SEX AND THE GARDEN: REPRESENTATIONS OF EVE IN POSTFEMINIST POPULAR CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Biblical scholars have paid considerable attention to the reception history of the Bible in film, art and music. Advertising, however, remains a neglected area of research in biblical studies. Popular culture is a fertile ground for research into the cultural reception of biblical figures, and the biblical figure of Eve is the most frequently represented of them all. She is especially prominent in postfeminist advertising from 1990 onwards because she embodies the *Zeitgeist* of the postfeminist era. Eve functions as a postfeminist icon for female consumer power, advertising cosmetics, clothing and food, almost always to a targeted 18-34 year-old female consumer. Despite the postfeminist pretensions of contemporary Eve advertising, the imagery of female sexual empowerment employed in popular culture, I argue, merely recycles old stereotypes of woman as temptress.

This thesis seeks to make a contribution to the study of Bible in popular culture by analysing representations of Eve in advertising and film. It compares nineteenth-century representations of the *femme fatale* with contemporary postfeminist advertising images of Eve and 1960s filmic representations of Eve with contemporary Eve films to show that, even after two waves of the feminist movement, the image of Eve as sexual temptress has not changed but rather remained constant. The thesis investigates the ongoing appeal of Eve as a cultural symbol, and asks to what extent the predominant popular cultural image of Eve has its seeds in the biblical text, and what it is about the biblical text that lends itself to appropriation by those who wish to exploit Eve's cultural meanings.

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SETTING THE SCENE

> Why the hell should we care what a bunch of depressed, deluded, dead men said about a woman who never existed?
> Julie Burchill, 'All About Eve All Over Again'[1]

> It is far more difficult to murder a phantom than a reality.
> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*[2]

> The burden of a tale that for thirty–five hundred years has taught women where they came from and what they're made of is not going to be shrugged off lightly in two decades.
> Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*[3]

This thesis is a contribution to the reception history of the Bible. Despite considerable attention to the reception of the Bible in film, art and music recently, advertising has continued to be a neglected area of study for biblical scholars.[4] Advertising, however, is a fertile ground for research into the cultural reception of biblical figures, and the biblical figure of Eve is the most frequently represented of them all. She is especially prominent in the postfeminist advertising (produced from 1990 onwards) that is treated in this thesis.

Eve, in the style of all truly great cultural icons, embodies the *Zeitgeist* of the era: already Western society's premier *femme fatale*, Eve now functions as contemporary popular culture's pin–up girl for postfeminist female consumer power. And she is, it seems,

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[1] Julie Burchill, 'All About Eve All Over Again' in *Guardian Unlimited* (Guardian Newspapers Ltd., January 27, 1999).
[2] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Flamingo, 1994).
[3] Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women* (London: Vintage, 1991), p. 94.
[4] Influential contributions to research into the reception history of the Bible include: J. Cheryl Exum, *Plotted, Shot and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); George Aichele and Richard Walsh (eds.), *Screening Scripture: Intertextual Connections Between Scripture and Film* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 2002); Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans, *Biblical Epics: Sacred Narrative in the Hollywood Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Alice Bach, 'With a Song in her Heart: Listening to Scholars Listening for Miriam', in Brenner, Athalya (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 243-54; Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hollywood Dreams and Biblical Stories* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); Martin O'Kane, *Painting the Text: The Artist as Biblical Interpreter* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2007); Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

everywhere these days, modelling crockery in the place of her traditional fig leaf for Versace, looking ravished for a Lolita Lempicka perfume campaign and, if we go to the cinema, we can even find her advertising a film in which she never even appears.[5] Pamela Norris has recently traced Eve's journey from biblical first lady to the archetypal sexual temptress we see in literature and fine art.[6] What remains unexplored in scholarship (biblical or otherwise) is Eve's ubiquitous presence in Western contemporary popular culture. This thesis seeks to make a contribution to this unexplored territory by analysing representations of Eve in advertising and film. It focuses on examples from 1960 onwards, primarily because, as the major institutions of social representation in modern society, advertising and film are arguably the most influential cultural reflectors and shapers of attitudes and beliefs about gender, sexuality and race.[7]

Because so much material is available on Eve in advertising and film, this thesis will deal almost exclusively with the analysis of white, heterosexual representations of Adam and Eve. The decision to limit the scope of the thesis in this way is not meant to place any greater value on white ethnicity or on heterosexuality but rather reflects contemporary advertisers' primary target: white, heterosexual female consumers. 'Heterosexual and white' is the 'norm' in Western popular culture and the vast majority of representations of Eve thus depict her as heterosexual and white. Sarah Projanksy criticises postfeminist academic discourses for being 'limited [by their] overwhelming focus on white, heterosexual, middle–class women [and sometimes men]'[8] This thesis belongs to the type of postfeminist academic

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[5] In Harry Ramis's 1999 film, *Bedazzled* (20th Century Fox) Elizabeth Hurley plays the character of the Devil in the storyline but represents Eve in the images that advertise the film on billboards and in magazines. See further the discussion in Chapter 4 of this thesis.
[6] Pamela Norris, *The Story of Eve* (London: Papermac, 1999).
[7] Since I call my work, and myself, feminist then it is clear that my study takes a particular political position. Feminism, the representation of women in popular culture, and the representation of women in the most influential literature in Western culture have an effect on my life and on those around me, so I read for my own interests. Every reader does to an extent but some are more self–conscious about it than others.
[8] Sarah Projansky, *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture* (New York University Press, 2001), p.68.

discourse that Projansky criticises for being 'limited,' but in this case the limitation reflects the available data.[9]

Contemporary images of Eve are definitional for women. Indeed, in contemporary Western culture the name 'Eve' has come to be synonymous with woman. How Eve is seen is how women are seen, and her body is the site of her meaning, her power. In other words, Eve's body, as it is portrayed in popular culture, represents the collective bodies of women so that her image in advertising is a reflection of how women are viewed and how they should view themselves, as is illustrated in Chapter 3 of this thesis on advertising images. The archetypal image of the sexual temptress who proffers fruit to a bewildered-looking male and the pseudo–sinister sexual allure of the woman/snake conflation are used in contemporary culture as evidence of women's potent sexual allure. The popular ideology of postfeminist advertising suggests that the ability to attract the opposite sex allows women to obtain power and, the advertisers would have us believe, independence through their devastating effect on men.

What's Postfeminism Got to Do with It?

Since the 1960s and 70s, when the media became increasingly identified as the 'machinery of representation'[10] in modern society and 'an institution of ideological control with the power to construct meaning about the world and represent it to the public in many different and conflicting ways,'[11] feminists began to recognise the importance of popular cultural representations of women in influencing and reflecting societal attitudes to women. The media was criticised by feminist scholars for its representations of women, which seemed wholly defined by male priorities. Scholars of advertising found that women were

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[9] Projansky, *Watching Rape*, p.68.
[10] Stuart Hall, 'Media Power and Class Power' in J. Curran *et al.* (eds.), *Bending Reality: The State of the Media* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p.9.
[11] Vicki Coppock, Deena Haydon and Ingrid Richter, *The Illusions of Post–Feminism: New Women, Old Myths* (London: Taylor and Francis Ltd., 1995), p. 107.

consistently objectified and subjugated in advertisements,[12] and, with the massive social change brought about by second-wave feminism, advertising began to incorporate some of the more profitable aspects of feminism into its images. Before the advent of second–wave feminism, male advertising executives objectified women in visual culture for a male consumer. In contemporary postfeminist advertising, the woman is objectified for a female consumer. In addition, when the model for Eve is a celebrity, she frequently objectifies herself for own agenda and financial gain. For instance, as discussed below in Chapter 3, when the career of TV presenter Anthea Turner began to flag after her affair with the then-married man, Grant Bovey, she chose to boost her publicity in a campaign where she posed as Eve, complete with serpent and apple. TV presenters Zoe Ball and Gabby Roslin posed for similar shots to change public perception of them from children's TV presenters to 'sexy' stars for an adult rather than children's audience. Postfeminist advertising does not so much sell and objectify women per se but has women objectifying and selling *themselves.*[13]

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[12] See Erving Goffman's trailblazing study of gender representation in advertising, *Gender Advertisements* ((London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1979), Judith Williamson's seminal work on encoded social messages in advertising, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Marion Boyers Publishers Inc. 2000) first published 1978 and Trevor Millum's pioneering research on the representation of females in 1970s women's magazines, *Images of Woman: Advertising in Women's Magazines* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975).

[13] Carol J. Adams, *The Pornography of Meat* (London: Continuum, 2003); Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *ManifestA: Feminism, the Future and Young Women* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000); Ann Brooks, *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory, and Cultural Forms* (London: Routledge, 1997); Delilah Campbell, 'This Article Degrades Advertisements' in *Trouble and Strife* 35 (1997), pp. 30-9; Sarah Ciriello, 'Commodification of Women: Morning, Noon and Night', in Emilie Buchwald, Pamela R. Fletcher and Martha Roth (eds.), T*ransforming a Rape Culture* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1993), pp.265-81; Vicki Coppock, Deena Haydon and Ingrid Richter, *The Illusions of Post Feminism: New Women, Old Myths* (London: Taylor and Francis Ltd., 1995); Tab Friend, 'The Rise of 'Do Me' Feminism', *Esquire,* February (1994), pp. 48-56; Stacy Gillis and Rebecca Munford, *Feminism and Popular Culture: Explorations in Postfeminism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Robert Goldman, Deborah Heath and Sharon L. Smith, 'Commodity Feminism', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication,* 8 (1991), pp. 333-51; Robert Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially* (London: Routledge, 1992); Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, 'Introduction', in Heywood and Drake (eds.), *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 1-24; Ariel Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (New York: Free Press, 2005); A. Rochelle Mabry, 'About a Girl: Female Subjectivity and Sexuality in Contemporary "Chick" Lit Culture', in Suzanne Ferris and Malory Young (eds.), *Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 191-207; Patricia S. Mann, *Micro-Politics: Agency in a Postfeminist Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

In postfeminist popular culture, female sexuality represents female power and is the avenue through which women can achieve social ambitions and equality in gender relations. In the images analysed in this thesis, it would seem that some of the aims of feminism are realised: women are in control of their sexuality, so long dominated by men; they enjoy financial autonomy and, far from achieving social equality with men, thanks to the traditional feminine wiles of male manipulation through sex appeal, women have a way to dominate, subdue and control men. Much of the contemporary advertising treated for the purposes of this study appropriates and transforms feminist politics into one handily marketable commodity. The advertisements are selling the concept of female empowerment and sexual autonomy through images of Eve, a postfeminist social construction of femininity. The term 'postfeminist' is used throughout the thesis to describe the ideology in which the advertisements are anchored. Postfeminism has become a buzzword for describing popular discourse since second–wave feminism. Sometimes known as 'third–wave' feminism, postfeminism becomes a slippery term in academia, owing to the distinct lack of consensus as to what the term actually means.[14] The present thesis does not attempt to contribute to a debate about the 'true meaning' of postfeminism, since postfeminism, like feminism, is an umbrella term that encompasses diverse ideologies that share a concern with the representation and attitudes of, and to, women who now have

[14] See Diane Negra's work on the problems of postfeminism in academia, *Perils and Pleasures: Postfeminism and Contemporary Popular Culture* (forthcoming) and also the *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Contemporary Culture* conference (April 2004) co–organised by Negra, Yvonne Tasker and Judith Ashby, which addressed the problematic nature of the term 'postfeminism' for scholars of popular culture. As the conference's Call for Papers explains: 'Some of the most vibrant recent work in media studies research explores the increasing proliferation of popular cultural texts which seek to construct and address women as consumers. The notion of 'post-feminism' has, implicitly and explicitly, been a staple feature of this proliferation, yet there still exists little consensus or clarity about what it really means and what its relationship with feminist scholarship should be. Both within academic and mainstream cultural forums, current definitions of post-feminism are multiple, contentious and often contradictory: for some, post-feminism constitutes a playful and empowering new phase in feminism's relationship to popular culture; for others, it is another means through which feminist cultural politics may be diluted and misappropriated by the mainstream media.'

the rights and (albeit still limited) economic autonomy afforded to them since second–wave feminism became mainstream in contemporary culture.[15]

Some of the many forms postfeminism can take are outlined by Sarah Projansky in her groundbreaking work, *Watching Rape*[16]

- Linear Postfeminism: describes discourses that suggest that postfeminism has supplanted feminism and therefore feminism no longer exists.

- Backlash Postfeminism: defines discourses that do not declare feminism over but retaliate against feminism, in what Projanksy describes as 'antifeminist feminist postfeminism'. Backlash postfeminism offers a 'new' feminism as an improvement on the 'old' flawed feminism.

- New Traditionalist Postfeminism: harks back to prefeminist gender ideals and roles that were supposedly destroyed by the advent of feminism. New Traditionalist Postfeminism and Backlash Postfeminism are very closely linked since they both hold feminism in a particularly negative light and New Traditionalist Postfeminism is, in itself, a form of backlash against the social changes that feminism brought about.

- Equality and Choice Postfeminism: This form of postfeminism credits feminism with the achievement of gender equality and having given women 'choice'.[17] This type of postfeminism sees feminism in a relatively positive light; however, it does suggest that, if women have achieved equity and choice, then feminism is no longer necessary.

- (Hetero)sex Positive Postfeminism: In (Hetero)sex Positive Postfeminist discourse feminism is defined as being inherently antisex. This type of postfeminism is then offered as a more contemporary, more positive, alternative to the other types of feminism. Again, this form of postfeminism does not reject feminism completely, since it relies on aspects of feminism that promise women's independence. In other words, it both rejects feminism on the grounds that it is antisex and embraces it because of its focus on individuality and independence. In most postfeminist discourse of this type men are background figures, featuring only as villains, role models or objects of desire.[18]

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[15] Chapter 2 of this thesis will discuss the illusion of female financial equality assumed in postfeminist advertising.
[16] Projansky, *Watching Rape*, pp. 67–8.
[17] Despite the fact that postfeminist advertisements, and the ones I analyse in this thesis, tend to reflect Equality and Choice and (Hetero)sex positive postfeminisms, it seems that women 'choose' to represent themselves only in the same ways that men have represented them in the past. Has this newfound ability to 'choose' made any difference to women in that case?
[18] A characteristic of the contemporary Adam and Eve advertisements analysed in this thesis.

It is important to recognise the many forms that postfeminism can take, even though not all the forms of postfeminism delineated by Projansky are represented in the material investigated in this thesis. Throughout this study I use the generic term 'postfeminism' to describe the ideologies and attitudes encoded in contemporary Eve advertisements, namely, the ideologies of Equality and Choice and (Hetero)sex Positive Postfeminisms. These ideologies portray female sexuality as irresistible to the rather docile modern man and portray the modern woman as knowing how to make her body work in her favour. The sexually attractive woman can have it all: money, power in gender relations and social superiority among her peers. This thesis exposes the commercial, social and cultural factors that make this postfeminist capitalist image of Eve/ woman so appealing to producers of popular culture and consumers alike.

The Aims of the Thesis

Advertisers constantly recycle images of Eve because she is a cultural icon, easily recognisable to the target consumer, allowing producers of popular culture to exploit the cultural mythology that surrounds her and communicate implicit gender codes to the consumer. In popular culture, Eve becomes the signifier for female sexual temptation as a route to achieving social power.

This thesis is concerned with the predominant stereotype of the sexual female in postfeminist advertising. It enquires into the power dynamics that inform the stereotype. The following chapters will investigate from various angles how the power advertising sells to women is illusory. The empowered New Woman of postfeminist consumer cultures uses her sexuality as a means of gaining power and influence in society. Consequently, postfeminist advertising portrays the male in the images as a victim of the charms of the female and often pictures him as docile, passive or submissive, illustrating the power of female sexuality to strip the male of his traditional role of dominance. Postfeminist advertising simplifies the

sexual dynamics between the male and female to a straightforward transaction of power from the male to the female: the female is empowered through the male's desire for her and the male is disempowered by that same desire. The woman's sexual desire, however, is not part of the transaction. The focus is on her ability to attract the gaze and maintain that attraction through the consumption of, often luxury, cosmetics and clothing.

Another aim of this thesis is to contribute to the dialogue in an area that is very much underrepresented in biblical scholarship: the use of the Bible in popular culture.[19] Until very recently the enterprise of studying popular culture academically has been considered a somewhat trivial pursuit, not taken seriously by those in favour of more traditional academic subjects.[20] However, to create a distinction between subjects that are 'worth' studying and those that are not seems rather artificial and futile and it certainly does not seem a particularly postmodern approach for contemporary academia. Moreover, it smacks of something close to intellectual snobbery. What makes opera a more valid area of intellectual inquiry than hip–hop? Who says that the study of classical art is more worthwhile than the study of advertising? This thesis aims to show that, far from being frivolous and insignificant, popular culture remains an almost untapped area of study for biblical scholars, one that is dense with biblical iconography exploited by the producers of popular culture as vehicles for implicit meanings, qualities and values to be communicated to the consumer.

The reader may consider advertising to be a strange place to find research material for Biblical Studies, and yet the fashion magazine is a rich resource for cultural criticism of the Bible. Analysing contemporary advertising is similar to looking at a collage of images simultaneously reflecting and dictating the ideals, ideologies and iconography that inform the whole of Western culture. The iconography seen in fashion magazines is replicated and

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[19] Although Exum, *Plotted, Shot and Painted;* Bach, *Women Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* and Aichele, *Screening Scripture,* have been forerunners in the analysis of the roles of the Bible in contemporary culture. See also Alice Bach, *Religion, Media, Culture and the Broadband Era* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2004).
[20] See Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989) for a far more comprehensive discussion of the relationship between intellectuals and popular culture.

constantly updated in the most influential areas of popular culture, such as advertising, film, television, popular literature and album covers, all of which teach women and men how to see each other and themselves, how to treat each other and themselves, and how to become their popular culturally dictated dream through the products they consume. Therefore, the fashion magazine, the popular film, the advertisement, together with the biblical text, become surprising sites for the exposure and subversion of the dominant cultural attitudes to gender roles.[21]

The influence of the cultural emblems found in Genesis 2–3 on contemporary visual culture is not, as Athalya Brenner writes, 'on the decline but is still wide–spread',[22] rather, the cultural emblems found in Genesis 2–3 are currently enjoying a resurgence. New advertisements featuring Adam and Eve, and, more popularly, Eve, with her trusty apple and python, are being created and published all the time. These advertisements are everywhere in popular culture. We are bombarded with stereotypes of Eve as temptress and Adam as dupe, so that most contemporary readers' interpretations of the biblical text will quite likely be influenced by these popular cultural representations, even if only at a subliminal level and even if these readers are familiar with the biblical text.[23]

What I am concerned with in this thesis is what aspects of the biblical text are exaggerated in the advertising images? Why? What aspects of the text are downplayed or even ignored? Why? This study, in reading the biblical text in conjunction with its popular

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[21] A very common response to scholarly work on popular culture and in particular advertising is that it 'means nothing' or that it 'isn't meant to be taken seriously' (to take quotes from students of a Bible and Arts class at the University of Sheffield, dedicated to the analysis of the Bible in high and popular culture). The notion that advertising is without ideology or political orientation seems fairly widespread and yet even a cursory glance at the images reveals definite gender roles in the 'story' of the image. Perhaps our way of viewing advertising images and the gender ideologies implicit therein has become so naturalised that it is a difficult task to analyse those images.

[22] Athalya Brenner, 'Introduction' in Athalya Brenner, *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 13.

[23] Cf. Cheryl Exum's comments about cultural appropriations of female biblical characters because, 'What many people know or think they know about the Bible often comes more from familiar representations of biblical texts and themes in the popular culture than from study of the ancient text itself...' In Exum, *Plotted, Shot, and Painted*, pp. 8–9.

cultural interpretations, acknowledges the influence of the text in contemporary Western society rather than its authority. The aim of the thesis is not to reclaim or redeem the text, nor to reclaim or redeem Eve, rather, the aim of the thesis is to consider how Eve's character functions in the temptation story and in popular culture: how is she represented in the text? What themes and motifs are used in conjunction with Eve and what do they imply about her? Are the themes emphasised in popular culture already inscribed in the text? Does the text lend itself to the prevalent popular cultural readings of Genesis 2–3, to the representations of Eve? What in the text gives rise to these ideas? What challenges them? Such are the questions that I want to ask of the biblical text, the advertising images and the films in which Eve is depicted.

This study critiques feminist approaches that have chosen to side-step problematic areas of the text in favour of more 'positive' aspects that more conveniently fulfil the needs of their reading agendas. My aim is not to argue for a 'true' or objective reading of Genesis 2-3—or indeed, to engage in an in-depth study of a text about which so much scholarly literature exists—but rather to show how the cultural tradition of viewing Eve as a sexual seductress, whose sexuality is both her power to influence men and her reason for subordination, has its roots in Genesis 2–3. In contrast to popular cultural portrayals of Eve, some feminist biblical scholars have sought to reclaim, redeem, re-establish or deconstruct Genesis 2-3 for womanly readers.[24] Striving to recover Eve from her cultural status as temptress, feminist critics have scoured the narrative for positive interpretations of the Bible's first woman and her role in the 'fall' of humanity.[25] Whereas popular culture has

[24] For examples of this approach see, Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 72-143 ; Reuven Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender', *Biblical Interpretation 4* (1996), pp. 1-39; Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Helen Schungel–Straumann, 'On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: The History and Reception of the Texts Reconsidered', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 53-76.
[25] For instance, Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* and Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender'.

emphasised female sexuality and exaggerated the role of the sexual power dynamics between Adam and Eve, in contrast, some second-wave feminist biblical scholars have refuted any interpretation of Genesis 2–3 that emphasises sex or sexual relations,[26] while others have suggested that the text, arguably the most influential cultural document for gender relations in Western society, is beyond redemption and attempts to reclaim the text from patriarchy are futile.[27] This thesis does not intend to try to discredit feminist readings of Genesis 2-3 that seek to provide positive re-readings of the biblical material. Such an approach is understandable and even admirable, although entirely unhelpful in trying to understand the story's function and influence in contemporary culture, since interpretations are not created independently of the text, but rather interpretations are created in a mutual relationship of reader and text, where, while the reader's 'extra–text'[28] may affect their interpretation of the text to a certain extent, the text limits or controls the semantic range for the reader.[29]

To illustrate this point, Chapter 1, *Ads and Eve: Reading Genesis 2-3 against Contemporary Advertising Images*, describes how Genesis 2-3 contains encoded gender messages, which need to be decoded and exposed if we want to understand the influence of the biblical text on contemporary popular cultural gender politics. In this chapter, I read the biblical text against contemporary advertising images to argue that, when advertisers make sexual temptation the theme of the story, they are picking up on a theme implicit in the biblical text even though they may exaggerate its importance.

In Chapter 2, *The Never-changing Face of Eve,* I read examples of popular cultural Eve images against her nineteenth century artistic representations to show that not

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[26] Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) and Carey Ellen Walsh, *Exquisite Desire: Religion, the Erotic and the Song of Songs* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).
[27] Pamela Milne, 'The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture: The Implications of Structuralist Analyses for Feminist Hermeneutics', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 146–72.
[28] I use the term 'extra–text' here to describe all the 'baggage' that a reader brings to a text: taking for granted that every experience, book, film etc. to which a reader is exposed, influences their reading of a text.
[29] Milne, 'The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture', p. 171.

only has the image itself remained unchanged throughout massive political, social, cultural and economic change but also the meanings associated with the image have remained constant too. What has changed is the way the image functions in contemporary society: postfeminist advertising promotes a kind of pseudo–liberation for female consumers; it suggests that because women objectify themselves where previously they were objectified, then women are freed from centuries of male control. In doing so, however, advertising posits the female as simultaneously subject and object, and thus this 'liberation', as suggested above, is only half–hearted. Whereas nineteenth-century works of art, in response to first-wave feminism, condemn the New Woman as a threat to social order, third-wave feminism, which is postfeminism, dismisses feminism altogether in favour of female empowerment through the exploitation of women's own sexuality as a commodity.

Chapter 3, *Bad Girls Sell Well: The Commodification of Eve in Postfeminist Consumerism*, examines this phenomenon of postfeminist consumerism. Advertisers use images of Eve as temptress in order to sell to women the ideal of female heterosexual sexuality as a means to obtain power.[30] This chapter argues that the power offered by postfeminist advertising is both illusory and, because of the primary focus on the individual and her choice, is divisive for women so that they are more likely to concentrate on personal consumer choice rather than collectively campaigning to bring about social change to obtain equal pay and to redress the imbalance in child-care; the issues that genuinely affect women's ability to achieve social status and equality.

Chapter 4, *Now and Then: Representations of Adam and Eve in 1960s and Postfeminist Popular Culture*, compares representations of Adam and Eve in 1960s films with 1990s postfeminist films and asks whether the treatment of woman as sex-kitten (1960s) or woman

as harbinger of social change (1990s) is in the final analysis as different as it might seem at first viewing.

This thesis will illustrate how images of Eve in postfeminist advertising and film are used to promote an ideology that focuses on female sexuality and the use of traditional feminine wiles as a means for women to obtain power in a society that, contradictorily, is assumed to already achieved gender equality. Images of Eve, despite their appearance of conventional gender-role subversion, in fact reinscribe traditional roles for men and women, and reflect the gender codes embedded in the biblical text.

CHAPTER 1

ADS AND EVE: READING GENESIS 2–3 AGAINST CONTEMPORARY ADVERTISING IMAGES

With a taste of your lips,
I'm on a ride,
You're toxic,
I'm slipping under,
With a taste of a poison paradise,
I'm addicted to you,
Don't you know that you're toxic?
And I love what you do,
But you know that you're toxic.
Britney Spears, *Toxic*[31]

Heterosexual men, on beholding an attractive female body, insistently divide it into edible parts; for centuries, the female beloved has been subjected to a scrutiny as critical as that of a greengrocer examining the latest crop of apples before deciding whether to buy... It's a striking feature of men's imagery of woman–as–food that it's frequently vegetarian, transforming the object of desire into luscious fruit-like figs and cherries. Men are also happy to think of their female lovers as tender birds of prey but not as creatures with hooves, teeth and a predatory appetite of their own. Whoever heard of a fig - or indeed an oyster – biting back?
Joan Smith, *Hungry for You*[32]

He needed women as mother figures and mistresses and at the same time bitterly resented their power over him.
Patrick Bade, *Femme fatale*[33]

It is well documented that Eve has been the victim of centuries of bad press by interpreters.[34] Traditionally, in art and literature she has been viewed as the ultimate temptress whose predatory sexuality lured Adam into disobedience and out of Eden.

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[31] Although Spears is singing about a man's irresistible sexual attraction being 'toxic' here, in the promotional video she is the one portrayed as the *Femme fatale*. She is depicted in a variety of 'temptress' scenarios, where, in full temptress costume, she kisses various rather ordinary looking men, ultimately feeding poison to the final 'toxic' male in the line. Thus, while the lyrics of the song suggest that a male's kiss is intoxicating, it is a different case in the video, which subscribes to the rather fashionable postfeminist attitude that a sexually attractive woman exercises, or is capable of exercising, enormous power over the male. In the video it is her kiss that is the toxic 'poison paradise' and not the man's. Britney Spears, *Toxic* (Bmg, 2004).
[32] Joan Smith, *Hungry for You* (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 85.
[33] Patrick Bade, *Femme fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women* (New York: Mayflower Books, 1979), p. 24.
[34] See Norris, *The Story of Eve*, for a comprehensive guide to the many religious and literary interpretations of Eve as temptress. See also Elizabeth K. Menon, *Evil By Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006) for analysis of *Femme fatale* Eve imagery in French popular sources from 1885-1910.

Figure 1. 1: Promotional Poster for Rock Band Evadne's Album Released in 2002

As the image above illustrates, contemporary advertising perpetuates the age-old reading of Eve as the embodiment of desirable sin and emphasises the sexual nature of Eve's transgression. In many images, as in the one above, Adam is not even present; we, the viewer, are supposed to take his place. These images are aimed at a female consumer, who is expected to adopt the position of male to assess herself. John Berger's comment about painting is applicable here:

> *Men act* and *women appear*. 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. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.[35]

In contemporary Eve imagery, in contrast to the literary and artistic representations of Eve in the past, female self-objectification has become the basic tenet of postfeminist popular

[35] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), p.47 (italics his).

culture. Advertising that targets young women promotes a form of power that is centred around female sexuality, its manipulation and its objectification to the benefit of women, who will, advertising suggests, gain social status and power in gender relations from attracting the gaze. This is in contrast to more traditional images of Eve, which have denounced her for being a *Femme fatale* and a temptress. Postfeminist popular culture attempts to turn what was once viewed as a negative (images of Eve as temptress) into a positive message of self-empowerment for young women.

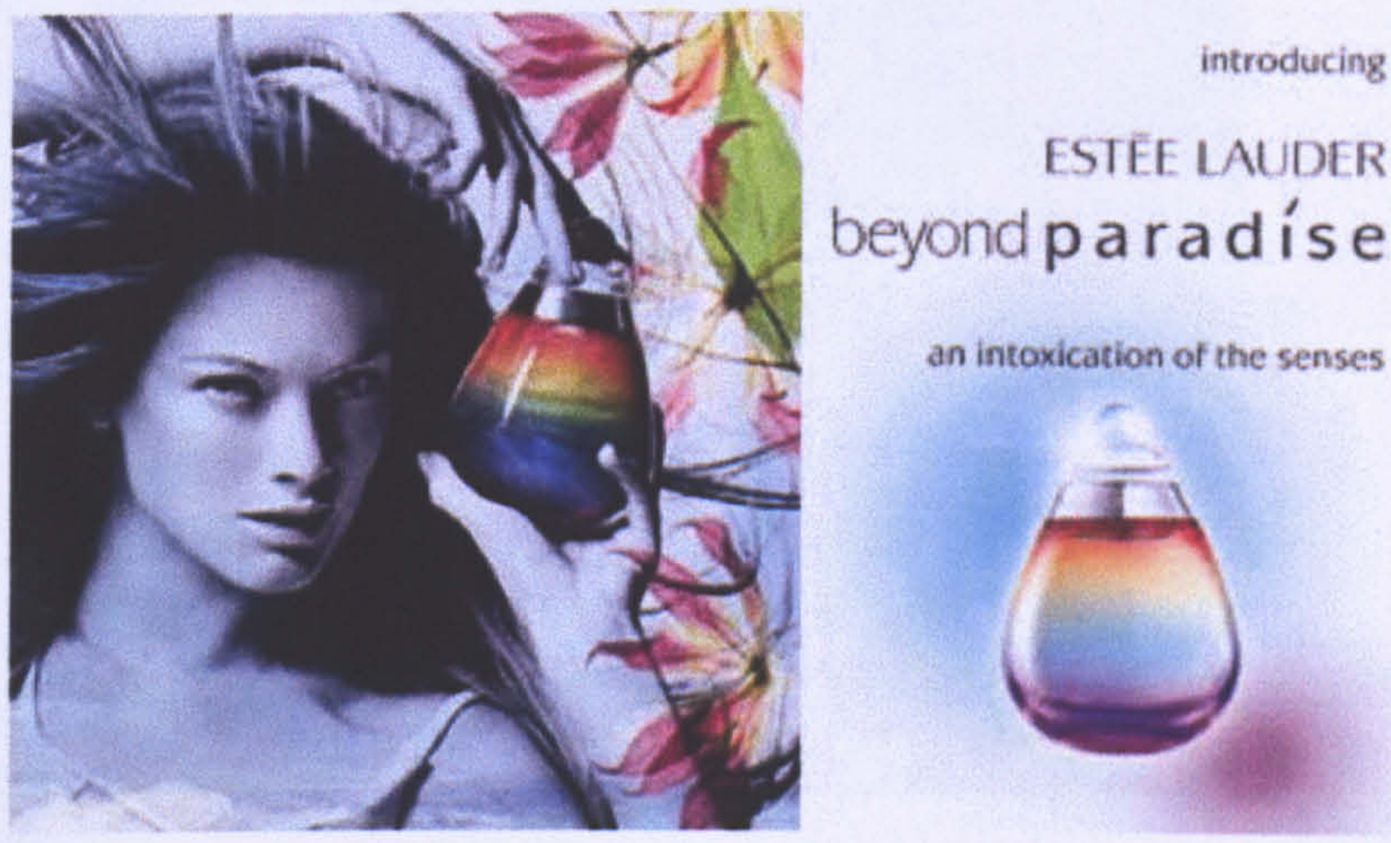

Figure 1.2: Print Advertisement for Estee Lauder, *Beyond Paradise* Fragrance, *InStyle* Magazine, 2004

The image above, an advertisement for Estee Lauder's *Beyond Paradise* fragrance, is a further example of an advertisement where Adam is absent from the transgression scene. Here the viewer becomes Adam but, instead of being tempted into transgression by Eve, we are tempted into purchasing 'an intoxication of the senses'.

In contrast to the active and engaged Eve, who tempts Adam and the consumer with her often naked body and proffered apple (it is almost always an apple in advertising, or a bottle shaped to resemble an apple), Adam, on the occasions when he is included in the image, is usually depicted in a state of 'licensed withdrawal'. Licensed withdrawal, a term coined by sociologist Erving Goffman in his groundbreaking analysis of 1970s

advertisements, *Gender Advertisements,* refers to this technique as one that advertisers use to distance a character from the action in an advertisement, to remove them from responsibility for the action, by having them look away from both the viewer and the active figure in the image.[36] Licensed withdrawal allows advertisers to make a one person appear child-like, thereby giving the impression that another character in the advertisement has the higher social status and greater responsibility for any action taking place.

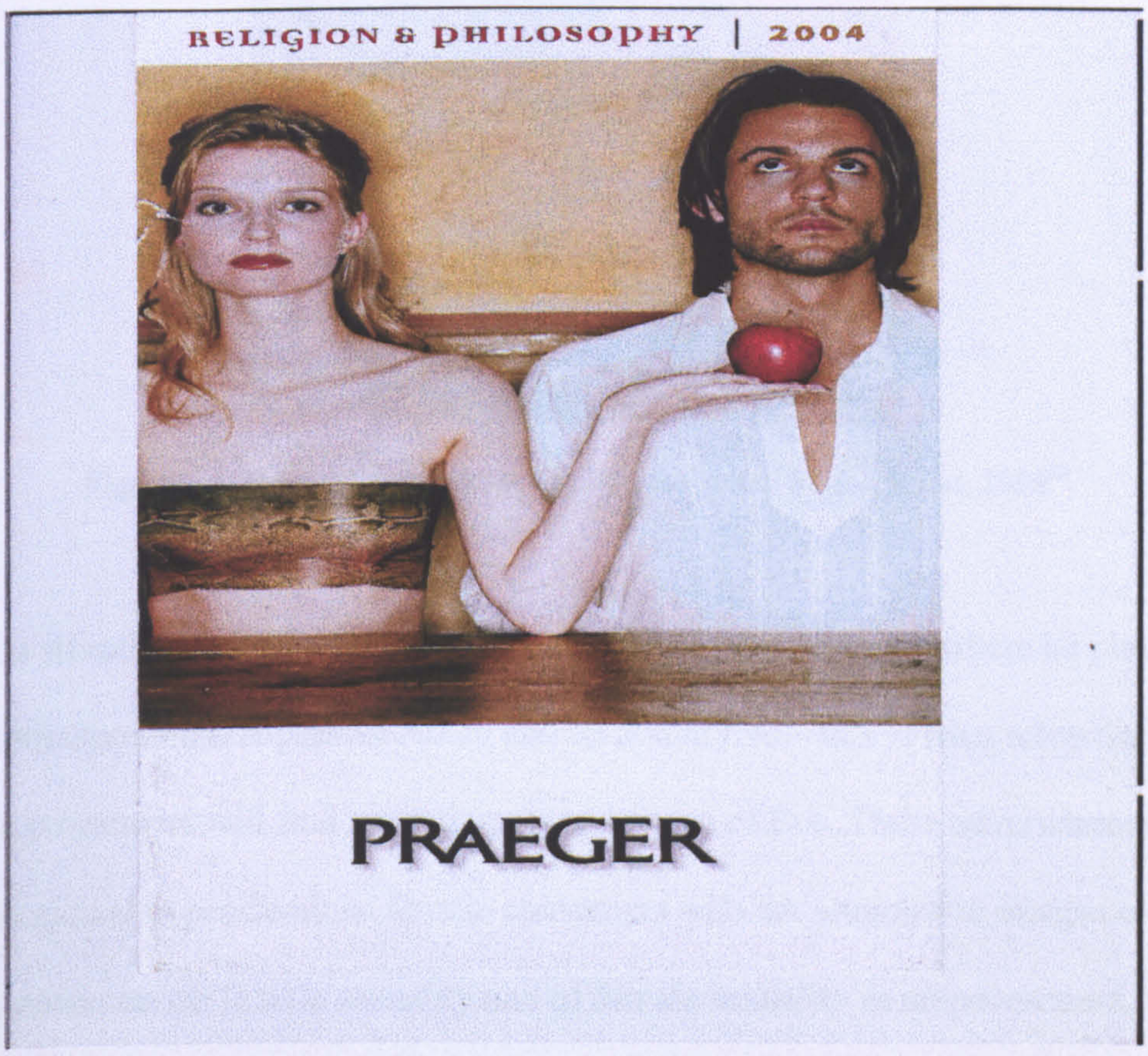

Figure 1.3: Cover of Praeger Press Book Catalogue, 2004 (Greenwood Publishing Group)

In the case of Adam and Eve, it is Eve who is given the lion's share of the blame for temptation taking place. But unlike women in traditional advertisements, who are usually shown in a state of licensed withdrawal,[37] Eve is simultaneously given the higher social status and responsibility for the transgression episode. If Adam is engaged in the action in the

[36] Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).
[37] See Cortese, *Provocateur*, pp. 33-34 and Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, pp. 57-83.

picture, he will be looking at Eve, whom he appears to find irresistible, but Eve is always pictured as unaware of him, and, without fail, stares back at the viewer, returning our gaze.

