held all the buying power, and women have served largely as visual

indicators of this.[3] As a result, men have been conditioned to look upon women as "status symbols of their husbands' wealth" (Walkowitz: 47), not as independent economic agents. For women this determines their narcissistic relation to consumerism: commodity acquisition, which usually distances subject from object, is here conflated. The woman, it seems, is incapable of separating herself from the commodity she buys.[4] In this, the image of the after does not always inspire feelings of pleasure. Rather, the perfected image succeeds only insofar as it is able to convince the would-be consumer that her non-commodified appearance is somehow incomplete.

> The spectator-buyer is meant to envy herself as she will become if she buys the product. She is meant to imagine herself transformed by the product into an object of envy for others, an envy which will then justify her loving herself. One could put this another way: the publicity image steals her love of herself as she is, and offers it back to her for the price of the product. (Berger: 134)

The ideology of the make-over, and the solicitation of product consumption that it represents, promises to return to the "spectator-buyer" the self-love she initially experienced with regard to her own 'reflected' image in what Jacques Lacan has designated the "mirror stage." The mirror stage has long been used as a metaphor to explain the processes of identification in

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[3]Like Lévi-Strauss, Veblen has argued that "the institution of ownership has begun with the ownership of persons, primarily women" (53). The more women and slaves a man owned, the greater his prestige, the greater his ability to accumulate more wealth, and the greater his own comfort (leisure) as a result of their accumulated services. "Women and other slaves are highly valued, both as an evidence of wealth and as a means of accumulating wealth" (Ibid).

[4]Consumerism depends upon the woman's relationship to her own body, that is, upon her considering it in much the same way as she would an object. As Mary Ann Doane has determined, "The body becomes *the* stake in late capitalism. *Having* the commodified object - and the initial distance and distinction it presupposes - is displaced by *appearing*, producing a strange constriction of the gap between consumer and commodity" (1987: 32). This particular phenomenon is discussed further in chapter two.

relation to the cinema, but it also provides the basis for understanding the role of desire in the constitution of the subject. In "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience" (1949), Jacques Lacan adds to Sigmund Freud's somewhat inchoate theory of identification the primacy of vision in the revelation of subjectivity. In the reflection of the mirror, the child[5] apprehends in her/his image a completeness, as well as a separateness, that s/he has heretofore never experienced. Freud called this apprehension an identification with an illusory ideal self (*Ideal-Ich*), an ideal which can never be, but whose introjection is necessary to the formation of the ego. Lacan called it an 'ideal image' which is always, however, an impossible one, as constitutive as it may be of the child's perception of self. The child revels in the assumption of her/his image, and in her/his narcissistic identification with, and desire for, it. The image, although it may well be the child's first love, is always self-alienating in that it can never be the child's self, only a specular representation of it. Therefore, the child experiences her/his self as other, and this seemingly narcissistic identification in actuality becomes a desire for the perfected image of the specular 'other.' It is worth quoting Lacan at length here since this function is central to the identificatory processes which make the make-over not only possible, but which invest it with desire and the power of subjectivization.

> We have only to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: Namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he [*sic*] assumes an image [...]

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[5]Lacan designated eighteen months as the age at which the mirror stage is 'played out,' but the identification[s] unique to it can be replayed at any number of similar events throughout the subject's life.

> This form [the image in the mirror] would have to be called the Ideal-I,[6] if we wished to incorporate it into our usual register, in the sense that it would also be the source of secondary identifications, under which term I would place the functions of libidinal normalization. But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction...(2)

First, Lacan indicates the illusory nature of identification itself; it is an assumption, and, interestingly, a transformation. The child, or subject-to-be, experiences her/his self externally for the first time; that is, s/he experiences her/himself transformed into an image, much as s/he has experienced others. The mirror image, as a consequence, produces feelings of ambivalence: it can no more be assimilated by the subject-to-be than can the images of others.[7] Like the child whose sense of self is informed by the fiction of the reflected self (the specular other), the 'narrative' of the make-over can be seen to inform the desire for subjectivity of the would-be consumer. In this, identification is about disavowal. That is, the image in the mirror, or the 'after' image of the make-over, is quite clearly *not* the self, but depends for its agency in the formation of subjectivity (or in the selling of products) on the subject's renunciation of this fact.

Anne Friedberg (1990), in her essay, "A Denial of Difference: Theories of Cinematic Identification," refers to the structural similarities between identification and fetishism as each is dependent upon disavowal for its effective functioning. In Marxian thought, although it borrows the concept from

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[6]Lacan introduced the term, *je-idéal* only in this particular article, and, as he says in the footnote attached to it, he has not used it since.

[7]Of course, we cannot interpret the "mirror stage" too literally, but must understand it as a cultural construct by which ideal representations are mediated. The 'mirror' might thus be interpreted as a metaphor for the reification that necessarily takes place when an image is internalized as ideal.

the same source as psychoanalysis, fetishism refers to a syndrome particular to capitalist societies which over-invests objects with characteristics not innate to them. In psychoanalysis, fetishism refers to a masculine perversion resulting from the attempt to deny the site of sexual difference. Thus, a certain object - a shoe, a stocking, even a body part - is invested with characteristics not intrinsic to it, serving the function of restoring to the subject a sense of (illusory) wholeness he fears losing. The operation of Marxian fetishism, in a similar way, requires that the would-be consumer deny or disavow the commodity's use value (or lack thereof) and focus instead on its illusory value, its seemingly magical powers to transform, and complete, the consumer. For the purposes of this work, then, I rely upon a conflation of Marxist and psychoanalytic thought, using, what Baudrillard has called the "metaphor of fetishism" as a means of reconciling the seeming disparity between psychoanalytic accounts of subjectivity and desire, and those postulated from a more historical, materialist perspective. The necessity of bringing these two methodologies together stems from the very practical consideration that no one theory can possibly account for all aspects of any cultural construct. Marxist analysis alone would neglect the fundamental role played by desire in the formation of subjectivity, as well as the structural operations of identification which make product promotion/consumerism possible. Psychoanalysis alone would fail to account for the role played by history in constructions of desire, as well as the material foundation upon which desire, subjectivity and gender are played out.

My focus here is to undertake an elaboration of three key moments in the development of the make-over: from its first fully articulated appearance

in/by industrial capitalism in the critical play *Pygmalion*, by George Bernard Shaw, to its appropriation by advertising in women's magazines, and finally in its uncritical narrativization by the cinema. The shared concern of each chapter is the status of female subjectivity and desire in patriarchal capitalism. Most importantly, but perhaps least obviously, is the question of what women are *really* buying when they 'buy into' the make-over. The first part of chapter one delineates the taxonomy of the make-over. The emphasis here is on what makes the make-over identifiable as such, and why it is of particular relevance to women. The second part, then, provides an analysis of a cultural text based on the observations made in the first part. Here, Shaw's *Pygmalion* dominates the discussion. This chapter, which is the least psychoanalytic, provides the *contextual* basis for the ensuing chapters, and points toward the idea that female subjectivity is synonymous with constructions of femininity, which, of course, are subject to historical change according to what it means to be a woman at any given moment.

The first section in chapter two provides a brief history of women's magazines to aid in the conclusion of the issues raised at the end of the first chapter. The structure of the magazines is described, and then an exemplary "text" (*Cosmopolitan*) is introduced. Here is where I develop the discussion of how the make-over sells to women what they most desire in the form of commodities. The second section puts into dialogue several advertisements and a selection of articles with the theory, and illustrates how the make-over works to effectively *dis*empower the female consumer. The discussion of magazines, insofar as they share an investment in the image, anticipates the discussion of cinema to follow in chapter three. Since two still images - the

'before' and 'after' - do not comprise in themselves a narrative, the magazines, one could argue, only 'narrativize' consumerism and commodity fetishism.

The third and final chapter, then, is where the make-over is "transformed" into two narratives - Irving Rapper's *Now, Voyager* and Garry Marshall's *Pretty Woman*.[8] The status of the films as commodities is explored in their stimulation of identification and desire, as is the temporal nature of the medium in its particular suitability to the temporality or narrativity of the make-over. The first part might be seen as the theoretical introduction to the following 'textual' reading of the films, and will reiterate and redefine the structures of identification now in relation to the cinema.

The work concludes with the possibly disturbing proposition that the make-over is inescapable. It is, as I have said before, everywhere. Simply due to the operations of capitalism - where the commodity-inspired transformation of appearance necessitates the circulation of goods and money - we can see how ours is a "culture of the make-over." I also take the time to address here what I haven't discussed: how the make-over crosses over into other arenas such as plastic surgery, Prozac, and even masculine subjectivity. Finally, where does an analysis of this sort get us? Is it in any way helpful in rethinking not only female subjectivity, but also the cultural objects which cater to it? Ultimately we must ask the questions: whose desire is at stake here? And what has it to do with ours?

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[8]While *Pygmalion* is a play *about* a make-over, it does not actually narrativize it. The films fill in the gap between the 'before' and the 'after' making the actual transformation *the* narrative. The play, on the other hand, uses the make-over as a theme upon which to base its critical narrative.

Chapter 1

The Anatomy of the Make-over

Anyone who has leafed through a women's magazine, or browsed through a department store, is familiar with the prototypical make-over. In women's magazines the make-over is usually enacted on an "ordinary" woman (that is, a woman not professionally a model) by a 'specialist,' or in most cases, by a 'team' of specialists comprised of fashion and wardrobe consultants, cosmetologists, and hairstylists who take the woman from a lacklustre 'before' to a glamourized 'after.' In department stores, cosmetic counters often offer impromptu make-overs to potential clients, as well as scheduled 'consultations' to coincide with promotions. Both of these rely on the would-be consumer's investment in the idea of specialization: beauty must be seen and represented as an area of expertise which lies outside of the consumer's capacity. If women are to participate in the make-over, there has to be a reason why they would look to beauty specialists instead of themselves for transformation. This is in part achieved by the quasi-scientific vocabulary

used by the 'beauty industry,' as well as by the images of laboratories and institutes devoted to it.[9]

These kinds of make-overs, of course, are explicitly tied to consumerism and product promotion, but the most prominent feature common to all make-overs is the treatment of the self[10] as a problem to be fixed. The make-over cannot justify its existence nor its claim to authority unless it is able to stimulate desire for transformation, accomplished in large part by the evocation of dissatisfaction. The make-over must be able to identify (or create) the problem (the self, interpersonal relations) and offer itself as the solution. This is apparent in many other discourses not readily identifiable as what we have come to know as 'the make-over' but which can be classified as such.

Self-help books, for example, offer another kind of make-over, albeit of a less visual sort. An informal survey of such books reveals many titles that explicitly address and pathologize a female audience. Therapist Robin Norwood's, *Women Who Love Too Much: When You Keep Wishing and Hoping He'll Change*, for one, seems to epitomize the kinds of books available to female consumers in want of transformation. As the subtitle suggests, the woman who is unhappy in her relationship is advised not to try to change her partner,

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[9]One need only think of the skin care line, *Clinique*, which attires its representatives in white lab coats, and sells its products with the aid of a 'computer' designed to 'personalize' each client's skin care needs. Another example is the hair dye, "belle couleur" marketed as being developed and "researched" by the highly scientific sounding *Laboratoires Garnier*.

[10]The 'self,' as it shall be used for the purposes of this work, refers to that fictional construct set up in the subject's accession to the illusion of the mirror stage. The make-over appeals to the subject's desire for an identity. The address is then to a subject with a coherent ego who buys into the fictions of self and individuality necessary to normative functioning in the social order.

or her relationship, but herself.[11] Again, the idea is that the self is a problem to be remedied, always through the expert mediation of a specialist. The explicit goal of self-transformation, is always the same: to attract love [marriage], or to ensure its continuation. The make-over's promise of heterosexual bliss seems to be particularly aimed at female consumers. Male consumers, on the other hand, appear to be targeted in relation to what we might call the 'financial make-over.' Such books tend to focus on how to be the sort of man who commands respect from colleagues which will somehow restore to the reader financial security and social deference. Titles such as Anthony Robbins' *Unlimited Power*, and *Wealth 101: Getting What You Want, Enjoying What You've Got*, by John Roger and Peter McWilliams seem to position the male reader in 'homosocial' rather than heterosexual terms. That is, where the emphasis in women's self-help books tend to be on sexual or familial relationships, in men's self-help books, the emphasis appears to be on impressing other men. Titles such as *Women Who Love Too Much* or Sue Patton Thoele's *The Courage to be Yourself: Growing Beyond Emotional Dependence,* imply a male other against whom the female reader is interpellated as having defined herself.[12] The problem of being a woman, then, as it is constructed by this kind of make-over as well as by the more visual variety, is reduced to attracting love and desire and being worthy of both.

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[11] cf. Susan Faludi's *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (347-356). Faludi outlines the basic structure of the 'women who love too much' syndrome as it is presented by Norwood, and surmises that aside from contributing to the perpetuation of the heterosexual social structure, the movement (as it has become known) perpetuates the dangerous stereotype of female passivity: "...Norwood's text offered women more serenity to accept the things they couldn't change than courage to change the things they could" (348).

[12] It is also significant to note that the authors of books relating to financial recovery and personal empowerment tend overwhelmingly to be male, while those addressing the relational subject tend to be female.

Confusingly, however, the make-over sells itself under the aegis of self-empowerment. That is, the rhetoric of romance and heterosexual coupling is enmeshed with the only apparently contradictory message of independence and self-fulfillment: the love of a man is all the fulfillment the woman who wishes to be made-over needs. Since what has been called the "backlash" has attempted to undermine any power women might have achieved as independent social subjects, it is now deemed acceptable for women to claim power for themselves if it is framed by a desire to become more appealing to men. As Susan Faludi (1991) charges:

> In the guise of self-help, the experts issued only demands and dictates about how women should behave to win a man, rather than dispensing therapeutic tools and encouragement that women could have used to help themselves. (387)

In this regard, the make-over succeeds in setting up a trajectory in which women on the path to self-improvement end up either with, or being more desirable to, men, indicating that the self in need of help is a single - read: undesirable - self.

The January 1995 *Cosmopolitan,* for example, has an article titled "Must You Depend on Him *That* Much: best to stop clinging, be a *person.*" In much the same format as self-help books such as *Women Who Love Too Much*, the text is comprised of mini-narratives about women having gone from emotional dependence to independence who tell their stories, always with the same conclusion: they end up in 'healthier' relationships, but in relationships nonetheless. "My independence has never made me less desirable, less of a catch," says Pat, sending out the seemingly contradictory message that emotional independence is actually only a strategy for catching a man.

In *Women on the Market*, Luce Irigaray (1985) illustrates that the very foundation for human culture and social organization relies on the exchange of women under the guise of marriage, and therefore, that the analysis of commodities as the fundamental elements of capitalism can be likewise understood as "the interpretation of women in so-called patriarchal societies" (172). The structural similarities between woman and the commodity suppose a reified relationship between men and women. There is, in the commodification of woman, the same disavowal of her use value in favour of her exchange value: *"A commodity - a woman - is divided into two irreconcilable "bodies":* her "natural" body and her socially valued, exchangeable body (180). We might think of the "natural" body to which Irigaray refers, as the 'before' (or the unmediated self), and the exchangeable body, like any other object which has undergone the transformation of commodification, as the 'after.' Where the fetishization of commodities perpetuates capitalism, the fetishization of women ensures the perpetuation of a patriarchal social structure where women are interchangeable with any other objects of exchange. To explain woman's complicity in her own commodification, Irigaray starts with the premise that, at least in western society, women have had only themselves with which to negotiate their economic futures, and so have been conditioned to look at themselves in terms of marketability; as objects to be sold in the interests of marriage. Self-commodification and the resultant heterosexual coupling are thus presented as *choices* made by a viable, economic subject: the woman may *choose* self-commodification and objectified heterosexual relations, but under these conditions, she may not have the option of *not* choosing them. It is not surprising, then, that the make-over, as an ultimate representation of female

social and consumerist agency, always signifies at least the spectre of a male other.

The importance of male desire to feminine subjectivity is echoed in virtually every discourse addressed to women. For example, twenty pages after the article in January's *Cosmopolitan* which warns the reader against emotional dependence there is a section titled "A Top Model Shares her Sexiest Ever Beauty Secrets." The four page feature's layout comprises a sort of narrative where the first image, occupying an entire page, is of Frederique (the model), alone, partially clad, partially reclining on a bed. The following two pages show Frederique at various stages of her beauty ritual, from bathing in honey, rose petals and milk, to spritzing her brassiere with perfume ("gets cleavage noticed!"). The last image - the 'after,' so to speak - shows Frederique in the embrace of an adoring, and attractive, man ("This is my live-in lover, Frederick. He's French, so we pronounce our names the same. We've been together two years... I guess my beauty techniques actually work"). The idea is that if you (the reader) try the same transformative techniques as Frederique, then you too might seduce the domestic affections of an adoring, and attractive man (an adoring and attractive French man, no less!). The relationship set up between the two human beings here - Frederique and Frederick[13] - is one which Robert Goldman (1992) considers in terms of reification where "qualities of acting subjects are attributed to objects, while relations between subjects appear as a function of relations between objects (commodities)" (50). Importantly, the perfume Frederique uses is her

[13]Note the virtual indistinguishability between the two names. The last image of the two together thus indicates more than just a successful make-over: it also indicates a sense of narrative closure and subjective completion.

namesake fragrance, "sold at drugstores," she casually mentions. While the use of celebrity names in the creation of product lines has become a typical promotional device, it may also be seen to blur the boundaries between subject and object, making the connection here between the woman and the commodity even more pronounced.

At any rate, what this sort of make-over shares with the self-help variety is the idea that the unmediated self is a problem, if not *the* problem to be remedied by the solicitation of male desire and companionship through willingly engaging in self-commodification. Self-transformation is promised as a means of self-empowerment on the surface, but the ideology of the make-over is a fiction which narrates self-empowerment as self-commodification: as giving oneself over to, and actively pursuing, conjugal or 'relationship' status. Transformations represent empowerment as desirability where "women enhanc[e] their social and economic power *vis-à-vis* men by presenting themselves as objects of desire" (Goldman: 113). For now, what is important is the idea that woman on her own (either independent or undefined by male desire) is the problem - a problem which finds its critical articulation in what might be considered the structural blueprint for what we have come to call the make-over: George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion.*

Shaw's play takes its name from a character in Ovid's *Metamorphosis.* Pygmalion, it should be remembered, was something of a misogynist who, "revolted by the many faults which nature ha[d] implanted in the female sex...long lived a bachelor existence,"[14] and carved himself the 'perfect woman'

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[14]Trans. Mary M. Innes, 1955. London: Penguin, 1986. P. 231. George Sandy's 1626 version (reprinted by Garland Publishing, Inc: New York, 1976) translates the same passage: "Pygmalion...frighted with the many crimes/ that rule in women; chose a single life" (342).

out of ivory. What is important in this myth is the idea that the perfect woman for a man is a woman conceived *by* him, and that when left to define herself, woman is corrupt and immoral. We can see here the foundation for the contemporary make-over: the construction of female subjectivity as something akin to a disorder, and the presentation of male desire and/or male intervention as the remedy. Pygmalion 'starts from scratch,' improving not on an existing subject, but creating one entirely anew. In this, the make-over is equally about the construction of a model femininity. The woman Pygmalion conceives - Galatea - conforms to classical ideals of what a woman should be. She is, above all else, passive. She is immobile and essentially decorative. During a time when Aristotelian notions of femininity constructed woman as little more than companion to man and repository for his reproductive seed, the conclusion to the myth, which might be seen as the 'ur' conclusion to the make-over in general, is decidedly ominous: Galatea, brought to life by Venus who has heard Pygmalion's pleas to "[give] as my wife... one like the ivory maid" (232), turns immediately to Pygmalion as his wife, and shortly thereafter, gives him a son. She has no thoughts of her own, no ambitions or desires. She exists for male desire and for reproduction, not as an autonomous, desiring subject in her own right.

Set in early twentieth-century London, Bernard Shaw's critical rewriting of the myth represents 'Galatea' not as an object for male desire and pleasure, but as a subject aware of the object-like status that has been thrust upon her. Prior to Eliza Doolittle's metamorphosis at the hands of Henry Higgins, her appearance as a woman alone on the streets indicates first, that she is outside of male control and influence, and second, that this is what her make-over should, and will, attempt to alter. In a time which was struggling to reconcile

the notion of separate spheres with the emergence of greater mobility for women, Eliza's presence on the streets is highly suspicious. Previously, if a woman was alone on the streets it could only mean that she was a prostitute; 'ladies,' on the other hand, stayed at home.[15] Eliza is highly sensitive to the possible interpretation that she is, simply because she is not a lady, a prostitute, and is anxious to defend herself against the implication ("My character is the same to me as any lady's" [226]). She is aware of her precarious situation as a woman alone in public, but is equally aware of the lack of alternatives available to her.

> I aint done nothing wrong by speaking to the gentleman. Ive a right to sell flowers if I keep off the kerb. ... I'm a respectable girl: so help me, I never spoke to him except to ask him to buy a flower off me. ... Oh, sir, dont let him charge me. You dunno what it means to me. Theyll take away my character and drive me on the streets for speaking to gentlemen.[16] (222)

The division between the prostitute and the lady (the two most frequent female representatives of public and private spaces at the time), however, reaches a crisis in the late nineteenth century, as is evidenced by Eliza's tenuous presence on the street.[17] It might, then, be more helpful to look at the crisis in femininity represented here in terms of modernity and the rise of capitalism.

The gendering of space, where women are associated with the private and men with the public, became possible with the emergence in the eighteenth century of a new and dominant social class, the bourgeoisie. Previously, since

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[15] cf. Janet Wolff's "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity" in her book, *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

[16] I have here, as with all quotes to follow, cited the dialogue exactly as it appears in the 1953 Random House edition of the play without changing apostrophes and other diacritics to conform to contemporary usage.

[17] Although *Pygmalion* was written in 1912, it still manages to reproduce many of the conflicts at stake during this period.

the home had been the center of production, the distinction between private and public was not so clear. With the structures of capitalism firmly established, however, the center of production shifted from the home to the factory. Now, the public world was one of business and masculinity. The home was a place of leisure, of rejuvenation and of the feminine. Of course, leisure became a privilege of the middle class and the task of femininity a middle class pursuit. Modern notions of femininity, then, as Ros Ballaster *et al* (1991) argue, were informed by the "increasing identification of a particular class, the bourgeoisie, with the attributes of a particular gender, the feminine" (74). Though femininity was presented as something to be learned and dutifully applied, it was also "a task wholly identified with the world of leisure" (Ibid), the private realm, the domain of the wife or lady. It was not her appearance in public, then, which made the prostitute identifiable, for that was where she had always plied her trade. Rather, it was the disappearance of other women from that same space. The association of the private sphere with femininity and the public with masculinity meant that women on the street lacked access to respectability. The prostitute, whose public status made it impossible for her to approximate the bourgeois construct of femininity, therefore manifested a deviant femininity. The boundaries separating feminine from masculine, class from class and lady from prostitute were thus clearly marked.

But, as Jennifer Craik (1994) notes, "[b]y the late nineteenth century, yet another model of femininity could be identified, that of consumer" (49). Where consumption had heretofore been an activity confined to the home, now it was replaced by an activity that took place increasingly in public - consumerism. Femininity thus became a site of striking contradiction. Newly constructed department stores, aimed directly at female consumers, enticed women out of

the private sphere and into the public. Femininity was still associated with the realm of home and family, but now it had to account for the feminization of a particular sector of the public sphere.

Anne Friedberg (1993), in her study of shopping, attributes women's greater public access both to the department stores, whose architectural design facilitated movement, and to "machines of mobility," such as "trains, steamships, bicycles, elevators," etc. (3), which had important consequences not just for women, but for all marginalized groups. This is corroborated by Judith Walkowitz who notes the erosion of the physical boundaries separating class from class in the late nineteenth century. Various marginalized groups, she tells us, "spilled over and out of their ascribed, bounded roles, costumes and locales into the public streets" (41), obscuring the previously conspicuous distinction between classes. Importantly for women, there arose a new class of "girls in business" or shop girls, who, Walkowitz says, were "neither ladies nor prostitutes, but working women employed in the tertiary sector of the economy," to wait on the "shopping ladies" in the new department stores (24). The former dichotomy between the lady, or 'angel in the house,' and the prostitute, had to now account for a third class of woman neither refined nor wealthy enough to aspire to middle class femininity, but also not aberrant enough to be considered prostitutes. This is further complicated by the woman who is neither a prostitute, a shop girl, nor a lady; a figure Walkowitz, unfortunately, does not address. This is the woman who can be seen to epitomize the crisis in femininity, the woman upon whom Shaw has based Eliza Doolittle.

For Shaw, the 'crisis in femininity' is indistinguishable from a crisis of class. A member of the Fabian Society, Shaw wanted to dismantle and

denaturalize class boundaries and saw a parallel to the constructedness of class in the constructedness of gender. Shaw was well aware of the second class status women held in society and used Eliza as sort of a gendered emblem of the besieged poorer classes. Indeed, the unmediated Eliza hardly conforms to the ideals of femininity particular to the surrounding culture if only because of her class. Eliza is a common flower vendor who, the stage directions tell us, "is not at all an attractive person" (219). Her clothes are soiled and mismatched and she needs a bath. The play on class and gender is established when Shaw notes, "She is no doubt as clean as she can afford to be; but *compared to the ladies* she is very dirty" (220, my emphasis). Further, the erosion of class boundaries is made even clearer by the opening scene where, on a busy London street, characters from all walks of life seek refuge from a downpour. The disparateness of the classes assembled on stage is signified by the different dialects of English represented. Yet, none of the accents we hear is so "horrible" as Eliza's. After identifying the exact street from which she comes based on her diction, Higgins describes her speech as consisting of "depressing and disgusting sounds" (227). What is so horrible about Eliza's accent is that it is a marker of her low class, and the transformation to come must endeavour to elevate her from it.

Of course, what will elevate her from her class is both a make-over and a marriage, since, as we have seen, Eliza's problem is twofold. First, her low class - indicated primarily by her accent but also by the clothes she wears - makes her presence in the street highly dubious. She works the same streets as the prostitutes, albeit from the margins ("off the kerb"), and is seemingly outside of the control of masculine authority. Like the prostitutes with whom she shares geography, and the shop girls with whom she shares the legitimate

job of vending, Eliza is quite autonomous. Secondly, in order for her to attain the mark of respectability, she must be able to engage in the activities which define femininity (defined, in turn, by its containment within the domestic realm). Eliza, according to the dictates of femininity and middle class morality, must be made-over for either a marginally respectable job as a shop girl, or as a potential candidate for a middle-class - ergo respectable - marriage. The important thing, the thing which the play laments, is that she be transformed and then transported into a controlled space, a space under the dominion of male authority. In relation to the structure of the make-over, what is most important is that Eliza becomes domesticated, and feminized, signified in part by her acquired genteel speech and clothes, but also by the fact that she has been left fit for little but marriage. "What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for?" (280), she asks, knowing full well that the alternatives open to her now are really no better than before her metamorphosis. To Higgins the problem of Eliza's future has, for the most part, been resolved by the transformation of her appearance: "youre what I should call attractive... You go to bed and have a good nice rest; and then get up and look at yourself in the glass; and you wont feel so cheap" (Ibid). Higgins reiterates here the ideology of the make-over which promises to remedy all dissatisfaction through the commodification of the subject's appearance, the expected fulcrum of which is marriage.