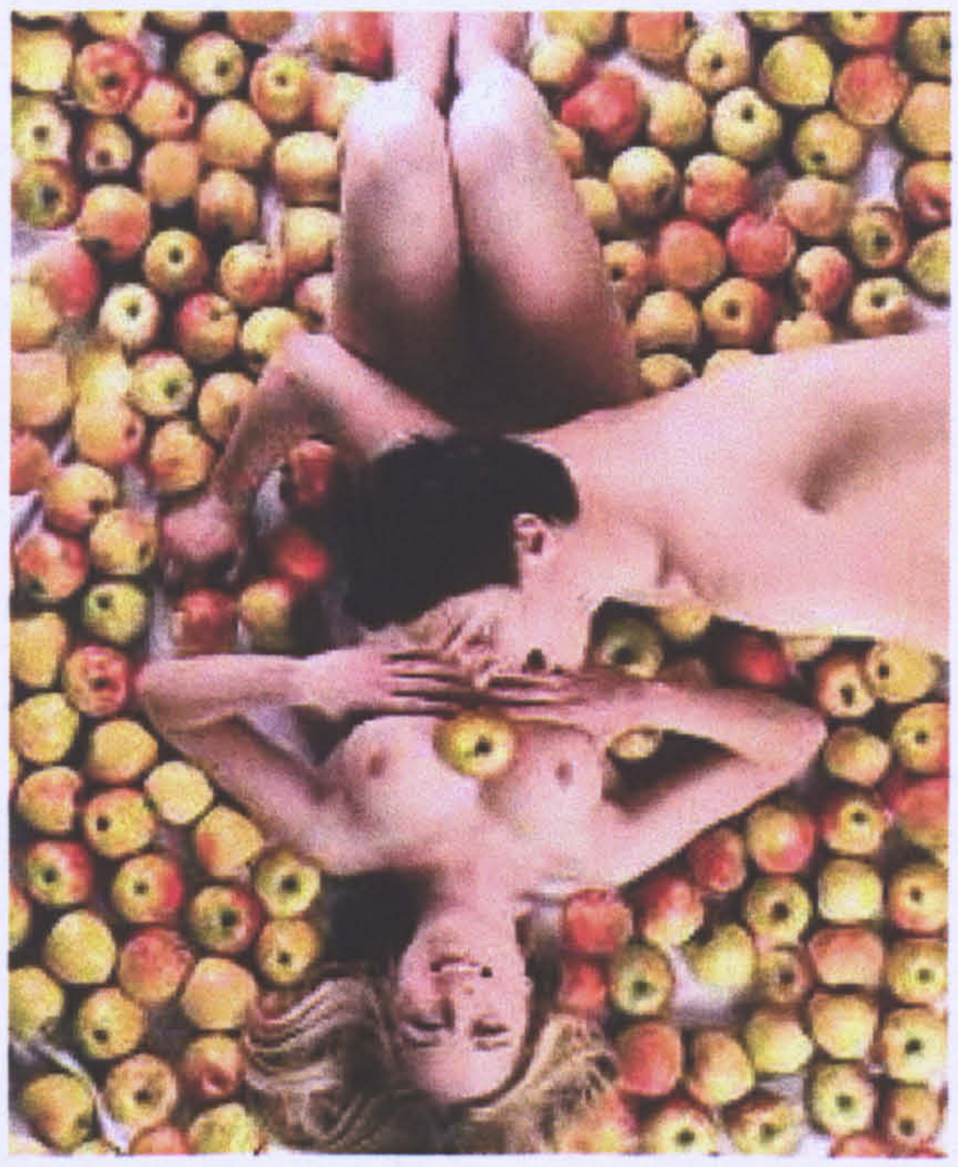

Figure 1.4: Promotional Release for *Bibelkalender*, Stefan Weist, 2005[38]

This situation recalls his lack of narrative presence in the text, where he plays a small role in the transgression. A passive Adam and an active Eve – this is what advertisers hope that female consumers will find appealing about images of Eve. These advertisements are designed to appeal to postfeminist female consumers who are attracted to images of apparently autonomous female sexuality and of female sexuality as empowerment, sexuality not just unfettered by male domination but sexuality that dominates. Women are offered the opportunity to buy the power to influence men through the consumption of material goods.

In spite of the analyses of biblical scholars such as Phyllis Trible[39] and Reuven Kimelman,[40] among others who have attempted egalitarian readings of Genesis 2-3, the

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[38] Stefan Weist was forced to remove the order form from his website promoting *Bibelkalender* because he sold out of all his stock of the calendars depicting naked biblical figures after a Reuters report on the Bible calendar had been distributed across the globe, along with the website address. The calendar, created by the youth group of the Lutheran congregation of Katzwang as a fundraising venture, also features a naked Eve in church, a bare-breasted Delilah cutting Samson's hair, Rahab waiting in the doorway of a motel room, King David as a Peeping Tom in a sauna and Salome wearing a thong and body paint instead of the seven veils.
[39] Trible, 'A Love Story Gone Awry', in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp. 72-143.

traditional perception of Eve as sexual temptress shows no sign of dwindling appeal for the consumer. Aside from the efforts of many feminist biblical scholars there are few challenges outside academia to the traditional reading of Eve's character, and, since she has evolved into a cultural icon, it is unlikely that she will ever break free from her mould. After all, Eve is quite a money-maker, and so long as she can bring in the revenue she will be out there in cinemas and magazines with her trusty apple and snake to lure in the consumers to take a bite of whatever product she is selling.

Genesis 2-3 is popular with advertisers because it offers the opportunity to explore and exploit contemporary heterosexual gender roles and the distribution of power in sexual relations. In particular they pick up on the image of woman as sexual temptress.[41] This has been for centuries the popular interpretation. This chapter will be asking whether the predominant popular cultural reading of Eve has its seeds in the biblical text, and what it is about the biblical text that lends itself to such an interpretation.

Can we dismiss centuries upon centuries of interpretation of Eve as a temptress responsible for the 'Fall' of humanity by introducing sin and evil into the world as so much mis-reading? Schungel–Straumann would have us do so.[42] She argues that the woman and man are equal in the biblical text in spite of the patriarchal context in which the story was created and that 'women have to reclaim this gender equality of image and power from traditional and historical interpretations through a return to the text.'[43] Schungel-Straumann argues:

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[40] Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender', pp. 1-39.
[41] I will analyse and critique the function of Eve imagery in advertising in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.
[42] Schungel–Straumann, 'On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3', p. 53–76.
[43] This is how Athalya Brenner summarises Schungel–Straumann's conclusion in the Introduction to *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* p. 15. Schungel–Straumann's suggestion that readers can 'reclaim' gender equality through a return to the text seems to ignore the fact that the responsibility for interpretation does not lie with the reader alone. Meaning is created in the interaction between the text and the reader; while it is certainly possible for multiple interpretations to arise from one text, it is also likely that a text will give rise to very similar interpretations since the semantic field of text is relatively limited, as Pamela Milne comments: 'Placing the locus of meaning so completely within the reading subject leads me to ask whether it matters if a reader is reading the Bible or Ku Klux Klan literature. If the text does not limit or control the semantic range in any way,

> Why could these narratives be used to make women responsible for humankind's sin and evil? There were two major stages leading to this: the first was the interpreting of the Fall in such a way that the woman's role in it was seen to be greater then the man's. The second was the generalisation; *one* woman equals *all* women.[44]

On the contrary, one could argue that traditional interpretations have been perpetuated in Western culture because the woman's role in the transgression episode *was* greater than the man's and Eve *does* represent womankind in the text, just as she does in advertising. Genesis 2-3 serves didactic purposes and one of them is to suggest the danger of a woman allowed to have authority.[45]

Carey Ellen Walsh also argues that mainstream traditional interpretations of the text, following Augustine, were plucked from the air and certainly not from the biblical text:

> Augustine managed to link desire, sex and shame in a slam dunk of guilt–inducing interpretation. The biblical problem, of course, is that desire is the only element mentioned in the text. Sex is nowhere evident, and shame is a rather strong inference to draw from the couple's new-found awareness of their nakedness.[46]

But could one not argue that Augustine and many who followed him were picking up on hints, suggestions and meanings latent in the text? It is difficult to maintain that there is no sex in this text or that centuries of misogynist readings alone are to blame for Eve's bad reputation and the sexist treatment meted out to generations of women. For instance, contrary to Walsh's argument, shame is not 'a rather strong inference to draw from the couple's new-found awareness of their nakedness' but a perfectly logical one. Before the transgression the couple are naked and not ashamed (Gen. 2:25). After the transgression their eyes are opened. They know they are naked and therefore sew fig-leaves together to cover themselves (3:7).

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then surely we should not worry about such things as hate literature since only those readers who are already committed to anti–Semitism, racism, sexism or anti–feminism will read hate literature as hate literature. I do not think any text, biblical or not, contains "real meaning" but rather that texts put constraints on the range within which meanings are constructed.' Pamela J. Milne, 'The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture: The Implications of Structural Analyses for Feminist Hermeneutics', in Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, p. 170–71.

[44] Schungel–Straumann, 'On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3', p. 55.

[45] I am not suggesting that the only didactic purpose of the story is to warn of the peril of women and is certainly not that the story is only about the danger of female sexuality. What I am suggesting is that these readings are entirely plausible and that the text lends itself to androcentric interpretation.

[46] Walsh, *Exquisite Desire*, p. 153.

This seems to indicate that the pair are ashamed of being naked, whether the shame they feel is shame in front of each other or before God, as Fewell and Gunn conclude,

> The man and the woman know nakedness and shame (Genesis 3:7, 10–11; cf. 2:25). The knowledge of sexual difference brings shame in its train. Sex and shame. That association, however, primarily serves the interest of the party wanting sexual control – that is, men who want to control women's sexuality.[47]

The couple go from being naked and unashamed before the transgression to the realisation that they are naked and covering that nakedness after the episode. Shame is an interpretation of what motivates Adam and Eve to cover themselves after they recognise nakedness after previously being 'naked and unashamed'.

I do not share the confidence of scholars such as Trible and Kimelman that Genesis 2-3 is an egalitarian text. This is not to say that an egalitarian reading of the text is not possible. It can even be quite persuasive, as David Clines comments in his criticism of Trible's analysis of the text;[48] however, there are many reasons not to view this text as egalitarian. Popular culture knows it is not egalitarian, and the imbalance of power in the text is exactly what leads advertisers to turn the tables on traditional male dominance in the story and re-read it as female dominance, the subjugation of the male through irresistible female sexuality. Moreover, one could argue that male dominance is a thread that runs through the biblical text even before the transgression in Genesis 3.

It is Not Good For the Man to be Alone

God creates a companion for the first human being, referred to in the text as *ha'adam*, because, God decides (the man has nothing to do with it), 'it is not good that *ha'adam* should be alone' (2:18). What is the nature of this companion? The answer to this question depends upon what one understands to be the nature of *ha'adam*. Is the first creature sexually

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[47] Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, p.26.
[48] David Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), p. 29.

undifferentiated, androgynous or male?[49] Scholars such as Trible, Kimelman and Bal have argued that *ha'adam* describes a sexually undifferentiated earth creature, whereas others, such as Clines, Lanser and Milne have argued that *ha'adam* refers to a male.

Trible's argument that *ha'adam* is an earth creature is based on the premise that, although the grammatical gender of the word is male, the term does not refer to a male, but is a generic term for humankind. Thus she translates *ha'adam* as 'earth creature'.[50] God creates a woman from part of this earth creature and what remains is a man. After the woman is created, what was once a marker for humanity without sexual differentiation now becomes a sexual reference for the male, and the couple is referred to as the *ha'adam* and his woman. This is a weakness in Trible's argument. After the woman is created the *ha'adam* says 'she shall be called woman (*'ishshah*) because she was taken out of man' (*'ish*). For Trible's argument to be convincing, one would expect the story from this point on to refer to the 'man' (*'ish*) and 'his woman' (*'ishshah*) but the text refers to them as *ha'adam* and his woman (*'ishshah*). The repetition of *ha'adam* after the splitting of the sexes suggests that the 'earth creature' was, in fact, male after all. In favour of Trible's argument is the fact that at the end of the story, in 3:24, we are told that God drove the *ha'adam* out of the garden. Here we must assume that *ha'adam* refers to the man and the woman; otherwise the woman would still be in the garden.

Susan Lanser offers a persuasive argument against Trible's thesis that the earth creature is sexually undifferentiated by applying speech-act theory to the biblical text:

> This understanding of language implies that meaning is created not only by decoding signs but by drawing on contextual assumptions to make inferences. That is, every act of understanding relies (unconsciously and sometimes also consciously) on complex rules and assumptions about social and cultural behaviour and language use ... within such a

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[49] Trible is at pains to point out that the first creature is not a sexual being and thus distinguishes between a sexually-undifferentiated creature and an androgynous being. Contemporary scholars have tended to follow Trible in arguing for a sexually-undifferentiated being as opposed to one that is androgynous, that is, both male and female. This distinction is not particularly relevant for the debate, since the key-point is whether or not a male is created first and a female later.

[50] Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp. 79-82

> framework communication is a function not only of signifiers but silences; meaning is not coextensive with words on–a–page but is constituted by the performance of the text in a context which teems with culture–specific linguistic rules that are almost never articulated.[51]

Taking into account the social and cultural context within which a text is created and read, Lanser concludes that the original audience would have understood the first creature to be male.

> When a being assumed to be human is introduced into a narrative, that being is also assumed to have sexual as well as grammatical gender. The masculine form of *ha'adam* and its associated pronoun will, by inference, define *ha'adam* as male. I am not suggesting that one cannot read *ha'adam* as a sex-neutral figure; I am saying that readers will not ordinarily read Genesis 2-3 in this way. Gendered humans are the unmarked case; it is not *ha'adam*'s maleness that would have to be marked but the absence of maleness.[52]

Lanser's argument, unlike Trible's, takes into account the patriarchal culture in which this text was written. It is unlikely that a patriarchal text disavow patriarchy by promoting egalitarianism.

As the many biblical scholars involved in the *ha'adam* debate have found, there is no way to prove conclusively either that the term refers to a male or to a sexually undifferentiated earth creature. The answer to this question, however, has little bearing on the argument of this thesis. My contention is that regardless of whether humanity was egalitarian at the start of the story, by the time the woman is created the hierarchy of genders is implied in the text through the woman's role of helper and her absence of voice in Genesis 2, both of which will be discussed below.

I Will Make For Him a Helper Fit for Him

It is God who decides that the *ha'adam* — and from this point I will be referring to him as the man — should not be alone. After it transpires that none of the animals is a suitable helper, God creates a woman from the side of the man. Does her creation from the man imply

[51] Susan Lanser, '(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden: Inferring Genesis 2-3', *Semeia* 41 (1998), p. 70.
[52] Lanser, '(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden', p. 70.

subordination? For centuries this is the way it has been understood. Trible, however, argues that the term 'helper' in Hebrew (*'ezer*) does not imply inferior rank, as the term does in English.[53] She argues that the term is neutral, God in the Bible is referred to as a helper, and he is superior to humans. The animals in this story are helpers and they are inferior to the man. Central for Trible's argument is her understanding of the preposition *kenegdo*, traditionally translated 'fit for him', as meaning 'corresponding to him' and implying equal rank. This rather begs the issue, for regardless of how we translate the preposition, a problem remains with the meaning of the word helper.

As David Clines shows, the term 'helper' is not a helper in the sense of a 'companion' or a 'partner' that is an equal.

> What I conclude, from reviewing all the occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, is that though superiors may help inferiors, strong may help weak, gods may help humans, in the act of helping they are being 'inferior'. That is to say, they are subjecting themselves to a secondary, subordinate position. Their help may be necessary or crucial, but they are *assisting* some task that is already someone else's responsibility. They are not actually *doing* the task themselves, or even in cooperation, for there is different language for that.[54]

Another male could have been created to be the man's helper. Why, asks Clines, should a different sex be created for this role. What does Eve do to help? The answer, as Clines persuasively argues, is that the woman is created to help the man with procreation. As Clines observes, 'this view of Eve's helpfulness also explains the narrative's emphasis on nakedness, on the man cleaving to the woman, and on their being one flesh.'[55] The man recognises her as the 'right' helper because she is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2:23), and, consequently, a man will leave his parents so that he can have a can have a sexual relationship with his woman. Eve is created as a sexual partner for Adam, and even Kimelman cannot rescue her from her lot when he suggests:

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[53] Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 88-89.
[54] Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?* pp. 30-31.
[55] Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?* p.35.

> Chapter 2 explicitly states that the splitting of *ha'adam* comes to resolve the problem of loneliness, a problem more likely to be resolved by a counterpart than a helper. This role for woman also matches the part she plays in ch.3, a part that resembles more that of male complement than that of helper in any subordinate sense.[56]

Kimelman fails to explain why it was necessary to introduce another sex if Eve is made only solve the problems of Adam's loneliness. Moreover, Eve is not presented as a counterpart to the man in the narrative, but as his supporting act. The Church Fathers, it seems, were not far off the mark with their interpretations. The seeds of the idea that the function of woman is as sexual mate to man are already sown in the text before the transgression takes place. After the transgression the punishments or consequences reinforce the gendered roles assigned to the couple. Adam still has the task of working the ground and Eve remains child–bearing vessel and sexual partner for Adam:

> To the woman he said,
> 'I will greatly increase your pangs in
> childbearing;
> in pain you shall bring forth children,
> yet your desire shall be for your husband,
> and he shall rule over you.'
> And to the man, he said,
> 'Because you have listened to the voice
> of your wife,
> and eaten from the tree,
> about which I commanded you,
> You shall not eat of it.
> Cursed is the ground because of you;
> in toil you shall eat of it all the days
> of your life;
> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth
> for you;
> and you shall eat the plants of the field.
> By the sweat of your face
> you shall eat bread
> until you return to the ground,
> for out of it you were taken;
> you are dust,
> and to dust you shall return.'
> (Gen. 3:16–20)

The punishments do not serve to change Adam and Eve's prescribed roles by bringing disruption to the 'harmony and unity' seen in Genesis 2 as Trible argues,[57] but

[56] Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender', p.16.
[57] Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp. 115-139.

instead serve to make Adam and Eve's assigned social roles more difficult. Adam is associated with the ground from which he was taken while Eve is associated with the body and sexuality. Eve was taken from Adam's body to fulfil a sexual function and her punishments echo both her origin, by linking her with the body again, and her social function as sexual partner to Adam: she will be subjugated by him but will desire him and her body will feel great pain because of her sexual function, or, as Clines wryly observes:

> It is also clear that God regards Eve as primarily a child–bearing creature ... after the sin of the couple he does not punish the woman by threatening her with demotion to intellectual inferiority or by rendering her incapable of keeping up interesting conversation with her partner, but he most severely punishes her by promising to make the one thing she has been created to do difficult for her ... just as Adam will find his work as farmer painful, so she will find hers as mother. [58]

The man's punishment is preceded by the statement, 'because you have obeyed the voice of your wife,[59] and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, "you shall not eat of it"'. This information comes as something of a surprise. Nothing was said earlier about 'obeying' or 'listening to' the woman's voice, but clearly, now, the woman is blamed as the instigator of the transgression. It should therefore come as no surprise that she has been blamed by readers ever since. Here the reader learns that Adam should not have listened to the voice of his wife. God gives Adam a sentence of hard labour for his folly of following the actions of his wife. For her part, the woman is subjugated to the man—an extension of the gender hierarchy hinted at in Genesis 2. The encoded message in the text is that women need to be subjugated and controlled by men. The text teaches men that the consequences of letting woman have power are dangerous. Adam is officially promoted in the gender league in a bizarre twist to the tale that sees Adam's elevated social status confirmed and his

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[58] Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?*, p.35.
[59] The typical translation 'you have listened to the voice of your wife' does not convey the force of the Hebrew idiom *shema' beqol*, which is better translated 'obey' (See BDB 1034a).

dominant role amplified.[60] Although it was implied earlier in the text that Adam was superior to Eve, it is now made explicit.

Because You Have Obeyed the Voice of Your Wife

In Genesis 2, far from evidence of parity there is evidence of the gender hierarchy that will be developed in the transgression consequences in Gen. 3:12-24. There can be no doubt that the woman makes a great silent partner for Adam; she gives her crucial support to his 'business' in order for it to be successful but has no active input.[61] In Genesis 2, Adam names all the cattle, the birds of the air and every animal in the field (2:20). He offers his opinion on his new 'helper' when she is brought to him (2:23). He decides what she will be called,

> This at last is bone of my bones
> and flesh of my flesh;
> this one shall be called Woman,
> for out of Man this one was taken.

Eve says nothing. We know that Adam is happy with her, but we do not know what she thinks about Adam or if she is happy with her helper status. Adam has a choice over what, or who, is to be his 'helper', and he refuses all the other creatures, finding satisfaction only with the woman born out of his own body. The woman, however, is given no choice and no voice:

> Upon meeting her new companion, would she have been impressed? Disappointed? Ambivalent? But such possibilities of subjectivity are avoided, suppressed. We might easily infer that were she to have opinions they would not, in any case, matter – not to God, the man, or the narrator. Men can have opinions about women (the objects of male desire: Genesis 2:24), but women's perceptions of men are not important.[62]

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[60] I use the phrase 'bizarre twist to the tale' because it seems odd that the man should be chosen as the superior sex here after his lack of leadership, forethought and action in Gen. 3:1-8. Surely the woman, who displays characteristics of intelligence and action would have been a better choice.

[61] Clines argues along the same lines when he comments: 'Whether the helper is superior or not will depend entirely on other factors, extrinsic to the relationship constituted by the act of helping.' *What Does Eve Do to Help?* p.31.

[62] Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), p. 29.

After Genesis 2, where the woman is more of a supporting act to the man than a counterpart, comes Genesis 3, when Eve suddenly turns into the star of the show. Where has this assertive, outspoken woman come from? This is the episode that popular culture portrays in its representations of Adam and Eve. Eve and her eating of the fruit and her giving of the fruit to Adam brings about a radical change from the final verse of the last chapter, 'And the man and his wife were both naked and not ashamed', to the surprising revelation in chapter 3, 'then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves'. In Gen. 3 Eve is the active character and Adam passive. At the build up to, and the moment of transgression, Adam has no narrative presence, the dialogue and the action is left to Eve. Why should Adam suddenly become silent in the text? Is this the biblical narrator's way of subtly removing him from direct responsibility for eating the forbidden fruit? His role is so small that we discover he is there only in v.6, when we are told 'and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate'. Adam's apparently minor role helps us to understand how popular advertising has preferred an interpretation according to which Eve has a dominant role in the narrative. Eve has the larger role in the transgression episode and, thanks to Adam's lack of presence in the scene, the blame for eating the forbidden fruit is left at her feet. Advertisers accept this picture. But in contrast to the biblical narrator, who portrays Eve's transgression as justification of the subordination of women to men, advertisers turn on its head the notion that Eve's main role in the transgression episode is the cause of her subjugation and depict the temptation as the source of her power and the cause of the man's subjugation instead.

Both humans eat the fruit. They both are both the cause of their expulsion from Eden, but do they both transgress equally, as many commentators would have us think?[63] The narrator, by giving more narrative space to Eve's actions and deliberations than to Adam's,

[63] See Trible, 'A Love Story Gone Awry', pp. 72-143; Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender', pp. 1-39; Bal, *Lethal Love* and Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, pp. 72-94.

implies that she deserves the lion's share of the guilt or blame for eating the forbidden fruit. Leaving Adam without a voice at the crucial moment of the temptation has the effect of making Adam look like a weakling. As readers we should wonder why Gen. 3:1–7 awards so much more narrative space to Eve's actions and deliberations than to Adam's. After all, he was with her, as we discover in v.6, when the narrator finally informs us that, in fact, Eve was not alone during the episode. Why did Adam not speak up and tell Eve that they were not supposed to eat from *this* tree? Why did he not raise any objections or make any comment about what the serpent said? Adam is kept out of the picture until the end of the episode in order to make him look less guilty at Eve's expense.

Advertisers focus exclusively on the moment of transgression, picking up on textual clues to the woman's central role and her guilt. In this advertisement for Versace, for example, Adam is part of the picture, but is disengaged from the situation and from viewer, indicating his lack of responsibility for the episode. Eve, in contrast, makes eye contact with the viewer: she is offering the apple as much to us as she is to Adam.[64]

Figure 1.5: Versace Crockery Advertisement, *Vogue* Magazine, August, 1998

[64] For further discussion of this image and the one below, see Chapter 3 below.

Similarly, in the advertisement below, Eve engages with the viewer while Adam is apparently far too immersed in staring amorously at Eve to notice what is going on.

Figure 1.6: Leeds Victoria Quarter Poster, 2004

It seems that popular culture takes its cue from the biblical text and removes responsibility from Adam, placing it upon a knowing, seductive Eve. How can we blame Adam for buckling under the pressure of Eve's considerable charms?

The text is structured so that it appears that Eve *does* transgress to a greater extent than Adam. He has no narrative presence in the episode except for the passage, 'and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate' (Gen. 3:6), which occurs after Eve has been described talking to the serpent and eating the fruit. Of course, the text contains within it the seeds of its own ideological deconstruction because Eve exposes the vulnerability of those in power. If it is such an easy task to divert the man enough to jeopardise the future of paradise merely by being naked and offering fruit then patriarchy seems, to me at least, to be treading on very thin ice. As David Jobling comments:

> Part of the price the male mindset pays is the admission that woman is more aware of the complexity of the world, more in touch with 'all living.' And finally, at the deepest level of the Text … the possibility is evoked that the human transformation in which the woman took powerful initiative was positive, rather than negative, that the complex human world is to be preferred over any male

> ideal. But these "positive" features are not the direct expression of a feminist consciousness ... Rather, they are the effects of the patriarchal mindset tying itself in knots trying to account for woman and femaleness in a way which both makes sense and supports patriarchal assumptions.[65]

For popular cultural postfeminist interpretations of the biblical story, this vulnerability of male authority to loss of power and status through the irresistible allure of women means that the text is an ideal sales ground for products intended to increase women's sexual attractiveness and, therefore, social power. That is why advertisements tend to portray only the moment of transgression or directly after. The episode of Gen. 3:1–7 is the only passage in the text in which Eve exercises any power and the only passage in which she is afforded a point of view by the narrator. Popular culture, seeking a postfeminist heroine, would not find her in Genesis 2 and certainly not after the transgression, when God metes out the punishments to the man and the woman for eating the fruit.

And She Also Gave Some to Her Husband Who Was with Her

I asked above, with regard to the temptation scene, why does Eve suddenly become so vocal? Alice Bach offers some help here:

> While culinary codes and banquet settings are not found in the majority of biblical narratives, they are important to mark transitions within the life-cycle, alterations in the expected role of a character, or interplays of sexual desire and possible danger.[66]

The point of the transgression, when Eve discusses the fruit with the serpent, fits what Bach says about culinary codes. Eve's taking of the fruit marks the transition from 'naked and unashamed' (Gen. 2:25, which appears directly before the transgression episode in chapter 3) to 'naked and covered' (Gen. 3:7, which appears directly after the transgression episode). Also, since the man and the woman reverse the expected active male—passive female gender

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[65] David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible II* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), pp. 42–43 (italics author's own).
[66] Bach, *Women, Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative*, p.183.

roles for the transgression episode, the eating of the fruit marks the change in the woman's role from silent 'helper' to primary actor and the change in the man's role from an active and vocal character to a passive follower, fulfilling another one of Bach's functions of culinary codes in the biblical text: to mark the alterations in the expected role of a character. This leaves us with 'interplays of sexual desire and possible danger'. Is it a coincidence that fruit is the article of transgression? Is it a coincidence that at the moment of transgression it is a naked woman who thinks for herself who offers forbidden food (fruit no less) to the man? Nakedness may mean many things, among them vulnerability,[67] but it would be a rare reader who would not also associate it with sexuality, especially female sexuality. Not only nakedness but also food is part of the female arsenal signifying sensuality and desire. In addition, food belongs to the feminine domain, and, as such, it is a means by which women can appropriate power from men.[68] For women without access to other avenues of obtaining power, food has been a way to exploit the methods they do have available to them.[69]

Countless readers across the centuries have interpreted Eve's potent female sexuality as the reason for Adam's lack of resistance to Eve's offering him the fruit. There is some basis in the biblical text for such an interpretation. Some arguments have been put forth for understanding the phrase 'good and evil' as a reference to sexual intercourse,[70] though this

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[67] See Margaret R Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Kent: Burns and Oates, 1992) for an extensive discussion on the various meanings of nakedness in Western culture.

[68] Bach goes on to say, 'In the majority of biblical narratives dealing with food, as I read them, the food is seasoned with the sexual power of woman. It is a connection of pleasure and power, a connection that too often leads to death for the man who trusts the offering.' In Alice Bach, 'Eating Their Words', Athalya Brenner and Jan Willem van Henten (eds.), *Food and Drink in the Biblical Worlds* (Semeia 86; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1999), p. 220.

[69] See Stewart Lee Allen, *In the Devil's Garden: A Sinful History of Forbidden Food* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2002).

[70] See Ronald A. Veenker, 'Forbidden Fruit: Ancient Near Eastern Sexual Metaphors', *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vols. 70-71 (1999-2000), pp. 53-73. There's no specific mention of sexual intercourse until 4:1 after the couple has eaten; the verb *yada'* frequently has a sexual meaning; the serpent has phallic significance in the ancient Near East; the scene is a garden, suggesting a fertility setting; there is an interesting parallel in the Gilgamesh Epic, when, after sexual intercourse, the harlot says to Enkidu, 'you are wise, Enkidu, you have become like a god'.

is not the most likely explanation.[71] It is more likely a merismus meaning 'everything' but this is not an entirely satisfactory explanation either.[72] The phrase remains something of a mystery. Regardless of the meaning of the phrase 'good and evil' to describe the fruit, eating the fruit raises the question of a possible relationship between food and sex. Fruit, for example, is used to describe female sexuality in the Song of Songs, and this is a code that has not lost its significance in the contemporary world.[73] The forbidden fruit comes to symbolise sex, as the images below illustrate:

Figure 1.7: Promotional Poster for *Forbidden Fruit* Club Night at Club on the Rocks, London, June 2007

[71] One could assume sexual intercourse from v.2:24; the verb *yada'* in a sexual sense has a clear sexual object; in 3:22 God says that 'the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil', the woman eats first then the man.
[72] Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 55.
[73] See a variety of recent books on this subject for comprehensive enquiries into the food/sex connection in contemporary culture (all of which mention the Genesis 2-3 account as a literary example of this link between food and eroticism). Joan Smith, *Hungry for You* (London: Random House, 1997); Cristina Moles Kaupp, *The Erotic Cookbook* (London: Fusion Press, 2002) to name but a few on this currently very popular topic.

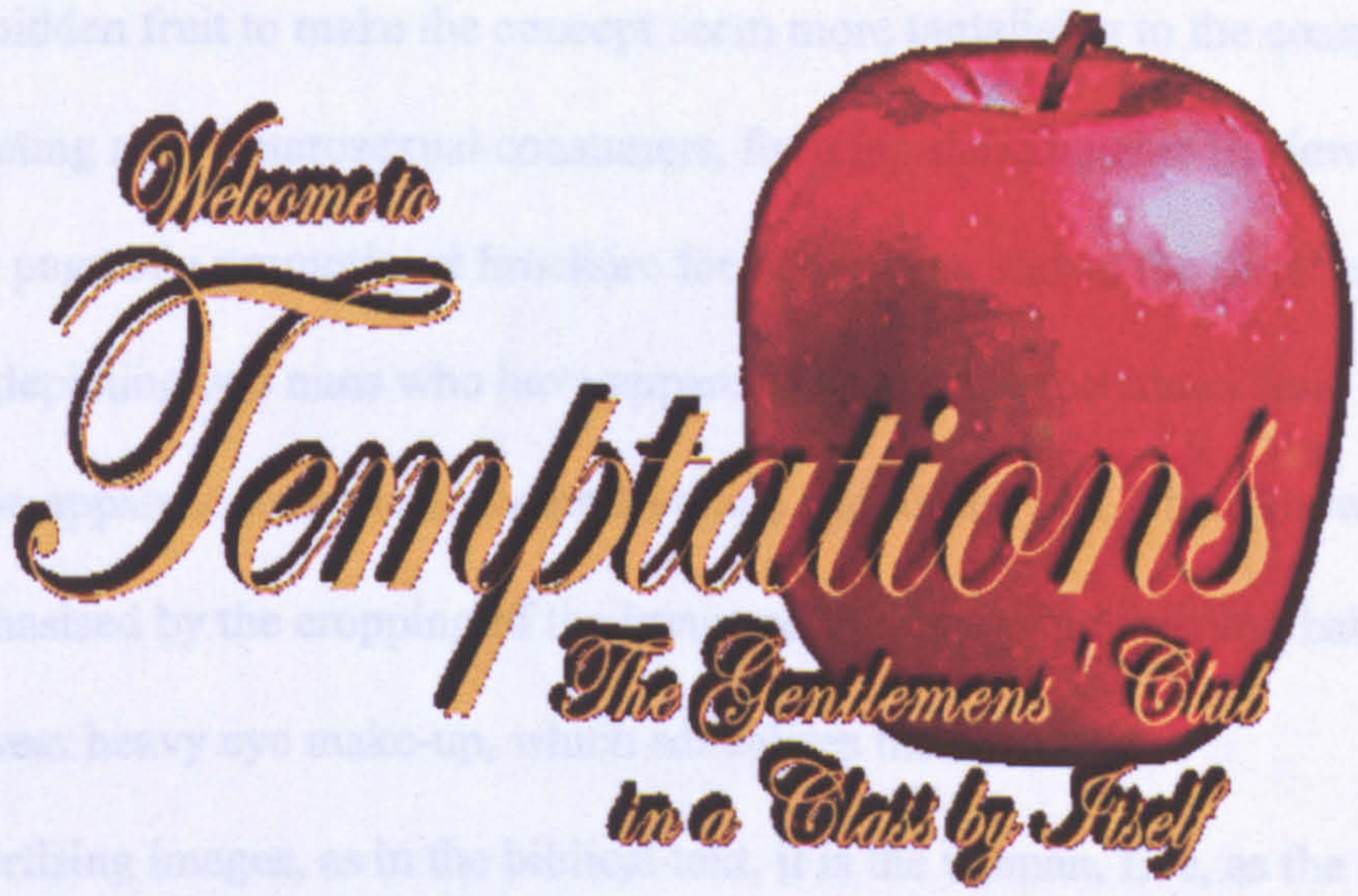

Figure 1.8: Online Advertisement for *Temptations* Gentlemen's Club, February 2000[74]

Figure 1.9: Second Page of Promotional Brochure for *True Religion* Underwear, March 2000

As these advertising images show, it is always female sexuality that is identified with the fruit. The first image is an advertisement for a night at a London night-club venue and features the image of a cropped female body with a red apple at the crotch to signify the forbidden fruit and female sex. The second image similarly associates the promise of female

[74] In this advert for a 'gentleman's club' the apple creates an inoffensive way for the club to advertise its business: the red apple (popular cultural forbidden fruit) symbolises the naked women in the club.

sexuality with forbidden fruit to make the concept seem more tantalising to the consumer. This image is targeting male heterosexual consumers, for a lap-dancing club in New Orleans. The third image, a page of a promotional brochure for underwear, shows the illicit effect of the underwear by depicting two nuns who have apparently eaten the forbidden fruit (associated with the apparent sexiness of the underwear) and turned bad. Their knowing expression is emphasised by the cropping of the image so that just their eyes and habits are visible, and they wear heavy eye make-up, which sexualises them.