> I should imagine you wont have too much difficulty in settling yourself somewhere or other... Most men are of the marrying sort... I daresay my mother could find some chap or other who would do very well. (280)

Yet, although the make-over comes at Eliza's request, it is not because she wishes to become eligible for marriage. Rather, she wants to remain independent, and to find work in a respectable flower shop. Here is the

framework for the contemporary make-over which attempts to pass itself off as a means of self-improvement and empowerment: Eliza initially believes in the make-over's promise to improve her economic status, and therefore, her social power. But, of course, in keeping with this same structure, it is assumed from the outset that the problem of Eliza's low class, as well as her lack of power, is to be solved by the solicitation of heterosexual male desire ("By George, Eliza, the streets will be strewn with the bodies of men shooting themselves for your sake before I've done with you" [238]). Therefore, if we consider the parallel between class and gender arranged at the beginning, it is easy to see how Eliza is only superficially transformed into the feminine by being only superficially transformed into a member of the class definable by its ability to consume. Eliza can consume as long as she is living under Higgins' roof, but it is unlikely that she will be able to engage in this activity once on her own.

> *Higgins.* ...She can go her own way with the advantages I have given her.
> *Mrs. Higgins.* The advantages of that poor woman who was here just now! The manners and habits that disqualify a fine lady from earning her own living without giving her a fine lady's income! Is that what you mean? (273)

As Veblen pointed out, consumption has always been directed toward the male head of household. Historically, women were expected to consume for themselves only what they needed to survive and all other consumption would merely reflect back on the pecuniary standing of the husband or father. The primary index of women's subservience, then, is their 'vicarious' existence, especially within the confines of marriage. In the domestic realm, women consume vicariously; they are decorated with clothing and other paraphernalia to indicate not, as it would first appear, their own economic standing, but that of their husbands. Women's dress, Veblen contends, also becomes intrinsic to

the masculine monopolization of leisure. It is constructed neither for manual labour, nor for comfort, but entirely for decoration, as an "insignia of leisure" (171). Importantly, one of the first things Higgins does is order Mrs. Pearce to burn Eliza's old clothes (the insignia of her working class origins) and to send for new ones from Whiteley's department store (the indicator of her newfound status as vicarious consumer). As with the contemporary make-over, clothes and the desire to acquire them, become indices of leisure, of an ahistorical, autonomous subjectivity defined not by class but by consumption.

Eliza is not being prepared for just any marriage, certainly not a working class one. Rather, she is being instructed in the behaviours and tastes of the middle class. In short, she is learning how and what to consume. This is introduced during Higgins' and Eliza's second encounter when Eliza attempts to leave, thinking perhaps, that a make-over might not provide her with the empowerment she seeks. To tempt her into staying, Higgins capitalizes on Eliza's general deprivation and appeals to her as a potential consumer.

> *Higgins (snatching a chocolate cream from the piano, his eyes suddenly beginning to twinkle with mischief)* Have some chocolates, Eliza.
> *Liza (Halting, tempted)* How do I know what might be in them? Ive heard of girls being drugged by the like of you.
> *Higgins whips out his penknife; cuts a chocolate in two; puts one half into his mouth and bolts it; and offers her the other half.*
> *Higgins.* Pledge of good faith, Eliza. I eat one half: you eat the other. *(Liza opens her mouth to retort: he pops the half chocolate into it).* You shall have boxes of them, barrels of them, everyday. You shall live on them. Eh?
> [...]
> *Higgins*...Think of chocolates and taxis, and gold, and diamonds.

Eliza, on the other hand, realizes that the price to pay for vicarious consumption may be too high:

> *Liza.* No: I dont want no gold and no diamonds. I'm a good girl, I am. (240-241)

The indication here is that consumption on Eliza's part would compromise her virtue - the comparison between marriage and prostitution being a common theme throughout. Indeed, the parallel is even hinted at in the preface to *Pygmalion*, where the editor writes:

> In *Pygmalion*, the rich bachelor raises the guttersnipe out of the gutter; feeds her, clothes her, makes a fine lady out of her without making a dishonest woman - or even a wife. (ix)

As for the rest, well, the idea is that underneath Eliza's coarse exterior lies the 'natural' Eliza, the ahistorical Eliza who is somehow outside of class.

> *Higgins.* [...] you shall marry an officer in the Guards, with a beautiful moustache: the son of a marquis, who will disinherit him for marrying you, but will relent when he sees your beauty and goodness- (241).

This narrative fiction of "happily ever after," with which we have become so familiar, is typically addressed to women in the form of pulp romances, soap operas and melodramas, or 'weepies,' but is no less common to the make-over. As in Higgins' parody above, the traditional romantic narrative provides several obstacles to the couple's eventual union, which will, and must, be overcome in order for the 'heroine' (or consumer) to live happily ever after. Where in a popular romance, for example, an obstacle may be the hero's lack of emotional availability or another woman, in the make-over, the obstacle is always the woman's unmediated and/or, as in the case of Eliza Doolittle, independent, self. The promised ending, however, is the same: the 'hero' is (or will be) overpowered by his burgeoning love for the 'heroine' who is (or will be) rewarded for her tenacity by marriage. As Rosalind Coward (1985) points out, "[r]omantic fiction promises a secure world, promises that there will be

safety in dependence, that there will be power in subordination" (196). It is its investment in this fiction which makes the make-over of such interest, and it is this pattern in turn that perpetuates the make-over.

The ironic appropriation of the classical romantic narrative here is used to critically point up the standard convention of the make-over which positions the subject-to-be-made-over as independent of social and material factors. In the epilogue to the play, Shaw deliberately plays to our generic expectations by informing us that Eliza does not, in fact, marry Higgins, but rather a man "who is not her master nor ever likely to dominate her in spite of his advantage of social standing" (309). Where in *Pygmalion* the constant reference to the inevitability of Eliza's getting married is used as a means of critical intervention, in the contemporary make-over, economic circumstances are covered over by the un-self-conscious and utopic envisioning of heterosexual coupling, and the problem of female subjectivity is constructed in such a way that it always signifies male desire as a solution. In keeping with the message of the make-overs that follow, Eliza has, simply by virtue of having been made-over, commodified herself in the interests of marriage.[18]

While women are considered to have reached a certain level of economic independence and freedom regarding choice, it is still assumed that their ultimate destiny lies in marriage. Inasmuch as the make-over appears to be about consolidating women's economic agency and thereby bolstering their social power, it is also about keeping women involved in the perpetuation of the

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[18]It is also interesting to note that in *Pygmalion*, it is the man who buys into the ideology of the make-over and who entertains romantic notions of what the expected outcome of the make-over will be, whereas it is the woman who is positioned as an economic subject, not a romantic one: "I sold flowers. I didn't sell myself. Now you've made a lady of me I'm not fit to sell anything else" (281).

production of commodities as well as in the perpetuation of their subservience to an economic system which compares them to those same objects. The make-over, if the fate of Eliza Doolittle can be taken as exemplary, is equally about keeping women dependent on men and their domination of the public sphere. Eliza *does* get married in the end since to claim economic and sexual liberty in a world which denies women economic and sexual freedom would mean the sacrifice of what little human status women have been allotted: "A free woman in an unfree society will be a monster."[19]

It is this structure which informs the issues at stake in the following chapters, and which should also be considered for any productive problematization of the status of women's subjectivity under patriarchal capitalism. For now, however, we turn our attention to the relation of desire to female subjectivity, and to the further elaboration of the commodity's role in its construction.

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[19]Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman.* London: Virago Press, 1990.

Chapter 2

Women's Magazines and Advertising: Selling the Make-over

> Advertisements are selling us something else besides consumer goods: in providing us with a structure in which we, and those goods, are interchangeable, they are selling us ourselves.
>
> Judith Williamson, Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertisements

Around the same time as department stores were being constructed to appeal to female mobility and spectatorship, the previously modest women's magazine industry began to thrive. While there had been women's magazines in the eighteenth century, changes in women's economic circumstances as well as the phenomenon of mass production in the nineteenth century, made women, as Ros Ballaster *et al* (1991) confirm, "consumers of magazines on a scale unimaginable a century earlier" (75). These new magazines appeared to offer women a space in which to see themselves and their concerns addressed and taken seriously, while at the same time, they gave advice on what might be considered women's new work: consumerism. Indeed, the history of the

woman's magazine "is also the history of the construction of woman as a consumer" (Ballaster *et al*: 47), not just of magazines, but of commodities in general.

The movement of women into the public arena that was facilitated by shopping is even played on by the titles of some women's magazines. *Cosmopolitan*[20] is perhaps the most blatant title, conjuring images of the previously forbidden city, now open to women who are further invited to identify themselves as somehow aligned with it through the appellation, 'Cosmo Girl.' Moreover, the 'New Woman,' a public figure agitating for women's suffrage, doubtless had much to do with the positioning of women in general as public actors by women's magazines. Yet, as much as they attempted to seduce women by playing to their new status representable by the New Woman, "they rarely addressed themselves to her" (Ballaster, *et al*: 85). Instead, the New Woman "was invoked in her absence...always to show her as aberrant and unfeminine" (ibid). Magazines, then, endeavoured to instruct women on what Craik has termed "techniques of femininity," while using the rhetoric of liberation to appeal to women as consumers. An example is to be found in the post World War I promotion and appropriation of cigarettes as symbols of new freedom and femininity for women. Maria LaPlace (1985) notes that since "smoking was a symbol of liberation," increasing feminist demands for equal rights for women were rerouted into images of equality and liberation represented by cigarettes (36). In fact, most new products have

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[20]Further, if we take into consideration Veblen's argument that "[c]onspicuous consumption claims a relatively larger portion of the income of the urban than of the rural population" (87), then we can see how the title, *Cosmopolitan*, also signifies the magazine's central investment in consumerism.

been similarly positioned for women so that it is consumerism *itself* that is represented as progressive and liberating.

> Thus, choice and freedom for women became synonymous, in the advertisements, with the mass-produced goods of the new market, rather than implying any structural change in society or in women's primary identification within the family. (Ibid)

One result has been that women's magazines have been riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions. On the one hand, they brought together the two spheres of public and private allowing women at least vicarious participation in the 'outside' world, while on the other hand, they encouraged activities and behaviours which kept women tied to that same space from which the magazines promised in part to liberate them. This much, at least, has remained the same.

> Whether women had the opportunity, or could afford, to indulge in women's magazines - be they 'ladies,' homemaker, or escapist penny papers for working women - all played on the contradictions and tensions between different roles and orientations for women. (Craik: 49)

Early magazines, which may have been able to capture their female market as a result of women's new status as public participants, produced, and were comprised of, didactic narratives on how to be a good wife and homemaker - the model for femininity up until rather recently - so as to ensure the continued leisure and comfort of the domestic realm. The reader was encouraged to identify with this model heroine and attempt to emulate her. The domestic model of femininity has persisted even up until today with magazines such as *Good Housekeeping, Ideal Home*, and the Canadian, *Homemaker*, although it now competes with the model femininity offered up in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan, Glamour* and *Flare.* These latter magazines interpellate a young, professional woman, not already married and immersed in

home and family like her *Good Housekeeping* and *Homemaker* counterpart, although she may (and is encouraged to) aspire to such domesticity nonetheless.

Like their earlier counterparts, these contemporary magazines might also be said to rely on a form of 'narrative.' Only now the narrative instructs women through a series of photographs depicting the pleasures of commodity consumption and its promise of the complete transformation of the would-be consumer.[21] Here, the reader is persuaded to identify with, and try to emulate, a pictorial heroine - a fashion model - whose femininity, defined by consumption of consumer goods, now perpetuates the public world of commerce and commodity exchange rather than the private world of male leisure. Furthermore, where previously romance (and/or marriage) was heralded as an end in itself, now it is touted as being simply a happy upshot of the "single girl's" devotion to self-improvement (consumption).[22]

With the transition to focusing on the single woman in the sixties, Jennifer Craik observes that magazines "became less dogmatic and more interactive" (52). Rather than merely instructing women about femininity through narratives in which readers could participate only indirectly, here they encouraged women to contribute to the pages of the magazine through letters to the editor, advice columns, and through reader make-overs. Once a regular feature of women's magazines, the make-over column is easy to recognize. Typically an average woman (a reader as opposed to a model), is photographed from the shoulders up without make-up or special lighting for the

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[21]The process of narrativity is discussed and developed further in relation to the make-over in chapter 3.

[22]Of course, as Ballaster *et al* confirm, the magazine's "endorsement of the single state is never more than ambiguous... the single state (without a man) is a temporary condition" (138).

'before' image. This photograph, which is usually smaller and set apart from the after, is frequently unposed (or is posed to look unposed). For the 'after' image, which occupies more space on the page, make-up, hairstyling (and/or colouring), wardrobe, soft lighting and a now seductive posture complete the woman's transformation. An accompanying text informs the reader what make-up/ hair colouring/ clothing line/ etc., has been used in the process and usually smaller print at the bottom of the page tells the reader where she can also get the clothes, make-up and services. All of this indicates, of course, an apparent democratization of beauty: you too can buy the listed products and make the same transformation.

This kind of make-over, with which we are still familiar, is rarely found anymore. Frequently the distinction between advertisements and copy is blurred so that now make-overs usually involve models, and instead of being a regular part of the magazines' overall structure, the make-over is often only offered as a complement to some special event; Valentine's Day or a wedding, for example. Previously, the make-over supplemented advertising. It served as an example of what the ever-emerging new products could accomplish. Today, however, advertising, which has become increasingly more sophisticated, might be seen to presuppose the make-over. That is, the make-over is implicated in the structure of the advertisement, which, using a model - one might say a perfected 'after' image - indicates what the advertised product can achieve. All advertisements, then, might be considered 'after' images and since advertisements structure the magazine, and readers buy magazines as much for the pleasure of looking at the ads as for the articles, it is easy to see how the entire framework for women's magazines is based on the make-over. Only now, instead of reader participation being individualized as in the reader make-

over, interaction takes place *en masse:* women no longer need to rely solely on specialists to transform them because of the myriad products available for them to transform themselves. For example, many magazines feature a regular 'product update' column which alerts readers to new and/or revamped products (products being remarketed as 'new and improved,' say). Often the column will provide a chart in which the reader can map herself depending on her hair colour and skin tone/ type which will then determine which product is best suited to her 'needs.'