In the advertising images, as in the biblical text, it is the woman, Eve, as the one who decides to eat the fruit, who is more strongly identified with the forbidden fruit than the man, Adam. In the popular cultural imagination the temptation offered by the fruit becomes the temptation offered by woman. Women in Western popular culture are constructed as the desired, the object of the gaze, the forbidden fruit pleasing to the eye and displayed for temptation. Popular culture has recognised this aspect of the biblical story long before some feminist biblical scholars began to accept that Genesis 2–3 is an irredeemably androcentric text, and it is this interpretation of the text that advertisers are currently exploiting by turning the story of Adam and Eve's transgression into a postfeminist tale of female victory through influential sexuality. As a result of her starring role in the transgression, and not least due to the fact that the transgression involves a naked woman giving her husband forbidden fruit to eat, Eve becomes a postfeminist capitalist heroine.

Both advertisers and consumers love Eve's assertive, sexy, forbidden fruit-offering character, and, conveniently for advertisers wishing to target the much desired young female consumer market, Genesis 3 can be re-read through a postfeminist lens as a story of female sexuality turning the tables on traditional male dominance: the subjugation of the male through irresistible female sexuality. The fruit is essential to this postfeminist equation; it

represents empowered female sexuality, highly attractive to men but no longer under their control, or so the purveyors of pop culture would have us believe.[75]

Figure 1.10: Print Advertisement for *The Apple Tree* Play, 2003

In the text too, fruit has connotations of female sexuality. This is not to say that the fruit functions only as a symbol of female sexuality, for symbolic meaning is complex. But one can posit a connection between women's bodies and sex in the biblical temptation account. Carey Ellen Walsh makes a perceptive and persuasive case for the deep connection between food and sex in her analysis of the Song of the Songs, [76] a text that has many similarities to Genesis 2-3:[77] 'They [fruit] are symbols of succulent enjoyment, markers of sensual pleasure … fruit gave alimentary pleasure and also came to represent other sensual delights.[78] Furthermore, she observes, 'Horticulture simply and powerfully summons the oral excitement in sexual pleasure, then and now'.[79]

> The excitement of desire is an orgiastic inundation of all our senses with taste at the forefront, and this is why food and sex are so often associated in our imaginings of sensual pleasure. Both food and sex stimulate the mouth and cater to the orality of pleasure. [80]

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[75] See Chapter 2 of this thesis for a discussion of how young women continue to be sexually disempowered in heterosexual relationships despite claims to the contrary from popular culture.
[76] Walsh, 'The Orality of Desire', in *Exquisite Desire,* pp. 114-29.
[77] See Trible, 'Love's Lyrics Redeemed', in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp. 144-65 and Francis Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983).
[78] Walsh, *Exquisite Desire,* p. 117.
[79] Walsh, *Exquisite Desire,* p. 118.
[80] Walsh, *Exquisite Desire,* p. 119.

Curiously, considering the amount of space Walsh takes to write about the function of fruit as a sexual symbol in the biblical text, she fails to analyse the function of the fruit in Genesis 2–3 at all. She seems to undermine her argument for the carnality of fruit as a literary trope by denying that Eve and the transgression have any connection with sex. Despite a long and detailed account of the link between eroticism, sex, fruit and desire, Walsh considers there to be no link between Adam and Eve's eating of the fruit and sex:[81]

> Eve exercised desire for both wisdom and fruit, and this desire was then cursed by being redirected to her husband. That this story came to associate woman and sexuality with sin is a notorious post-biblical development. Eve became the scapegoat for a culture's anxieties about the body, sexuality and women.[82]

If food and sex are closely connected, and if ancient and contemporary readers so readily interpret fruit as 'symbols of sexual delight', then why does this argument not extend to Genesis 2-3 for Walsh? Fruit in Genesis 2-3 represents what is forbidden, nakedness suggests female sexuality and becomes associated with forbidden fruit. From there is a short step for advertisers to adopt an apple as a symbol of sexual temptation on the part of women. The fact is, readers *have* interpreted the fruit as a sexual symbol, whatever the ancient author might have intended.[83]

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a reading of Genesis 2-3 alongside contemporary advertising images of Eve with a focus on encoded messages about gender in both the biblical text and in advertising. In the last fifteen years, images of Eve have become extremely popular in advertising. My research has revealed hundreds of advertisements featuring Eve to sell a wide range of products claiming to enhance a woman's appeal to the

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[81] Walsh, *Exquisite Desire*, p. 129.
[82] Walsh, *Exquisite Desire*, p. 152.
[83] See Smith, *Hungry for You* and Allen, *In the Devil's Garden* for numerous examples of the ways in which women have been equated with forbidden fruit in western culture.

opposite sex. In advertising aimed at the postfeminist consumer, the claim is made that traditional gender roles are reversed. This is not the case. The idea of power that the advertisements sell to women is but a manifestation of the same age-old stereotype of woman as sexual temptress and sexual manipulator that has always been present in visual representations of women.

Eve's presence in advertising is disproportionate to her presence in the biblical text. In the biblical text, Eve is not an equal party to Adam; after her creation she has no power, choice or voice until the transgression, at which point she becomes the active party and thus the one who can be blamed for the so-called 'fall'. The biblical Eve's core role in the transgression serves as a cautionary lesson to readers, warning them against allowing women authority and thereby helping to maintain the patriarchal social hierarchy. Just as the central role Eve plays in the biblical transgression scene serves the patriarchal ideology of the biblical writers, so the contemporary representations of Eve serve the marketing ideology of the advertisers who produce them.

I argue in this chapter that Adam's licensed withdrawal in advertising images reflects his lack of narrative presence in the biblical transgression episode. By removing Adam from the scene, either physically or psychologically, advertisers ensure that the blame for the transgression rests firmly with Eve. This serves their interest to represent Eve to their postfeminist consumers as a powerful agent in the temptation and seduction of the male.

Advertisers reverse the traditional gender roles in the biblical transgression episode where the male is dominant and re-read the story as one of female dominance, and of the subjugation of the male through irresistible female sexuality. This reversal of power relations does nothing to disrupt the stereotypes of gender relations, female sexuality and power that seem to be encoded in the biblical text and that advertisers build on. Thus it is not the case that popular readings of Genesis 3 should be dismissed as mis-readings. As this chapter has

argued, through an analysis of the gender power relations constructed in the text, contemporary advertising images reflect the biblical account of the transgression: Eve's role in the transgression episode *was* greater than Adam's and Eve *does* represent womankind in the biblical text, just as she does in the advertising images.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEVER-CHANGING FACE OF EVE: REPRESENTATIONS OF EVE IN NINETEENTH CENTURY FIN-DE-SIECLE ART AND TWENTIETH CENTURY FIN-DE-SIECLE ADVERTISING

> To enjoy women at all, one must manufacture an illusion and envelop them with it, otherwise they would not be so endurable.
>
> George Jean Nathan, 1929

> The most effective lure that a woman can hold out to a man is the lure of what he fatuously conceives to be her beauty.
>
> H.L. Mencken, 1924

> When Eve knew *in her mind* that she was naked she quickly sewed fig–leaves, and sewed the same for the man. She'd been naked all her days before, but till then, till that apple of knowledge, she hadn't had the fact on her mind. She got the fact on her mind, and quickly sewed fig–leaves. And women have been sewing ever since but now they stitch to adorn bursten fig, not to cover it they have their nakedness more than ever on their mind, and they won't let us forget it.
>
> D.H. Lawrence, 1923

The final decade of the twentieth century saw a revival of interest in the culturally notorious image of Eve, the temptress. Marketed as the ultimate example of the power of audacious female sexuality, Eve embodied the *Zeitgeist* of an era in which postfeminism reigned: 'girl power' was celebrated by the Spice Girls and their fans, 'kick-ass babes' like Charlie's Angels got to hit men where it hurt while sporting various fetish outfits,[84] and little

[84] *Charlie's Angels* (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment UK, 2000) and the sequel *Charlie's Angels 2: Full Throttle* (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment UK, 2003) both directed by McG, were both highly profitable for Sony. Despite being criticised in reviews for objectifying the female characters in the film, thanks to the frequent and lingering camera shots on the body parts of the actresses, the majority of the audience for the films was female and under 30, illustrating that the objectification of women in popular culture is now a way of targeting a young female audience rather than the traditionally male audience that this type of film would once have attracted. The success of the *Charlie's Angels* franchise (the 21st century filmic version rather than the 1970s TV series) with young women prompted the actress Cameron Diaz, who played an Angel in both films, to comment that the film was 'holding a mirror up to women and reflecting who they are now.' Interview in *Glamour*, July 2000 issue.

girls of eight wore T-shirts that claimed 'This Bitch Bites.[85] The last time there was such an interest in Eve was at the end of the nineteenth century when the image was also widespread. It is no accident that there has been a resurgence of popular representations of Eve at the end of the twentieth century because her image has been a particularly convenient symbol for similar social circumstances in each period. Whereas at the end of the nineteenth century images of Eve were ubiquitous in art, at the end of the twentieth-century her image is prevalent in advertising. It is this phenomenon in particular that I want to investigate here because in my view in order to understand the role of Eve in advertising in its relation to her role in the biblical text we need to understand these cultural issues.

This chapter looks at the way that the image of Eve, as sexual temptress, was exploited as a symbol of each era's idea of womanhood for different ends. Detailed accounts of the *femme fatale* image in all its manifestations in either of these eras can be found in important works by Elaine Showalter,[86] Virginia M. Allen,[87] Patrick Bade,[88] Elizabeth K. Menon[89] and Joseph Kestner.[90] Each century's image of Eve reflects the socio-political climate of the time, yet they are remarkably similar. My argument here is that the threat of feminism is a major if not the major social factor underlying the birth and rebirth of the image of woman as *femme fatale*, and that the proliferation of Eve images in each fin-de-siecle is a cultural response aimed at managing this threat by appealing to deep-rooted prejudices about the biblical figure of Eve. A comparative overview of every way in which the social issues of the fin-de-siecle eras of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were

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[85] See Anita M. Harris, *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2004) for a comprehensive analysis the fashion, behaviour and issues of girls and young women in twenty-first century Western culture.
[86] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin-de-Siecle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991).
[87] Virginia M. Allen, *The Femme fatale: Erotic Icon* (New York: The Whitson Publishing Company, 1983).
[88] Patrick Bade, *Femme fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women* (New York: Mayflower Books, Inc., 1979).
[89] Elizabeth K. Menon, *Evil By Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).
[90] Joseph Kestner, *Mythology and Misogyny: The Social Discourse of Nineteenth Century British Classical-Subject Painting* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

similar or dissimilar is beyond the scope of this thesis.[91] Each fin-de-siecle era faced social issues, the most burning of which centred around changes in sexual behaviour and challenges to traditional gender relations, whose impact on the fin-de-siecle societies was increased in intensity by the apocalyptic panic of the end of century. As Elaine Showalter explains in her book, *Sexual Anarchy*, parallels between the two, most recent, fin-de-siecle eras can be drawn, not only in terms of the shared *femme fatale* imagery produced by nineteenth-century artists and twentieth-century popular culture but also in the parallels that can be drawn between the perceived social issues addressed and reflected in this imagery.

In both fin-de-siecle eras the female body is presented as the locus of their respective socio-sexual upheaval. The female and her sexuality were something to be feared. For each era, Eve was the most popular *femme fatale* icon (along with Salome and Greek mythological characters in 1890s art) to represent the socio-sexual climate because she symbolises female autonomy and its dangers. When artists of the 1890s use images of Eve they show her as a source of death and degeneration.[92] In the twentieth century, when the *femme fatale* again became popular, the image of Eve was recycled by translating the older image of misogyny into one of empowerment for today's postfeminist "I'm not a feminist but..." generation. When the nineteenth century artist represented his fear of the 'New Woman' with images of *femme fatale*, animalistic, overtly sexual, temptress women, as a warning of the perils of female sexuality - especially unfettered female sexuality - twentieth century pop culture recycled those images for a society where the 'New Woman' was apparently revelling in her feminine power. Feminism, apparently defunct now that equality has been achieved, is replaced by postfeminism, where female sexuality, once controlled by men is now viewed as

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[91] In addition to the challenges brought by sexual epidemics and feminism discussed in this chapter, parallels in issues of immigration, blurring of racial and sexual boundaries (in respect to homosexuality), and the belief that the perceived breakdown of society was caused by the breakdown of the traditional family unit, can be made between the nineteenth and twentieth century fin-de-siecles; again, Showalter's book on fin-de-siecle, *Sexual Anarchy*, addresses these issues.

[92] For specific examples see below where I compare the 1890 paintings with contemporary advertisements.

in the control of women themselves and the New Woman can have it all: sexual and financial independence, power in gender relations and the body image of your choice.

In this climate, images of Eve represent the ultimate postfeminist. She exercises her power through her female sexuality, which is maintained or boosted though her consumer spending power – the greater the consumer power, the greater the power of her sexuality to increase her social status, or so the images would have today's young women believe. For the postfeminist target consumer, these images of Eve are a celebration of the sexual autonomy and financial independence for which the nineteenth-century suffragettes had fought. The contemporary young female target consumer has more in common with the nineteenth-century woman than postfeminist advertising would have them imagine. Whereas the nineteenth-century had to deal with the syphilis epidemic, in the final decade of the twentieth-century society was reeling from the blow of AIDS. The nineteenth century wrestled with worries of an uncertain future labour economy as a result of the New Woman was making moves to become the Employed Woman.[93] In the twentieth century, the fashion for conspicuous consumerism, soaring house prices, rates of inflation and the cost of living caused widespread insolvency, which created a panic that the Western world was on the precipice of an economic recession. If the Odd Woman of the late nineteenth century was derided for her refusal to fulfil her duty of motherhood, the late twentieth century woman was being castigated by a scare-mongering media, which, in reaction to the sharply rising rates of thirty-plus mothers and of women who far more frequently chose career over motherhood, warned that she was ruining her own life as well as the birth replacement rates of the country.[94] In other words, although the *femme fatale* Eve images recycled from the late

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[93] Actually, the New Woman effect on the job market was minimal to say the least.

[94] Bunting, Madelaine, 'Baby, This Just Isn't Working For Me: Sidelined, Overlooked, Squeezed Out ... The Mothers of Young Children are More Discriminated Against than Anyone Else in the Workplace, According to a New Report', *The Guardian*, 1 March (2007); Crittendon, Anne, *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World is Still the Least Valued* (New York: Owl Books, 2002); Dally, Ann, *Inventing Motherhood: The Consequences of an Ideal* (New York: Shocken Books, 1985); Kaplan, E.A., *Motherhood*

nineteenth-century took on a new, positive message of empowerment for the postfeminist target consumer – claiming that women could achieve the upper hand in gender relations through a potent coupling of consumerism and (hetero)sexuality – the reality of young women's situation was that they were the most likely victims of the things that popular culture suggested were their greatest weapons: money and sex. Far from being autonomous in either area, young women in fin-de-siecle twentieth-century Western society found themselves the new faces of AIDS and bankruptcy.

This situation in which today's young women find themselves shows the postfeminist advertising to be a myth. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries there has been a sharp rise in the numbers of young women infected with the AIDS virus because public health information was, and is, directed at gay men, traditionally considered the 'high-risk' group. The sexual risk being taken by young people of all sexual persuasions is virtually ignored.

The nineteenth and twentieth century fin-de-siecles were characterised by similar apocalyptic social fears, with epidemics of deadly sexual infection (AIDS in the twentieth century and syphilis in the nineteenth-century), worries of urban decay and social degeneration and the threat of the 'New Woman' looming large. Indeed, the New Woman seems to be blamed for many of society's ills, which were often seen as punishment for improper sexual behaviour. The New Woman posed a threat to the stability of the traditional family unit, the breakdown of this family unit being cited as a major factor towards the spread of AIDS and syphilis. Elaine Showalter draws parallels between the two fin-de-siecle sexual epidemics in her chapter 'The Way We Write Now: Syphilis and AIDS':[95]

> Both diseases have provided the occasion for sexual and social purity campaigns and for a retreat from the liberalisation of sexual attitudes. Viewing syphilis as divine retribution for the collapse of sexual and marital boundaries ... Syphilis became an obsessive public crisis at the precise moment when arguments over the future of

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and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama (London: Routledge, 1992); Wallis, Claudia, 'The Case for Staying at Home', *Time*, 22 March (2004), pp. 50-59; Warner, Judith, 'The Myth of the Perfect Mother: Why it Drives Real Women Crazy', *Newsweek*, 21 February (2005), pp. 42-49.

[95] Elaine Showalter, 'The Way We Write Now: Syphilis and AIDS' in *Sexual Anarchy*, pp.188-208.

> marriage, discussions of the New Woman, and decadent homosexual culture were at their peak. Conservaties were quick to seize upon the disease as a weapon in their fight to restore the values of chastity and monogamy; "continence ... became the hallmark of all sexual prescription."[96]

The anxieties over these diseases are symbolised in visual culture, with Eve acting as a representation of sexual transgression and a reminder of the consequences of stepping outside of traditional gender roles. Eve acted in an autonomous manner in Genesis 3 when she discussed the possibility of eating the fruit with the serpent, but her autonomy brought about the expulsion of humankind from the garden of Eden. In the nineteenth century, when gender upheaval and sexual epidemic were at a crisis point, Eve offered a visual cautionary tale against allowing women independence. Just as Eve brought death and suffering to the world so women in the nineteenth century were blamed for social breakdown and the spread of disease. It is no longer the case that Eve offers a visual cautionary tale. Now, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries fin-de-siecle when images of Eve's transgressive behaviour are being celebrated in advertising as 'feminine power', and female consumers are encouraged to enjoy the fruits of their financial and sexual independence. Ironically, the realities of contemporary young women's economic and sexual health, while they are being simply overlooked by the government, are completely ignored by advertisers for obvious reasons – you cannot sell insolvency and disease. Where advertising ignored the problem the media was not much better because if it did give attention to these problems it focused on the so-called 'high-risk' groups, particularly male homosexuals, as part of an ideologically charged push for a return to traditionally defined gender roles and monogamous heterosexuality.[97] The image of Eve, which shows the sexually assertive and confident young

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[96] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p.188.

[97] This 'moral panic' in itself reflects that of the nineteenth century fin-de-siecle, as Showalter describes: 'As we live through our own age of venereal peril, the parallels between syphilis and AIDS seem particularly striking. Elizabeth Fee notes that both diseases can be understood in terms as biomedical or moral: "Both diseases can be transmitted by sexual contact; both can also be transmitted non-sexually. The social perception of each disease has been heavily influenced by the possibility of sexual transmission and the attendant notions

woman, aware and in control of her sexuality, is in sharp contrast to the findings of sociologists and medical doctors such as Janet Holland and others, whose groundbreaking research paper, 'Sex, Gender and Power: Young Women's Sexuality in the Shadow of AIDS,' paints a bleaker picture:[98]

> The social pressures and constraints through which young women negotiate their sexual encounters impinge directly on their ability to make decisions about sexual safety and pleasure. The power of young women to control sexual practices can then play a key role in the transmission or limitation of sexually transmitted diseases. From preliminary analysis of data collected by the Women, Risk and AIDS Project, we argue that the risks young women take in sexual encounters with men arise within a nexus of contradictions through which women are expected to negotiate safer sex practices. However well intentioned, public health campaigns aimed at women cannot be effective unless they recognise that men and women begin their sexual encounters as unequal partners in the battle against the sexual transmission of HIV.[99]

Unlike the media messages being marketed to young women in newspapers and advertising through the postfeminist Eve images, Janet Holland and her colleagues found that, with very few exceptions, young women 'lack a positive sense of their own sexual identity'[100]

Medical research has found that young women now represent the fastest rising group of new HIV infections in the US.[101] AIDS is currently the primary cause of death for women aged between 25-29 in New York City and in the US, as a whole, women are proportionately the fastest growing group of people with AIDS.[102] The reality of the unequal power dynamics in young women's sexual relationships is being ignored by advertisers in favour of a more

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of responsibility, guilt and blame. In each case, those suffering from the disease have often been regarded as both the cause and embodiment of the disease, and have been feared and blamed by others at the height of periods of anarchy, both syphilis and AIDS have been interpreted as the inevitable outcome of the violation of 'natural' sexual laws"' Showalter, pp. 189-90.

[98] Janet Holland *et al*, 'Sex, Gender and Power'.

[99] Holland, *et al*, 'Sex, Gender and Power', p.336.

[100] Holland, *et al*, 'Sex, Gender and Power', p.340.

[101] Shari Margolese, 'Women and HIV' July 2003, *The Well Project.* http://www.thewellproject.org/en_US/HIV_The Basics/Women_and_HIV.jsp

[102] Janet Holland, *et al*, 'Sex, Gender and Power: Young Women's Sexuality in the Shadow of AIDS', in *Sociology of Health and Illness Vol.12 No.3 1990*, p. 338. Although this thesis focuses on contemporary Western young women, AIDS is an issue for women on a global scale with the rate of AIDS transmission among young women in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean soaring recently. In Africa alone, 61% of new cases of AIDS are young women, a plight caused by female disempowerment in this country where, as opposed to young Western women, who are unable to negotiate safer sex in relationships because of an inability to assert their own needs in sexual encounters, African women who are contracting AIDS and HIV are doing so primarily because they are the victims of violence and have no say whatsoever in their sexual encounters.

attractive, lucrative option. Although young women are being offered images of heterosexual relations as the way in which they can achieve power, influence and independence in society, in fact, they experience an imbalance in power in sexual negotiations, resulting in their inability to control the practice of safer sex in their relationships. Consider this image of Eve, taken from the US Edition of *Glamour* magazine:[103]

Figure 2.1: Promotional Image for model Marisa Miller in *Glamour* (US Edition) Magazine, December, 2005[104]

This image is typical of the type of advertising that young women are confronted with regularly in magazines and on billboards. Eve, the epitomy of contemporary ideals in beauty, stares directly at the viewer, one hand holding the fruit and the other on her hip in a posture of confident self-display. There are no worries about sexual infection here. Looking at this image it is unsurprising that the target consumer for this image is suffering from the 'lack of positive self-identity' reported by Jane Holland. *Glamour* magazine has a target female reader aged 17-25, meaning that the viewer of this image, although implied to be male, will be a young female consumer. She must identify with both Eve and the male viewer,

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[103] *Glamour* (US edition), October 2001.
[104] This image be analysed further in Chapter 3.

effectively seeing herself through male eyes. The assertive Eve in this knows she is attractive, enjoys the fact that she is attractive, and uses it for her gain, a picture that is in stark contrast to the reality of young women's sexual experiences and sense of self-confidence in her own life.

Of course, advertisers, as I mentioned above, want to sell fantasy not reality. They would not need to sell the idea of sexual power to women if women were already experiencing that power. Advertising must sell concepts and qualities that are desirable to the consumer; the consumer must want to embody those concepts and qualities to buy the product. Therefore, the image of Eve the sexually autonomous temptress is merely reflecting what young women might like to be, according to the market research of the advertising companies, rather than a direct reflection of who they are in the contemporary world. Indeed, it is a lack of power that young women actually experience in their sexual relations rather than the sexual 'power' attributed to them in postfeminist advertisements:

> There is certainly evidence from our interviews that young women can be very active in resisting men's power, but their resistance may not necessarily be effective. It is clear from our respondents' accounts that young women are actively engaged in constructing their femininity and sexuality, but it is also clear that the negotiation of sexual encounters is a contradictory process in which young women generally lack power.[105]

The findings of Holland and others are far from the suggestions of prevalent Eve images, such as the one below, in which Eve appears be the dominant sexual partner. In this image, an underwear advert from the Spanish edition of *Vogue*, the fact that Eve is clothed in contrast to the posse of near naked Adams who surround her suggests that she enjoys a higher status than the men. Furthermore, given that the postures of the men are mimicking those of the traditionally female sex object, with Eve positioned in the centre, one of the men at her feet indicates that the sexual power dynamics are in her favour. A postfeminist

[105] Holland, *et al*, 'Sex, Gender and Power', p. 341.

woman's first reading of this image would be that Eve has not only reached equal status to men but have gone beyond it.

Figure 2.2: Print Advertisement for Duloren Underwear, *Vogue* (Spanish Edition), 1999

In fact, attitudes to female sexuality appear not have progressed greatly in the hundred years since the nineteenth-century fin-de-siecle since 'sexually active women are in constant danger of having negative identities attributed to them'[106] and Holland and her co-writers again found that 'women who challenge male definitions by revealing their own needs and desires for sex have negative images as rapacious and devouring, or as sluts':[107]

> Women who seek their own sexual pleasure with different partners were seen by some of our informants as 'slags' or as 'doing what lads do'. Others saw sex primarily as what you do to keep your boyfriend happy or, more negatively, what you do to keep him. It is difficult for young women to insist on safe sexual practices, when they do not expect to assert their own needs in sexual encounters.[108]

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[106] S. Lees, *Losing Out: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls* (London: Hutchinson, 1986).
[107] Holland, *et al*, 'Sex, Gender and Power', p.340.
[108] J. Holland, C. Ramazanoglu and S. Scott, 'AIDS: From Panic Stations to Power Relations', in, *Sociology*, Issue 24, Vol. 3 (1990).

Because the biblical Eve is the basis of all sorts of cultural myths about female subordination, female sexuality and female autonomy, from all sorts of cultural prejudices, the advertisers have selected a particular image of Eve to sell a contemporary myth that young women can buy sexual power in a product. While the new myth has little in common with the biblical Eve who is tempted by the possibility of gaining knowledge it does resonate with some of the themes of the biblical story and advertisers have been quick to give prominence to them: Eve had authority and independence in the Garden of Eden and has been a temptress in culture ever since (a powerful woman must be a temptress - how else has she obtained influence?), young women today want authority and independence. Moreover, temptresses get it all according to popular culture and so Eve becomes the ultimate icon to sell a new image of themselves to them. One of the major socio-economic issues in contemporary society shows the fallacy of the postfeminist Eve image, however. Far from achieving high social status and financial independence through the consumption of products, young women are suffering serious financial problems.

The cost of trying to appear financially successful and sexually attractive is proving to be more than young women can afford. The US,[109] UK[110] and Australia[111] are all seeing

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[109] See, Anya Kamenetez, *Generation Debt: Why Now is a Terrible Time to be Young* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006); Robert D. Manning, *Credit Card Nation: The Consequences of America's Addiction to Credit* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Liz Perle, *Money, A Memoir: Women, Emotions and Cash* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); Tamara Draut, *Strapped: Why America's 20 and 30 Somethings Can't Get Ahead* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005); John De Graf, *et al.Affluenza: The All Consuming Epidemic* (San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers, 2005); James D. Scurlock, *Maxed Out: Hard Times, Easy Credit* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007); Teresa A. Sullivan, *et al., As We Forgive Our Debtors: Bankruptcy and Consumer Credit in America* (Washington DC: BeardBooks, 1999), Oliver James, *Affluenza* (London: Vermilion, 2007) and the New York Policy Group, DEMOS, briefing Paper, 'Generation Broke: The Growth of Debt Among Young Americans', 2005, for recent studies into the US economic difficulties for young people.

[110] The news headlines for most of 2006 have included something about the sharp rise in bankruptcy and IVAs for young adults, especially women; however, the 'epidemic' has been brewing for years: See, Louise Brittain, 'Sisters are Doing it to Themselves as Female Bankruptcies Rise', in a Web News Release from the top ten accountancy firm Baker Tilly, Thursday June 28 2001; Helen Nugent, 'Bankrupt Women Paying for Credit Cards', in *Times Online,* May 16 2005 (http://business.timesonline.co.uk); Sean Poulter and Becky Barrow, 'Middle–class Debts Soar in Quest for Designer Lifestyle', in *The Daily Mail,* 24 May, 2006; Lech Mintowt-CZYZ, 'Bankrupt Women Pay the Price of High Living', in *The Daily Mail,* 27 July 2001; Laurie Osborne, 'Britain's Bankrupt P.Y.T.s', in *The Guardian,* 16 June 2005; The BBC *Woman's Hour* radio programme, 'The Impact of Borrowing and Debt on Women's Lives', June 14, 2005.

[111] Louise Brogan, 'Going for Broke', in *Sydney Morning Herald,* November 11, 2001 and David Koch, 'Shocking Debt Ruins Young Women's Debut', in *Business,* (www.smh.com.au/news/money), April 23, 2006.

dramatic rises in the insolvency of young adult females, to the point where the trend is being called an epidemic.[112] The rise in personal bankruptcies and IVAs[113]is due to 'a greater drive for independence among young women'[114] according to a survey by finance company ClearDebt in 2005. The survey concludes that young women's current financial distress is due to several factors. One is the dual pressures of striving to maintain a consumer lifestyle while looking attractive:

> We see a lot of young women with three, four and five credit cards which are spent up to their limit on clothes and holidays. Young women are under greater pressure than men to spend more of their money on looking good, fashions and going out. But the evidence is that many are simply living ahead of their income.[115]

Another is that pursuing independent, single lives is expensive:

> There is evidence that young women are striking out on their own, pursuing their independence and setting up home, much more readily than men. However, this generates its own debts in terms of finding the money to pay rents, mortgages, bills and living expenses.[116]

Patrick Boyden, a partner at PriceWaterhouseCoopers, a consumer trend analysis firm that found that forty-five percent more women went bankrupt in 2003/4 than the previous year, confirmed the statistics, saying, 'A new bankrupt is emerging who is more likely to be female, under thirty and has not been in business before.'[117]

This surge in insolvency among young women should be unexpected, given the 'financial autonomy' and consumer power that they are supposed to be wielding in the late twentieth/early twenty-first century but the problem is that they do not really have the financial means to gratify in them the consumeristic desires inculcated in them by advertisers. Women's income is still thirteen percent lower than a man's for an equivalent

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[112] Louise Brittain, a bankruptcy specialist and partner at the top ten accountancy firm Baker Tilly estimated in 2001 that female bankruptcies were growing at a rate of 20-25% annually from *News Release*, 28th June, 2001.
[113] An IVA is an Individual Voluntary Arrangement, a legally binding agreement with creditors that allows the debtor to pay a sum of money to them for between three to five years to avoid bankruptcy.
[114] Sean Poulter, 'Debt Piles Up for Young Women', in *Daily Mail*, November 14th, 2005.
[115] Andrew Smith, *ClearDebt Survey*, 2005.
[116] Smith, *ClearDebt*
[117] Quotation from Keith Stevens in Sean Poulter, 'Debt Piles Up for Young Women', *Daily Mail*, 14th November 2005.

job, and lack of real progression in childcare provision means that women still have to shoulder the financial responsibility for parenting, with twenty percent of women facing dismissal or wage loss because of pregnancy.[118] Despite recent proposals by the government, pensions are still designed for people who work full-time all of their working lives, leaving women (still overwhelmingly the main care-givers for children) financially short-changed. Nevertheless, young women's debt levels are rising in spite their static income because, as Keith Stevens, a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, states, 'The root of the problem is that women have seen the rapid growth in their financial independence outstrip the rise in their incomes.'[119] Similarly, Helen Nugent of *The Times* observes, 'a combination of women's growing financial independence and the fact that they continue to earn less than men means that forty-two percent of bankrupts are female.'[120]

If women are earning less than men, lose job security and savings through maternity[121] and face the glass ceiling in terms of job prospects,[122] what exactly is the 'financial independence' that the financial experts speak of? Women are no longer entirely dependent on men and marriage to support them,[123] but women who support themselves often take on far more financial risk than their income allows. This 'independence' comes in the form of credit. The 'consumer power' of the postfeminist ideology is actually the ability to spend borrowed money, which young women then find themselves unable to repay. The

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[118] Anne Crittendon, *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World is Still the Least Valued* (New York: Owl Books, 2002).
[119] Patrick Boyden, quoted in Poulter article, *Daily Mail*, November 14 2005.
[120] Helen Nugent, 'Bankrupt Women Paying for Credit Cards', in *The Times*, 16 May 2005. The figure of 42% for the proportion of women bankrupts is currently higher – in the same period of 2006 50% of bankrupts were women, a massive increase on even five years previously (the number of women bankrupts rose by one third from 2000 to 2005 [*The Times*, 16 May 2005]).
[121] In her 2002 bestselling polemic, *The Price of Motherhood*, Ann Crittenden claims that rearing children will cost a college-educated woman nearly a million dollars in lifetime earnings, and that motherhood is still the single best predictor of poverty in women.
[122] In the US in 2004, women held only a 13.6% proportion of board seats at the nation's 500 largest companies (source: Anya Kamenetez, 'Generation Debt: Superwoman 2.0 – Your Biological Clock. Your Student Loans. Your Girly Paycheck. Hey, You're Having It All' in *News: Village Voice*, 21 December, 2004 www.villagevoice.com
[123] Of the dozens of women on the 2004 *Forbes* Richest People list, nearly all of them made their fortunes through marriage.

consumer group *Which?* has blamed the 'slick marketing material',[124] targeting young women specifically for the rise in female bankruptcies: 'Women are particularly susceptible to companies' tactics of teasing customers into certain spending patterns. They want people to spend money today and pay it off another time.'[125] Women are taking up the offer of a 'buy now, pay later' culture created by credit card companies, and analysts agree that young women are spending their borrowed money on 'a high-octane lifestyle of socialising and spending on luxury goods'[126] and 'designer clothes and extravagant social lives.'[127]

Eve is an advertiser's 'dream girl' for selling luxury goods. Her image has been used to sell cars, designer clothes and an overall luxury lifestyle that is marketed as being normal for the average young woman. In the promotional article from *Glamour* Magazine in 2003, the link between Eve, young women and luxury products is made clear. The advertisement was included in the magazine as a triple page advertisement (the third page was a full page picture of the Thorntons Eden chocolates that the article was promoting). The first page shows the image of a young woman of the same age range as the target reader of the magazine (age 17-25). The young woman is pictured from the waist up and she is naked, with her right arm covering her breasts. She has a sultry and almost malevolent expression, glowering at the viewer as she holds a half-eaten Thorntons chocolate up to her mouth. The inside of the chocolate is red, which matches the shade of her lips, linking the forbidden fruit with the young woman herself. She is positioned as a temptation to the consumer in the same

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[124] Quotation from Laurence Baxter, Senior policy advisor at *Which?* in *The Times*, 16th May, 2005. Also, research from a 2003 survey by the Dieringer Research Group found that women were more likely than men to research and be influenced by Internet advertising for credit cards and other financial products, stating, 'If you're not targeting Gen X/Y women online for your financial/insurance products – or for many other product categories – you're probably missing an important market growth opportunity'. Quotation in, Janet Kidd Stewart, 'Generation IOU: Credit Card Debt and College Loans are Creating Financial Hardship for Many of Today's Young Working Women', in *The Chicago Tribune*, 27th April, 2005.
[125] Kidd Stewart, 'Generation IOU', *The Chicago Tribune*, 27th April, 2005.
[126] Michael Clarke, 'Young Women Fuel Bankruptcy Rise', in *This Is Money*, 10th June, 2005 www.thisismoney.co.uk/credit-and-loans/debt-news/article.html
[127] Lech Mintowt-Czyz, 'Bankrupt Women Pay the Price of High Living', in *The Daily Mail*, 23rd July, 2001.

way as the chocolate, her function is to attract and to be consumed.[128] The text on the next page explains the reason for Eve's dark facial expression – she is indulging her wicked side:

> We all have the right to be sinful sometimes, and we've uncovered the most deliciously decadent gift to entice and seduce in serious style. Get your wicked way, and you'll be glad to be bad. Here's our guide to uncovering your 'inner-Eve', where no sense if left untouched…[129]

The idea that pleasure, style, consumer temptation and luxury products are all part of what a young woman needs to do to make herself feel good. The constant consumption of expensive luxury goods is naturalised in these adverts. The young women reading this magazine may very well not have the means to afford luxury goods but that is not seen as an obstacle when the encoded message is that buying expensive things may be naughty but 'we all have the right to be sinful sometimes'.[130]

Figure 2.3: Print Advertisement for Eden Chocolates by Thorntons, *Glamour* Magazine, February 2003

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[128] This image will be treated again n Chapter 3 when I will focusing on advertisements that match the colour of the apple to the lips of the Eve.
[129] Print Advertisement for Eden Chocolates by Thorntons, *Glamour* Magazine, February, 2003.
[130] '10 Layers of Temptation', Thorntons Advertisement, *Glamour* Magazine, February 2003.

Temptation

10 layers of

We all have the right to be sinful sometimes and we've uncovered the most deliciously decadent gift to entice and seduce in serious style. Get your wicked way and you'll be glad to be bad. Here's our guide to uncovering your 'inner-Eve', where no sense is left untouched...

1 *Forbidden Fruit:* Give in to temptation, because too much is never, ever enough. Curling up in your favourite armchair, with new season *Sex and the City* on the box and as many treats as you fancy to hand – bliss.

2 *Chocolate Heaven:* Slick, bright and modern – Thorntons Eden introduce the Kylie of chocolates, the silver Gucci stiletto of chocolates – sexy and modern – but with a fresh and original twist.

3 *Melting Mocha:* Melt away on the fluffy and sensual side of life. Think feel-good textures and gentle velvety touches for maximum impact

4 *Grand Passion:* If he's buying you Eden by Thorntons, you know you've found a man with taste and style. Keep him to yourself.

5 *Vanilla Vamp:* Rich, intense flavours to savour morsel by morsel – a little of something sublime to pep you up after every hard day, or if you're feeling totally indulgent, throughout just the one intense, but beautiful evening...

6 *All About Eve:* Think lusciousness and the fun can really begin. Eve might have been tempted by an old apple – but unfortunately, it ain't gonna work in the modern day, boys!

7 *Utterly, Nutty, Nibbles:* New, exciting, adventurous and varied. No, not a night out with your favourite delicious boy band, but close and certainly as seductive...

8 *Champagne Creations:* Understand the importance of luxury: tiny Agent Provocateur knickers, cocktails and mini caviar blinis – a little of something really fabulous is worth 1,000 bars of anything else. Pure delight!

9 *Dinner in the Dark:* Replace the dimmer switch and soft music of old, with a million tiny fairy lights and a devilishly handsome date. Modern-day self-indulgence is quite simply, a girl's favourite way to spend her time.

10 *Connect with Eden:* Big box, big smile, big connection. Lead us into temptation...

Figure 2.4: Print Advertisement for Eden Chocolates by Thorntons, *Glamour* Magazine, February 2003

In Australia, the manager of Sydney's Creditline Financial Services, Richard Brading, blames media targeting of young women in advertising campaigns for the sudden growth of female insolvents there[131] stating that, 'It's our lifestyle, young women are subjected to an enormous barrage of advertisements for expensive products, high fashion, cosmetics, and they're spending more than they can afford on credit cards simply to keep up with their peers. They'll shop to boost self-confidence and deal with emotions.'[132]

Both Richard Brading and policy coordinator, Sharon Baker, at the Financial and Consumer Rights Council in Victoria, Australia, believe that young women are susceptible to borrowing, and overspending, money because of deeply embedded self-esteem issues:

> Easy credit is only part of the problem, the other issue if that many young women see spending as a validation of their worth. It's about image, about the media, look at women's magazines these days – it's not difficult understand why young women feel compelled to go out and spend a lot of money on clothing and make-up when the media clearly indicates that that's what you've got to do to be considered a member of society. [133]

It may not be just a matter of low self-esteem for these many insolvent young women across Western society - although the research into the power imbalances in young women's sexual relationships seems to support the conclusion that they are suffering from a general disempowerment in contemporary society – but also a poorly thought-out political move. In postfeminist culture, the representation of identity is a political process capable of reinforcing power relations in society. If women are in control of representing themselves after a history of being represented by men, as in the nineteenth-century fin-de-siecle *femme fatale* images, then how they portray themselves, both personally and in the media, is indicative of their status in contemporary society. Women who overspend on luxury goods in an attempt to create the impression that their social standing is higher than it really is are merely following

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[131] According to Reserve Bank figures, in July 2001, Australia's credit card debt was $18.6 billion, triple the amount for the same month in 1995.
[132] Quotation from Richard Brading in Louise Brogan, 'Going For Broke: The Latest Hairstyles, Shoes, Designer Outfit and Restaurant are a Seductive Lure to Many Young Women Who Are Plunging Themselves into Debt to Maintain the High Life', in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11th November, 2001.
[133] Quotation in Brogan, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11th November, 2001.

the example of popular culture, which creates the illusion that women wield more power than they hold in reality. The power associated with the images of Eve employed in contemporary advertising is the ability to attract the men. This attraction somehow allows women, or attractive women at least, to gain more influence, status and economic power than would otherwise be the case. The 'power' that advertisements suggest is ambiguous since the viewer, however, since is not able to see the effects of Eve's power. She harnesses the male gaze, but does this make her a CEO of a top 100 PLC Company? Does it allow her to earn the same pay as the man who is looking at her? The power of Eve in the advertising seems to be merely the traditional power of women to attract a mate rather than female autonomy. Consider for example this image based on Eve. Red Delicious is the name of an apple

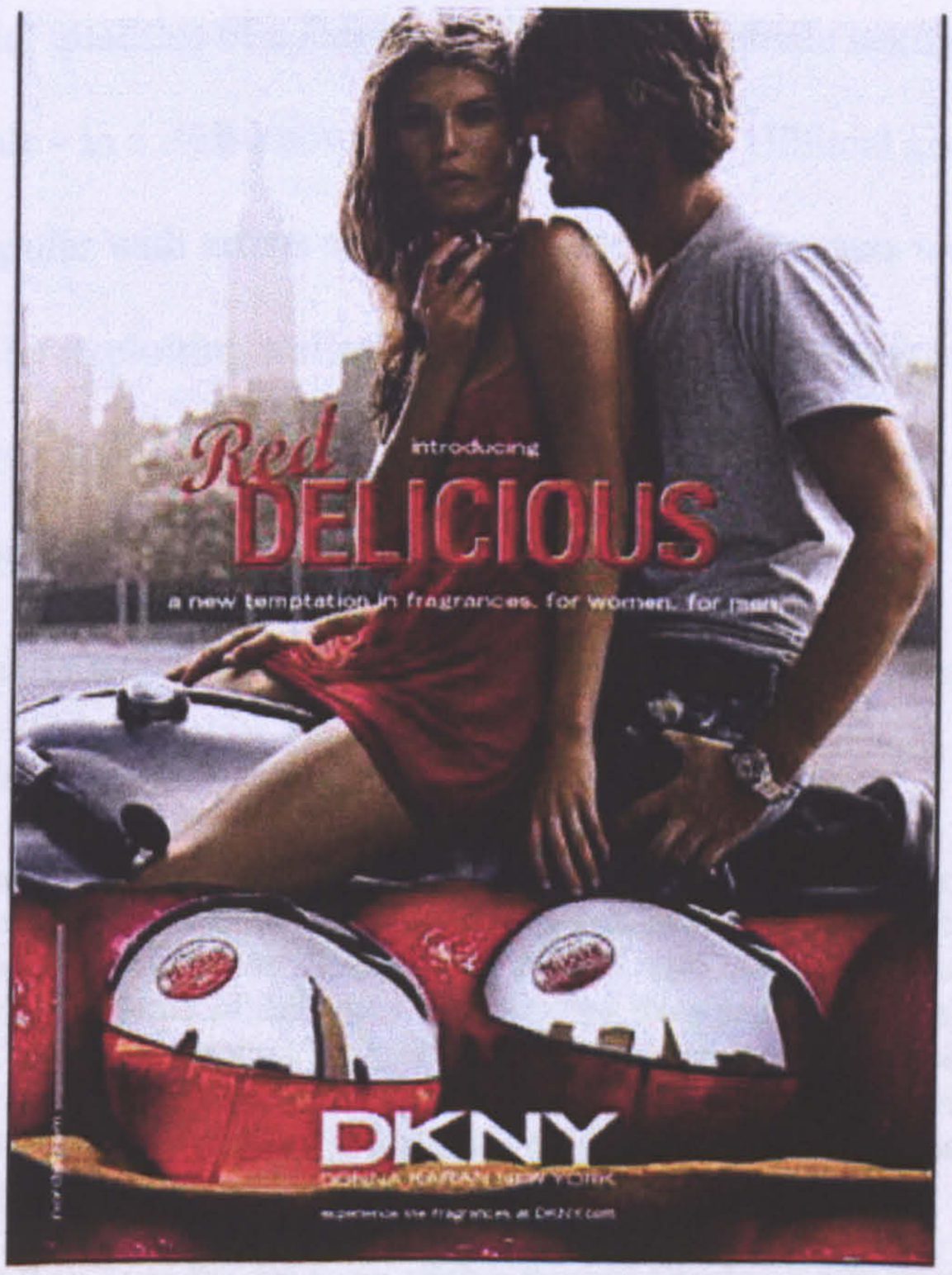

Figure 2.5: Print Advertisement for *Red Delicious* fragrance by DKNY, *InStyle* Magazine, April 2006

Although these ads are supposed to represent the new woman, they have in reality simply rehashed old, misogynistic images. Even in the context of a new postfeminist ideology where

women are equal and even sexually dominant, these images still view women as sex objects whose worth and social status lie in their ability to be sexually attractive.

Although the naked female body has long been presented as a symbol of sexual lust in culture,[134] the fashion for depicting the woman as the locus of social evil reached its zenith at the nineteenth century fin-de-siecle, when the *femme fatale* genre of art became a cultural phenomenon. Artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, Gustave Moreau and Jean Delville produced images of macabre and maleficent female sexuality that, although produced by male artists for male viewers, were, like the Eve images in contemporary advertising, popular with both females and males at the time. Naturally, Eve, being synonymous with 'woman', was a favourite figure of representation; her cultural doxa embodied the essential qualities of a *femme fatale* – potent female sexuality and the destruction of the male - in a well-known biblical character. Biblical and mythical female characters proved popular with artists not only because the characters were familiar to the viewer, but, because by exploiting well-established stories, the images of evil female sexuality seemed to be based on cultural 'truths' about gender roles and the dangers of transgressing prescribed sexual roles.

Images of usually naked, always sexually provocative, were a measure of the social climate. As Patrick Bade asserts:

> The phenomenon of the *femme fatale* was far more than the artificial creation of a small number of artists who had problems with their mothers and mistresses. These men sensed and expressed the underlying anxieties of the age, which resulted from profound social change. Before the women's movement had made women conscious of their subservience and given voice to their grievances, poets and artists had realised that male dominance, which had evolved since the beginning of civilisation, was becoming increasingly precarious.[135]

Like Bade, Virginia Allen sees the images of the *femme fatale* as a reflection of nineteenth-century fin-de-siecle society's grievous concerns with the rise of feminism:

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[134] See Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (*Kent: Burns and Oates*, 1992). p.81.
[135] Bade, *Femme fatale* p.39.

> But if one is to say they (the artists) were sexually disturbed, even neurotic, then one is forced to say that a major aspect of the culture of Europe was equally neurotic. If they created an image based on neurotic sexual fantasy, that fantasy was nearly universal in Europe. The 'icon' they made was so sought after and so cogent for their contemporaries that its label entered the language. And they shared their culture's values.[136]

The proliferation of *femme fatale* images in the late nineteenth century coincided with the significant change in women's socio-political position. The issue of the right of women to vote had been raised in the British Parliament in 1867 and the Married Women's Property Act, which established minimum legal rights for a married woman, was passed in 1870. Some educational and professional opportunities began to open up for women but, although this feminist progression was significant, the cultural response was exaggerated - almost verging on hysterical, considering the extreme visions of the nature and threat of femininity that were produced by artists. After all, these changes in women's position benefited only a small minority of women at the time and any attempt at the female autonomy that 1890s society found so worrisome was decades away.

Eve, as an erotic icon in art, represented these social and sexual fears of the nineteenth century fin-de-siecle and consequently she accrued 'an enormously intensified erotic and lethal power.'[137] In art, images show that social and sexual degeneration stemmed from the sexual female and her bid for emancipation. The 'New Woman' that feminism had created, who campaigned for emancipation, resisted the traditional social gender roles of the time and insisted on the right to be financially autonomous instead of dependant on a husband, was very much something to be feared. In her study on Eve in art for this period Allen states, 'female self-assertion implies instant sexual threat'. Eve was a symbol of the dangers of female self-assertion and images of Eve served as a warning to retain the clear demarcation between gender roles for the social good.

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[136] Allen, *The Femme fatale*, p.190.
[137] Allen, *The Femme fatale*, p. 185.

The New Woman was not the only type of female to be threatening the traditional social order at the end of the nineteenth-century, however; the Odd Woman was causing almost as much upset. The term was used to describe the steadily increasing surplus of unmarried women in England. These single women were considered to be masculinising themselves by earning their own living rather than fulfilling their duty by becoming a mother – they were independent but incomplete, 'As women sought opportunities for self-development outside of marriage, medicine and science warned that such ambitions would lead to sickness, freakishness, sterility and racial degeneration.'[138] The Italian Symbolist painter, Giovanni Segatini, painted several versions of a work entitled *The Wicked Mothers*[139] in response to these Odd Women, who delayed or refused motherhood. The painting is an interpretation of a passage in the Indian poem, *Pangiavahli*, which describes the punishment inflicted in women who deny their biological role as child-bearer. In the painting *The Wicked Mothers* are tormented by their unborn babies.

Figure 2.6: *The Wicked Mothers*, Giovanni Segantini, 1894

[138] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p.39.
[139] Giovanni Segantini, *The Wicked Mothers*, 1894.

The Wicked Mothers illustrates the torments to be endured by those women who refuse maternity.[140] A woman is suspended in the foreground. She is trapped in a barren, frozen landscape, by the branches of the dead tree, which has caught her hair. As if whipped, her body is bending, and at her bare breast is a dead baby. The painting functions as a warning to women who reject their biological destiny. *Wicked Mothers* was only one version of a series Segantini painted on the theme of the woman who rejects her traditional maternal role. In another of these paintings *Punishment for Lasciviousness* (Figure 2.7, below), Odd Women are again tormented in a deserted, freezing world for choosing against motherhood.[141] In *Punishment for Lasciviousness* the women are doomed to float, naked, in a coma-like state, in a frozen landscape as a punishment for their dismissal of traditional social gender roles.

Figure 2.7: *Punishment for Lasciviousness (Punishment for Lust)*, Giovanni Segantini, 1894

The nineteenth century fin-de-siecle Odd Woman, the single woman who chooses self-development over motherhood, is pivotal to the discussion of Eve images in contemporary advertising. Although most contemporary Eve images are borrowed, sometimes almost

[140] Wendy Slatkin, 'Maternity and Sexuality in the 1890s', *Women's Art Journal*, Vol. 1, No.1, Spring/Summer, 1980, pp. 16.
[141] Also known as *Punishment for Lust.*

exactly, from the nineteenth century *femme fatale* paintings, it is this 'Odd Woman' who is the precursor to the postfeminist consumer of fin-de-siecle twentieth century. The New Woman is a feminist and fights for her financial independence but remains married and still abides by the mainstay of gender demarcation: marriage; however, this New Woman becomes an Odd Women when she does away with the need for a husband altogether. She has her own income and employment and she shuns her traditional duty of motherhood. As the twentieth century draws to a close the Odd Woman is reborn as the Career Woman, but in the 1990s, after second wave feminism has mutated into postfeminism, the financially and sexually independent woman is celebrated rather than denounced in popular culture. She is now a market sector and therefore a highly valuable consumer, she is to be courted by advertising campaigns and her wealth targeted and harnessed through commercial consumption. In this climate, Eve, the *femme fatale*, begins to appear again. By the late nineties there is a proliferation of her images in popular culture and they are photographic copies of the artworks of the nineteenth century.

Figure 2.8: *Lilith*, John Collier, 1887

This painting by John Collier from the late 1880's is of Lilith. The image may not be titled explicitly as Eve but the associations between the image and Eve remain.[142] This image of the serpent-entwined woman connotes various concepts to the viewer: sin, dangerous female sexuality and temptation. In the nineteenth-century she may have been the symbol of female maleficence but at the end of the twentieth-century she is given a postfeminist makeover and she is now a symbol of the change in gender dynamics in contemporary society.

[142] Pamela Norris actually terms such representations as 'Lilith-Eve representations' since Eve is as much evoked as Lilith. See Norris, *The Story of Eve*, p.10.

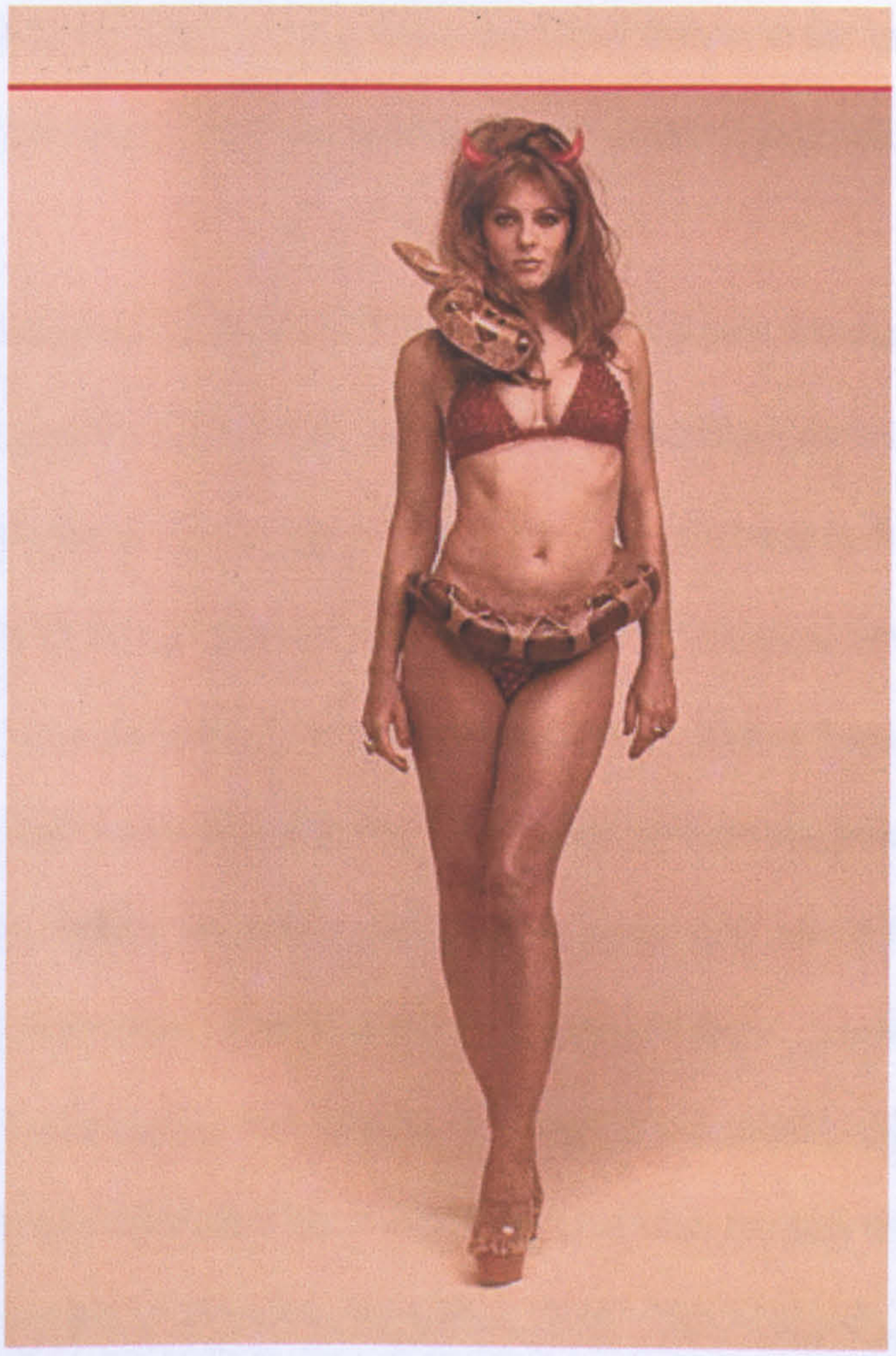

Figure 2.9: Online Promotional Image for *Bedazzled*, 2000

According to the contemporary advertisements, women's ability to attract males is their most lucrative asset and it is implied in the images that the products that the advertisers are selling will either increase the potency of female sexuality or somehow imbue the consumer with female sexual power. For instance, figure 2.9 (above) shows Elizabeth Hurley promoting the 1999 film *Bedazzled*. She is in character as the Devil, the role she plays in the film. To advertise *Bedazzled*'s release Hurley posed for several promotional shots as sexy satan, the modern retake on the nineteenth-century *femme fatale*. Hurley's career success has been founded on her physical beauty and this advertisement builds on the audience's knowledge of Hurley's persona. She poses in a bikini, with a serpent around her neck and

horns have been added to her head to emphasise the Devil theme in the image. Hurley simultaneously links femininity with evil and the *femme fatale* image with the power to attract the gaze.

Whereas the power of the nineteenth-century *femme fatale* was her ability to attract and destroy men, and, usually themselves, as Segantini's paintings showed, the power of the twenty-first century temptress Eve image is her power to attract men to further her own ambitions. An example of Eve's function as a career 'booster' is most famously seen in an advertising campaign from the end of the twentieth-century. Anthea Turner, the former highest paid female in television, found herself the victim of a severe media backlash in the late 1990s. Having constructed her public persona as a 'good girl' she fell foul of the tabloids when she had an affair with Grant Bovey, a married father of three. Turner went on to marry Bovey and even their wedding day was marred with negative publicity when the newlyweds agreed to advertise the new chocolate bar, Cadbury Snowflake, in their wedding photos that were to be sold to the celebrity interview magazine, *Hello.* Unfortunately, Turner then found herself a pariah of the early evening shows in which she had found such success. Her status had lurched from TV golden girl to unemployed 'has been' in the course of one year. When she attempted to exploit her new, media constructed, persona of temptress and increase her status, she posed for publicity shots as Eve.

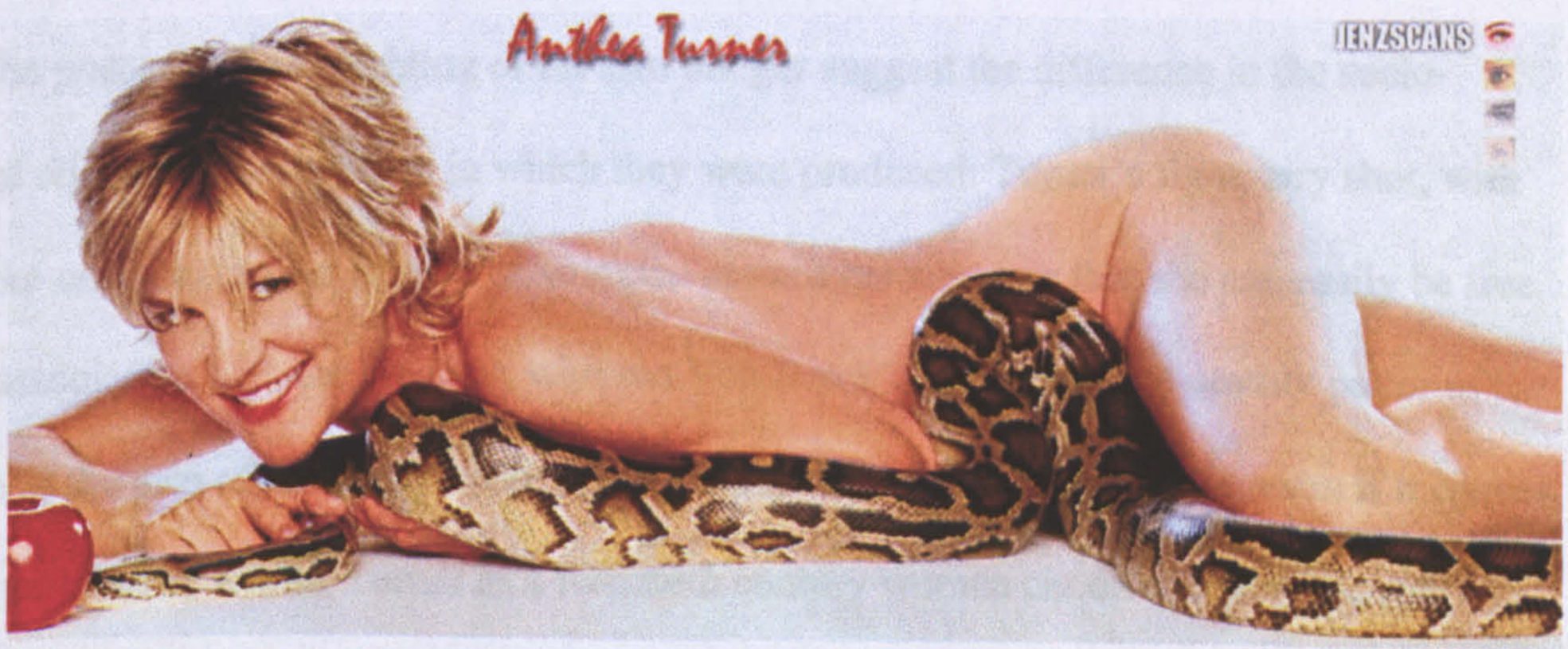

Figure 2.10: Promotional Media Image of Anthea Turner, *The Sun*, 17 March 1997

The pose mirrors one of Franz von Stuck's many versions of his painting, *Sin*.

Figure 2.11: *Sin*, Franz von Stuck, 1893

Again, although the concepts communicated by the images are similar, the Von Stuck image is dark, deathly and sinisterly erotic. The image of Turner, however, does not have any of these undertones of sex and death, her photo is light to the point of being clinical; she is not a true *femme fatale* in the nineteenth century fin-de-siecle sense but is merely using the image of the *Zeitgeist* of the era to change the backlash she has experienced to her advantage; in her photo she is a woman of the times, she knows what she wants and she knows how to get. The serpent is carefully manipulated around her body so that it mirrors her own body's shape exactly, as if the woman and the snake are the same. Von Stuck's painting, however, seems to have the woman trapped within the dark coils of the snake. She does not look like she could get easily free of the serpent, but she is smiling, showing that she does not mind its grip. The postures of and lighting of the two images suggest the difference in the socio-political climate of the cultures in which they were produced: Turner's light, airy shot, with the snake only next to her instead of wrapped around her suggests that she can easily be free of her association with the creature, whereas Von Stuck's image and the deathly pallor of the woman in the grip of the serpent suggests that she cannot get free of its grip, even if it causes her harm. In other words, Turner as a twentieth century woman chooses to play the role of the Eve to increase her status but the woman in Von Stuck's painting does not. She is trapped

in her role only because that is someone else's idea of her. A comparison of another of Turner's publicity shots with yet another of Von Stuck's versions of perverse serpentine femininity further illustrates the point:

Figure 2.11: *Sin*, Franz von Stuck, 1893

Figure 2.13: Promotional Media Image, Anthea Turner, www.antheaturner.com

Again, Von Stuck's snake-woman has no identity, she is in the shadows and her body, since it is the centre of sin, is made the focus of the painting and is centralised and highlighted - the woman's identity is her body, the viewer does not need to see her face, she needs no other identity than her sexuality. Turner, on the other hand, covers her body for the camera and grins at the viewer; she is a celebrity and her identity is written on the left of the picture, she

is being associated with the power of female sexuality but she is not oppressed by it in the way Von Stuck's women seem to be – in fact she is enjoying it.

Conclusion

Through a comparison of nineteenth-*fin-de-siecle* art and twentieth-*fin-de-siecle* advertising and the social conditions in which they were produced, this chapter has argued that the visual representation of Eve has barely changed in over a hundred years, despite three waves of feminism in that time. What has changed, however, is the image's socio-cultural function. Whereas images of Eve in art at the end of the nineteenth century, in response to first-wave feminism, condemn the New Woman as immoral and a threat to social order, advertising images of Eve at the end of the twentieth-century employ postfeminist consumer ideology to dismiss feminism altogether in favour of female empowerment through the exploitation of women's sexuality as a commodity. Based on evidence of women's disempowerment in sexual relations and in their financial dealings, this chapter has argued that the threatening, or dominant, qualities attributed to Eve in her images, which are presented as a universal representation of femininity, are illusory.

Finally, this chapter has argued that, regardless of twentieth-century advertising's apparent promotion of female empowerment, the stereotype of woman as sexual temptress has remained unchallenged throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On the contrary, this stereotype is, in fact, perpetuated in contemporary Eve advertising to serve its postfeminist ideology, an argument that is developed further in the next chapter, which analyses additional images of Eve in twentieth and twenty-first century advertising.

CHAPTER 3

BAD GIRLS SELL WELL: THE COMMODIFICATION OF EVE IN POSTFEMINIST CONSUMERISM

Chapter 2 discussed how contemporary advertisers exploit the market potential of the image of Eve in order to make their products appeal to young women in today's society. They sell a non-subversive sexuality in the package of a subversive one. As this thesis has argued, Eve's image is extremely popular in advertising, where images of Eve are primarily used to promote three sectors of consumerism: cosmetics, food and clothing. These three areas – cosmetics, food and clothing - are particularly associated with the stereotype of woman as sexually powerful temptress that Eve so conveniently encapsulates. Advertisements that rely on the image of Eve to sell products tend to repeat images, poses, expressions, all of which contain, as I have sought to show, encoded gender messages. These messages - in particular, the ideas that a woman's power lies in her ability to attract men, that sexual power can enhance a woman's social status and that through sexual power a woman can dominate men - dominate representations of Eve in popular culture. Although on a superficial analysis contemporary Eve advertisements seem to be subversive of traditional gender stereotypes as set out by sociologists such as Goffman, Cortese and Williamson,[143] this is not the case. In this Chapter I will be asking whether the advertisements drawing on Eve imagery really do subvert the stereotypes of Eve as *femme fatale*, the sexual temptress who brings about man's downfall, which I discussed in Chapter 2, as well as stereotypes of women and gender relations. Or do they reinscribe them?

Of the hundreds of advertisements I have examined in my extensive research on Eve imagery, the majority are of Eve alone, followed closely by images that show Adam and Eve

[143] See Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*; Cortese, *Provocateur;* and Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements.*

together. In contrast, Adam appears alone in only about a half a dozen advertisements.[144] This situation reflects the status of woman as sex object in popular culture and also the postfeminist social climate in which the images are produced. It also reflects the status of the woman in the biblical text. For me, as for popular culture and for so many interpreters over the centuries, Eve is the star of the story. So much narrative space is given to her in the so-called 'temptation scene' in Gen. 3:1-7 that a visual depiction of this scene would tend to focus on Eve. In the biblical text Adam appears only at the end of the scene. Genesis 3 begins by introducing the serpent, who in v.1 speaks to the woman. In vv.2-5 the serpent and the woman discuss God's command not to eat the fruit of the tree, God's motive and the possible consequences of eating. In v.6 the woman considers the possibilities: the tree is good for food, is pleasing to look at, and desirable to make one wise. So she takes some of its fruit and eats it. Up to this point there is no indication that the man is present, but the remainder of v.6, 'and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate', is crucial for a proper understanding of the biblical story, for it makes clear that both the man and the woman are present at the temptation scene and that the man raises no objections to the woman's decision to eat of the fruit. Her disobedience to God's command is active whereas his is passive.[145]

For centuries Eve has been blamed and condemned for leading Adam into temptation, and recent feminist biblical criticism has done little, if anything, to redeem her image outside the guild of biblical studies.[146] That Eve is to be blamed for the so-called 'fall' of humanity is, in my view, not just a figment of the popular cultural imagination. She is

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[144] In the course of my research I have compiled a database of popular cultural images of Adam and Eve, in which 150 of the images are of Eve, only 6 of them depict Adam alone.

[145] Thus one of the consequences of their action is that the active sinner is made subordinate to the passive sinner (v.16).

[146] See for example Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp.72-143; Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender', pp.1-39 ; Myers, *Discovering Eve*, pp.72-121; Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), pp.123-193. More recent readings have been critical of claims made for gender equality in Genesis 2-3 by early feminist interpreters; see, eg. Clines, *What Does Eve Do To Help?* pp. 25-48;Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power and Promise*, pp.22-38; Milne, 'The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture', pp. 146-172, and Lanser, '(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden', pp. 67-84.

blamed and condemned in the text too. She is the one who consciously and actively disobeys the divine command. She plays the stronger role. She is the first to take the fruit and eat it. She *gave* the fruit to her husband who simply eats. And, most damaging for Trible's argument that both the man and the woman are equally guilty in transgression,[147] is Gen. 3:17, where God says to the man, 'because *you obeyed your wife* and ate from the tree, which I commanded you saying "you shall not eat of it", cursed is the ground because if you in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life'.[148] Indeed one would not expect an androcentric text produced by a patriarchal society to champion the cause of women. Even though the woman in Gen. 3:1-6 has a stronger role, this text teaches a lesson about the danger of allowing women to think for themselves and make decisions. The consequences are disastrous, and thus convey to the reader the idea that women should be subordinate to their husbands. Indeed, the subordination of the woman to the man is precisely the situation that Eve's punishment achieves: 'your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you'.

Advertising makes explicit what is implicit in the text. Adam allowed himself to led be astray by Eve. Thus women have power, the power to lead men into temptation, as well as power to make decisions for themselves, regardless of the consequences. Where does this mysterious female power lie? For advertisers the answer is in female sexuality, and here one can argue that they are picking up on hints in the biblical text. In advertisement Adam is a passive character who plays a minor role in the temptation scene, just as he does in the text. Eve is the commanding figure. Popular cultural interpretations frequently play on Adam's inability to resist his sexual desire for Eve when she offers him the forbidden fruit.

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[147] Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 114.
[148] For this translation of *shema' beqol*, see Chapter 2 above.

In advertising, offering the forbidden fruit, an apple, is a metaphor for offering the woman's body. In the Bible too there is a connection between fruit and female sexuality.[149] A naked woman offers a naked man fruit that opens the eyes so that they *know* they are naked. Knowledge in such a context could be seen as an allusion to sexual intercourse.[150] In the biblical text Eve is primarily connected to the body whereas Adam is brought from the ground. Eve is brought forth from Adam's body:

> This at last is bone of my bones
> and flesh of my flesh;
> she shall be called woman
> because from man she was taken (v.23).