This apparent democratization of beauty, then, obviously has much to do with the increasing role played by cosmetics. Cosmetics advertising has been a staple of women's magazines since the 1920s, but might be seen to have reached its zenith today, if only due to the substantially greater number of products and lines on the market. From the 20's to the 50's the most frequent cosmetics advertised were face powder and "beauty bars," often endorsed by emerging young movie stars,[23] and heralded as rendering beauty achievable by all. Indeed, the transformative abilities of cosmetics would seem to speak to all women, regardless of size, class or even race. As Kathy Peiss (1990), puts it:

> By making the complexion, rather than the bone structure or physical features, more central to popular definitions of beauty, [the cosmetics industry] popularized the democratic idea that beauty could be achieved by all women if they used the correct products and treatment. (148)[24]

An ad for *Max Factor* "Pan-Cake Make-Up" taken from *Cosmopolitan*, April 1943, reads "Create flattering new Beauty... in a few seconds. What a thrill the

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[23]This phenomenon is pursued further in chapter 3.

[24]However, Peiss also points out that the ideal complexion was always presented in terms of "racial-ethnic types with white Anglo-Saxons at the top of that hierarchy" (164).

first time you try Pan-Cake Make-Up and find that you can actually create a new complexion, lovely in color, smooth and flawless... in just a few seconds." The direct address to "you," which has proven so effective that it has become a magazine and advertising mainstay, is a further illustration of the democratization process, and may be seen to serve a subjectivizing *and* an objectifying function where consumer and commodity seem to collapse into one. What takes place is a sort of inversion between subject and object, where the object, or commodity, interpellates and aligns itself with the potential consumer, or subject. Robert Goldman argues that such a process means that women are encouraged "not merely to adorn themselves with commodities, but also to perceive themselves as objectified surfaces" (121). In other words, magazines position the reader as a sort of 'tabula rasa' to be determined and defined by the products they display and even by the magazines themselves as commodities.

The single most successful example of this process is the invitation to readers of *Cosmopolitan* to adopt the Cosmo Girl identity. The magazine, which attempts to imbricate the reader in its structure by identifying all of its consumers as potential Cosmo Girls, represents the reader as undergoing a kind of make-over just by buying the magazine. That is, she is transformed into a Cosmo Girl the moment she buys (into) *Cosmopolitan*, and is set up against all the other magazines and products which she does not buy. Of course, identifying oneself as a Cosmo Girl is not just about buying the magazine from which the appellation takes its name. The Cosmo Girl archetype is a young woman who is confident, empowered, sexy, glamourous, career-minded and, of course, heterosexual. The Cosmo Girl is, in fact, a complete identity. She is devoted to her relationships but most committed to her career

(at least for now). She is autonomous, financially secure, but able to retain her still integral femininity, definable in turn by commodity consumption. As Goldman suggests, femininity is thus presented as the "route to control, security and power" (113).

Indeed, power is a central theme in both women's magazines and the advertising therein since many of the 'commodities' women are being solicited to buy are sold under its aegis. The Cosmo Girl, as an emblem of power, speaks to women about their desire for power not only in the social realm, but in the private realm as well. The two signify each other, where power in the public world of business and careers is made to translate into power in the 'bedroom,' or power vis-à-vis relationships with men. An appropriate example is to be found in an ad for *Cosmopolitan*, of which Goldman makes effective use.

> Three days in I got the non-commitment speech. 'You're wonderful but I'm not ready for a relationship.' Fine, I said, and we kept dating. One night I had to cancel because of a heavy meeting the next day. He was astonished. Two weeks later I went on a business trip to France. He was in shock. Two months later - right this minute - he's the most attentive man I've ever known. I didn't plan to be hard to get...I really *have* been *busy*. My favorite magazine says don't play games... just play your career for all it's worth and a lot of things will fall into place. I love that magazine. I guess you could say I'm that COSMOPOLITAN Girl. (in Goldman: 113)

The contradictions at play operate on multiple levels of concealment. The text *reveals* the Cosmo Girl's presumable philosophy: "play your career for all it's worth," indicating that the woman who subscribes to the Cosmo Girl identity is concerned more with professional, rather than romantic, success. The 'speaker' of the text, whom we understand to be a satisfied consumer of the magazine, *is* unaffected by the man's initial inattention. Her tone is casual, and

she is quite happy to pursue her career, "in France, no less" (Goldman: 113), *sans homme* . If we go by the text alone, the outcome of the speaker's unwittingly playing hard to get is merely a fortuitous side-effect of her professional ambition. What the text only ostensibly conceals, however, is the magazine's overall concern with male desire, since everyone knows that *Cosmopolitan*, like many of its contemporaries, is more about relationships with men than anything else. Here, the representation of the Cosmo Girl's independence and power attempts to disguise, at least superficially, the magazine's preoccupation with, and (endless) provision of advice on, men: how to catch them, how to keep them, how to please them.

The March 1995 issue of *Cosmopolitan* features, for example, "Secrets from the Courtesans...and What You Can Learn From Them." Courtesans, we all know, were upper class prostitutes whose entire existence revolved around the pleasuring of men. Other recent articles include "The Way to be Surely, Surely Sexy: Foxy suggestions to leave your man tingling with desire;" and my favourite, "The Rules: Ten Time-Tested Secrets for Capturing His Heart." First, consider the immediate title, 'The Rules.' The implication is that there *is*, contrary to official Cosmo Girl philosophy, a game to be played. Then, in traditional *Cosmopolitan* fashion, there is a formula for success -'Ten Time-Tested Secrets.' These consist of such seemingly antiquated ideas as "Don't talk to a man first," or "Don't tell him what to do," reminiscent of marriage manuals from the fifties where wives were warned that the 'greatest mistake' they could make when their husbands were experiencing any sort of difficulty was "to try to help him solve his problems... to offer suggestions, or to help lift

his burdens, or remove his obstacles. All of these are mistaken approaches. All of these hurt his pride."[25]

The articles and the ads work in tandem, of course, to perpetuate consumption of both the products which sustain the magazine and the magazine itself by inviting women to self-commodification, or in psychoanalytic terms, self-fetishization. The fetish, like the commodity, works on desire. The fetishist attempts to fill the lack motivating his[26] desire. The lack he experiences can always be referred back to the lack of the phallus - which no one ever has, and as a consequence, everyone always wants. If, as Luce Irigaray has suggested, there exists a structural relationship between the commodity and the phallus, the invitation to self-commodification and the promise of power which accompanies it, is the power of the commodity, or, one might say, the power of the phallus.[27] In effect, what woman is being instructed to do is to turn herself into the phallus, not only through self-adornment, but also through self-abnegation since the phallus is an object which will never be claimed. Disavowing the fact that woman does not *have* the phallus, self-fetishization creates the illusion that woman *is* the phallus. Therefore, the anxiety over woman's apparent castratedness is allayed and replaced by desire, for a woman's attractiveness directly corresponds to the extent to which she is no longer perceived as a threat. A couple of years ago, *Cosmopolitan* featured an article titled, "A Plan For Romance - Stop Chasing So He Can Chase You." Basically the idea is to be unavailable, to "play hard-to-

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[25]From a marriage manual circa 1950. Title and author unknown.

[26]Fetishism is a specifically male perversion prompted by the subject's fear of castration.

[27]"-just as a commodity finds the expression of its value in an equivalent - in the last analysis, a general one - that necessarily remains external to it, so woman derives her price from her relation to the male sex, constituted as a transcendent value: the phallus" (188).

get," which will make you more desirable. Preferably, like the definitive Cosmo Girl, you will truly be too busy with your own exciting life to have any time left over for chasing a potential lover. If not, fake it.

> Take up a hobby. Get involved in a cause. Once you stop chasing your lover, he's likely to start to wonder how you're managing to have so much fun without him... and then he'll start pursuing you. (*Cosmopolitan*, February, 1993)

Consider also the most frequent advice given to the woman about to embark on the "first date." She is told not to talk too much about herself, to listen to him, but not necessarily to offer an opinion. In the same article cited above, the woman who is dissatisfied with the amount of attention she is getting from men is advised to "[t]ry and hear your words as you speak them. Then practice interrupting yourself *before* you speak" (Ibid). In other words, she is encouraged to silence herself, to compliment the man's presence with her own, but to let him control the discursive space. All of this works with the larger consumerist project to reinforce the reader's perception of herself as always already deficient and in need of renovation.

While the study by Ballaster *et al* indicates that women do not, at least openly, take all of this relationship advice very seriously, what isn't taken into account is that the advertisements and articles do appear to accomplish what they set out to, if the multibillion dollar cosmetics and fashion industries are any indication. What happens is that any dissatisfaction women might feel with regard to their present social or personal status, is channeled into desire; ultimately for various commodities endowed with transformative properties. Commodities come to stand for all that the reader perceives as lacking in her own life, and the Cosmo Girl persona as a model of what such commodities can accomplish. In the words of Judith Williamson ((1986), "[t]he need for change,

the sense that there must be something else... becomes the need for a new purchase" (12). The empowered identity offered to women is that of both consumer and consumed, subject and object. By equating control over one's physical appearance with "control over one's socio-economic environment," Goldman argues that advertisers are really addressing women's improved *buying* power (111), thereby appropriating feminist discourse into what he calls "commodity feminism." An ad for the "Kikomo" clothing line provides a good example of how commodity feminism turns a political movement into a fashion statement (fig.1). The copy reads:

> ALL men & WOMEN are created equal. CELEBRATE and exercise the many FREEDOMS you have ...DEMOCRACY is for EVERYONE: young and old, black and white, rich and poor, man and WOMAN. (*Glamour*, August 1993)

The text is organized so that specific words with political currency such as "democracy" and "freedoms" stand out. The woman in the photograph, whom we can assume is supposed to serve as the embodied symbol of democratic freedom and achievement, sits confidently - if precariously - perched on a director's chair. Her clothes are designed to express comfort and freedom of movement, and they do not conform to gender specific fashion codes. She confronts the camera directly with a look that is neither coy nor flirtatious, reinforcing the reading that the interpellated subject is indeed the free, democratized (one might say 'white' and 'young' as well) woman suggested by the celebratory text. The layout of the copy and the posture of the woman work in tandem to reveal the advertisement's "real" message: spend, exercise your *power* to consume. At the bottom of the page the ad, in a pun on the "Declaration of Independence," reads "Decorations of Independence." Here woman's traditional decorative function, which used to signify a man's

economic standing, is now celebrated for signifying her own. The direct address, "exercise the many freedoms you have," indicates that women's struggle has largely been won. Note also the flag on which is fashioned the "o" in "Kikomo," held up by a stylized figure in the posture of a marching soldier. The fact that this flag is in the shape of a T-shirt, combined with the overall rhetoric of revolution running throughout the ad, reinforces the message of commodity feminism: social change need only be effected through the commodification and feminization of appearance.

Commodity feminism works to address women about their status as independent and liberated, while at the same time it often reinscribes the centrality of men's desire to women's existence by encouraging self-commodification as opposed to political or social action. Feminism is used to represent women taking control over their physical appearance; as something which is worn like any other object of adornment aimed to attract men's desire. A woman's power is therefore represented in terms of what she represents for men, or, as Goldman says: "the more a woman is able to elicit desire via presentation of self as a valued commodity - valued by her rareness/ availability - the more powerful she feels" (124). Yet, self-commodification also speaks to, perhaps even informs, women's subjectivity by attracting their desire. Since the term "desire" is ubiquitous in theory these days, for the purposes of explaining desire as it informs subjectivity and the issues at stake with regard to female consumption, I borrow from Lacan, who in turn, borrows from Hegel. Desire is intersubjective, according to Hegel, in that one subject desires from another recognition. "Hegelian *desire* is the desire to have one's own desire recognized by the other, and thus to make desire represent a

certain *value*."[28] For Hegel, the ultimate value is self-certainty, or assurance about one's own identity, and therefore, desire might be said to be for oneself. Borrowing from Hegel, Lacan theorizes desire as basically narcissistic since others are desired only insofar as the subject believes they will complete her/himself. On the one hand, then, in both the Lacanian and the Hegelian formations, desire might be said to be unsatisfiable. On the other hand, desire can be satisfied if it achieves its own self-certainty "through the relation to the desire of an other, human, historical, desire" (in Wright: 63). In order to clarify this seeming contradiction, it is useful to look again to the moment at which desire is born, in what Lacan calls the mirror stage.

As perhaps the most critical moment in the formation of subjectivity, the mirror stage inaugurates the subject's desire for a complete and unified self by providing the subject with her/his first experience of a coherent corporeal image - the Ideal Image - which is said to form the ego. This Ideal Image, or the Ideal Ego, is an impossibility in which the subject again and again misrecognizes her/himself so that inasmuch as this is an exaltant moment, it is also a self-alienating one since s/he can only experience her/himself as other, as a projection. Yet, the constituency of the ego relies on the misrecognition and introjection of the image in order for the subject to take her/his position among other subjects in the social order. As a consequence, s/he repeatedly desires to be returned to this moment so as to re-experience the initial sense of wholeness and distinctness s/he first felt with regard to her/his specular, ideal self. The attempt at recovering this ideal, illusory self, indicates an ever present, fundamental sense of lack for which the subject will perpetually

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[28]See "Desire" in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*. Ed. Elizabeth Wright. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992. 64.

attempt to compensate, usually through visual apprehension. What the mirror stage initiates, then, is a drive 'to look,' where the subject desires what is seen in so far as s/he believes it will complete her/himself. In this context, Lacan posits looking as a drive in "excess of mere seeing" (in Wright: 449), and as a dialectical process involving both active and passive aims: to look is active, to be looked at is passive. To look is to desire, and since desire is for recognition, one desires to have the look returned.

The activity of looking may be situated quite specifically within the domain of power and its relationship to gender. According to John Berger, the ideal spectator is always assumed to be male precisely because of the "promise of power which he embodies" (45). Beginning with paintings of nudes, Berger suggests that such images are typically tailored to flatter the male spectator and to reinforce his position of dominance. His 'buying power' is indicated by virtue of the fact that he *can* possess what he sees. Traditionally the holder of capital, the male spectator has the power to own the woman - the frequent object of high art representation, and now just as often the object of ads - by purchasing her likeness. Typically, the nakedness of the woman in a painting is not "an expression of her own feelings; [but] a sign of her submission to the owner's feelings or demands. (The owner of both woman and the painting)" (52). Further, Berger notes that the nude's look is often directed toward the spectator-owner. She returns his look; she recognizes his desire and her desire appears to be for his. This sets up a relationship between men and women where women are the objects of enjoyment and desire, men the subjects. Janice Winship (1987), who takes up Berger's argument in relation to advertising, reasons:

> Symbolically women are men's leisure, to which the 'girlie' magazines are a sad witness. Women personify eroticism, leisure and pleasure. They are, in most men's imagination, the ultimate commodity to be 'enjoyed,' the 'commodity' which is so often sold in ads. (54)

The conflation of woman and commodity has resulted in the tendency to solicit a specifically masculine desire. This tendency, Berger postulates, has set up women's relationship to images in general and as a result, women have resigned themselves to being *the* objects of visual consumption and desire, not desiring subjects themselves. They have become accustomed to being looked at and to seeing themselves being looked at.

Yet, we also must consider women 'consuming' women's magazines, for here women look at other women. In fact, ads and fashion layouts in women's magazines use the same kinds of images of women to elicit desire as those used in the traditional solicitation of male desire. John Berger, and after him, Laura Mulvey (1975), argue that women have developed a split personality where the woman as object of visual contemplation (the surveyed) is feminine, and the subject who contemplates (the surveyor) is masculine. Desire in looking, if we follow this assumption, would always be desire for the 'image-as-woman.' Desire would thus be constructed as a desire to possess, and female desire would seem to be somewhat transvestitist. Increasingly, however, scholars have begun to explore the limitations of such an hypothesis, especially when taking into consideration female pleasure and desire in relation to looking. An alternate model, which furthers Berger's and Mulvey's argument while taking into account the construction of a specifically female spectator-buyer, is suggested by Diana Fuss (1992) in the process of what she has unfortunately termed "vampirism" theorized as "identification pulled inside out," (730) contingent upon the mirror stage and born out of desire.

The models with which we have previously contended have suggested only two, seemingly incompatible, possibilities: to desire the image (to have), or to identify with the image (to become). Like the vampire who seeks to become one with her victim through consumption of her, the spectator might be seen to consume the image of the woman on the page in a similar attempt at "other-incorpora[tion] and self-reproduc[tion]" (ibid). Vampirism accounts for both identification and desire, indeed, positions them as "coterminous, where the desire to be the other (identification) draws its very sustenance from the desire to have the other" (ibid). In this, vampirism proposes a simultaneously auto- and homo-erotic relationship between the spectator of the fashion magazine and the model who poses therein. The misrecognition of the mirror stage is also particularly important to the concept of vampirism and its construction of lesbian desire and identification. Identification, or misrecognition, occurs as a result of the desire to possess the totality represented by the mirror image. The subject who looks at her image in a mirror identifies with it, or (mis)recognizes herself in it, because it promises a totality she cannot otherwise experience. But she also experiences a narcissistic desire for it. Advertisements rekindle this early autoerotic sensation in order to court the would-be consumer's desire for the products they solicit, products presumably capable of restoring to the subject a sense of imaginary wholeness. The image in an advertisement acts like a mirror, providing the viewer with a reflection of what she herself might look like once completed by the commodity. Yet, before she can identify with the image, she must first desire it. As Fuss suggests:

> Vampiric identification operates in the fashion system in the way that the photographic apparatus positions the spectator to identify with the

> woman precisely so as not to desire her, or to put it another way, to desire to be the woman precisely so as to preclude having her. But in order to eradicate or evacuate the homoerotic desire, the visual field must first *produce* it...(730)

Numerous ads operate in this way, but perhaps the most effective are those for "Victoria's Secret" lingerie (Fig. 2). Typically the models are photographed and lit in such a way as to suggest an absent, desiring male. Indeed, the model's enticing pose and come hither gaze seem designed exclusively to seduce the viewer in terms of desire rather than identification. The golden hue of her skin, the voluptuous curve of her breasts - these are certainly not included in the price of the bra she wears and which is supposed to be the object up for purchase. Pre-oedipal oral desire, where the subject hopes to reproduce itself in the other through incorporation of that other, is thus rerouted into desire for the product which the woman represents. The viewer then becomes caught up in what Goldman calls a dialectic of envy and desire where on the one hand, the woman is desired erotically, and on the other, where she is envied the same appearance which makes her so desirable. The production of desire in the erotic field thereby makes way for the production of desire *for* identification. Identification with a model selling lingerie - or lipstick, or face powder - then, is not immediate. In fact, it might be said not to even happen at all. It only *promises* to happen if the viewer buys the product advertised, which in turn is interchangeable with the woman whose image accompanies it. As Williamson (1978) observes, most ads use a face staring "back at us with a gaze that merges with our own" (64), like a mirror. This 'mirror image,' however, does not wholly inspire feelings of erotic, visual pleasure. The image also solicits our desire, and desire is always a signifier of lack. In other words, the faces which stare back from the pages of women's

magazines, the faces with which the reader (you) would like to identify, "show you a symbol of yourself aimed to attract your desire; they suggest that you can *become* the person in the picture before you" (65), although they can only promise this if they can convince you that you are deficient as you are.

An advertisement for "Playtex Secrets" lingerie illustrates a new movement in advertising which attempts to extirpate the homoerotic content with which we are so familiar by eliminating the first condition of identification: desire (fig. 3). The ad is separated into two components. On the left is a photograph of a shapely woman with a caption running over her midriff reading, "This woman's body isn't as good as it looks." On the right side there is the ad copy briefly interrupted by an image of the woman's torso attired presumably in "Playtex Secrets" lingerie. The copy reads:

> Her tummy's not really that flat. Her bust not quite so shapely. So what's her secret? Playtex Secrets. Matching bras and panty slimmers masquerading as beautiful lingerie. When the real beauty is hidden panels that target your tummy to control and hold. And lift and support your bust. In light and moderate control. So you don't have to be perfect to look perfect. Playtex Secrets - Lingerie for real life. (*Cosmopolitan*, May 1995)

The efficacy of the ad relies on the reader's familiarity with an entire lexicon of lingerie ads and feature layouts and in being able to determine the difference between them.[29] Importantly, the model is less glamourous and, one could say, not as seductive as most of the models whose images fill the pages of the

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[29]Judith Williamson (1978) looks at advertisements in terms of their status as signs. Following Saussure's formulation, Williamson notes that an ad, or a product, relies for its currency on its differentiation from other ads or products. For an ad to be effective in promoting its product, it relies on the reader's being able to distinguish it from all other ads and products of the same nature: "it is the first function of an advertisement to *create* a differentiation between one particular product and others in the same category. It does this by providing the product with an 'image'; this image only succeeds in differentiating between products insofar as *it* is part of a system of differences" (24).

magazine. The lighting in the photograph is flatter, and the effect of the lingerie *underneath* clothes is highlighted, as opposed to the foregrounding of the lingerie's accessorization of an already "perfect" body that we have come to expect from lingerie ads such as the one for "Victoria's Secret." The difference between the ad for "Playtex Secrets" and the one for "Victoria's Secret" are of course in what each signifies, or *means*. The posture of the woman in the "Playtex" ad, and her direct confrontation of the camera imply that, unlike the ad for "Victoria's Secret," this underwear is not meant to be displayed (although, the ad is careful to mention, it can "masquer[ade] as beautiful lingerie"). Moreover, we are told that, as good as the model may look, her body is actually imperfect (there is no such implication in the ad for "Victoria's Secret"). Where the Victoria's Secret model may inspire only desire (for identification), the "Playtex Secrets" model solicits identification almost immediately: the imperfect 'before' is implied, and doesn't need to be shown since the reader need only look at herself in the mirror to imagine.

A woman may see, then, in photographs of other women, the potential of what she herself might become through either immediate identification or through desire "turned inside out" as identification. Recalling her first love, the *gestalt* of her own ideal image, her desire, frustrated as it may be by its impossibility, is thus constantly addressed. She is encouraged to disavow the impossibility of assimilation of this ideal other, and instead, to try to identify with it. At the same time, she is seduced by the chance to engage in the voyeuristic activity to which she herself feels exposed. Rosalind Coward suggests, "[w]e are lured to photographs as witnesses of how we exist in the world, by the possibility of occupying the position of the other who judges and records" (53). But, of course, advertising's goal is not to placate nor to instill

that contentment we first knew. It can only succeed if our desire is frustrated and we are unable to identify with the perfection of the image we look upon. In the reflected image of the ideal self selling lipstick, there is also reflected the impossibility of self-certainty - the consignment of desire forever to a state of non-fulfillment. The images are designed to criticize, to sublimate the power of the other's critical gaze into a "self-policing narcissistic" one (Goldman: 108) so that the viewer can never again look upon her own image with satisfaction. The purchase of the magazine inaugurates a sort of contractual relationship between itself and the consumer where the magazine promises the reader that with each (imaginary) purchase she will have moments of satisfaction, moments where she can be desirable, moments which will then justify the love she initially felt with regard to her own mirrored image. But as Ballaster *et al* remark, "the magazine seems to fail in its function of affirmation. The woman reader does not ultimately find herself, or her ideal self, mirrored in its pages, but fragments of that imagined self" (167).

Whether or not women have achieved a certain level of social or political power appears no longer to be the question. It is rather how that power is rendered less potent by its constant rerouting through commodity relations, in turn constructed through the operations of identification and the precondition of desire. The question, "what does woman want?" seems to beg the answer, "to find a self mirrored in desire."