Eve's punishment in the text is connected to her sexuality. She has to endure painful childbirth and she will desire her dominating husband sexually. In the biblical text, as in advertising, female sexuality is threatening. The biblical text tries to control it by blaming the woman and then having her ruled by her husband. Advertising also tries to control female sexuality, as well as to harness it and exploit it. The same danger and threat portrayed in the biblical text are present in advertising images of Eve: women are blamed for male desire, and for leading men astray. In the text, although the consequences of Adam and Eve's transgression are not all negative, woman must still be controlled. Although advertising celebrates Eve's transgression and her sexuality, it also, insidiously, controls women by defining for them a particular role. It tells women that their most important attribute is their sexuality. In order to have status and acquire wealth and power, a woman must be both attractive to men and more attractive than other women. Advertising purports to be empowering women with a female-defined sexuality but in reality male interests are so deeply embedded in culture that it would difficult for women to create subjective

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[149] See above, Chapter 1, pp. 47-55.
[150] The verb *yada'* is a term for sexual intercourse; see *BDB* 394a; *DCH* IV, 100b.

representations of their sexuality without seeing themselves through male eyes. Margaret R. Miles comments:

> The female body which has played such a central historical role in the circulation of meaning in the Christian West is perhaps too assimilated to the male gaze to permit inscription with new meaning, with a female-defined sexuality and subjectivity. Female nakedness is, after all, at least as vigorously appropriated to the male gaze in the twentieth-century media culture as it ever was.

Instead of offering women new or alternative ways of viewing themselves, advertising rehashes old images and old stereotypes. It changes only the blurb. While female sexuality, as defined by Eve in post-feminist advertising images, remains sexuality defined by androcentric concerns, the advertisers have a different agenda from that of the biblical text, with its concern to preserve patriarchal hierarchy: where the Bible is concerned with keeping women in their place, advertising is concerned with making money. The representations of Adam in advertising merely underscore the importance of sexuality in the images of Eve. They are the exceptions that prove the rule, and the fact that a male naked body can mean something so different from a female naked body is testament to the deeply embedded gender stereotypes prevalent in popular culture and, I would argue, rooted in the biblical text.

The Serpent Beguiled Me and I Ate

As will be illustrated by the images in this chapter, Eve is an advertiser's favourite; embodying the *Zeitgeist* of the late 90s and early 2000s postfeminist era, Eve's image in advertising functions as a vehicle to communicate concepts about power, envy and status to the consumer.

The target consumer for the overwhelming majority of these advertisements is the lucrative 18-34 year old female market. As this thesis has shown in Chapter 2, the female 18-34 market sector embraces the basic tenets of postfeminism – that participating in the

commodification and objectification of their own bodies is women's route to control, security and power in their relations with men. In postfeminist advertising, the male domination of old is overthrown in favour of women taking control of the representation of their sexuality and using it for their own financial and social gain. The more attractive a woman is, the more successful and powerful she is; however, this state of success and empowerment can only be achieved by women through consumption of commodity goods. Women can only become, and remain, sexually attractive by buying perfume, wearing the right clothing, the right make-up, the right underwear. This active self-commodification and objectification, the advertisements suggest, will increase women's social status and economic power, a point made by sociologist Robert Goldman in his book *Reading Ads Socially*: [151]

> Her appearance is her value, and her avenue to accumulating capital. Ironically, men once dominated women on the basis of proprietary claims made on the body of woman; today, male domination gets reproduced on the basis of women acquiring proprietary control over their own bodies—or, over the appearances given off by their bodies.[152]

It is not enough to be sexually attractive, however. To achieve financial and social success a woman must be more sexually attractive than other women, she must participate in a competition to attract the gaze and hold it. This competition inevitably means that women become more isolated from each other, losing their collective political power, because every other woman is a threat to the power achieved through the self-commodification. Power achieved through self-commodification of sexuality must continually be pursued, it is a never-ending task. Therefore, images of Eve as postfeminist icon are as much about female envy as they are about female sexual power. Female power, according to these adverts, can only come about through desirable sexuality and desirable sexuality can only come about through consumerism. In Eve images, as in all postfeminist advertising images targeted to the female market sector, power and success can only be achieved through consumerism. In

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[151] Robert Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially* (London: Routledge, 1992).
[152] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, p. 123.

short, in postfeminist popular culture, consumerism *is* power. The downside of this female empowerment through (hetero)sexuality is that it is an expensive and time-consuming task. Women must fight to achieve status through sexuality, continually comparing themselves against other women, continually updating the latest fashion, the latest make-up, the latest skin-care or exercise regime, continually striving to become more sexually attractive, continually consuming to become a more profitable commodity.

Since postfeminist advertising is concerned primarily with social status, power, and female sexual and financial independence, many Eve advertisements feature a female celebrity playing the role of Eve. These celebrities exemplify the very concept that postfeminist advertising is trying to sell: female sexuality is the route to increased wealth, power and status. For instance, one of the highest paid models in the world, Naomi Campbell, takes the role of Eve in the 2005 Ford Ka advert below:

Figure 3.1: Print Advertisement for the Ford Ka Roadster, *Glamour* Magazine, April 2005

This advertisement shows Campbell in a garden of Eden setting, standing in front of a red open-top Ford Streetka Roadster. The by-line to the image is 'The Sinful New Roadster'. Campbell wears only a fig-leaf, and her long hair-extensions obscure her breasts from view. She is holding a snake around her neck, and she looks directly into the camera, fixing the viewer's gaze with her own.

Campbell, one of the original supermodels, who famously declared, 'I won't get out of bed for less than £10,000', was chosen for the Streetka advertising campaign after Ford's marketing research showed that the target consumers (again the 18-34 females) for their new soft-top roadster thought the most attractive temptress of our time was Naomi Campbell. Well-known in the media for being both beautiful and confrontational,[153] Campbell has a reputation for being a diva — a highly-paid, successful female celebrity who is prone to being very difficult and demanding. The connection of the Ford Streetka Roadster with the concept of temptation, which is connoted by the garden of Eden set, and the choice of Campbell to model as Eve, the most desirable female celebrity to most young women consumers, suggests to those consumers that the car is as desirable as Campbell. Campbell, the advert suggests, would not only be the kind of woman to drive this car, beautiful, successful, wealthy, sexually desirable, feisty, but she finds the car incredibly desirable. The car is positioned as the apple in the image; both Campbell and the Streetka roadster are objects of temptation but the car is even more tempting than the ultimate contemporary temptress herself. The consumer is positioned as Adam and Campbell is simultaneously tempting us with her herself (both her legendary body and her persona) and with the Streetka 'apple'. 'If you drive this, you will appear as desirable and successful as Campbell', the advert suggests. The ordinary young women who are the target consumers of this car are not

[153] Campbell had been ordered to attend anger management classes by a judge after an employee had taken Campbell to court for allegedly verbally abusing and hitting her. This was before Campbell was ordered to do community service for attacking another employee in a different court case.

supermodels, they are unlikely to be wealthy,[154] and they would want to be seen as sexually desirable, feisty and successful. The advertisement tells them that buying this car will achieve their aspirations.

Even the name 'Eve' is enough to connote the allure of powerful female sexual desirability, as shown in this print advertisement for Colinette knitwear. As part of a series of advertisements for knitting patterns associated with the names of religious and mythical *femme fatales* such as Eve, Pandora, Salome, and Delilah, the advertisement has attempted to employ elements of postfeminist Eve imagery in order to target a young female consumer. The model is of the same age range as the advertisement's target audience but the name 'EVE' at the young woman's side suggests that she shares some of the characteristics of the biblical Eve.

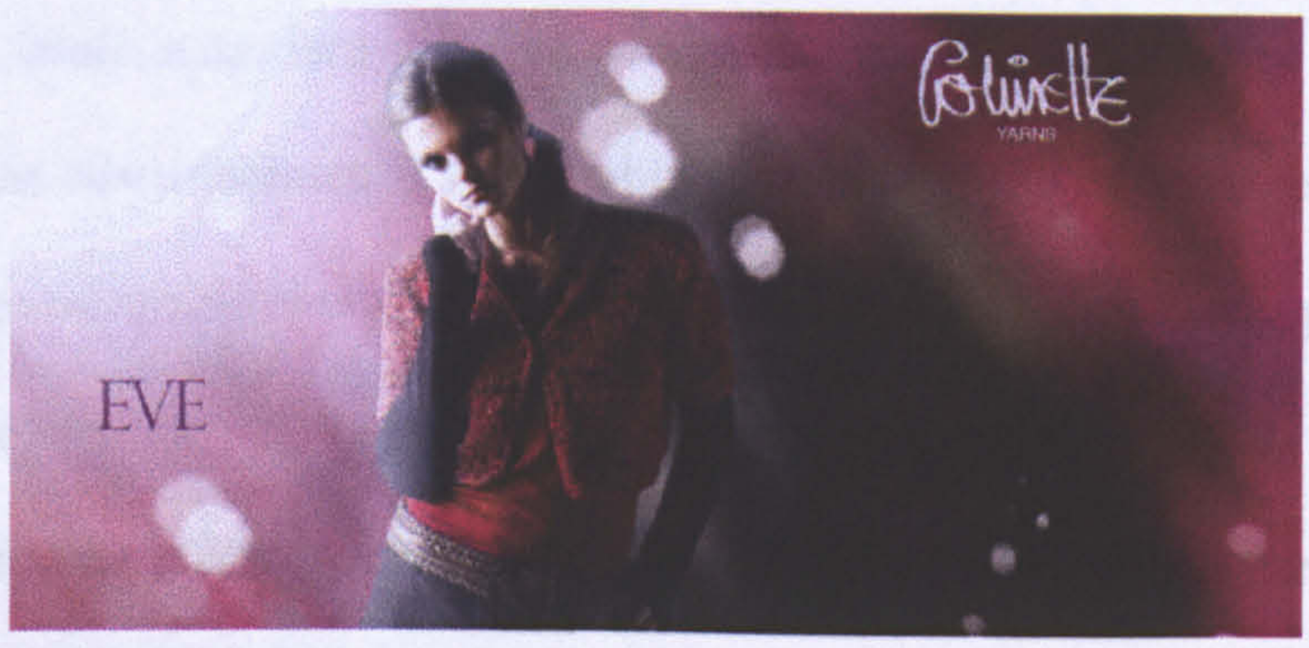

Figure 3.2: Print Advertisement for Colinette '*Femme fatale*' Series Knitting Patterns, *Woman's Own* Magazine, Issue 25, October 2001

Although the young woman is dressed more modestly than most of the Eves in the images treated in this thesis, she does share a similar posture in that she shows awareness that has attracted the gaze of the viewer and returns their look. Her neutral expression is not one of invitation, but she stands in a typical female model posture, with one hand hooked on her hip and one hand pointing to her face — a traditional advertising technique used to direct

[154] The car was designed for 18-24 year olds and is in the lowest price bracket for a new car, even though this would still be too much for the target group, they could certainly be bought one by their parents as their first car.

attention to a female model's face: 'self-touching can also be involved, readable as conveying a sense of one's body being a delicate and precious thing'.[155] In fact, the very item that is being advertised, the cardigan, is not very clear in the image. The light from the upper left corner of the image is highlighting the young woman's face and the hand that is pointing the viewer's gaze to the model's attractive features. The advertisers have chosen to use red as the background colour for the image and the young woman is also dressed in red, the colour associated with sexual desire, temptation, passion, and, most significantly for this thesis, the colour of advertising's traditional forbidden fruit: the red apple. In depicting the young woman in a traditional posture of self-display, confidently returning the gaze of the viewer, and linking her with the forbidden fruit through the choice of background and clothing colour, the advertisers promote the image of this young woman to consumers as a contemporary *femme fatale*, a modern-day Eve who is aware of her desirability and displays it to her advantage. The advertisement is selling this young woman's understated but potent desirability, which, the advertisement suggests, can be emulated through buying the cardigan's knitting pattern.

Just as the Colinette knitting pattern advertisement made allusions to the forbidden fruit by choosing red as the background colour and the colour of the model's clothing, Eve advertisements can make more obvious links between the forbidden fruit and female sexuality by matching the colour of the apple with the lips of Eve. Images of red female lips are widely recognised in advertising criticism as a symbol of sexual arousal, mimicking the female labia.[156]

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[155] Quotation from Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, p. 31; see also Cortese, *Provocateur*, p. 36.
[156] See Cortese, *Provocateur*, p.23; see also Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, p. 117, who argues that 'The sign, lips, has become an abbreviation for fetishised desire, even while made to stand for an idealised woman that you want to be'.

Figure 3.3: Online Advertisement for *Deviant Art* Website, 2007

By matching the shade of the forbidden fruit with the symbolic red lips of Eve, the connection between female sexual anatomy and the forbidden fruit is made clear and is emphasised further by the cropping of the woman so that her lips are the only feature of image. For instance, in the advertisement above -- which appeared in February 2007 as part of an online advertising campaign for the website *Deviant Art* (the largest art community on the web) that coincided with the widespread promotion of Valentine's Day -- Eve's apple is matched perfectly with both the woman's lips and the substance smeared on her neck and chest, which is reminiscent of blood. As Chapter 2 illustrated, postfeminist Eve advertising images borrow from nineteenth-century artistic images of the *femme fatale* stereotype. The

Deviant Art advertising image is no exception. The image has Gothic undertones, reminiscent of the 'vamp' stereotype in nineteenth-century art and literature, with the suggestion of blood on the neck of the young woman, the style of the ring on the model's hand and the icy-tone of the skin and the hair of the young woman (which enhances the vivid red shade of her lips) the apple she is holding and the red smear on her lower neck. The pale, bloodless scratch marks on the model's cheek suggest violence, and possibly, if the red substance on her neck is blood that is not from the woman herself but perhaps that of a victim. The shared colour of the woman's parted lips, the apple and the blood smear reflects a link between the forbidden fruit and the woman's sexuality that equates sexuality with death.

Images of the vamp in Gothic literature were inspired by stories of the Poison Damsels from ancient Asian folklore where young women, raised on snake venom so that they become venomous themselves, prove fatal for the men who are seduced by them.[157] This notion of poisonous woman has become conflated in this image with Eve, where the apple signifies the temptation of the viewer but also the *Femme fatale* status of women. The cropping technique, which makes the mouth the only feature on the woman's face, emphasises the symbolic red lips of the woman and results in the image not representing an individual woman but representing the dangerous sexual qualities of women in general.

A colour-match technique is used in the image below, a late nineties advertisement for underwear.

Figure 3.4: Print Advertisement for *Adam and Eve* Underwear, *Allure* Magazine, 1999

[157] Allen, *The Femme fatale*, p.50.

The woman's closed mouth implies that she is not about to eat the apple. Rather, the apple is positioned close to her lips in the image to emphasise the similarity in their colour and to link the mouth and the apple together more effectively. As in the *Deviant Art* advertisement, the model's skin is bleached to dramatise and emphasise the effect of the red lips and apple, which also matches the copy, 'Can you resist temptation?', accompanying the image. The text positions the image in the concept of temptation. The red apple, next to the woman's lips, suggests that the temptation is sexual and links the woman with Eve. The advertisement uses a similar technique to the *Deviant Art* advertisement: the woman's face has been cropped. The missing upper half of the face, and in particular the cropping of the eyes, dehumanises the woman and removes her ability to confer power to the viewer via her look. In postfeminist Eve images, the concept of power -- achieved through self-objectification and being sexually desirable to the consumer – is conveyed through Eve's return of the male gaze. In the underwear advertisement, as in the *Deviant Art* image, Eve is prevented from conveying power through the cropping of her eyes from the image. She is rendered powerless, while still representing sexual temptation, desire for the female and destruction of the male (in the case of the *Deviant Art* image) through that desire. The power that the advertisements suggest – the power to attract through female sexuality – is domesticated by the denial of Eve's return gaze.

In the advertisement below, for Lolita Lempicka's *The First Fragrance*, the female return gaze is one again prohibited. The image depicts a fantasy woodland scene,

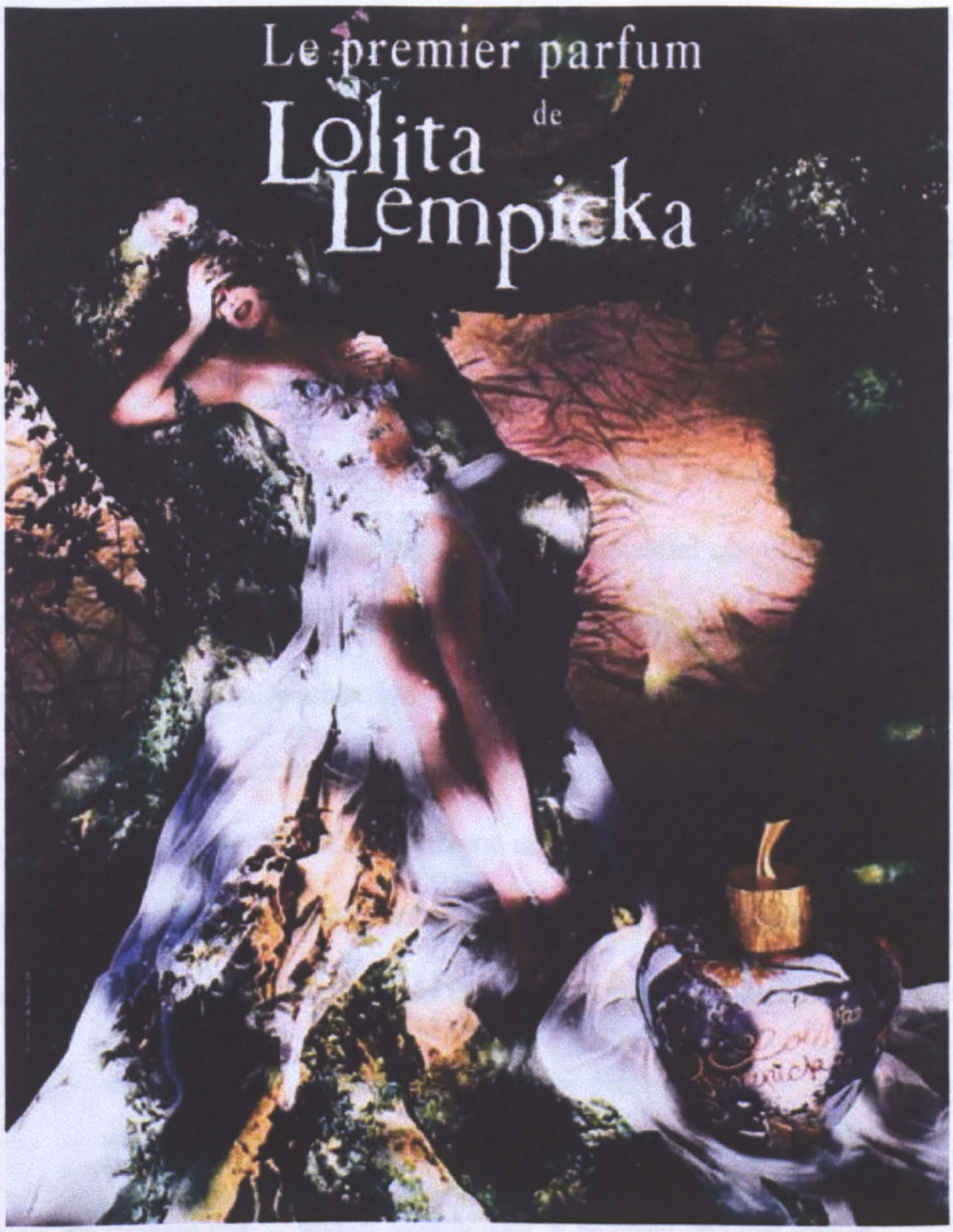

Figure 3.5: Print Advertisement for *The First Fragrance* by Lolita Lempicka, *Glamour* Magazine, May 2001

in which a woman in a torn evening dress lies on the trunk of tree, with one hand covering her exposed right breast and the other holding her head in a posture that seems to be a swoon or an expression of what could be either post-coital pleasure or post-traumatic distress. The woman's bare legs, abdomen and breast suggest that she has been involved in a sexual encounter. The image is ambiguous, however, about whether that encounter was violent or of mutual consent. The positioning of the perfume bottle near her feet connects the ambiguous sexual scene with the apple containing the first fragrance. As usual in postfeminist Eve

advertisements, the apple connotes the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3 and links the image of the ravished woman with temptation and desire. Is this an image of Eve after she has eaten of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil? If so, where is Adam? Whatever the story of the advertisement, the reason for the exhausted, prone, half-naked and dishevelled state of Eve is the effect of the first fragrance. The spectator-buyer sees that using the first fragrance can make a woman so sexually desirable that she will attract aggressive sexual attention, whether that attention is consensual or otherwise. On its appearance in women's glossy magazines, the ambiguity of the advertisement and the suggestion of sexual assault -- and indeed the insinuation of the image that sexual assault might be a desired outcome by women who wish to be considered highly sexually attractive – led feminist groups to protest the image and petition for its removal from circulation. In fact, the publicity surrounding the image significantly increased the profile of the perfume and Lolita Lempicka won a prestigious Fifi advertising award for best advertising campaign at the 2001 fragrance awards.

Images of suggested sexual violence are commonplace in postfeminist advertising having become: [158]

> ... romantic and chic instead of being seen as grievously contemptible. Such ads are used by some of the most reputable manufacturers in mainstream magazines aimed at refined, stylish audiences... Ads convey the message that ... women secretly want to be raped, and that women invite rape by their behaviour and attire.[159]

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[158] Also see double-page advertising image for *Agent Provocateur* underwear showing a murder scene in which a woman's body, wearing a transparent net bra, suspenders and stilettos, is sprawled on stairs. Her body is cordoned off with crime scene tape. The suggestion is that wearing *Agent Provocateur* underwear can have such a dramatic impact that it could cause one of its customers to be murdered. See *Agent Provocateur's* promotional coffee-table book, Joseph Corre and Serena Rees, *Agent Provocateur: A Celebration of Femininity* (London: Carlton, 1999), pp. 168-9.

[159] Cortese, *Provocateur*, p. 73. The idea that a woman and even a child bears responsibility for provoking a sexual attack is still in evidence in court cases in the UK. Most recently (25 June 2007) a 24 year old window cleaner, Keith Fenn, was given a minimal custodial sentence of three and half years for two counts of raping a ten year old girl in a park. Due to the amount of time Fenn had already spent in prison awaiting his sentence, the sentence would mean that he only has to spend another four months in imprisonment for the crimes. In his summing up of the trial, Judge Julian Hall QC said that the girl looked sixteen and was 'sexually precocious' and that the child dressed 'provocatively'. In a previous child abuse case in February 2007, however, Hall suggested that compensation paid to a child-abuse victim could be used to buy the child a bicycle to 'cheer them up'. See Mark Tran, 'Call for Appeal over "Pathetically Lenient" Rape Sentence', *The Guardian*, 25 June 2007.

Such advertisements display the flip-side of self-objectification in a society that still blames victims of sexual assault for attracting the 'wrong kind' of attention.[160] Rather than resisting, problematising or challenging such gender-biased attitudes, advertisements such as the Lolita Lempicka *The First Fragrance* one help perpetuate the notion that a woman invites and welcomes all sexual attention from men, even rape.

The updated version of the Lolita Lempicka *The First Fragrance* advertisement displays a similar, if less obviously controversial, ideology to the previous image. Once again, Eve is pictured in fantasy woodland scene but this time she sits on the trunk of the tree, looking sideways into the distance. As before, the advertisers have chosen to have the model look away from the viewer. She looks into the distance, or at a person off-scene, and her expression seems unhappy. Light falls on her exposed bare legs and the right side of her face. The advertisement is once again ambiguous -- not only does the woman wear a torn dress, similar to the one Eve wears in the previous advertisement, but she appears to have a bruise on her right cheek-bone. This could be heavily applied make-up, but, given the torn dress, the sad expression of the young woman, and the supposed 'overwhelming' effect of using the fragrance, one has reason to wonder. The light upon her face has bleached her eye make-up to the point where only half her eye-brow is visible; any make-up to enhance a cheek-bone should be bleached or at least have a much more subtle effect also.

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[160] See the following scholarly works for further examples of this attitude to victims of sexual violence: Abrams, D. *et al.*, 'Evaluating Stranger and Acquaintance Rape: The Role of Benevolent Sexism in Perpetrator Blame and Recommended Sentence Length', *Law & Human Behavior*, Vo. 3, Issue 28 (2004), pp. 295-303; Abrams D. *et al.*,'Perceptions of Stranger and Acquaintance Rape: The Role of Benevolent and Hostile Sexism in Victim Blame and Rape Proclivity', *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, Vol. 1, Issue 84 (2003), pp.111-25; Benedict, Helen, *Virgin or Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); G. Bohner, & Schwarz, N., 'The Threat of Rape: Its Psychological Impact on Non-victimized Women', in D. M. Buss & N. Malamuth (eds.), *Sex, Power, Conflict: Evolutionary and Feminist Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 162-75; Johnson, K. K. P., 'Attributions about Date Rape: Impact of Clothing, Sex, Money Spent, Date Type, and Perceived Similarity', *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, Issue 23 (1995), pp. 292-311; Viki, G. Tendayi and Dominic Abrams, 'But She was Unfaithful: Benevolent Sexism and Reactions to Rape Victims who Violate Traditional Gender Role Expectations - Brief Report', *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, Vol. 47 (2002), pp. 289-293.

Figure 3.6: Print Advertisement for *The First Fragrance* by Lolita Lempicka, *InStyle* Magazine, August 2003

Whether the viewer decides that the mark is make-up or bruising is actually of less importance than the fact that the advertisement creates enough ambiguity to suggest that the woman could have been the victim of an aggressive encounter.

The image could depict the scene after the first Lolita Lempicka advertisement, when the woman was able to recover from her experience, but the Company has used a different model and her hair is styled differently. Whereas in the first advertisement the woman's hair-style was long loose curls, thrown over her upper face, after a dramatic sexual encounter, this woman's hair-style is far more groomed. She has flowers fixed into the side of her hair and the style seems to be still in place regardless of whatever happened to shred her dress or result in possible facial bruising. While the advertisements may be ambiguous as to what has actually taken place immediately before the scenes they portray, they leave the spectator-buyer in no doubt over the power of the fragrance to make women overwhelmingly sexually desirable.

The Lolita Lempicka advertisements are unusual in terms of the pattern of representation in postfeminist Eve advertisements, however, because of the lack of the models' return of the consumer's male gaze. Usually in postfeminist advertising, the models' acknowledgement and direct return of the viewers' gaze is a technique to convey not only the power of the woman in the image but also to signify resistance and challenge to traditional patriarchal social values, as Robert Goldman concluded in his study of 1980s and early 1990s advertising:

> [Postfeminist advertising] Reinforces a prominent ideological account of woman defined by the male gaze. The ability to survey is based on power, but here the female look confers power. Women's power over man is thus ironically depicted as a function of her willing acceptance of her vulnerability and powerlessness *vis-à-vis men.* Here, the woman as paragon of beauty commands the male's attention by making herself *an object* of desire (brackets mine)[161]

Such a fine line differentiates passive 'sexist' female objectification from postfeminist self-objectification that promotes female sexuality as a means to achieve power and success that postfeminist advertising images must attribute Eve with sexual agency to show that she is active and powerful in her objectification rather than passive and powerless.

For instance, like Lolita Lempicka, the perfume company Cacharel, chose to use Eve imagery to represent their notion of desirable contemporary femininity. Also like Lolita Lempicka, the company updated its print advertisement to one that offered the same theme but enabled a slightly different reading.

[161] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially,* p. 117.

Figure 3.7: Print Advertisement for *Eden* Perfume by Cacharel, *Vogue* Magazine, July 1995

The advertisement above is the first print advertisement for Cacharel's perfume, *Eden: The Forbidden Fragrance*. In the image Eve returns the viewer's gaze; however, her expression seems to be questioning the look of the spectator-buyer rather than obviously inviting it. At the same time, however, she also displays the forbidden perfume by holding it next to her exposed left breast, linking the idea of forbidden pleasure with both the bottle of fragrance and the woman's naked body.

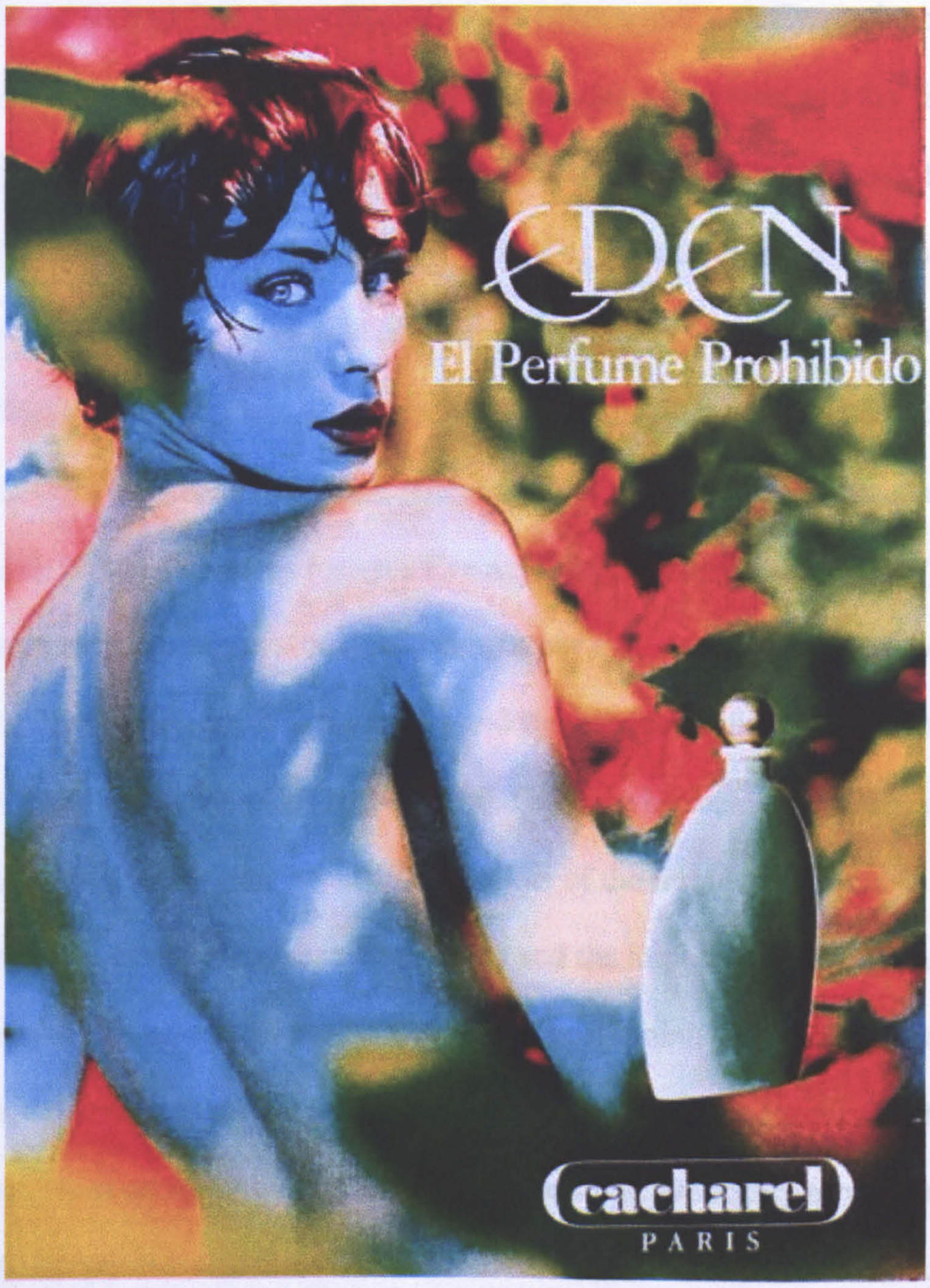

Figure 3.8: Print Advertisement for *Eden* Perfume by Cacharel, *Elle* Magazine, February 2000

In the updated print advertisement for the same fragrance, Cacharel's advertisers have chosen to make the overall impression of the image a little darker and more dangerous. The very name of the perfume 'El Perfume Prohibido' (The Forbidden Fragrance) suggests that the perfume will cause illicit or illegal consequences for the wearer. The second advert makes more of this notion than the first.

Both representations have cast Eve in a greenish-blue light. The second advertisement puts this colour against hot shades of orange and yellow and a brighter green, whereas the

first image placed Eve against a backdrop of pastel colours and gave Eve an innocent look, with a coiffed and quite androgynous hairstyle (despite her bare breast and the 'El Perfume Prohibido' tag-line). The updated image presents a new version of Eve, a tousled-haired, pouty-lipped woman who does not display her breast to the viewer, but instead offers the spectator-buyer a tantalising suggestion of breast, just available for view under her slightly lifted arm. Although she may turn her back on the gaze, she does not turn her face – she returns the viewer's gaze with a knowing pout. She does not question the gaze, as her predecessor did; in fact, the image presents Eve as if she is walking (or running?) away from us, the viewer, and has just looked back and caught our eye, or as if we, the viewer, have been watching her through a gap in the leaves and she has just realised that we there. Whatever the case, Eve is complicit in the game of looking because the increased sexual attraction created by her looking is the desired effect of the forbidden perfume.

The promise of increased sexual attraction and the implicit promise of increased power with which it is associated is characteristic of postfeminist advertising - the power the advertisements promise to the spectator-buyer, however, is illusory. Postfeminist advertisements focus on the individual rather than the collective ability of women to create improvements in their lives. In these advertisements, the individual woman's body becomes the site of liberation and route for achieving power. The advertising constructs a femininity that is organised around sexual confidence and autonomy and promotes this femininity as an embrace of the assertive, liberated woman, the powerful *Femme fatale* who debilitates men with her overwhelming sexuality. This femininity, however, allows the women who subscribe to postfeminist advertising ideology only tokens of power that are dependent on whether or not the woman competes for male attention, maintains her gender performance as sexually desirable temptress, and participates in the constant consumerism that this brand of

postfeminism necessitates. L.S. Kim warns against the dangers of self-objectification in her article on postfeminism in television:

> Moving from passive object of the male gaze to self-objectification does not necessarily achieve subjectivity, and it can be a false freedom. Self-objectification could be defined as the conscious effort to gain attention through one's feminine traits – again, sexual attention, not professional attention.[162]

When a woman's sexuality becomes her ultimate tool for the achievement of power and social status, women are dissuaded from forming collective groups -- the groups that really can achieve power shifts and increase women's social status -- to challenge the socio-political conditions that make male/female child-care responsibilities still heavily imbalanced for women, that allows a pay-structure in which women consistently earn a lower salary than men for the same job[163] and that maintains that women's best chance of achieving power and increasing social status is through the exploiting the market value of her own sexuality. In effect, postfeminist advertising ideology depoliticises women's struggles for power in daily life and purports that women's power issues can be solved through consumerism. Issues of gender equality are no longer about pay, unequal child-care, discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic abuse etc. but become about the most effective perfume, underwear, chocolate or clothing to offer increased sexual desirability. The suggestion of postfeminist advertising is that the better looking a woman is, and the more she maintains her gender performance, the less she will struggle with the issues that 'normal' women have to contend with in life.

As this thesis as so far argued, consumerism is the foundation of postfeminist advertising ideology that links female power and resistance to traditional patriarchal values with self-objectification. Advertisers use Eve imagery to exploit *Femme fatale* imagery and

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[162] L.S. Kim, ''Sex and the Single Girl' in Postfeminism: The F Word on Television', in *Television and New Media*, Vol.2 No. 4 (November 2001), p. 324.
[163] See Madelaine Bunting, 'Baby, This Just Isn't Working For Me: Sidelined, Overlooked, Squeezed Out ... The Mothers of Young Children are More Discriminated Against than Anyone Else in the Workplace, According to a New Report', *The Guardian*, 1 March 2007.

transform it into an image of contemporary female sexual empowerment through consumerism. An advertisement that has already been partially treated in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the double-page advertisement for Thorntons Eden chocolates, which appeared in *Glamour* magazine in February, 2003, makes the postfeminist advertising agenda I have been discussing so far in this thesis particularly explicit by virtue of the connections it makes between female sexual temptation and consumer empowerment.

The advertisement shows an image of Eve, in which chocolate has been substituted for the forbidden fruit, on one page, and describes the '10 Layers of Temptation' on the other.