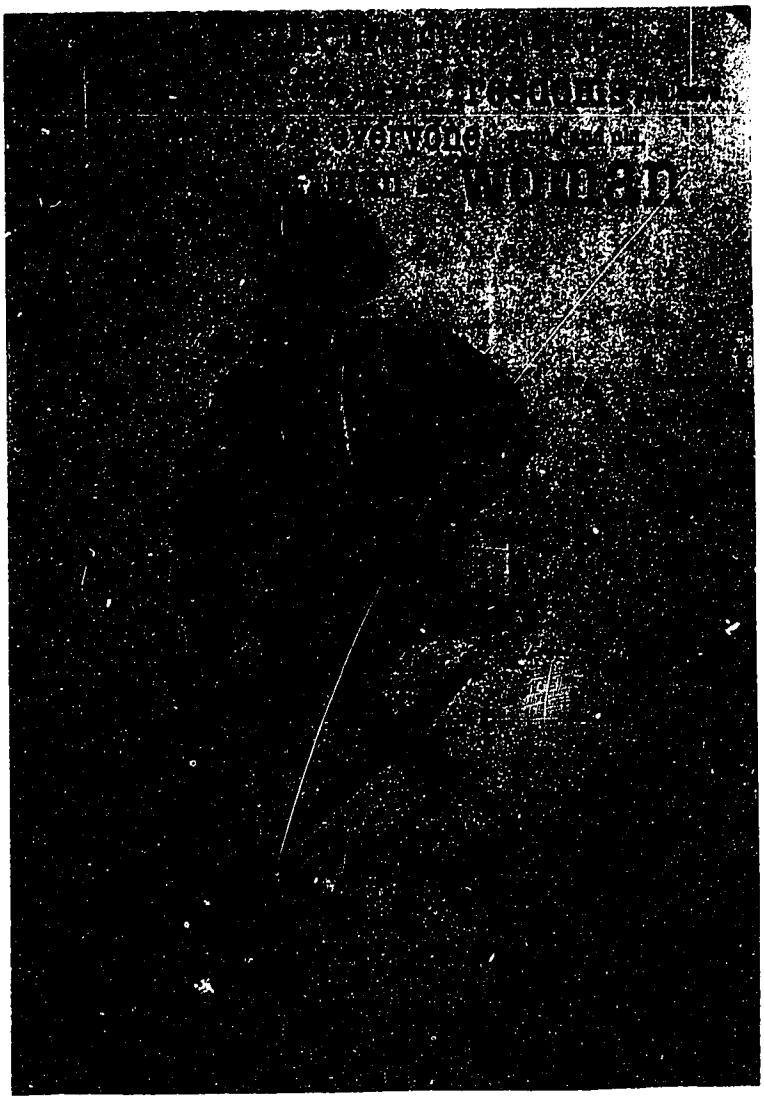

Figure1: Kikomo (Detail), *Glamour* August 1993

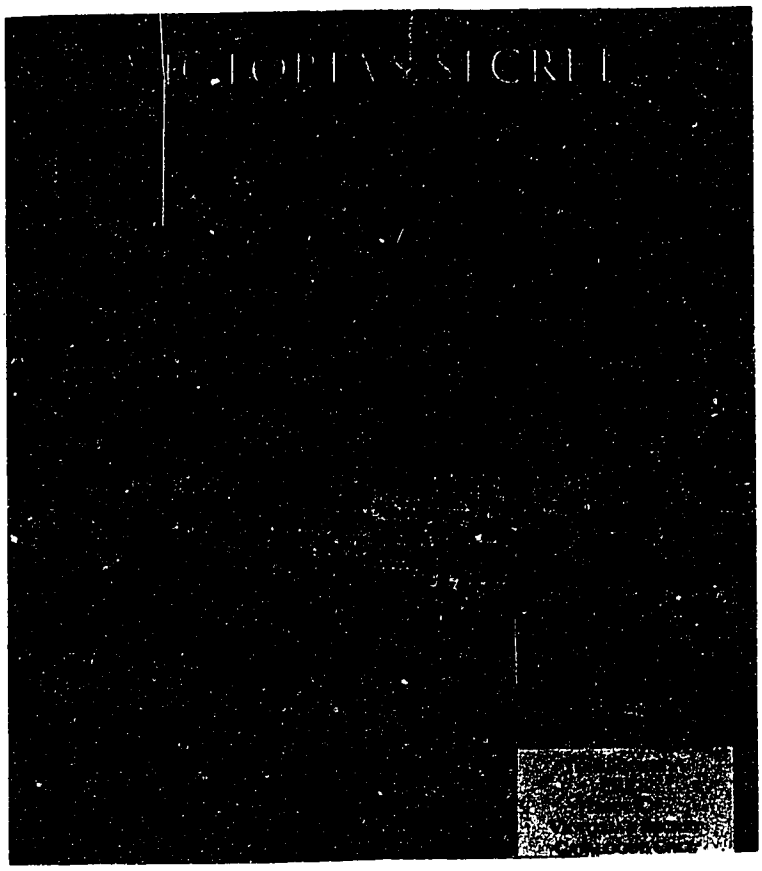

Figure 2: Victoria's Secret (Detail), *Vogue* March 1995

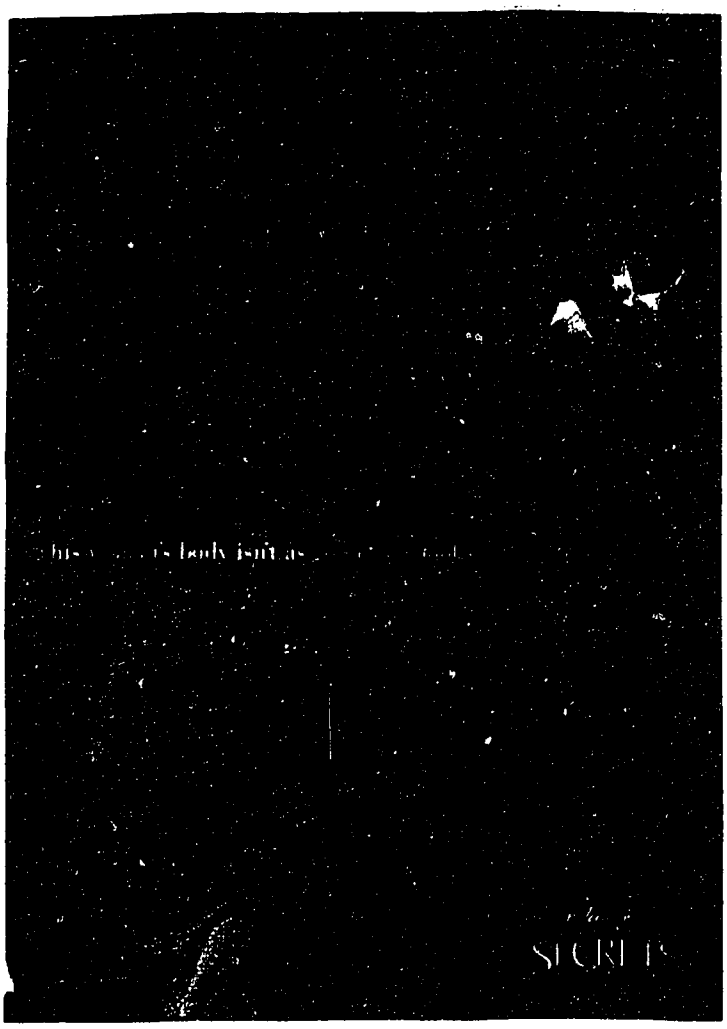

Figure 3: Playtex Secrets (Detail), *Cosmopolitan* May 1995

Chapter 3

Transformation Films: Narrating the Make-over

> The distinguishing feature of narrative is its linear organization of events into a story... Story consists of events placed in a sequence to delineate a process of transformation of one event into another.
>
> Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires
> *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction.*

In the previous chapter we saw how the structure of the make-over permeates the women's magazine, and how the magazine, in all of its component parts, then takes on the characteristics of the make-over in general. In the first chapter, the features of the make-over were extrapolated from the play *Pygmalion* to show what gets reproduced by the discourse of consumerism which the make-over later works to sustain in women's magazines. What has yet to be discussed, however, and what the play and the magazines anticipate, is how the make-over's structure can be examined in terms of narrative, and how this structure is capable of reproducing itself in more complex and explicit narratives - what I call "transformation films."

In the make-over's 'before and after' structure there is the most rudimentary form of narrative - the transformation of one state into another. As Seymour Chatman (1978) submits, however, a narrative is more than just a simple recounting of events, more than just what is called 'story.' In the magazine make-over there are only two still images from which a narrative must be (and ultimately is) abstracted. Using E.M. Forster's example of "the king died and then the queen died" to illustrate story, and then, "the king died and then the queen died of grief" to illustrate narrative, Chatman suggests that the only significant difference between the two is in implicit as opposed to explicit causation. The first example indicates no explicit causal relationship between the king's and the queen's death. But, what is interesting, he observes, is that our minds will seek to impose a causal structure on events and will therefore assume that the queen's death has something to do with the king's without our being told so. Thus, there may seem to be a 'causal gap' between the before and after images of magazine make-overs (or the perfected 'after images' of advertisements) which might not appear to exist in a recognizable narrative such as *Pygmalion.* But, as Chatman has shown, the reader (or viewer) will tend to fill in this seeming gap and provide a causal relationship where none is explicitly suggested. The question, then (at least for now), is where the difference lies between the magazine make-over's narrative trajectory and its filmic counterpart. This is most easily explained primarily in terms of the narrative difference between still, as opposed to moving, images.

In his discussion of pre-cinematic experiments with glass slides and the magic lantern (i.e., still images) which were shown to the accompaniment of a soundtrack and/or a lecturer, André Gaudreault (1990) argues that it was a lack of narrative complexity which anticipated the necessity for what would

become narrative cinema. Differentiating between two levels of story - "narration," which is the telling or recounting of different events, and "monstration," which is the showing of events (as still images attempt to do) - Gaudreault suggests that only monstration is incomplete.

> The narrative 'weakness' of still images ... probably best explains the recourse to verbal narration. With a magic lantern, monstration could not support a narrative project on any scale. This is because the images are immobile and the actor mute. (276)

Any doubt as to the validity of this argument might be put aside if we consider the frequency with which still images in books and magazines are accompanied by an explanatory text, a tendency likely due to the image's susceptibility to interpretation.[30] The before and after still images of the make-over, however, since they are related to each other temporally and by a continuous subject, do not allow for the same freedom of interpretation. Further, the gap between the before and after images is presumably filled by the viewer who interposes a causal relationship between the two. We infer a narrative from these two images even if we don't have an accompanying text because we are so well-acquainted with the semantics of the before and after structure of the make-over - i.e., because the woman supposedly looks worse in the before photo, she must be unhappy with her appearance since she has sought out 'professional' advice regarding its transformation. What is also important is that the make-over images appear on the page from left to right. This is, of course, the order in which we read and might also contribute to the narrativity of the make-over and to the viewer's willingness to fill in any gap between the

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[30] A still image is also ambiguous in that it can only ever represent one moment in time. In this regard, it might be considered as more objective - therefore, more indeterminate - than an image which is related syntagmatically to another.

two images. The end result, or the 'after' image, then fulfills for the reader a function not unlike the customary "happily ever after" conclusion. That is, all of the other discourses surrounding the make-over, with which the viewer is likely familiar, also find their way into this narrative including the presumption that the woman will be more successful, more popular and therefore more desirable as a consequence of her make-over. However, all of this is only ever implicit, and must be abstracted from what are objectively only two still images however linked they may be by a 'before and after' caption and a continuous subject. The crucial difference, then, is that the implicit narrative trajectory of the make-over is made manifest in its filmic representation so that very little interpretive work needs to be done by the film spectator.

There can be no doubt about *Pygmalion*'s status as a narrative. However, where the theatre diverges from cinema in terms of narrativity is in the camera as 'narrating agent' directing our vision. The theatre can only suggest where an audience will look through blocking and staging, but it cannot control our vision. In the cinema, we are inescapably at the mercy of the camera as narrating agent through the use of close-ups, editing, etc. By these same means, the viewer becomes more vulnerable to any ideological project a film may have. In this way the cinema is able to connect the make-over to a larger and more explicitly consumerist narrative trajectory.

The "make-over film" can be seen to incorporate the two dominant features of the magazine make-over and the 'original' make-over, *Pygmalion*. Firstly, the films, due to their ability to represent objects in their fetishizable, commodified forms (again, through editing, close-ups, etc.), sustain the message of consumerism intrinsic to the magazine make-over. Secondly, like *Pygmalion*, the films are equally concerned with changing the status of the

single, as yet maritally undesirable, woman and so provide the causal relationship between the two stages by filling in the seeming gap between the before and after images of the magazine make-over. This is to say the woman's independent status is presented as a problem to be remedied by the make-over and its guarantee of male desire. Imbricated in all of this is the status of (the) woman's desire (the spectator and the star on screen with whom she is supposed to identify). These are the main issues at stake in the make-over as narrative, and which find their way into the structure of transformation or make-over films.

Transformation fi[illegible]e incorporated under the more general heading of what has bee[illegible]"he women's picture." According to Pam Cook (1991), the "wo[illegible]re is differentiated from the rest of cinema by virtue of its construction of a "female point-of-view" which motivates and dominates the narrative" (248). Like women's magazines, the women's picture attempts to address and articulate what have typically been considered women's issues: relationships, family, romance, etc., and thereby address itself to a specifically female audience. Feminist interest in the women's picture has traditionally centered [illegible]n these issues in terms of representation and cinematic identification. Lately, however, there has been an abundance of interest in how these films posit female desire. Cook argues that the mobilization of desire was a primary means of capturing a female audience, and that one of the ways in which women's pictures could accomplish this was to act as "showcases for product display" (255). With female stars "endorsing consumer goods such as cosmetics, fashion, jewelry, kitchen and other household equipment" (Ibid), the relationship between the woman's film *as* a

commodity directed toward the newly 'empowered' female consumer,[31] and its promotion *of* consumerism through the solicitation of femininity, enabled these films to construct women's desires in a consumerist direction. In effect, what women are being sold by make-over films is an image of femininity embodied by the female star, who, through product consumption - be it textually explicit or abstracted from visual codes such as make-up, wardrobe, etc., and/or consumer tie-ins - is able to achieve the lifestyle the make-over's ideology recommends as desirable.

The mutually signifying relationship of the female star as both subject of, and object for, consumption (in terms of both product endorsement and her commodified image on the screen) makes the women's picture particularly suited to commodity discourse. In its solicitation of desire, the women's picture invites the spectator to "witness her own commodification, and... to buy an image of herself insofar as the female star is proposed as the object of feminine beauty" (Doane: 25). Mary Ann Doane argues that such a relationship contributes to a narcissistic proximity between the spectator/consumer and image/object to be consumed.

> Narcissism confounds the differentiation between subject and object and is one of the few psychical mechanisms Freud associates specifically with female desire... Having and appearing are closely intertwined in the woman's purportedly narcissistic relationship to the commodity. (31)

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[31] While female consumerism was steadily on the rise since the late nineteenth century, it might be seen to have reached its highest peak between and after World Wars I and II. Changes in the social sphere, effected primarily by the wartime entrance of women into the work force, and the ever-increasing creation of new products, allowed for women's work to be increasingly identified in terms of consumerism. See, for example, Pam Cook's 'Melodrama and the Woman's Picture,' p. 255.

Women's magazines and the women's film acknowledge this relationship and play it to their advantage, addressing woman both as consumer and as potential object of desire/consumption. By working on the same principles which have historically positioned women in terms of their saleability on the marriage market, these films and magazines can be seen to narrate a particular brand of femininity, one attainable through the purchase of commodities. The make-over theme, then, is an especially effective device for the interpellation of the spectator's desire for femininity as it is represented by the heroine of the transformation film.

Further, the make-over can be seen as the locus of, and may provide a paradigm for, female consumerism by making explicit the connection between use of the 'correct' products and female desire, security, autonomy, etc. Women's social power, achieved only in part through participation in the work force, is here, as in the women's magazine, redressed as *buying* power. Bodily autonomy, symbolically representing economic autonomy (as well as desire and pleasure), is promised as the outcome of the feminized articulation of the commodified self. This transaction is ultimately negotiated in terms of what has been construed as "the gaze." Specifically, it is the heterosexual male *look* that women are being conditioned to solicit which is believed to confer desirability, social approval, and represents, therefore, the telos of the make-over. The images of 'before and after,' understandable in terms of what Mary Ann Doane conceives as 'being and appearing,'[32] rely on the element of 'having,' or product consumption, guaranteeing the desiring male look and all it

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[32]Being correlates to the before image. Appearing is how she might look - the after image - if she is able to *have* the correct products. What could otherwise be a marked distinction - a gap - between subject and object is thus covered over.

confers. Unlike the images in fashion magazines which situate the reader in close and intimate terms with the image on the page, the image on the screen allows for the insertion of male desire as both narratively and visually medial. This does not, of course, evacuate all of the homoerotic possibilities inherent to the fetishized construction of the female body for the female spectator. It does, however, enable a multiplicity of identificatory possibilities. That is, the spectator vacillates between identification *with* the heroine and desire *for* her through identification with the desiring male look. Metamorphoses, then, are always depicted in terms of a woman's improved position *vis-à-vis* the male look, and hence, male desire.[33]

If, as Doane suggests, "commodification presupposes that acutely self-conscious relation to the body which is attributed to femininity" (31), these films frequently depict a woman who, in some way or another, is stigmatized by her looks. In identificational terms, the viewer's own critical gaze, evoked during the 'before' sequence of the films, is sublimated into what Robert Goldman calls a "self-policing narcissistic gaze" (108). Visual identification with the before image works in much the same way as advertising by exploiting what has been called the "social self;" that part of one's identity which is defined by the opinions of others and which determines whether or not s/he is 'worthy' of being loved. The viewer is then persuaded to identify with the

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[33]While the films are directed toward women, the 'male gaze' (which is, in Lacanian terms - from which it has been borrowed - a misnomer) is thematized in the text of the film and has the effect of stimulating desire in the spectator to command the same attention. Here is perhaps where the tie-in with female desire can best be abstracted as one of those "moments of self-creation, when [the character] is the agent of her own desire" (Laplace, 1987: 161), and where the desire of the spectator becomes imbricated in the discourse structuring the narrative.

potential of what she herself might *become* if she takes the same steps as the heroine (i.e., commodity consumption).