Figure 3.9: Print Advertisement for Thorntons Eden Chocolates in *Glamour* Magazine, February 2003

On the first page, Eve is represented as a young woman, of the same age-range as the target audience of the magazine (18-25). She is pictured from the waist up and is naked. Although she covers her breasts with her arm and hand, the photo still allows much of her cleavage to be available for view by the spectator-buyer. The image suggests that the viewer has just caught Eve as she is about to bite into the forbidden fruit (the particular chocolate she is holding is actually called 'Forbidden Fruit' in the menu of Eden chocolates). Eve returns the spectator-buyer's gaze, although her expression is not welcoming – her look is simultaneously seductive (she is pouting rather than scowling or being pictured with her mouth open ready to eat the chocolate) and hostile – because, as the advertising copy suggests, the viewer has just interrupted her 'being bad'. The '10 Layers of Temptation' refers to the ten chocolates in a box of Thorntons confectionary and alludes to another well-established biblical trope, the Ten Commandments. Each chocolate has a name, the advertisement's copy lists each of the chocolates by its Eden-inspired name, and offers young women ways to 'uncover their inner-Eve' through self-indulgement.

The first 'layer', Forbidden Fruit, suggests that *Glamour*'s readers 'give in to temptation, because too much is never, ever enough. Curling up in your favourite armchair, with new season *Sex and the City* on the box and as many treats as you fancy to hand – bliss.' The advertising copy links Thorntons chocolates with postfeminist ideology of empowerment through sexuality and consumerism. By mentioning *Sex and the City* the advertisers suggest to the *Glamour* reader that Thorntons Eden chocolates are in the same bracket as the popular postfeminist television show. *Sex and the City*, HBO's phenomenally successful TV series, was at its peak of popularity in 2003. It centred around four female friends and their relationship, sex and wardrobe issues. By associating the two brands, Thorntons Eden chocolates and *Sex and the City*, with each other in the copy, the advertisers of Thorntons Eden hope to associate their product with the same 'cool' qualities as *Sex and the City*: sex

and consumerism.[164] Another 'layer of temptation' cements this connection between luxury consumer brands and Thorntons Eden Chocolates by saying that the advertised confectionary is the 'the silver Gucci stiletto of chocolates – sexy and modern – but with a fresh and original twist'. The copy then goes on to create connections between the Thorntons chocolates and consumer indulgence with the vague direction for readers to 'Think lusciousness and the fun can really begin. Eve might have been tempted by an old apple – but unfortunately it ain't gonna work in the modern day, boys!' So, although the advertisement is targeting young female postfeminist consumers in a young women's magazine, it assumes that the young women are receiving gifts from men. In order to tempt these young women into transgression, the advert suggests, the men are going to have to buy them something that presumably runs along the same lines as the Gucci shoes that have been mentioned in the copy. Is this alluding to the power that postfeminism promises women in return for self-objectification? The power to achieve male financial support through being sexually desirable? The postfeminist idea of female empowerment through sexuality does not seem altogether too different from the husband-hunting that nineteenth-century women had to go through in order to be financially secure.[165] For those women, trying to find the most eligible male to be a husband created competition for women and ensured that collective groups of women were unlikely to be formed because of the threat each woman posed to others. Similarly, postfeminism creates competition between women in terms of who can be the most successful temptress. Postfeminism can only benefit individual women, not women as a collective, since postfeminist advertising ideology is fundamentally exclusive: only the

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[164] For more comprehensive discussions of *Sex and the City* as a postfeminist text, see L.S. Kim, "Sex and the Single Girl", pp. 319-34; Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, 'In Focus: Postfeminism and Contemporary Media Studies', in *Cinema Journal 44*(2005), pp. 107-110; Diane Negra, '"Quality Postfeminism?" Sex and the Single Girl on HBO', in *Genders Online Journal* (www.genders.org), Issue 39, 2004; Rachel Moseley and Jacinda Read, '"Having it *Ally*": Popular Television (Post-)Feminism', *Feminist Media Studies*(2002), pp. 231-49, and Amanda D. Lotz, 'Postfeminist Television Criticism: Rehabilitating Critical Terms and Identifying Postfeminist Attributes', in *Feminist Media Studies* (2001), pp. 105-21.

[165] See Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p.100.

attractive, young, able-bodied and those who can give the appearance of being wealthy can participate in the competition for power.

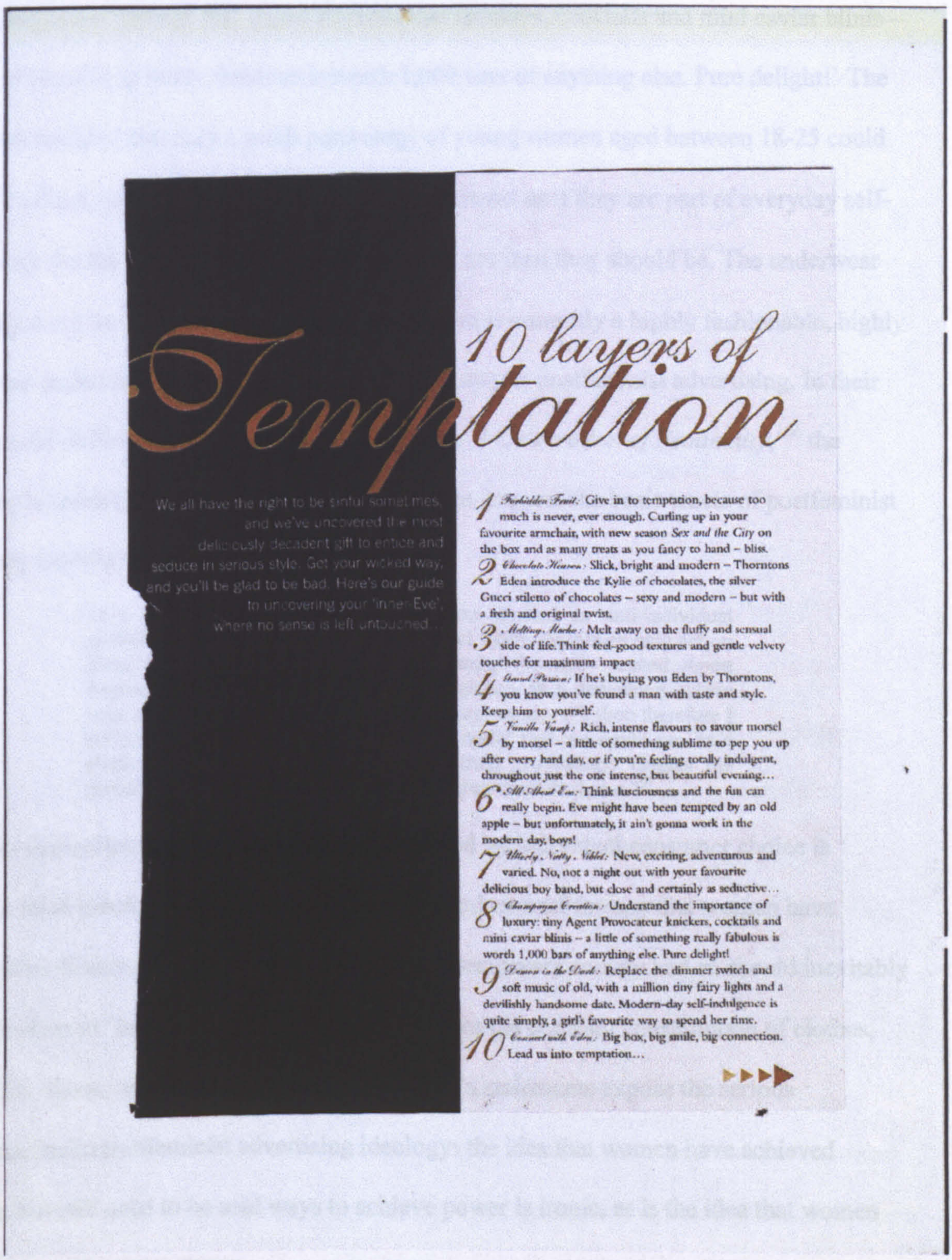

Figure 3.10: Print Advertisement for Eden Chocolates by Thorntons, *Glamour* Magazine, February 2003

At the end of the '10 Layers of Temptation', the Thorntons advertisement goes on to expose the deceit of postfeminist advertising ideology: 'Champagne Creation: Understand the importance of luxury: tiny *Agent Provocateur* knickers, cocktails and mini caviar blinis – a little of something really fabulous is worth 1,000 bars of anything else. Pure delight!' The copy lists luxuries that only a small percentage of young women aged between 18-25 could possibly afford, and yet the advertisement lists the items as if they are part of everyday self-indulgence for the *Glamour* reader -- or if they are not then they should be. The underwear company mentioned by the Thorntons advertisement is currently a highly fashionable, highly expensive underwear manufacturer, who leads the way in postfeminist advertising. In their promotional coffee-table book, *Agent Provocateur: A Celebration of Femininity*,[166] the company's creators, Joseph Corres and Serena Rees, express the basic tenets of postfeminist consumer ideology eloquently:

> At a time when political correctness has created an anti-individual environment to avoid offending anyone and when companies only act on ideas after the approval of marketing men, the aptly named *Agent Provocateur* was created to redress the balance. In a democracy where your only real choice is where you spend your money ("I shop therefore I am"), we found it necessary to open an outlet that we could use as a platform for our ideas and where we could provokingly display the sexuality of the female form without embarrassment or shame.[167]

The idea that collective politics has been superseded by individual consumer choice is inherent in all postfeminist advertising, as is the fundamental fantasy that women have achieved professional and personal equality in contemporary society and so should inevitably make a return to 'femininity', which always involves the constant consumption of clothes, cosmetics, shoes, and perfume. *Agent Provocateur*'s statements expose the serious discrepancies in postfeminist advertising ideology: the idea that women have achieved equality but still need to be sold ways to achieve power is ironic, as is the idea that women

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[166] Significantly for this thesis, Agent Provocateur means 'spies who provoke others to act illegally', which reflects the same theme as Eve advertising – that through the manipulation and display of her sexuality a woman can provoke others to act illegally or transgressively. This is a basic theme of postfeminism and the reason why Eve has become a postfeminist icon.
[167] Corres and Rees, *Agent Provocateur*, p. 7.

can afford expensive luxury items in order to achieve this power when they are yet to receive the same salary as men for the same job. Women, contrary to what the creators of *Agent Provocateur* want us to believe, are far from equally represented in the highest professional offices in academia, medicine, law and politics – a fact that Corres and Rees totally dismiss in their promotional literature:

> That women would rise to the heights of corporate, academic, and artistic success was inevitable. Women were no longer objects of seduction but powerful and provocative seducers, as well as highly competent professionals. With the power of equality, and the right and ability to choose, there was a yearning to return to an expression of femininity that has been put aside in order to succeed. It was time for a return to femininity by exploiting female charm, and what better way to draw attention to female power than by emphasising the female form? We believe that the ultimate expression is for each individual woman to emphasise her femininity and to revel in her erotic life. After all, the instinct to display and attract is inescapable. The desire to be sexy and the innate sexiness of the body remain, no matter how it is politicized. If you've got it, flaunt it. If you don't have it, GET SOME![168]

The idea expressed in this quotation from Corres and Rees -- that women can buy sexiness, charm and thereby achieve female power (If you don't have it. GET SOME!) -- is the concept that fuels postfeminist Eve advertising. For instance, in a recent perfume advertisement for the new *Desperate Housewives* fragrance, *Forbidden Fruit*, advertisers again exploit the combination of Eve and the ultimate in achieving power through female sexuality – the female celebrity -- to sell products to female consumers. *Desperate Housewives* centres on the lives of five main female characters and how they negotiate their friendships, relationships, marriages, families and jobs, while uncovering and hiding secrets along the way. The postfeminist tenet of promoting individual choice is one of the basic themes of the show, which is one of the most successful TV series of all time, winning multiple Emmy and Golden Globe awards annually.[169] Marc Cherry, the creator of the show, told *Newsweek* during an interview that, when developing *Desperate Housewives*, he 'wanted to write something about choices we make in life and what happens when that does not go

[168] Corres and Rees, *Agent Provocateur*, pp. 43-44.
[169] The series is currently ABC's number one show.

well. All the women have made some kind of choice in their life and are in various stages of regretting it. That is where the desperation comes from.'[170]

Cherry hit on a concept that resonated with millions of viewers (mostly female) all over the Western world. The series began in October 2004 on the ABC network in the US and since then has become the most popular show for 18-49 year old females worldwide, having been sold to fifty countries globally, with an audience of approximately 119 million viewers. The primetime comedy-drama series takes a darkly comedic look at suburbia, where the secret lives of housewives are not always what they seem. The series began with Mary Alice Young (Brenda Strong) leaving her perfect house in the loveliest of suburbs to commit suicide. She then narrates the whole series, taking the viewer into the lives of her family, friends and neighbours. Her circle of girlfriends on Wisteria Lane include Susan Mayer (Teri Hatcher), the divorcee and single mom who will go to extraordinary lengths for love; Lynette Scavo (Felicity Huffman), who struggles with balancing the complications of work and family issues; Bree Van de Kamp (Marcia Cross) who battles the demons of widowhood, alcoholism and vengeful children; Gabrielle Solis (Eva Longoria), the beautiful trophy wife who accepts jewellery from her husband in exchange for sex and conducts an affair with her young male gardener; and serial divorcee Edie Britt (Nicolette Sheridan), the real estate maven whose colourful love-life and vindictive personality keep the neighbourhood buzzing.

From the show's opening credits, the private lives (as opposed to the façade of domestic contentment that the women try to maintain) of the main female characters are connected with the temptation scene in Genesis 3. The credits contain references to famous pieces of art, which portray domesticity through the ages. The first image is a copy of the painting *Adam and Eve* by Lucas Cranach the Elder.

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[170] Interview with Marc Cherry, *Newsweek*, October 2005.

Figure 3.11: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Adam and Eve*, 1526

A snake passes an apple to Eve before another larger apple, with the words 'Desperate Housewives' written on it, falls on Adam.

Figure 3.12: Title Credits, *Desperate Housewives*, ABC Network

At the end of the credits, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil appears again, this time with a snake wrapped around a branch and the four main characters, Bree, Lynette, Susan and Gabriel, all appear under the tree and catch a falling apple. The *Adam and Eve* painting and the image of the five woman holding apples is a reference to individual choice – the choices that the women make and the ways they must then negotiate the needs and desires in their lives as a consequence of those choices. For instance, Lynette had to choose motherhood over career but deeply resents her position as stay-at-home mum and her husband, who enjoys a greater freedom because he is not expected to be equally involved in child-care and domestic duties. The ex-model, Gabriella, has chosen to marry her husband and commit herself to being a trophy wife in return for financial security. Despite her choice to marry for money, Gabriella is not happy with her husband and is having an affair with the teenaged gardener. Each woman is involved in various lies, deceits or scandals at any one time during the show and the apple in the credits also signifies the women's cunning and deviousness in these daily negotiations, playing on attributes traditionally ascribed to Eve in Genesis 3.

The explosive success of the series has spawned mass apple-related *Desperate Housewives* merchandising to exploit the market potential of the show's popularity, including clothing (most notably a T-shirt with an image of a red apple on the front, emblazoned with the words, 'It's time to come clean', referring to the many secrets of the women of Wisteria Lane), games, books, a Desperate Housewives Cookbook (with the tag-line: 'Juicy Dishes and Saucy Bits')[171] and the new *Forbidden Fruit* fragrance, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The red apple theme has been continued through all the promotional images and merchandising that have been produced by the show, usually using images that connect the

[171] Christopher Style and Scott S. Tobis, *The 'Desperate Housewives' Cookbook: Juicy Dishes and Saucy Bits* (New York: Hyperion, 2006).

female character of the show with the concepts signified by the apple and, of course, Eve: individual choice, deception, temptation, sin and desirability.

There are three main examples of the show employing Eve imagery to sell its products, all of which appeared around the time of the start of the second series of *Desperate Housewives* in 2005. The first example is the second-season promotional trailer featuring the theme 'Juicy'; the second is a print advertisement, featuring Eva Longoria as Eve, which promotes the second season of the show to its German audience, and the third example is the print advertisement for the *Desperate Housewives: Forbidden Fruit* fragrance. By the end of the first season *Desperate Housewives* had enjoyed overwhelming success and popularity, especially among the female audience age range 18-34. Two of its stars in particular, Teri Hatcher and Eva Longoria, had become celebrity staples of women's popular magazines for the age range 18-34. Longoria had by now won a lucrative contract with L'Oreal, a company that also appeals to the same market as magazines for the young female consumer and the same market sector as the *Desperate Housewives* show. The new promotional material for the show reflected Hatcher and Longoria's status as popular, desirable, successful female celebrities. Longoria in particular was singled out among the stars of *Desperate Housewives* to advertise the upcoming season to the German market. She also starred in the most sensual scene in the second season TV trailer.

The print advertisement to promote the show's new season to the German audience featured an image of Longoria holding a red apple. She returns the viewer's gaze and smiles. The red apple reflects the promotional material of the show and its opening credits; however, the picture is also typical of a postfeminist Eve advertising image. Longoria courts the viewer by tempting them to watch the show with her desirability – the viewers are enticed to watch the show to see more of her.

Figure 3.13: *Desperate Housewives*, StarForce Channel TV Advertisement, August 2005

The use of postfeminist advertising images in the show's promotional material is not surprising since the series offers postfeminism as packaged entertainment to its wide audience share. In each episode, as various tragedies, dramas and events unfold around the characters, the show suggests that the women are not victims of the circumstances or developments in their lives because, as Debbie Rodan proposes in her critique of the use of postfeminism in *Desperate Housewives*, they can employ individual tactics to negotiate and deal with the various difficulties they have to face, which enable empowerment and choice.[172] For example, when Longoria finds herself dissatisfied with being used as a trophy wife for her demanding husband, Carlos, but still requires his financial support, she begins an affair with the couple's teenaged gardener. She thus fulfils her need for physical satisfaction without sacrificing her lifestyle. The trophy wife who is valued only for her physical desirability turns the tables and takes a male trophy lover who she values only for his physical desirability. The choices the women make may not always be agreeable but they do

[172] Debbie Rodan, '*Desperate Housewives:* The Popularising of a Western Global Feminism', *Illumina* 1(2006/7), pp. 1-10.

allow them a degree of empowerment in their life. This empowerment is limited, however, since it can only be achieved through the subversion of the patriarchal society in which the women live. The desperate housewives do not experience equality, they experience inequality and injustice in their always heterosexual, domestic relationships. But they use individual tactics of guile and inventiveness to counter the patriarchal structure around them.

Interestingly, although the series is marketed as one involving a collective of female friends, the women rarely, if ever, work together to resolve any issues they may encounter. In line with the postfeminist ideology that promotes the empowerment of the individual woman over the collective group, the women employ individual tactics to deal with their domestic issues.

The second example of the use of Eve imagery in *Desperate Housewives* promotional material is the promotional trailer for the second season of the show, which ran during the break of NFL's Opening Kickoff in 2005. The trailer included each of the women in short scenes involving red apples.[173] The theme of the trailer is the word 'juicy': the advertisement is set to the song *Juicy* by the band Ezra, [174]and each woman, at the end of her scene, mouths 'juicy' to the camera. 'Juicy' can be used to describe many things – the bright red apples that form the major theme of the advertisement, the plots involving the characters that are alluded to during the trailer, and the women themselves, who act seductively and slightly menacingly throughout the scenes. The trailer begins with Teri Hatcher (Susan), in a black silk dress, walking seductively towards the camera while the blue sky rains red apples. The scene cuts to a close-up of a clock, which winds quickly forward, and then Hatcher, still walking seductively, enters a kitchen, where she opens a silver refrigerator only to be knocked to the ground by hundreds of red apples falling out. There is a close-up of Hatcher's amused expression as the viewer sees that she has landed next to a male arm. When the camera pans

[173] The Desperate Housewives Season Two trailer can be seen on the internet at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSK31belHmI.
[174] Ezra, *Juicy* (Artermis 2005).

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that is attached to the trunk of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. While she is grooming her hair she is surprised by the appearance of a snake, which drops down in front of her face and drops a red apple into her hand. The scene cuts to the words, 'Tempting isn't it?', and then back to a close up of Sheridan's mouth as she repeats the word 'juicy' once more to the camera. The trailer then gives the time and date of the opening show of the new season.

After the enormous success of its opening season, ABC created this highly sophisticated trailer to promote the second series of *Desperate Housewives*. Making the most of the now hugely famous actresses, who have become valuable commodities in their own right, the trailer creates a *Femme fatale* theme around each of the women. The forthcoming plots that the characters will be involved in during the second season are presented in terms of mildly menacing surreal scenes. The overwhelming presence of red apples represents the individual choices the women will make and the deceptions they will undertake as a consequence of these choices. For instance, Susan is overwhelmed with romantic choices and deceptions in the next series, which is signified by the apples raining down around her and the scene where she being knocked to the floor by apples cascading from her refrigerator. Bree's scene links the red apple with blood and death because the forthcoming plot centering on her character will involve her being implicated in the death of her husband. Lynette will deal with juggling motherhood, career and marriage in the second-season, so her scene in the trailer depicts her juggling red apples in the same way that she will juggle the choices and deceptions in her life. Gabriella, arguably the most openly deceptive of all the *Desperate Housewives* characters, is filmed bathing sensually in the red apples. She will enjoy her choices and deceptions in the second series, which centre around the imprisonment of her husband, Carlos. Edie, who will be offered choices and temptation during the second season

of the show, has an apple dropped in her hand by a serpent from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

While the function of the apples in the trailer undoubtedly points to the basic theme of choice and deception in the show and the complex plots of the next season, apples further function as a representation of the desirability of the female stars. The female celebrities are tempting the viewer to watch the second season of the show with their sexuality, which is played upon by the choice of black silk evening dresses as outfits for the women and also the undercurrent of sexual suggestion that carries through the trailer. For instance, the repetition of the word 'juicy' describes not only the dramatic forthcoming plot-lines but also the women themselves, who are being described in the same terms as the forbidden fruit.

Advertising for the *Desperate Housewives: Forbidden Fruit* fragrance, which was released at the same as the second season promotional trailer, builds on the themes emphasised in the short promotional film. In the print advertisement for the perfume, the female stars of the show all wear the same outfits as in the trailer and, again echoing the scenes from the trailer; they are all connected with the red apple 'forbidden fruit'. The five main stars of the popular ABC comedy-drama series are pictured in a circular shot, lying on a bed of red apples.

Figure 3.15: Print Advertisement, *Desperate Housewives: Forbidden Fruit* Fragrance, October 2005

Below the photograph of the desperate housewives is an image of the fragrance bottle. On the bottle's packaging is a copy of the painting *Adam and Eve* by Lucas Cranach the Elder, the same image used in the opening credits of the show. Now, as famous celebrities, who are known by their own names more than those of their characters, the desperate housewives have become a highly lucrative sales vehicle for the show's merchandise.

Used as a promotional image to sell perfume to the many fans of the show, the apple, in combination with the female celebrity holding it, offers the spectator-buyer the opportunity to become part of the *Desperate Housewives.* Just as the Adam and Eve scene in the opening credits and the end of that scene, when each of the characters is pictured holding an apple from the tree, signify the problematic power dynamics of male/female domestic relationships and the various 'sins' of each of the *Desperate Housewives* female characters (e.g. infidelity, preferring career to child-care, arson and taking non-prescription drugs to cope with the stress of motherhood, to name but a few), the image of the celebrities seductively holding an apple in the print advertisement for the *Desperate Housewives* perfume connotes the desirability and empowerment of those women and tempts consumers with the offer of somehow buying those same qualities through the perfume.

The show *Desperate Housewives* has always been concerned with the difficulties of domesticity for contemporary women (how to stem the resentment of having to put a successful career on hold when one has four children to look after and child-care is still seen as primarily the mother's responsibility; how to deal with the heart-break and humiliation of a husband's infidelity; how to negotiate one's own infidelity etc.) and it resonated with the feelings and experiences of millions of female viewers. The empowerment of the *Desperate Housewives* characters, however, involved each of them working within the patriarchal structure of society, individually subverting and undermining its limiting effects on them. The show translates this individual subversion of the traditional familial structures of

patriarchy into postfeminist empowerment, as the women use their sexuality, desirability, guile and inventiveness to negotiate their way around the difficulties caused by their relationships with men.

The depiction of the postfeminist empowerment of the *Desperate Housewives* female characters in the opening credits of the show, and the representation of the actresses as Eves in postfeminist advertising is no more than a way of marketing a form of limited female empowerment within a patriarchal structure. Far from returning to female power after the achievement of equality, women who subscribe to postfeminist ideology that promotes the empowerment of the individual by whatever means she needs to employ are actually using the same skills and wiles attributed to 'cunning' or 'devious' women who have attempted to subvert patriarchy throughout the ages. Postfeminism, in this package, is nothing new; in fact it is even older than the images it recycles.

As we saw in Chapter 2, the irony for women subscribing to the notion of female empowerment through self-commodification and sexualisation is that, in participating in 'empowerment through consumerism' to become a more profitable commodity, in reality, young women can suffer a tremendous loss. The difficulty for women who identify themselves with postfeminist values and view their bodies and sexuality as their most valuable commodities is that, because self-commodification leads to extreme competition among females, very few at any one time are successful in achieving power and wealth through their bodies. The few who are successful will change rapidly because the nature of consumerism is that what is considered desirable one year may well be passé the next, and the women who are fighting for their market share will have to work hard to ensure they maintain male desire and female envy. For instance, the most successful sexual-saleswomen at the moment are Beyonce Knowles, Jennifer Lopez and Scarlett Johansson – all of whom

have developed themselves into the ultimate commodity: an identity brand.[175] These women are no longer only actresses and singers, their very identity is a commodity. This identity brand is based solely on the desirability of the women; the consumer has to want what these celebrities have. Johansson has a dizzying list of celebrity endorsements increasing her wealth each year: Calvin Klein fragrances, Louis Vuitton and Reebok to name but a few of the most lucrative. She is also a 'spokes-model' for the cosmetics giant L'Oreal, as is Knowles. The companies hiring these female celebrities choose them because of their ability to represent the qualities they want associated with the product. For instance, L'Oreal wants to appeal to young, popular-culture literate, financially independent women. Thus they offer contracts to young female celebrities who are in the media eye, are considered highly desirable and attractive by consumers and who have achieved their status through their looks - perfect for a cosmetics company. In her press statement after accepting the L'Oreal contract, Johansson said, 'It is wonderful to be working with L'Oreal, a company that has celebrated independent women for years',[176] making clear the link between cosmetics, consumerism and female independence.[177]

Knowles's and Lopez's skills of self-commodification are formidable, with both of them flooding the market with popular film and album releases, appearing in numerous advertising campaigns and launching their own fashion, make-up and perfume lines. These women know how to sell themselves. They are the proof of the power of sexual

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[175] Both Beyonce Knowles and Jennifer Lopez are known to work out for two hours per day and have extremely restrictive diets to maintain their desirable and marketable figures. Knowles, in particular, has attracted criticism for admitting that she eats only slices of tomato and cucumber for lunch to keep body-fat to a minimum and fasted on a liquid-only diet to lose two stones for her part as the lead singer, Dinah, in the recent, hugely-hyped and Academy Award winning *Dreamgirls* movie.

[176] http://www.imdb.com/news/wenn/2006-01-05#celeb6.

[177] In Reebok's statement to the press, released after hiring Johanssen to endorse one of their footwear ranges, Reebok describes the Hollywood star as a 'world renowned style icon' and 'an inspiration for today's young women', making clear the link between celebrities who commodify their sexuality to achieve a market value and the appeal of these celebrities to young women. Reebok wanted to exploit that link to achieve greater customer sales, knowing that young women would be more likely to purchase a product that was endorsed by Johanssen in an attempt to emulate her appeal. BusinessWire, 'Reebok Partners with Screen Star Scarlett Johansson to Create Red-Hot Fashion Collection, Scarlett Hearts Rbk', July 25, 2006.

subjectification and they are the role models for current and future consumers. Significantly, Knowles, Lopez and Spears, all known for their overt sexuality and all highly successful identity brands, appeared together in a 2004 TV commercial for Pepsi that was shown during the Super Bowl. The commercial showed the three women as gladiators who were about to fight in a contest, again linking commodified female sexuality with power and strength. The commercial was one of the most successful of all time.

Advertisers are not creating a link between commodified female sexuality and independence, wealth, power and social status that is not apparent to the target young female consumer herself: in the 2006 Forbes Celebrity 100 Power list, which lists the most influential celebrities each year, there were proportionately few women compared to the number of men. Tom Cruise was at number one and the top two women were Oprah Winfrey and J.K. Rowling, at numbers three and nineteen respectively. Most of the women on the list had made their name through their looks. On the Forbes website each celebrity on the most influential list has their two most marketable assets listed next to their picture. [178] Four of the celebrities on the list were models, Gisele Bundchen, Kate Moss, Tyra Banks and Heidi Klum, and they each had 'beautiful, sexy' or 'attractive, stylish' next to their photos. These women have become powerful through being willing to participate in self-objectification and they were being rewarded handsomely for it. Indeed, Gisele Bundchen, currently the highest paid model in the world and number seventy-one on Forbes' list, is worth $30 million for being 'beautiful, sexy'. Forbes goes on to say that Bundchen has 'twenty fashion contracts and her "assets" earned her more last year than many of the highest paid actors on the Celebrity 100'.[179]

To succeed in popular culture a woman must be attractive and willing to exploit her attractiveness for its maximum market potential. This allows them to be powerful and

[178] http://www.forbes.com/2006/06/12/06celebrities_money-power-celebrities-list_land.html.
[179] http://www.forbes.com/2006/06/12/06celebrities_money-power-celebrities-list_land.html.

wealthy, but still nowhere near as powerful as the men, even if the women are out-earning them. Ironically, the two most powerful women on the list, and the only women in the top twenty, Oprah Winfrey and J.K. Rowling, earn far more than any other women on the list (Winfrey is described as earning $275 million and Rowling $75 million) and are described as having far more power and influence than any other woman on the list; however, they are also the only women who do not have any of the tags 'beautiful', 'sexy', 'attractive', 'stylish' or 'cute' next to their names as reasons for their success. Winfrey's most marketable qualities are described as 'intelligent, confident' and Rowling is 'talented, intelligent'. Their place on the list, and the personal qualities that have led them to become so wealthy and influential, simultaneously undermines and underlines postfeminist advertising's notion that the locus of women's power is their sexuality: the most powerful and wealthy women in popular culture have not achieved that status through self-objectification but all the other women on the list have. Nevertheless, the fact that so few women on the list got there through means other then being beautiful or sexy makes it clear that using your body and sexuality as a marketable commodity is a way to get ahead socially and financially.

There is, however, a negative side to this self-marketing. The demands of successful self-commodification and the constant scrutiny of being the object of the gaze can take their toll on celebrities whose careers, wealth and status are founded on the marketing of their sexuality. Britney Spears, who shot to international stardom with her controversial single, *Baby One More Time*,[180] has made a highly lucrative career from self-objectification. From dancing provocatively in a school uniform replete with mini-skirt and pig-tails in the *Baby One More Time* promotional video, to exploiting the popularity of the Eve image in the MTV 2001 Awards by dancing in a garden of Eden inspired stage set with a python around her

[180] Britney Spears, *Baby One More Time* (Bmg, 2000).

neck (the single most reproduced media image of that year), Spears found status, power, fame and immense wealth through self-objectification.

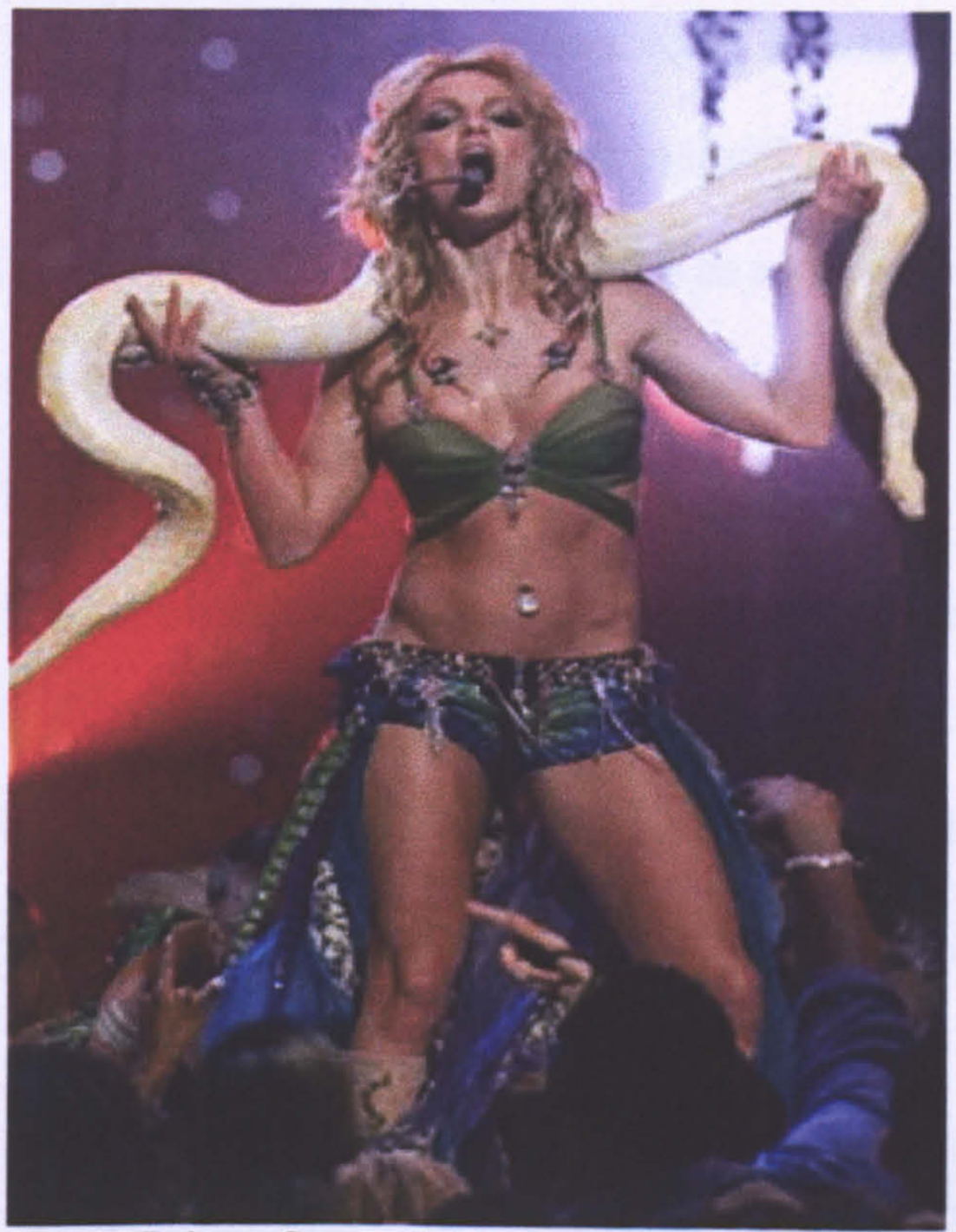

Figure 3.16: Image from Britney Spears Performing *Slave 4 U* at the MTV Awards, 2001

Marketing herself as a brand, Spears introduced her own clothing range, attached her name to many brands (such as Sketchers shoes and Pepsi) and launched her own perfume.[181] In 2002, at the pinnacle of her career, Spears was named as the world's most powerful celebrity (male and female included) on the Forbes Celebrity 100 list. By 2007, however, Spears had dropped out of the influential Forbes list altogether, thanks to being admitted twice to a celebrity rehabilitation centre for alcohol dependency, two failed marriages, a media furore surrounding her parenting skills, and a public breakdown, which saw her shaving her long hair-extensions off while the paparazzi frenziedly photographed the incident. Spears may well still be in the headlines but she is there as an example of a woman whose self-commodification has also caused her self-destruction.

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[181]Britney Spears's fragrance, *Curious,* has made approximately $100 million in revenue since its launch date in 2004, illustrating the selling-power Spears wielded at the height of her career.

Nevertheless, the drawbacks of female self-promotion through sexuality do not put off the target female 18-35 consumer, who is still attracted to the postfeminist advertising ideology that sells the idea of sex as the ultimate tool to achieve female empowerment. In this climate, images of Eve become ever more popular as a signifier of female independence and power through sexuality. The Eve image often functions as a vehicle, not just for already famous actresses, models and pop stars to connect their persona with the cultural myth of Eve, but for those 'wannabe' celebrity females wishing to become famous through their sexuality, or celebrities who want to transform their public persona from daytime, or children's, TV presenter to presenter of prime-time evening shows.[182]

The image below is a promotional shot for glamour model and ex-Playboy Playmate, Nicole Sawyer, who uses Eve imagery to convey the strength of her sexual appeal to potential consumers.

Figure 3.17: Glamour Model Nicole Sawyer Promotion, www.dk-studio.com, 2006

[182] The song Britney Spears performed at the MTV Awards in 2001, *Slave 4 U*, was a departure into a new, more adult sound for Spears. It is significant that for this transition from pop queen of the pre-teens to targeting an older audience, Spears' marketing team chose to exploit the Eve image to grab the headlines and make Britney's transformation from sex-kitten to *Femme fatale* clear.

This image is different from the other Eve images treated in this thesis because it only partially adheres to the postfeminist ideology promoted by advertisers and marketing companies. First of all, Sawyer is displaying only half of her face in the picture. She is selling her body, and her sexuality, which is linked with temptation and sin by the red, bitten apple she is holding just above her crotch. Sawyer is not promoting herself to women's magazines, however, which would explain the lack of any indication that her sexuality is an empowering tool for her. She gently holds the apple using the 'feminine touch' defined by Goffman as a typical advertising technique in the 1970s to denote female cradling, or caressing of an object.[183] In postfeminist advertisements involving Eve that sell female sexuality as the source of empowerment, Eve usually holds the apple or the snake in a less obviously delicate and decorative manner. In contrast to all the images of Eve that I have found so far in my research on the subject, the Eve that Sawyer represents is in licensed withdrawal. Licensed withdrawal, as discussed in Chapter 1, is a technique associated with Adam rather than Eve in postfeminist advertisements, as will be illustrated in the discussion of Eve advertisements where Adam is also present below. Eve is given the full responsibility for the transgression in these images, with Adam depicted as either looking away from the viewer and from Eve, or appearing *non compos mentis* and almost childlike. The function of licensed withdrawal in these images is to give the appearance of Eve's superior social status and power over Adam. The suggestion is that Eve's sexuality has empowered her and rendered Adam powerless. In Sawyer's promotional image there is no such agenda; she is the one rendered powerless and the male gaze does not offer her any means of resistance. On the contrary she is depersonalised rather than empowered by her objectification and the fact that her body is cropped so that only the sexually-associated parts of her anatomy – the lips, breasts and the

[183] Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, p. 29.

genitalia (signified by the positioning of the forbidden fruit) – are displayed. The cropping technique employed in this advertisement is significant because, as Cortese observes:

> Women's bodies are often dismembered or hacked apart in ads. When their bodies are separated into parts, women cease to be seen as whole persons. This perpetuates the notion that a woman's body is not linked to her mind, soul, and emotions… Advertising that depicts women's bodies without faces, heads, and feet implies that all that is really important about a woman lies between her neck and her knees. The lack of a head symbolises a woman without a brain. A faceless woman has no individuality. A woman without feet is immobile and therefore submissive.[184]

The Eve represented by Sawyer's promotional image, then, is the antithesis of the postfeminist Eve advertisements treated in this thesis. She is submissive, objectified and dehumanised by the commodification of her sexuality. What makes this image so different from the postfeminist advertising images of Eve promoted to young female consumers?

If we turn to a similar image, below, a promotional image for the model Marisa Miller, the difference becomes clear.

Figure 3.18: Promotional Image for model Marisa Miller in *Glamour* Magazine (US Edition), December, 2005

[184] Cortese, *Provocateur*, p. 31.

As opposed to Sawyer, Miller stares directly at the viewer. The viewer can see her face and can see that she is a person. She has a personality, however constructed that may be, and she is presented as a person rather than a collection of dismembered body parts. This image suggests empowerment through female sexuality, since Miller's posture is one of confident display. The similarities between the two models' promotional images are less dramatic that at first seems, however, because Miller's image is still cropped. Her lower legs and feet are missing from the picture and the woman is still limited to being the sum of her sexuality, even though the advertising techniques used to display her are less sexist than those employed to display Sawyer. The real difference, however, lies in the target consumer for these images. Miller is being promoted as a model in magazines aimed at 18-25 year-old female consumers and therefore must reflect the current postfeminist agenda that this target group currently finds appealing.[185] Sawyer's promotional image, on the other hand, is targeted at a male consumer who would not necessarily be interested in a postfeminist politik. The male consumer that Sawyer's image is attempting to appeal to is the same target male consumer who would buy *Playboy*, or one of the many 'lads' mags' that have become popular again since the early 1990s.[186] The images are not really about social politics of any kind but promote consumerism in whatever form it takes, whether it be young postfeminist women or male *Playboy* customers. The same theme will be repackaged to fit whatever is most appealing to the target consumer.

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[185] Miller embodies the postfeminist ideology of increased socio-economic status through self-objectification outside of this shot, however, since she has achieved celebrity status through being one of America's most popular model's thanks to her appearances in the US underwear firm Victoria's Secret catalogues. Miller is now famous, successful, rich and a role model for young women because of her self-objectification.

[186] DK Studio is the photographer, Dennis Keim, of the shot, who specialises in nude, glamour images of women, as can be seen from his photographs for the model agency that represents Sawyer, Solo Models' online promotional catalogue at, http://www.solomodels.com/smprint/18808/18808_portfolio.pdf. Furthermore, on her webpage (http://www.onemodelplace.com/member.cfm?ID=49911) Sawyer lists lingerie and glamour modelling as two of her key skills and lists appearances in Men's Click Magazine 2003 December as Candy of the Month, Teeze Magazine 2004-2005, and ROAD RACER X Magazine's Hall of Fame and photo of the year 2006, illustrating the male heterosexual audience to which she appeals.

Even when promotional Eve images attribute power to the woman representing Eve, this empowerment through sexuality can simultaneously be undermined by the advertisement itself. For instance, in this promotional image for one of the contestants in the first series of the show *America's Next Top Model*, the model is wearing a 'dress-up' costume, which conflates the Snow White character of fairy tales with the mythology of Eve.[187]

Figure 3.19: Promotional Image for *America's Next Top Model* Show, 2003

[187] We will see later in this chapter that the show *America's Next Top Model* has a particular fondness for representing its contestants as Eve in advertising campaigns.

The red apple in the image signifies both Eve and Snow White, since the red apple stands for both the biblical forbidden fruit in popular culture and the red apple by which Snow White was poisoned in the fairy tale. In this image, however, the model holds a red apple that is not poisonous to her, rather it signifies her sexual empowerment. She is desirable to the viewer and she is, according to the postfeminist advertising agenda, empowered by her desirable sexuality because she is the agent of her own objectification. While the trees in the background suggest a garden of Eden setting, the model is dressed in a more sexual version of the Disney Snow White costume. The corset and mini-skirt of the Snow White outfit may suggest a parody of the fairy tale, a witty postfeminist retake on the good-girl-gone-bad theme that would also fit with the Eve signifiers included in the image. The difficulty with this reading, however, is that the model's expression shows no sign of humour, parody or understanding of the 'joke'; instead the model is looking slightly down on the consumer, which conveys her elevated status as one who wields the power of sexual desirability. The cartoon character's costume, at the same time, undermines this power and status. By putting the model in this outfit the advertisement sends itself up, but seemingly without the understanding of the model, who appears mildly ridiculous rather than powerful.

Advertisements in which Eve is pictured with the serpent from Genesis 3 are usually more overtly sexual than those where she is pictured with the forbidden fruit. Furthermore, these images are usually unsuccessful at in any attempt to represent female sexual empowerment because of their use of traditional sexist advertising techniques, such as cropping and licensed withdrawal, which remove any sense of agency or self-empowerment through sexual objectification that could be attributed to Eve if these techniques were not employed. As I have argued above, the images of Eve with a red apple usually represent Eve as the ultimate agent provocateur. She is a postfeminist icon because she is, according to the

advertisements, able to tempt others into doing what she wants because of her overwhelming desirability. In advertisements where Eve is pictured with only the snake, the postfeminist idea of empowerment through sexuality is undermined. The adverts are more concerned to display Eve's flesh and use the serpent as a phallic symbol than to present Eve as an empowered, sexually assertive individual. Significantly, the essential returned gaze of the female in postfeminist advertising, which is necessary to signify her empowerment, is almost always absent from these images.

A notable exception is the promotional image of Anthea Turner, below, discussed above in Chapter 2. Since Turner was attempting to revive her flagging TV career with this image by playing on her very public affair with married man Grant Bovey, the image is self-consciously postfeminist and almost a parody of Turner's usual TV persona. Previous to the affair, Turner had been the highest paid female on television and offered audiences a wholesome girl-next-door image that had been a hangover from her days as a children's TV presenter for the Blue Peter show. After the affair with Bovey made tabloid headlines and Turner was pilloried

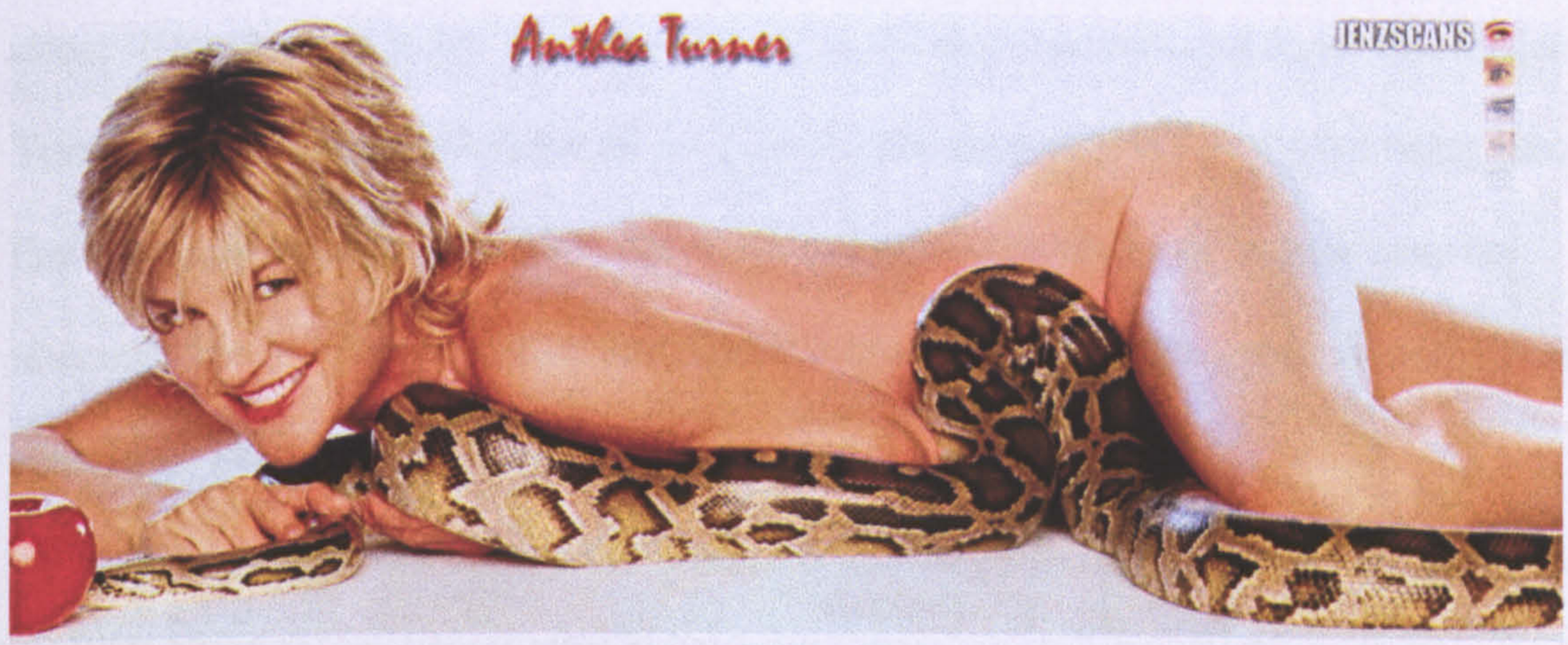

Figure 3.20: Promotional Media Image of Anthea Turner, *The Sun*, 17 March, 1997

in the press for her romantic transgression, she chose to display herself as Eve for promotional photos to use the negative publicity to her advantage. She lies naked, in an all-

white background, so that the focus of the image is on her body and the snake. Turner's posture is unnatural; she has raised her lower body to create a more prominent curve to her body, in an attempt to make the picture look more sexual. Her posture also mimics the natural movements of a snake, and the snake has been positioned next to her to highlight the similarity between them. The serpent has been positioned to follow the emphasised curve of Turner's body, and she grasps the creature with both hands near her face to show closeness. To make the context of the image clear to the viewer, the snake faces a bright red apple, just in the left corner of the image. The apple matches the shade of Turner's lips, drawing a connection between Turner and the forbidden fruit. The fact that she has physical similarities to both the forbidden fruit and the serpent in the image implies that she also shares other qualities with them, such as being tempting and desirable. After the affair with a married man, Turner tries to market herself as a sexually desirable forbidden fruit. She shows the audience that she is in on the joke by returning their gaze and smiling. By means of this image, Turner attempted to manipulate the public impression of her by parodying her tabloid persona as 'temptress/adulteress'. Having been in the press for her sexual transgression, she chose to market that to her advantage in true postfeminist advertising style. The difficulty, Turner discovered, was that, for all the postfeminist propaganda[188]and advertising ideology that currently saturates Western culture, the sexual transgression of women remains unacceptable in Western society and Turner's career has never recovered from the press scandal of her affair. [189]

The print advertisement for *Trussardi Python* perfume below, another appropriation of the Eve image, shows a similar image to the Turner promotional photograph, only this

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[188] See, for instance, the statement from Corres and Rees that they 'espouse a philosophy that takes equal rights of women as a given, while believing that women and can, and indeed, should, still look as sexy and feminine as possible', *Agent Provocateur*, p. 43.

[189] In the final episode of the much lauded postfeminist drama, *Sex and the City*, even Samantha, the ultimate television representation of postfeminist sexually assertive femininity, settled down with a long-term boyfriend after developing breast cancer and finding that she no longer wanted to continue being sexually promiscuous.

time all the hallmarks of postfeminist empowerment are absent. A naked woman stands in front of a white column that is similar in shape to the perfume bottle in the right-hand corner of the image. With one hand she holds on to the column and with the other she supports the enormous python that is coiled around her upper body. The naked woman stands in a traditionally feminine pose

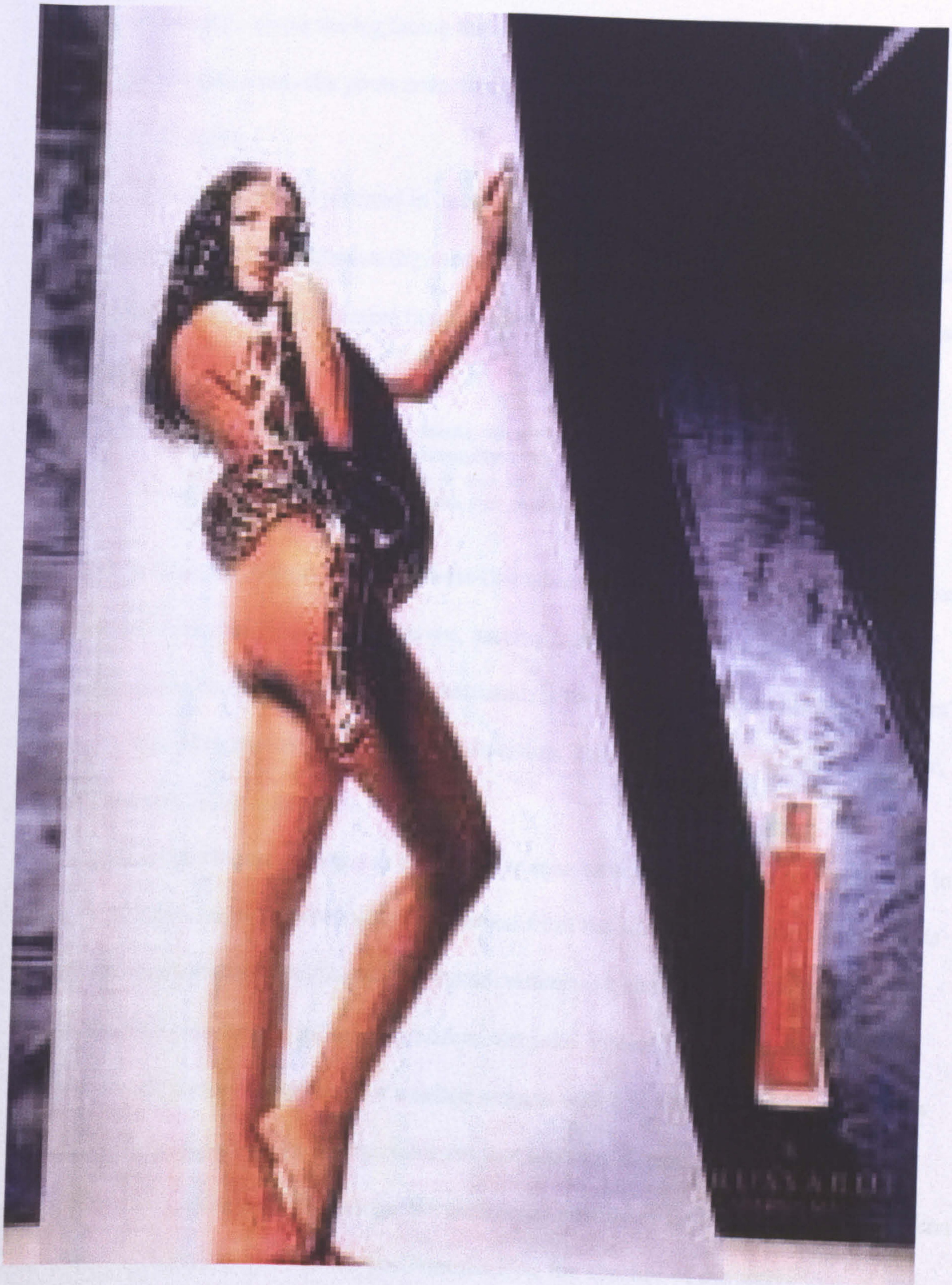

Figure 3.21: Print Advertisement for *Trussardi Python* fragrance for women, *Elle* Magazine, May, 1999

used in advertising, where the leg facing the camera is bent slightly to emphasise slenderness and length. Significantly, she pouts seductively and looks away from the camera, to something off scene.

In this image Eve is pictured in licensed withdrawal, which shows her removed psychologically from the situation depicted.[190] When Erving Goffman conducted his research in advertising in the 1970s he found that far more women than men were pictured in licensed withdrawal:

> Women more than men, it seems, are pictured engaged in involvements which remove them psychologically from the social situation at large, leaving them unoriented in it and to it, and presumably, therefore, dependent on the protectiveness and goodwill of others who (or might come to be) present.[191]

As I seek to illustrate below, in postfeminist Eve advertising the male character Adam is the one who is pictured in licensed withdrawal, leaving him disoriented and psychologically withdrawn from the scene. Eve, on the other hand, is usually pictured returning the viewers' gaze, as a sign of empowerment and sexual assertion. This is not always the case, however, as the Trussardi image illustrates.

Although the image seems to depict the woman as active in self-objectification,[192] in reality it presents her as psychologically removed from the scenario. Because the woman is on display and in licensed withdrawal in the advertisement, she is not empowered by her objectification – she is not 'in' on the postfeminist joke. Instead, this image becomes just another sexually suggestive image of a naked woman with a phallic symbol hanging down her leg. All the traits of sexual empowerment that one would expect in postfeminist advertising are absent from this image: the traditional posture of feminine display rather than the assertive display posture of the postfeminist Eve, the absence of the active look of one

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[190] See Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, p. 57.
[191] Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, p. 57.
[192] A I have said before in this thesis, there is often a fine line that divides postfeminist advertising images of empowerment through sexuality and self-objectification and more traditional sexist practices of female sexual objectification in advertising.

who has agency in her objectification, and the absence of the forbidden fruit that has become the postfeminist symbol for individual choice and sexual empowerment are missing from this image of Eve. The bottle, the serpent and the column are all phallically shaped, suggesting that Eve is being objectified not only to attract men but for the pleasure of men.

Similarly the two brochure covers, below, for Leeds Victoria Quarter's promotional magazine, *VQ*, and the clothing company, Sisley, further illustrate the disempowering effect of the absence of the female return gaze in postfeminist Eve advertising. Each cover features a representation of Eve with the serpent; however, both images have employed the sexist advertising technique of cropping the eyes from the head of the women, which objectifies and dehumanises the women in the shot.[193] In the *VQ* advertisement, this technique is used to allow the consumer to see themselves as the tempting Eve, consuming to make herself even more desirable in the *VQ* garden of Eden. The Sisley shot, however, is aiming for the shock factor in the hope that young consumers will take notice of the brochure and then buy from it, since it is associating itself with sexuality and rebelliousness, themes that are attractive to its late-teen target consumers.

[193] This technique is traditionally almost always used on females in advertising except in postfeminist advertising when it is used on male bodies to objectify and sexualise them. See the discussion of images where Adam is depicted alone later in this Chapter.

Figure 3.22: Cover of *VQ* Magazine (Leeds Victoria Quarter), Spring/Summer Issue 2004

Figure 3.23: Cover of Sisley Brochure, *Lost in the Garden of Eden*, Spring/ Summer Edition 2001

Unlike the unisex brochures of Sisley and *VQ*, the Trussardi print advertisement appeared in a women's magazine. Interestingly, the perfume did not sell well. Whether that is because postfeminist consumers picked up on Eve's lack of agency in the image or it was simply a matter of the perfume being unpleasant is not really the issue, since well-chosen advertisements have always sold mediocre products to consumers. The issue is that this advertisement highlights the fundamental weaknesses of the postfeminist theme of female empowerment through self-objectification. The images are merely a recycling opportunity for traditional patriarchally defined images of women in art produced in the nineteenth-century, and in advertising produced in the 1970s. Postfeminist images are packaging the traditional methods of women's negotiation tactics to achieve power in patriarchal culture as a new form of feminism. In fact, this kind of 'every woman for herself' survival tactic that women use in societies defined by men is long established. For example, the form of postfeminism sold in advertising today is remarkably similar to the strategies of female sexual guile promoted by Helen Gurley Brown in her 1962 smash-hit bestseller, *Sex and the Single Girl.*[194] Brown's book was a self-help manual that provided strategies for the modern single career girl of the time (who eventually became the *Cosmo* girl) to rise above her limiting circumstances through the tools of feminine transformation and sexual guile. Throughout the sixties and on through the next few decades, Brown celebrated an exaggerated femininity that hinged upon the power to remake oneself into a sexually desirable temptress. Brown summarises the fundamental ideology of what was to be seen by young women as female sexual empowerment in postfeminist advertising over forty-years later: 'Sex is a powerful weapon for a single woman in getting what she wants from life.'[195]

The sexual strategic approach of Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* formed the template for the postfeminist empowerment through self-objectification that we see in

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[194] Helen Gurley Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl* (New York: Barricade Books, 2003). Such was the popularity of this book that it has been reprinted many times since its original release in 1962.
[195] Gurley Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl*, p.7.

popular culture today. Despite the overwhelming similarities between the Gurley Brown self-help guide and postfeminist advertising ideology, a significant difference is that Gurley Brown was advising women who did not have equality in any sense in society. The women who bought her book were women who felt they needed to transform themselves into sex objects to achieve any form of power in their lives. Postfeminist advertising ideology, however, assumes that women enjoy equality in every area of their lives, ignoring the fact that this is not the experience of the women who subscribe to this brand of postfeminism. Advertising would not be successful at selling strategies for achieving female power if women already had it. As Jon Stratton comments in his study of the commodification of the body in advertising, *The Desirable Body*, 'turning men's desire for the female body to their own advantage ... [is one] of the multiplicity of ways in which women today negotiate certain circumstances in their everyday lives.[196] Following the lead of the Gurley Brown promotion of female sexuality as a way for women to achieve power, postfeminist sexual empowerment ideology, with its focus on the individual rather than the collective, does not offer any concrete solutions for obtaining equality, and only substitutes an autonomy based largely on sexual empowerment that is exclusive and dividing for women. Because postfeminism advertising ideology is concerned with selling products to women, the emphasis of the sexual empowerment they promote comes from exploring lifestyle choices and personal pleasures rather than outlining agendas for more direct and recognisable kinds of social activism.

I Will Make For Him a Helper Fit for Him

Advertisers use Adam and Eve as a paradigm for gender relations in contemporary society, reinscribing stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity, and, because

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[196] Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 239.

advertising in particular seeks to shape and influence consumer trends, they also use the biblical first couple to promote new ways for consumers to think about power dynamics in gender relations. This section focuses on the representation of Adam in advertising; how are we, as consumers, encouraged to view masculinity through images of Adam? Current representations of Adam appear to be a reversal of traditional gender display, showing men as the sum of their body parts in the same way that women have been displayed in advertising for decades. This thesis proposes that, rather than merely being symptomatic of the postfeminist condition, the images of an objectified Adam show up the contradictions in the concept of female empowerment through self-objectification. In most postfeminist discourse, men are in the background as objects of desire or villains, and this is no different in postfeminist Eve advertising where Adam is, quite often, a shadowy figure in the background. In an analysis of the images below, I argue that Adam is portrayed in this way to emphasise the message of postfeminist female empowerment promoted by the image of Eve as active, powerful agent in contrast to the passive, and apparently powerless, Adam.

In the previous chapters this thesis has illustrated how images of Eve have become increasingly popular in post–1990s popular culture as a vehicle to communicate notions about female and male sexuality for a postfeminist consumer. An image of Eve becomes visual shorthand for powerful female heterosexuality, sexuality that, if used correctly (i.e. if the correct products are consumed) will offer women a way of gaining the upper hand in contemporary gender relations. In these images, if Adam is portrayed at all, it is as an accessory, a 'himbo' with plenty of muscle but not too much brain. This objectification of Adam functions to both underscore the postfeminist notion of Eve as signifier for female sexual empowerment and undermines it by psychologically removing Adam from the episode of transgression. Although Adam is physically with Eve at the moment of transgression, by using licensed withdrawal the images suggest that psychologically he is not

present. They thereby lay the responsibility for the transgression wholly at the feet of Eve. Adam's passivity contrasted with Eve's activity makes her appear powerful and in control, even dominant, in her role; however, in repeating the notion that Eve was almost wholly responsible for the transgression in Genesis 2-3 does not so much suggest female empowerment as it perpetuates centuries of sexist stereotypes of women as sexual temptresses and reflects the lack of responsibility afforded to Adam in this episode in the biblical account in Genesis 2–3.

The images below, from two highly successful clothing companies, Versace and Benetton, are typical of contemporary portrayals of Adam and Eve. They represent Adam and Eve in similar ways: the couple are shown standing side by side, there is exposed flesh and Adam is depicted in a state of licensed withdrawal. The images are also highly sexually suggestive, although each provides a certain amount of calculated covering.

Figure 3.24: Benetton Advertisement, 1997

Figure 3.25: Versace Crockery Advertisement, *Vogue*, August, 1998

In both pictures, Eve is the active figure. She gives the apple to Adam. Also in both pictures Eve looks at the camera with a knowing smile while Adam, expressionless, stares blankly either just above or just below the camera level. There are, however, subtle differences between the two, not in the way Eve is portrayed but in the way she is portrayed vis-à-vis Adam. In the Versace image Adam is hyper-masculinised and in the Benetton image he is feminised. These differences in the representation of Adam are significant because, while they treat Adam differently, they both indicate male power as a counter-balance to the female sexual power being promoted in the images. In the case of the Versace image the male power being suggested by the hyper-masculinised physique of Sylvester Stallone is that of physical strength and dominance. In the Benetton image the androgynous representation of Adam coupled with the sacred heart symbolism of the apple transforms Adam from passive, powerless himbo to a Christ-figure redeeming the temptress Eve.

First of all, to illustrate the function of Adam's hyper-masculinity in the Versace advertisement it is necessary to engage with another one of Goffman's observations on gender representation in advertising from his seminal 1976 study. In his study Goffman uses

the concept of relative size to describe the way advertisers use the advantage of height as a visual indication of power and authority. A taller figure in an advertisement has greater power and authority than figures shorter than he or she is, and a figure positioned higher than others, regardless of the figures' relative heights also has the greater authority.[197] Characteristically it is men who are positioned above women in ads. On occasions when women are shown as relatively larger, or are positioned higher, than men, they also have a higher social status than those men. Even though the relative size shows the woman's status advantage in the Versace advertisement above, this advantage is illusory because the male in the image shows an alternative and more significant power. Adam is hyper-masculinised: he is portrayed as athletic and strong. He stands in the pose of a weight-lifter or sportsman, showing his heavily-muscled physique off to its best advantage. While Eve may have the relative size advantage in terms of height, there is no doubt that Adam has the relative size advantage in terms of width and potential physical power. The viewer understands that though Eve may have the higher status in this scenario, Adam could easily physically dominate her if he wished.

Significantly, Adam does not look at the viewer, or even at the apple being offered to him by Eve, but stares into the distance, appearing to be psychologically removed from the scenario. This effect not only lessens the apparent threat of physical force on his part but removes responsibility from Adam. Moreover, Goffman uses the concept of function ranking to describe a particular structure of gender inequality in which the male model in an ad performs the important role while the female model occupies a less meaningful role. In the two advertisements reproduced here, the opposite is the case: Eve performs the important

[197] For instance, in advertisements portraying a family, the head of that family would never be presented as sitting or kneeling while other, lower status members of the family stand. See Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, p.37.

role while Adam is in licensed withdrawal, representing a lower social status in what Goffman refers to as the 'hierarchy of functions'.[198]

In advertising criticism the gender differences evident in the way that hands are shown is known as 'feminine touch' and 'masculine grip' because women are often portrayed as touching or caressing themselves, whereas men are portrayed as gripping. The Versace ad goes beyond the Benetton ad in subverting traditional sexist practises in advertising by depicting Adam touching his legs. Eve's hands and arms, in contrast, remain totally out of contact with any other part of her body.[199] What is the point in this subversion? What message are these ads communicating to the consumer? In being active, engaged with the spectator and, because the man is passive, being responsible for the man's welfare, Eve assumes the lion's share of responsibility and blame for what happens. Of course, the reason advertisers recycle the story in Genesis 2-3 so frequently is because everyone knows what happens: Eve leads Adam into temptation and brings about his ruin. The vast majority of people in Western society are familiar with the biblical story and most likely, and most importantly, the consumers targeted by these advertisements will know the story in this its culturally appropriated form.

In these advertisements the traditional advertising techniques that are used for men are used for women and vice versa. In the Benetton ad this gender spin results in the man being feminised; he sports long hair and he is not altogether physically different from Eve. In the Versace ad, however, the gender spin does not feminise Adam. In casting the hyper-feminine Claudia Schiffer as Eve, and the hyper-masculine Sylvester Stallone as Adam, the

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[198] Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, p. 32.

[199] The position of her legs, however, betray the advertisement's adherence to strict rules of gender postures: Eve's legs are touching, in what seems to be a modest gesture, and is most certainly a feminine one. Also, she displays what Goffman refers to as the 'bashful knee bend', a posture frequently taken by women in advertising but men very infrequently that 'can be read as an acceptance of subordination, an expression of ingratiation, submissiveness, and appeasement', showing that the representation of Eve's empowerment through the subversion of traditional gendered advertising techniques is not entirely successful. See Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, p. 169.

advertisers ensure that Adam cannot possibly look feminine. Although he has taken on the traditional female characteristics in advertising, the feminine touch and licensed withdrawal, Stallone's masculinity is defined in opposition to Schiffer's femininity. Stallone is muscular, Schiffer is smooth; Stallone is dark, Schiffer is fair. Even the height difference works in favour of these opposites: Schiffer is tall and lithe; Stallone is stocky and powerful. In recreating physical gender ideals instead of subverting them, Versace ensures that its advertisement comforts rather than disturbs the consumer. The advertisers are not interested in undermining anything traditional, rather they are interested in persuading the consumer to find Versace sexy. Even Benetton, notorious for their attempts to disturb the consumer, does not do much to undermine any traditional gender characteristics or Eve stereotypes. Their Eve is portrayed as sexual. Whereas Adam's jeans are buttoned, hers are undone and partially unzipped. The denim jacket she wears is left open, exposing almost all of one breast, and a serpent hangs around her neck, alluding to the serpent in the garden story, thereby reinscribing notions of highly sexualised, deceptive and seductive femininity.

The Benetton image is more than just an image of Adam and Eve where Adam is in his usual state of licensed withdrawal and Eve is displaying her powers of attraction. The Benetton image plays on the Catholic sacred heart symbol. The difference here is that instead of a heart we have an apple. Eve is the active sinner and Adam is the redeemer. Adam in this image is also Jesus, the second Adam, the Adam who redeems the sins of the world. Eve, however, is still Eve the sinner. Adam's feminisation in this image becomes clear when his role as Jesus also becomes clear. As Jesus, he is not threatened by the temptress and does not need to be hyper-masculinised to compensate for his lack of power in the image.

Similarly, in the image below an advertisement for jeans has also made the link between Adam and Jesus. The advertisements highlight the fundamental difference it makes

whether Adam is taking the fruit or Eve is giving it, when Eve is giving the fruit she is giving sin. When Adam takes the fruit he is taking away the sin. While Eve is constant in her role as sexual temptress, Adam is either not held responsible for the transgression episode or he is the redeemer of Eve. This difference in the gender roles of the man and the woman show the serious imbalance between the ways that women and men are perceived in popular culture.