Irving Rapper's *Now, Voyager* (1942) and Garry Marshall's *Pretty Woman* (1990) nicely illustrate the dual process of identification specific to the make-over and the narrative representation of female desire/pleasure/self-worth, etc., as dependent on commodity consumption and its promise of both self-love and male desire. Likewise, both films manifest many of the features of their predecessor, *Pygmalion* (both the play and the myth), and work to situate the make-over in a narrative direction.

The films chronicle the metamorphoses of Charlotte Vale, repressed and unattractive spinster, and Vivian Ward, crass, second-rate hooker. Both films borrow much from *Pygmalion*, including the representation of female independence as, if not dangerous (in Vivian's case), then at least unhealthy.[34] Furthermore, Vivian and Charlotte are both transformed under the tutelage of an authoritative male figure: in Charlotte's case, by both Dr. Jacquith, her psychiatrist, and Jerry, her lover. Vivian's tutelage is likewise divided between two male figures: Barney, the hotel concierge, and Edward, her (paying) lover. Each, at different times, fulfills different aspects of the Pygmalion function. The archetypal figure of Pygmalion/Henry Higgins is also always identifiable in oedipal terms. That is, the transformation film is equally about feminine rescue fantasies which Freud equated with oedipal desire and competition with the mother for the father's attention. In *Pretty Woman*, one of the first things Vivian reveals to Edward about herself is that, as a child, her mother used to

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[34] While it may be true that Charlotte retains her independence by not marrying, what is significant is that she has nevertheless guaranteed the endless circulation of desire by remaining always neither unattainable nor attained. In this way, Charlotte, unlike Vivian or Eliza, is able to resemble the commodity - in its fetishized form - most closely.

lock her in the attic where Vivian would then fantasize about being rescued by a prince on a white horse. In fact, Vivian's and Edward's relationship is so oedipal, and Vivian so infantalized by Edward, that their love scenes seem almost incestuous. [35] On the one hand, these masculine figures are integral in alerting the heroines to the unsatisfactoriness of their present (before) appearances, and it is with their initially critical gaze that the audience at first identifies. On the other hand, it is this same judgemental gaze which the viewer herself wishes to avoid, and so comes to identify with the self-consciousness of the heroine in her before state.

The 'before' images, which are our first glimpses of Vivian and Charlotte, are revealed to us in fragments, and although the intentions may differ, the effect is ultimately the same. As we are introduced to Charlotte by the voice-overs of her family and Dr. Jacquith discussing her 'condition,' we see her unadorned hands carving an ivory box. Next come her thick legs in opaque nylons and her clunky sensible shoes descending the staircase. When we finally see her from Dr. Jacquith's point of view, we share his surprise - and pity - at her now unified, and decidedly unfeminine, appearance.

Likewise, the first shots of Vivian in *Pretty Woman* are designed to produce suspense as well as anticipation. But unlike the unappealing spectacle of Charlotte Vale, here the parts revealed to us are designed to titillate, albeit in a crass, one might even say, guilty, sort of way. We see her toned buttocks in black lace panties, her taut abdomen as she rolls onto her back, her face hidden from us by a pillow. Close-ups of other fragmented body parts are

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[35]Note also that Vivian's surname is "Ward," which is, in effect, what she becomes in relation to Edward. Likewise, in Mike Nichols' 1988 *Working Girl*, Tess McGill, although she transforms herself largely in relation to the ideal image she sees reflected by Katherine Parker, does so with the help of Jack Trainer (!).

revealed as she outfits herself in the uniform of her trade: black lace brassiere, thigh high boots, mini-dress and cheap jewelry. When we are shown her face, framed by a brassy blonde wig, she is in the process of applying layers of mascara to her already heavily made-up eyes. The surprise we experience in this instance is not because she is unattractive but because, in her excess of femininity, she is vulgar.

The device of delaying our observation of both characters' faces lays the groundwork for the structures of identification to come. As Gold[illegible] notes, "detachment of the face encourages a detached view of the viewer's self as she might be mediated by this attire" (112). Imagining herself as the character in this context produces not a feeling of pleasure for the viewer, but an anticipation of the pleasure to be had when the transformation is complete. This transformation, which we know is sure to come from the marketing of the films and the star system apparatus to the familiar structure of the make-over itself, allows identification yet again, only this time with the perfected image.[36] *Now, Voyager*, for example, was promoted as a "how-to-be-beautiful guide with Davis as the chief instructor" (Laplace, 1987: 141). In fact, the film's tie-in with consumerist activities is so explicit that the press book appealed to potential advertisers to link the title of the film with consumer products and business:

> Window displays in shops catering to femme clientele should be a must in your campaign: Clothing Shops: special windows showing traveling ensembles and accessories - Banner line, 'Now, Voyager, Buy Wisely ...

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[36]The spectator is in a privileged position with respect to the female character. The glamour images of both Davis and Roberts outside of the narrative inform our expectations about the transformation to come. Laplace provides a detailed account of this mechanism and its centrality to structures of identification as well as anticipation.

> Now!' Beauty Shops: for window displays and newspaper ad, 'Now, Voyager, Sail Thou Forth to Seek and Find ... Beauty.' (In Laplace, 1987: 142)

Also important, primarily in *Pretty Woman*, are the shopping scenes. The process of shopping, in which we vicariously participate, plays a significant role in increasing the anticipation of the transformation's conclusive 'after.' Watching Edward watch Vivian as she tries on outfit after outfit, the viewer then comes to consider herself as others may see her; to take stock of herself and determine the areas of her own appearance that may require renovation. As Doane notes,

> The effective operation of the commodity system requires the breakdown of the body into parts - nails, hair, skin, breath - each one of which can be constantly improved through the purchase of a commodity. (31)

As was apparent in *Pygmalion*, the make-over is almost always indicative of some more lofty transformation from sexual or social repugnance to class acceptance and marital desirability. However, the transformation of Charlotte, aside from the transition from undesirable to desirable, is also tied to a more significant psychological transformation. Charlotte's appearance signifies her sickness, and is a "symptom of her neurosis" (Laplace, 1987: 141) brought on, we discover, by her domineering mother who refuses to allow Charlotte to follow the consumerist order of femininity: "What man would ever look at me and say 'I want you' " Charlotte laments to Dr. Jacquith, "I'm fat - my mother doesn't approve of dieting. Look at my shoes - my mother approves of sensible shoes." Clearly, Charlotte knows what is necessary to achieve a

feminine appearance and that the outcome of so doing is to be desired by a man.[37]

The apotheosis of Charlotte's recovery, then, is represented by the cruise/romance sequence. After her partial convalescence at Cascade - Dr. Jacquith's sanitarium - Charlotte has lost weight, no longer wears glasses,[38] and is outfitted in a fashionable ensemble. As other cruise passengers discuss the "pale but interesting" guest whose late arrival is delaying the ship's departure, we see Charlotte's now fashionable shoes and slim legs sheathed in sheer nylons as she steps up the gangplank. The camera holds on the image briefly, and then slowly pans up her body until we finally see her face, now

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[37]The mother/daughter dialectic in transformation films is an area worthy of investigation in itself. In *Now, Voyager* alone, it is fodder for a completely separate study, and would require far too much detail than can be managed here. What is most important, I believe, is the centrality of the rescue fantasy to these films and the antagonism between mother and daughter that it represents. But what is also significant is the way in which women relate to one another through consumerism in these films. In *Pretty Woman*, the shopping scene in which Vivian is rebuffed by two well-heeled Rodeo Drive saleswomen, and then, in effect, rescued from the imprint of their scrutiny by Edward, represents the same consumerist antagonism represented between Charlotte and her mother in *Now, Voyager*. Unlike Vivian, however, Charlotte is not afforded the same dyadic "happily ever after" conclusion, and so sublimates her desire by transforming and commodifying Jerry's daughter, Tina, for his approving (and oedipal) gaze. In her identification with Tina (in her desire for Jerry), while at the same time adopting a maternal role, Charlotte is able to rewrite history by instructing Tina in patterns of consumption and feminine behaviour. In this way, Charlotte is able to be mother and daughter; Mrs. Vale and Tina.

[38]According to Pam Cook, among others, the "woman's ability to see is frequently questioned" (254) in the women's picture and is part of the overall visual code specific to the genre. Poor vision, she suggests, is a symptom of sexual repression and, I would argue, a metaphor for hysteria - hysteria being, in Freudian terms, a rejection of constraining identities. I would also argue that, in this case, Charlotte's improved eyesight following her transformation has to do with her improved visual relationship *vis-à-vis* her own mirrored (Ideal) image as well as her newfound alliance with the approving gaze of the characters on screen and the viewers in the theater. In contrast, however, is *Working Girl*. Once acknowledged for her mind more than her "bod made for sin," Tess McGill begins to wear glasses, and appears, moreover, to need them. This has more to do with the reconstruction of Tess in terms of taste as opposed to sexual appeal - of which, like Vivian, Tess is in excess. Both literally and figuratively, Tess sees things more clearly after she has been made-over. Less naive about, and less trusting of, the corporate world, Tess, interestingly enough, wears glasses only in the boardroom.

subtly made-up, her eyes partly concealed beneath a wide-brimmed hat. Although she has lost weight, plucked her eyebrows and borrowed the 'right' clothes, she has yet to be the object of male attention.[39] While the *mise en scène* may maximize her now desirable appearance, it is not until Jerry recognizes this desirability that we can conclude she is indeed well.

The rest of the cruise segment optimizes her appearance, constantly reinforcing the importance of her new clothes and make-up in relation to Jerry's growing adoration of her. Their first evening together, Jerry remarks on the impression she made standing in the doorway waiting for him, and proceeds to compliment her on her wardrobe. Charlotte is still self-effacing, however, and it is not until Jerry confesses his love for her that Charlotte's metamorphosis is confirmed. As Maria Laplace observes, "Charlotte cannot gain her sanity without clear-cut male approval; she must be seen, desired and pursued as a sexually viable woman" (145).[40]

After the cruise Charlotte returns to Boston not only self-assured, but also socially and sexually desirable. The other passengers and cruise director reinforce the transformation commending her on her popularity, and her niece,

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[39]Charlotte has borrowed (not bought) the various ensembles she wears on the cruise from Renée Beauchamp, replete with instructions on what to wear with what and when. Here is yet another example of the importance of female mediation in feminine consumption. It is also significant to note that the name (which Charlotte also 'borrows') ,"Renée" means "reborn" in French, and the surname, "Beauchamp," means "beauty camp." Further, Charlotte's borrowed name, aside from signifying her own metamorphosis, appeals to our equation of Frenchness with style and good taste.

[40]The heterosexual specificity of consumerism, insofar as it encourages the continuation of the heterosexual specular structure, is set up early on in the film when Jerry asks Charlotte to accompany him shopping to buy something for his wife and daughters, and to thank her, he buys her a bottle of perfume. Inspired by the appeal to her femininity, Charlotte rushes to her room to try on the dress she has brought for dinner. In *Pretty Woman*, the consumerist scenario is established when Vivian questions Edward about his marital status. "Do you have a wife... a girlfriend," she asks. "I have both" he replies. "Where are they? Shopping together?" she quips, confirming the necessity of male mediation (be it his desire or his credit card) in the negotiation of self-commodification.

June, formerly her tormentor, now becomes her admirer - "You look simply gorgeous, Aunt Charlotte! I love your new dress," she gushes. "Can you ever forgive me?" The feminized commodification of appearance, then, would seem to promise romance, popularity, and self-confidence making possible the panacea of male desire.

In *Pretty Woman,* Vivian's metamorphosis is not necessary because she is undesirable, but because she is desirable - and available - to too many men. Vivian's clothes signify her profession and indicate not an illness which must be cured, but a set of values which must be restored. Just as Charlotte wasn't always undesirable, Vivian wasn't always a hooker. Clothes, the film shows, interpellate who we are, from what we do (or don't do) for a living, to how we think. This is indicated when Vivian reproaches Edward after returning from a polo match where Phil Stucky, Edward's friend and lawyer, has tried to solicit Vivian's services. Newly attired in an elegant shift after a shopping spree on Rodeo Drive, Vivian asks, "Why did you make me get all dressed up? ... If you were going to tell everyone I'm a hooker, why didn't you just let me wear my own clothes? In my own clothes," she explains, "when someone like that guy Stucky comes up to me, I can handle it." The fact that she is offended by Stucky's advances indicates that Vivian's change of clothes has also made her reconsider her values. Although after the argument she asks for the balance of what Edward owes her, she doesn't take it. Even more importantly, she attempts to leave, no longer content to remain with him as a prostitute. This is a significant moment in the narrative, and it consolidates Vivian's transformation, justifying in turns Edward's love for her and her now acceptably repackaged desirability/femininity.

In order for the sale of femininity and, indeed, the discourse of consumerism, to be effective, it is important that Vivian and Charlotte be aware of how they are regarded by others, and that they be ashamed enough by their appearances (or demeanours) that it is not only necessary to their happiness, but imperative to their 'health' that they change.[41] Both women are aware of their appearances from the outset, and both know that the kind of looks to which they are subjected do not bestow approval. Charlotte is so sensitive to what Laplace calls her 'deviant femininity,' that she can barely speak, and she frequently cloisters herself in her room so that others needn't be subjected to her spectacle of ugliness nor she to seeing it reflected in their gaze.

Vivian, on the other hand, experiences quite a different gaze. Condemnation is due not to a lack of sex appeal, but to a vulgar excess of it. This is almost entirely related to wardrobe, but also to her crass manner and garish make-up.[42] Outfitted in a hideous blue and white haltered mini-dress, platinum wig, high-heeled thigh boots and gaudy make-up, Vivian looks almost

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[41] In this context, I use the word 'health' quite literally, both in reference to Charlotte's psyche, and to the very real dangers faced by Vivian as a prostitute. Aside from the threat of AIDS, consider the opening of the film where Vivian, on her way to work, walks past a group of police officers examining the body of a murdered prostitute. Vivian, although she walks on, cannot avoid looking, imagining herself, as we imagine her, ending up the same way unless she gets off the streets.

[42] This is also true of Tess McGill, and of Thelma and Louise in what has been considered an anti-make-over film. Sharon Willis (1993) suggests that *Thelma and Louise* works against consumerism and feminine masquerade by putting an "ironic spin on 'before' and 'after' pictures" since the women "strip down to tee-shirts, cast[ing] off all accoutrements of glamor" (124). I thoroughly disagree with this assessment since, like Tess and Vivian, Thelma and Louise are originally caricatures of femininity. The so-called 'after' image which Willis considers to be a challenge to conventional femininity is, in actuality, complicit with it: Thelma and Louise are, in keeping with a 90's aesthetic of health and 'natural' looking beauty, tanned (all that riding around in the convertible) and, importantly, they are still made-up, only now in subtle and neutral shades. What Thelma and Louise have really done, then, is learned how to use cosmetics so as to look as if they have not used them.

obscene in Edward's luxurious, tastefully decorated penthouse suite, and embarrassingly out of place along Rodeo Drive. "People are looking at me," she self-consciously complains to Edward as they embark on their shopping spree. Afterwards, however, dressed in a cream coloured suit with accessorized handbag, shoes and hat, she offers herself unabashedly to 'the gaze,' and is rewarded by the approving looks she receives.

The frustration of the visual image up until this point is necessary to the continuation of the narrative - the desire to gaze upon the spectacle of the 'after' prefigured by the spectacle of the 'before' - while bolstering the extra/cinematic message of consumerism. This does not mean that the viewer immediately engages in an imaginary identification with the heroine as soon as she has been commodified.[43] The female spectator is lured to images of other women in the women's picture and in women's magazines by the possibility of occupying a position of critical assessment. At the same time, the spectator's vulnerability as potential object of assessment is also addressed. She is simultaneously seduced by the chance to engage in the voyeuristic activity to which she herself feels exposed, and to imagine herself as she would have others see her. In both *Now, Voyager* and *Pretty Woman,* the viewer's identification is divided between the pleasure of owning the judging/desiring male look, and the desire to be owned by it. Moments of consumerist agency where the woman believes she will take pleasure by turning herself into a sight for someone else's pleasure converge with those instances where the heroine is transformed and her femininity legitimated by the approval and desire of a

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[43]Imaginary identification, it should be remembered, corresponds to the jubilant assumption by the child that the image s/he sees reflected in the mirror is indeed 'her/himself.' In the instance of the 'after,' the spectator sees, in the image of the transformed heroine, an image of herself as she *would like to see it* reflected back at her.

man. Vivian remains a prostitute until Edward's love completes the metamorphosis made possible in the first place by the transformation of her appearance. Charlotte, although she looks better, is not well until her beauty has secured Jerry's love. Ironically, the woman's desire to please is inverted to appeal to her desire for pleasure herself: she is led to believe that she will achieve power (social, sexual, etc.,) as well as take pleasure, by turning herself into an object - a spectacle - for someone else's pleasure. This is the ideology of the make-over; it is what sustains the consumerist project which invented it and feminine dependence on a culture which cannot survive without it.

Conclusion

Avon in the Amazon: Culture of the Make-over

> Back in Tenetehará, Pinheiro is finding out that the Tembé are just not interested. She shows some of the tribeswomen Red Temptation lipstick, but they are unimpressed. "We have that," says one. "It's *urucu*." *Urucu*, it turns out, is a greenish nut with a red core - and for the Tembé it fulfills the same function as Red Temptation. Finally, Marrioca, the village chief, takes a whiff of Cool Confidence deodorant and immediately detects it: "*Nekatu!* [bad]." He politely tells Pinheiro, "This may be good for you, but not for me. I like the way I smell." Undaunted, Pinheiro shares a lunch of chicken and rice with the villagers then one of the tribesmen rows her back upriver. There her air-conditioned car awaits her. Somewhere out there, she knows, are jungle dwellers who need a make-over and are willing to pay for it.
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> "Lotion Voyage: An Army of Avon Ladies Takes Cosmetic Change to the Amazon Jungle." *People Magazine*, February 14, 1994.

The reason this anecdote strikes us as bizarre is the stark contrast between contemporary capitalist culture and the so-called developing world.

The absurdity of "Avon in the Amazon" throws into relief the way in which western culture can be characterized as, first and foremost, a culture of consumption.[44] This is due, of course, to the fact that the effective functioning of capitalism requires the endless stimulation of desire through the creation of new products, or, new markets. *People Magazine* suggests that it is in "such rural Third World areas [as Amazonia] that Avon, the huge New York City-based cosmetics company, is enjoying its greatest growth" (68). It should also not escape us that a company such as Avon, long famous for its line of products appealing almost exclusively to female consumers, would seek to create a market amongst native populations: there is, of course, a long history of the feminization of indigenous cultures by western colonizers.

Indeed, colonization has always couched its own agenda of transformation, of making over the native 'other' so as to construct and institute a standardized western subject(ivity).[45] Our contemporary fascination with the make-over is not far removed from this structure. The make-over is offered as a remedy to "deviant" or unacceptable subjectivities, and heralds itself as liberating, if not empowering. As has been discussed throughout this project, consumption, and by implication, transformation, is offered as a means of self-(re)creation. It promises at least the appearance of bodily autonomy. Indeed, as Anne Friedberg (1993) notes in *Window Shopping*, "the historical relation between feminism and consumerism...(made emphatic in Stanton's rallying cry: "GO OUT AND BUY")" might be seen to offer feminist

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[44]The Avon lady in the Amazon's humourous potential is to provide the basis for a soon to be made movie by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/United Artists (*Edmonton Journal*, Friday, July 7, 1995, A5).

[45]This becomes particularly insidious when we consider the legacy in our own country of the brutal treatment of Aboriginals in Catholic (and Protestant) boarding schools in the colonial attempt to "make-over the Indian."

theory an alternate way of viewing consumption (118). Instead of theorizing female consumerism in terms of ideological coercion and condemning its pleasures as guilty ones, the impermanence of cosmetic transformation might alternately be seen to offer women access to the construction of a multiplicity of selves. As a consequence, the make-over might provide a form of critique: women can pick and choose from a variety of identities which can be worn as easily as cosmetics.

But what of more radical modes of transformation? What of plastic or cosmetic surgery where the body is subjected to a permanent make-over? In many cosmetic procedures, the dominant cultural aesthetic becomes literally and indelibly marked on the body of the subject herself. Kathy Davis (1995), in her study of cosmetic surgery, recounts a particularly disturbing presentation at a conference given by the Dutch medical faculty on body image and identity. The presentation consisted of a slide show of "before and after" pictures to explain how negative body image can be effectively diagnosed as a medical problem in order to justify a procedure, or 'remedy,' as drastic as surgery. Importantly, the pictures were of a young Moroccan girl who wanted her nose done. The doctor cited examples of other "second-generation immigrant adolescents who were getting harassed at school for having noses 'like that,' " and who, as a consequence, had "developed feelings of inferiority" (2). The doctor then concluded that he had "stumbled on a new syndrome and, being an enterprising scientist, he immediately gave it a name: inferiority complex due to racial characteristics" (ibid). Like the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons who, in 1983, discovered the "disease," micromastia

(small breasts),[46] there is a disturbing tendency to pathologize the female body in comparison to an ideal representable by the (for the most part) caucasian and impossibly curvaceous supermodel whose image is plastered on the pages of women's magazines.

Another radical, albeit less permanent, transformative phenomenon has been the wide distribution (as well as cultural currency[47]) of Prozac, an anti-depressant. While there are, indeed, individuals who suffer from severe and clinical depression or SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) who likely benefit greatly from Prozac, there has also been an abundance of writing recently on the haphazard distribution of the drug. Here we have a transformation of personality, a make-over of the patient's emotional/psychological responses. Renowned as being a drug which produces unusually happy subjects out of its users, Prozac might be seen as the ultimate commodity. But isn't this also the goal of psychoanalysis?

Psychoanalysis provides a theoretical model of transformation . As I have shown in my summary of the mirror stage, the process of subjectivization is not unlike that of the make-over. As a clinical practice, the goal of psychoanalysis, by transforming the analysand from one, usually dysfunctional, mental state into another, more socially workable one, is to provide the analysand with an illusory identity; a subject position from which to negotiate other subjects in culture/ideology. As Lacan (1977) admits, "the analyst teaches the subject to apprehend himself [sic] as an object; subjectivity is

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46 "There is a body of medical information that these deformities [small breasts] are really a disease" (The American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons cited in Faludi, 1981: 217).

47 cf. Elizabeth Wurtzel's best-selling gen-x novel *Prozac Nation.*

admitted into it only within the parentheses of the illusion" (90). What psychoanalysis attempts to do, then, is make the subject complicit with (and answerable to) culture as it exists. As a side-effect it also makes her/him susceptible to interpellation by the various discourses which sustain that culture.[48] In this, psychoanalysis converges with Marxist theories of interpellation, where consumerist discourse encourages the subject to "apprehend herself as an object" to be adorned and transformed through the purchase of commodities. Both, in a sense, work to ensure the subject's place in the society which sustains and creates her/him.

I have stressed the impact of the make-over on the construction of feminine subjectivity and desire under patriarchal capitalism throughout this work by highlighting a sampling of make-over discourses addressed primarily to women. A larger project, for example, might expand its parameters to include a discussion of how the make-over might be considered in relation to masculine subjectivity. In chapter one I pointed toward the idea that make-overs for men might be characterized as bolstering homosocial as opposed to heterosexual relations. It would be interesting, therefore, to examine the cultural manifestations of the masculine make-over from men's magazines to male make-overs in films. It might be argued, for example, that in *Pretty Woman*, Edward is made-over just as completely as Vivian. His, however, is not a make-over in terms of appearance or consumerism - although he does dress less conservatively in the end - but more in terms of his improved status *vis-à-*

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[48]This is not, however, to discount or discredit the great benefits offered by psychoanalysis, nor to jump on the Deleuzo-Guattarian bandwagon which, in its reduction of mental illness to cultural resistance, has railed against psychoanalysis for stoking the machine of capitalism. All of this is to say that, in the end, psychoanalysis has no choice but to work in the interests of culture as a whole if it is to help the analysand survive there.

vis other men. That is, Edward decides, at the end of his week with Vivian, that he will no longer tear things down, but build them, and elects to co-own the shipyard with Bellamy (his oedipal surrogate) whom he had originally intended to bankrupt. "At the risk of sounding condescending," says a fatherly Bellamy to a paternally deprived Edward, "I'm proud of you." Edward's transformation from destructive corporate raider to a sensitive and constructive member of society has assured him the approval and admiration of a respected peer.[49]

This project's main intent has been to outline the centrality of the make-over to the construction of feminine subjectivity and desire, and to offer possible theoretical approaches to it. Still, there is much work to be done. Make-over films for women, for instance - of which I have only scratched the surface - are in abundance, and alone could provide material for an entirely separate study. Furthermore, aside from magazine make-overs and the "before and after" photographs used in the promotion of almost everything from diet aids to home renovation products, talk shows such as Oprah Winfrey and Jenny Jones frequently devote programmes to making over guests who write in with (apparently) compelling reasons as to why they should be transformed. Evidently, the make-over is great entertainment. This "make-over madness"[50] thus suggests how commodity-based transformation is central to our culture, and can indeed be regarded as a metaphor for the operations of late consumer capitalism as a whole. As such, the make-over plays a crucial role in the ideological interpellation of individuals as subjects of discourse.

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[49]Other male make-over films (among many) include Mike Nichols' *Regarding Henry* (1991) and Barry Levinson's, *Rain Man* (1988) both of which work along similar lines as this one.

[50]Such is the title of *Allure*'s January 1995 editorial introducing the reader to an entire issue devoted to a multitude of make-overs

Ultimately, then, we are faced with a set of related contradictions. First, as I have argued throughout, the pleasures of consumption/self-transformation for women are available only at the cost of their self-abnegation, of accepting the presumption of their 'deficiency.' In other words, the pleasures of consumption hinge on the precondition of personal displeasure. The second dilemma is one long familiar to cultural and feminist studies: how do we reconcile acknowledging the pleasures of consumption with our critical analysis of consumerism's ideological participation in sustaining a world of masculine privilege? This is, of course, a question far beyond the scope of the project at hand, and will have to remain unanswered, at least for now. What is needed in the meantime may be a rethinking of pleasure and desire: a transformation (a make-over, if you will...) of the ways in which they are conceptualized. If the key to feminine subjectivity is to be found in Barbara Kruger's dictum, "I shop, therefore I am," then clearly, this issue deserves our sustained attention as an area central to the study of culture and the place it provides for women.

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