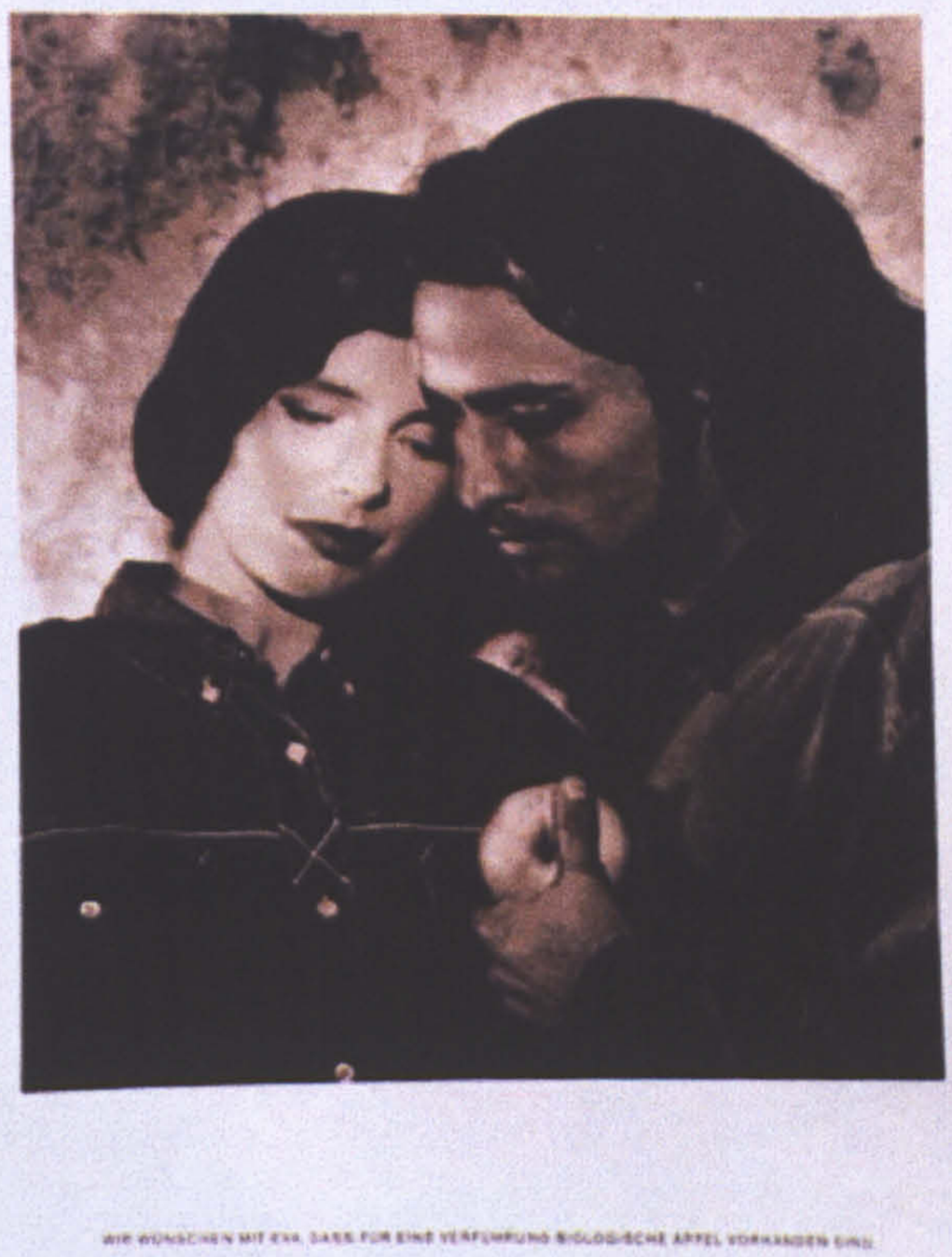

Fig 3.26: Print Advertisement for Korn Jeans, German Magazine, 2001

On deeper analysis these advertisements do not subvert traditional attitudes to gender but simply recycle them.

All the advertisements showing Adam and Eve together that I have found during my research for this thesis follow this pattern of representation. Adam is either portrayed as a background figure, barely visible against the fore-grounded sexuality of Eve, is pictured in a state of licensed withdrawal or is given the role of redeemer to Eve's sinner. A further

technique to reduce Adam's responsibility in the transgression scene and emphasise Eve's powers of attraction is the portrayal of Adam as so taken by the overwhelming desirability of Eve that he will do anything she wants. For instance, in the following image the advertisers use the relative size technique to suggest Eve's dominance over Adam.[200] Eve offers him the forbidden fruit but he is in no position to resist. He is well and truly beneath her, having to reach to take the fruit. Typically, he is so overwhelmed by the sexual desirability of Eve, he is not responsible for his actions. For this reason, Adam is often pictured as engrossed in a part of Eve's body.

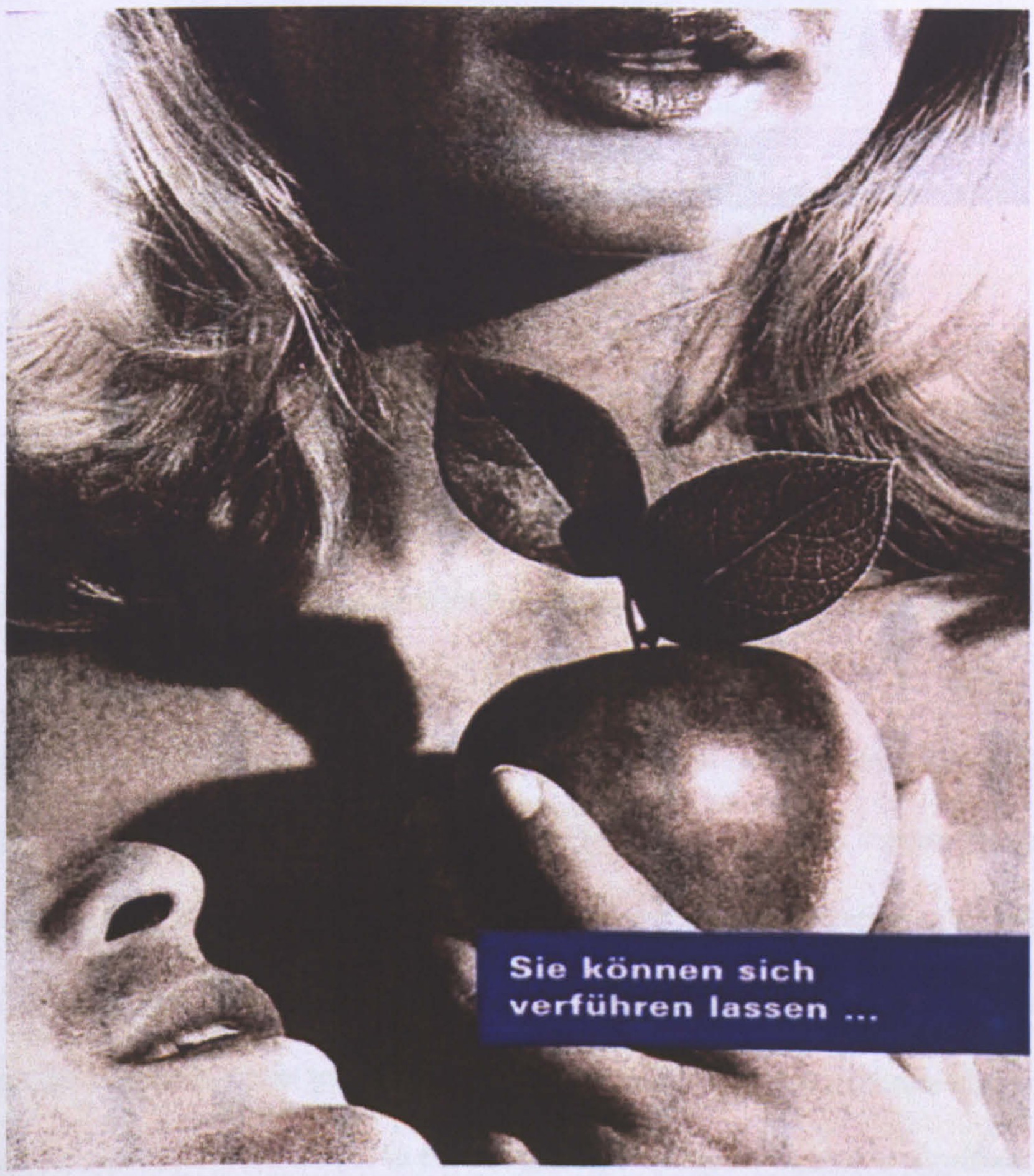

Figure 3.27: Print Advertisement from German Magazine, 2000

[200] Unfortunately I have lost the reference.

In the image below, Adam finds Eve so desirable that he cannot take his eyes from her, despite the fact that she does not return his ardour. In true postfeminist advertising style, she returns the viewer's gaze instead of Adam's.

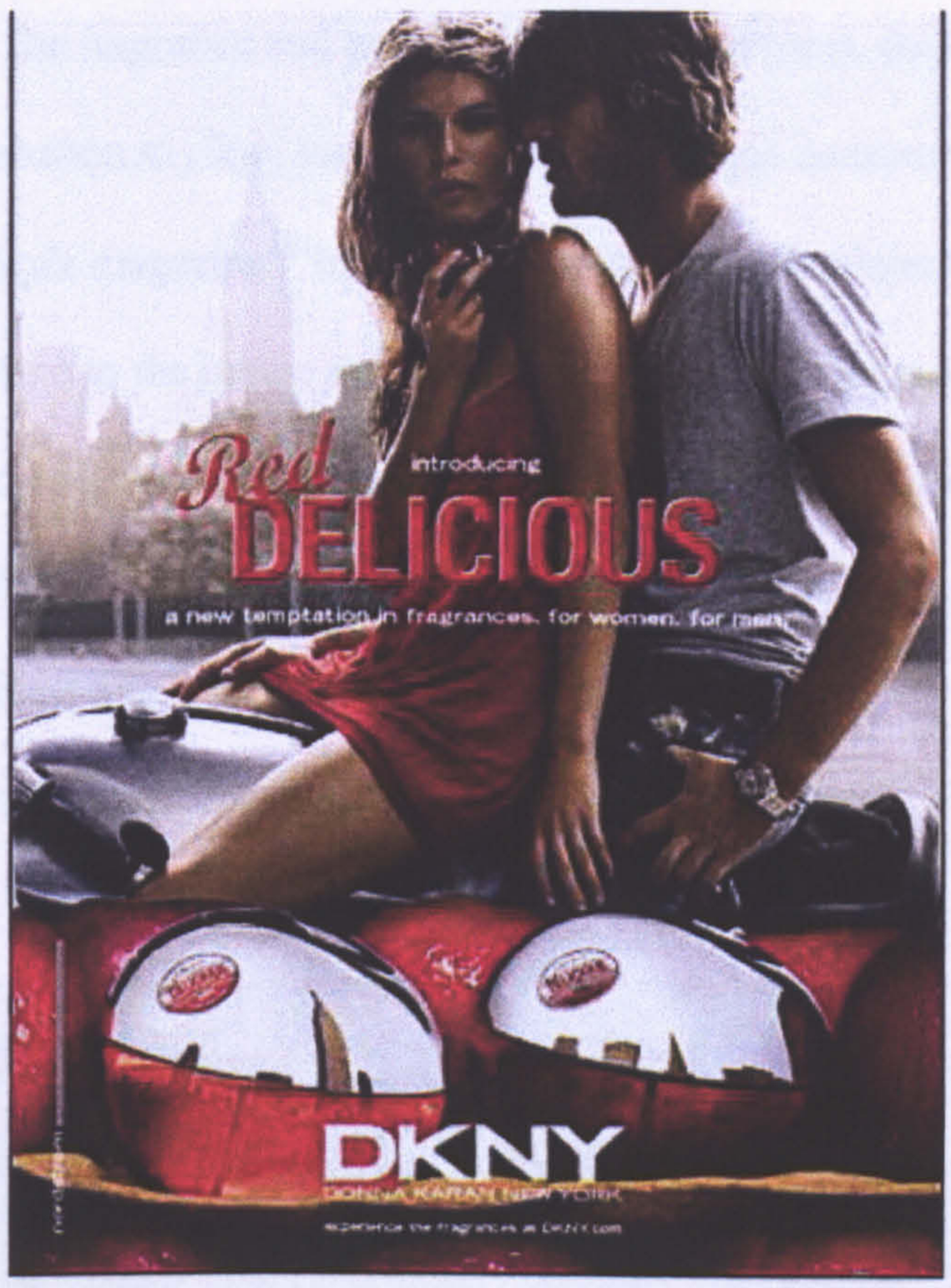

Figure 3.28: Print Advertisement for DKNY, *Red Delicious*, *InStyle* Magazine, August, 2005

She wears a red mini-dress, which shows her bare thighs and also connects her with the apple she is eating and the fragrance she is, presumably, wearing to get such a strong response from Adam. The fragrance in the foreground is the shape and colour of advertising's traditional forbidden fruit: the red apple. Once again, the red apple signifies female sexuality and desirability. The advertisement tells the viewer that if she wears this perfume she will have the same effect on men as the model in the image. Eve's empowerment is signified not only by the dramatic effect she has had on Adam but also by the fact that he sits behind on her on the motorbike, a vehicle usually associated with men. Women, if they do ride them, tend to

be the passenger. Eve is in charge in this image, empowered by her sexuality. She sits at the front of the motorbike, besotted man behind her, while she eats the fruit that connotes individual choice and empowerment in postfeminist advertising. To further cement the associations between the fragrance and postfeminist empowerment, the background of the image shows the Manhattan skyline, made famous to the target consumers of the fragrance and the readers of *InStyle* magazine[201] by the most popular postfeminist television show, *Sex and the City*. The by-line to the image says 'a new temptation in fragrances, for women, for men'. The copy associates the fragrance not only with the forbidden fruit and the woman but by adding 'for men' to the end of the by-line, the advertisement makes clear that the fragrance is being sold as a tool for women to attract men.

In the following advertisement, Adam is once again in the grip of licensed withdrawal.

Figure 3.29: Print Advertisement for Leeds Victoria Quarter, August, 2004

[201] *InStyle* Magazine is a magazine targeted at 18-25 year old females and consists solely of articles and photographic stories that centre on appearance. The magazine focuses on emulating celebrity style and the promotion of designer goods.

While Eve returns the viewer's gaze, Adam turns his face towards Eve and gazes in her direction. Once again the advertisement makes the connections between Adam and Eve and Leeds Victoria Quarter clear: the goods in the exclusive shopping area of Leeds Victoria Quarter will tempt the viewer into purchasing them. Not only that but, since the Victoria Quarter consists of mostly shops for women, the women viewers could achieve the same level of desirability as Eve in the image through purchasing the goods on offer.

Even the reality programme *Expedition Robinson* has employed Eve imagery to promote the series. [202] The advertisement, which advertises the start of the 1999 series, tries to attract the interest of potential viewers by using a naked Adam and Eve as the promotional bait. Links are drawn between the paradisial Malaysian

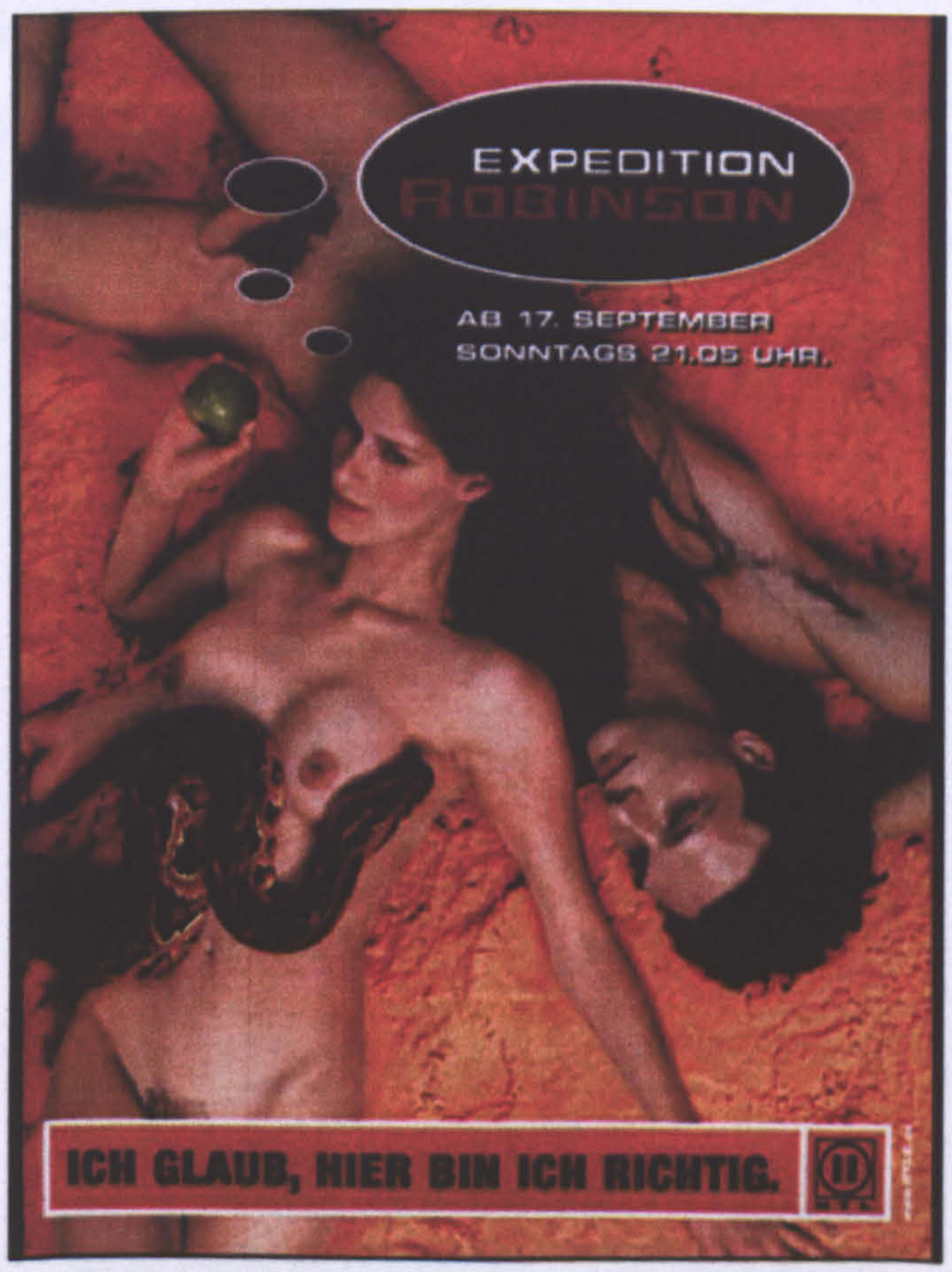

Figure 3.30: Print Advertisement for *Expedition Robinson* Reality Show, 1999

[202] Known as *Survivor* in the UK.

island in which the programme is set and the garden of Eden. *Expedition Robinson* is a reality game-show in which contestants have to survive life on a tropical island by means of guile, deception, inventiveness and intelligence. The advertisers clearly thought Eve, wearing a particularly ruthless expression in this image, would be the ideal symbol to attract an audience, suggesting to viewers of the programme that they would be tuning in to watch contestants use sex and the display of female sexuality as a means to win the series. Adam, on the other hand, is given no credit for guile. He is pictured in licensed withdrawal, expressionlessly gazing in the direction of the snake and Eve's naked breasts, while Eve dreams of being a contestant on *Expedition Robinson.*

Expedition Robinson has not been the only reality competition series that sets women contestants against each other for the opportunity to win a valuable prize. *America's Next Top Model*, hosted by the supermodel and chat-show host Tyra Banks, is a popular American series (but also shown across Europe) to find the next supermodel. Eleven finalists are put through a series of modelling assignments, with the contestant who is considered by the judges to have done the worst in the task being sent home each week.

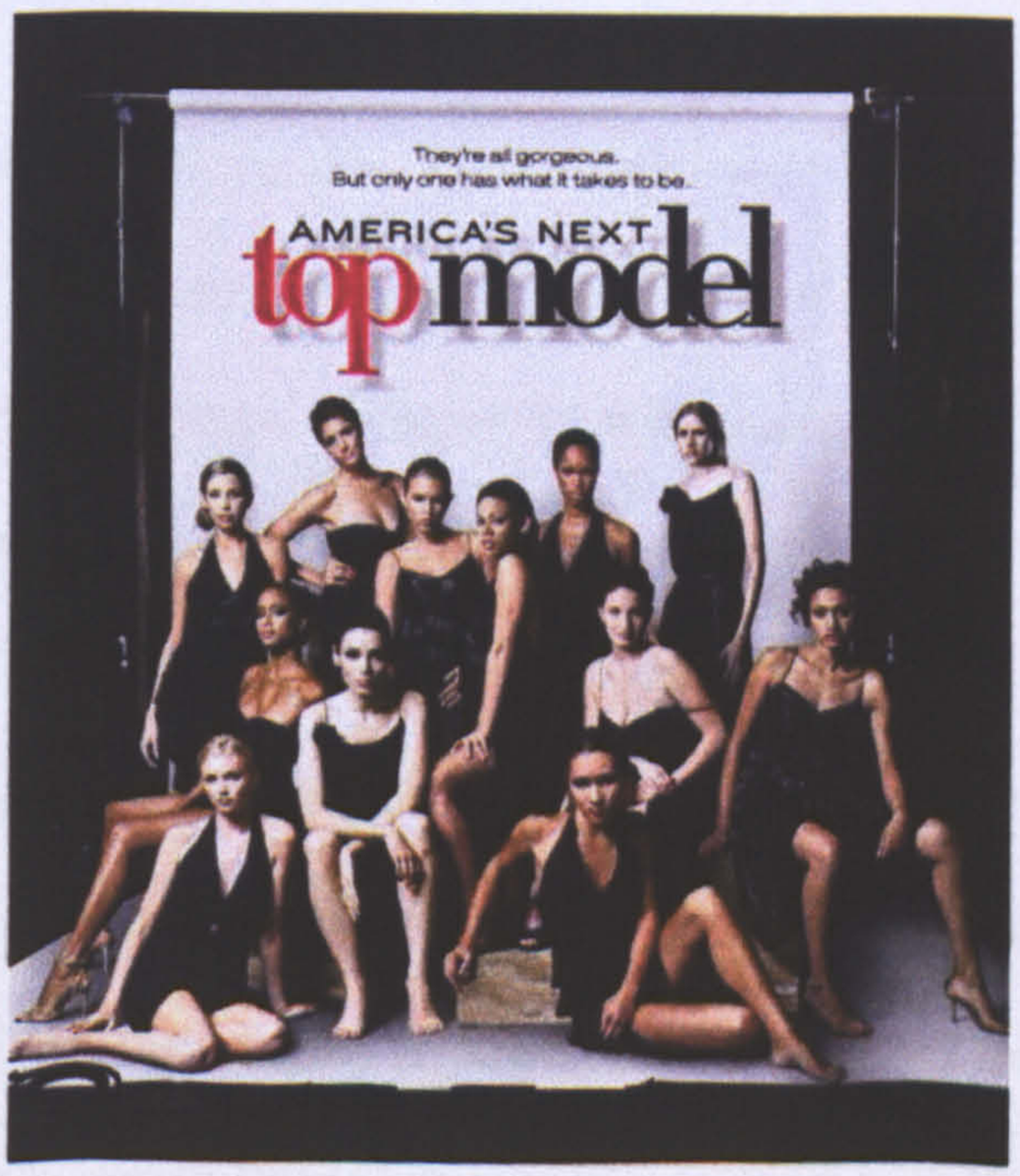

Figure 3.31: ***America's Next Top Model*** **Publicity Shot, January 2004**

The show is the ultimate example of the difficulties of postfeminist empowerment through sexuality and self-objectification. The eleven women are all young, beautiful and desperate for success. They want this success to come through the route of their sexuality, using Tyra Banks (the show's host and a former supermodel who was also included in Forbes' Celebrity 100 list in 2007) as their mentor. Banks has achieved power and wealth through self-objectification, but, as the by-line for the show's promotional image says, 'They're all gorgeous. But only one has got what it takes to be... America's Next Top Model.' The show sums up the nature of postfeminist empowerment through self-objectification: it is an exclusive enterprise -- although many women may compete with each other, only very few can succeed in achieving any power through self-objectification.

The first show of the 2004 season saw the eleven contestants modelling in an advertising campaign for Freshlook coloured contact lenses. The theme of the campaign was the temptation scene in Genesis 3. Each contestant modelled a shot as Eve, and Eve's representation changed with each contestant, depending on their ethnic origin, complexion or 'type of look'. Eve's theme was changed for each contestant to reflect the way the coloured contact lenses can give the same person a different look each time they are used. Each woman was naked except for body-paint, and often the serpent, and occasionally the forbidden fruit (apple), was painted onto the model's body. The common themes in all the shots are self-display and the foregrounding of female sexuality as a means to achieve power. The women objectify their bodies and display them as sites of sexual temptation to win votes from judges who decide which woman is the most desirable. Adam is always in the background of the image, being, quite literally, kept in the dark by the advertisers. He functions as a symbol of the status and desirability of Eve. In each shot he takes a position of subjugation, kneeling, sitting or lying by Eve, but always staring at her in awe.

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Figure 3.33: Caribbean Eve

The third image depicts Catie as 'Heavenly Eve'. She is an angel, whose serpent functions as a headband. Once again she is positioned for the viewer, with whom she makes eye contact. Although Adam, again lurking in the background, gazes in awe, the apple is not held within his reach; the apples are merely symbolic of the contestant's desirability and empowerment through her self-objectification.

Figure 3.34: Heavenly Eve

The next contestant, Heather (below), is represented as 'Floral Eve'. She holds a red apple fashioned from flowers. Just like all the other Eves in the campaign, she returns the viewer's gaze. The apple is offered to the viewer as much as it is offered to Adam, who kneels at her side.

Figure 3.35: Floral Eve

The fourth image (below) is entitled 'Enchanting Archer Eve' because the contestant, Jenascia, is representing Eve as an archer. A play on cupid, Archer Eve's body is painted red; she has large red-feathered wings clipped to her back and an enormous hat that looks like it is fashioned out of large petals and leaves. She has flowers attached to her chest, and red gloves cover her hands and arms. The obligatory red apple is painted onto the end of the arrow. Adam is again kneeling in front of her, staring at her. But Eve looks at us, the viewers.

Indeed, the arrow is not aimed at Adam, it is aimed at the judge of her desirability, the viewer.

Figure 3.36: Enchanting Archer Eve

Returning to the theme of basing the contestant's representation of Eve on their ethnic origin, Mercedes is dressed as 'Egyptian Eve'. A snake is painted slithering up her leg and a further snake is painted onto her shawl. Adam sits in the background, staring up at the towering Eve. She holds a large red apple in her left hand – nowhere near Adam – and although her lower body is turned towards Adam, she twists the top half of her body to display it for the viewer, whom she faces, returning their gaze.

Figure 3.37: Egyptian Eve

Sara features in the campaign as 'Medieval Eve', who is painted silver and dressed as a half-naked knight in chain-mail head-wear. She is the only one of the Eves in the full series of shots who is engaged in physical contact with Adam. He is in the shadow and kneels before her, holding her leg, while she has one finger in his mouth. This display of sexually suggestive body language is purely for the viewer, however, for it is the viewer she looks at and it is to the viewer she is offering the chain-mail apple.

Figure 3.38: Medieval Eve

The image below presents Shandi as 'Lady Godiva Eve'. Like her namesake, this Eve is naked except for the hair extensions and the long hair painted onto her body. She turns her back to Adam to better display her body to the viewer, and, although she is holding the apple in Adam's direction, it is as much directed at the viewer with whom she is really engaged as she returns the their gaze.

Figure 3.39: Lady Godiva Eve

Hiomara's representation of Eve involves only the theme of temptation – her shot is titled 'Eve of Temptation'. She holds the apple towards Adam, who lies on the ground looking up at Eve. The snake is painted as entwined around Eve's body with another red apple in its mouth. Once again Eve's naked body is displayed for the viewer and she returns their gaze.

Figure 3.40: Eve of Temptation

Bethany's representation of Eve is titled 'Eve of Winter' and her body is painted blue. She wears a blue and white wig and the apple is made of ice. Adam is lying down to the left of Eve and, although she holds the apple in his direction, its position is far too high for him to reach nor does he make a movement to reach the fruit. Eve's naked body, as usual in this campaign, is displayed for the viewer, with whom she makes eye conact.

Figure 3.41: Eve of Winter

The final image of the Eve series shows the contestant Yoanna presented as 'Eve of the Night'. Her naked body is painted shocking pink and she holds a crescent moon accessory, which holds the apple. This is only image in the series in which Adam is not looking at Eve. He maintains his position of subjugation by sitting on the ground close to where Eve is half-standing, half-kneeling, but, instead of gazing at Eve in awe, encouraging the viewer recognise her overwhelming desirability and do the same, in this shot Adam looks off camera to the left while Eve matches the viewers' gaze with hers.

Figure 3.42: Eve of the Night

This *Fresh Look* advertising campaign is rarely successful in representing the contestants as desirable and sexually empowered women. Although the images use many of the representational techniques outlined by Goffman to convey Eve's power, status and desirability, the fundamental flaw of the campaign is that it makes Eve look ridiculous rather than sexy, desirable and empowered. Adam's darkly lit background presence in each image signifies the women's higher social status, and her power over him. In many of the images he kneels before her, as she towers majestically above him in four-inch stiletto heels. She is the active participant in the scene; she offers the apple and matches the viewers' gaze with hers. Eve's self-objectification, however, does not convey any sense of empowerment to the viewer because these women appear naked apart from ridiculous accessories. To be adult females dressed as 'Enchanting Archer Eve', or 'Heavenly Eve' painted blue with images of

cherubs on her chest does not suggest the empowerment of these women but their disempowerment. They are made to look vain, child-like and ridiculous in the campaign, despite all the techniques, such as the function of Adam, employed to suggest otherwise. As this thesis has argued, postfeminist advertising depoliticises and domesticates feminism by reducing real women's experience of inequality to the single issue of achieving power through sexuality. This advertising campaign exposes the inanity of attempting to achieve power through being judged on appearance and market value. Significantly, the contestant who refused to participate in the campaign was the one who was expelled from the competition that week.

It is Not Good that the Man Should be Alone

This section will look at images of Adam that treat the male body in similar ways to the way the female body has traditionally been treated in advertising; for example, images in which Adam is treated as a 'sex object', and techniques traditionally reserved for the objectified female body are used to display the male sexualised body. For instance, in the image below, which was part of the Leeds *VQ* advertising campaign in August 2004, the display techniques of cropping, objectification and fetishization are applied to the male body. Cropping so that a body part is separated from the rest of the body creates a dehumanising effect and the results in the fetishization of that body part. The representation of Adam's body seems to indicate

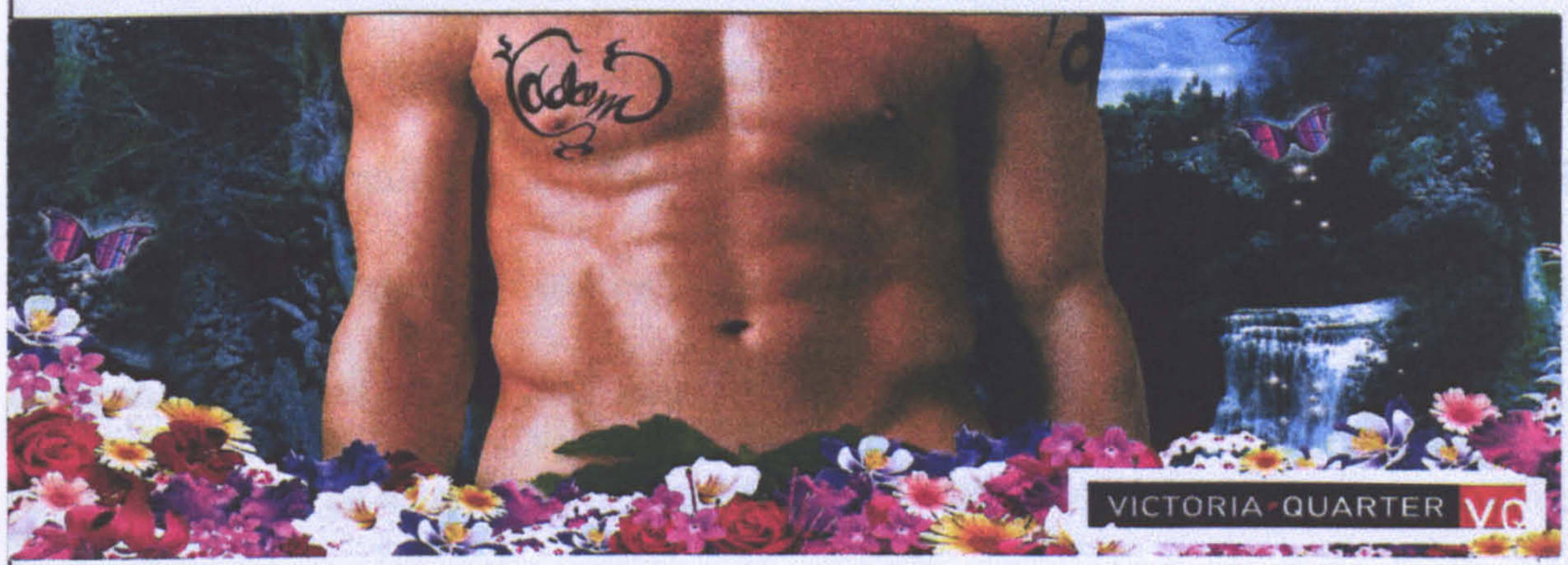

Figure 3.43: Promotional Flyer for Leeds Victoria Quarter, August, 2004

a certain equality or rebalance in the display of the genders: women may be on exhibit as sexual objects but all is equal because men receive the same treatment. However, as I argued in the last section of this chapter, the 'meanings' and connotations inherent in the representation of female and male naked bodies are significantly different. What Margaret R. Miles argues about nakedness in the art of the Christian West applies here:

> Female nakedness is presented as a symbol of sin, sexual lust, and dangerous evil. In depictions of the naked female body interest in active religious engagement, exercise, and struggle is often subordinated to, or in tension with, the female spectacle.[203]

[203] Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing*, p. 81.

> Since antiquity male nakedness has been used to represent 'physical strength as a symbol of extraordinary spiritual strength.' Heroic struggle against temptation, sense of personal choice, and single-minded, undistracted pursuit of an athletic crown characterised spiritual 'atheletes'. Male nakedness represented spiritual discipline and physical control and order.[204]

Inherent in the images that some advertising critics have termed 'beefcake himbos'[205] is the promise of power, power that is represented by the over–developed and clearly physically strong male torsos (and notice that unlike the images of women in advertising where almost any body part can be cropped and fetishised and can stand for sexuality these comparable images of men tend to focus on the torso). These portrayals of masculinity may at first appear to be an attempt to show the vulnerability of males to the power of female sexuality, or, as with the *VQ* advert below, to show a more 'sensitive male' by diluting the effect of the physically powerful torso by feminising the image with flowers and traditionally feminine decoration. Actually, however, they perpetuate traditional gender ideals, and in fact, the gender codes in the text, through their emphasis on the physical strength of the male body.

The advertising critic Anthony Cortese argues that the recent trend in the objectification of the male body is in itself is a reaction to postfeminist culture. He comments that a physically powerful look validates masculine identity and provides a dominating image for safety and protection. Furthermore, he argues, the strong physical image of men in postfeminist advertising allows advertisers to target the whole range of male consumers, since muscularity and strength are highly valued within the male sports subculture by men of all races and social classes.[206] This image of the male body is becoming more prevalent in contemporary advertising as a reaction to compensate for an increase in women's economic,

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[204] Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing*, p. 142.

[205] See Cortese, *Provocateur*, pp. 58-62; Sammy R. Danna, 'Sexier and More Sensitive: The Changing Advertising Image of Males in the 1990s', in Luigi and Alessandra Manca, *Gender and Utopia in Advertising: A Critical Reader* (Lisle, IL: Propcopian Press, 1994), pp. 73-86.

[206] Cortese, *Provocateur*, pp. 58-62.

political and social power. Advertiser's reconceptualise images of men as they lose control over or the ability to influence their wives, girlfriends, mothers or sisters. The hyper-masculine physique is suggestive of physical intimidation. If men can no longer dominate women economically, politically, and socially, in advertising their bodies become overdeveloped to appear much bigger and stronger than women's so that physical domination is implied.[207]

The Adam images prevalent in contemporary advertising may be a new thing, they may be reaction to, or reflection of, contemporary postfeminist social and cultural notions. But there is more to it than this. If we look at the origins of the image, at the state of gender relations in the text that the image is adapting, then the function of Adam's objectified body becomes clearer. His passivity in the text is translated by the advertisers into his 'himbo' image — a man who is physically strong but mentally weak. The images of Adam problematize the concept of female sexual power as exemplified in postfeminist advertising because they imply that females have sexual desire too. If one can become powerful or weaker through sexual desire, then Eve must be as vulnerable as Adam to the loss of power through sexual desire. Such a loss of power through sexual desire is, as I argued in Chapter 2, implied in the biblical text, and it is assumed in popular culture versions of the story.

In depicting Adam and Eve, the advertiser is able to convey a whole range of complex concepts and selling points to a carefully targeted audience using a single image. Representations of male and female nakedness in Western culture are saturated with meaning, and male and female nakedness signify different qualities and concepts to the viewer. The body is the site of rich visual symbolism and female and male nakedness are heavily invested with social and religious meaning. By representing Adam in advertising, marketers can sell an idealised image of masculinity that carries political implications. In the

[207] Cortese, *Provocateur*, p.60.

same way that popular cultural images of Eve can represent a postfeminist view of femininity, where the female is an active agent, powerful in her highly sexualised, fetishised form, Adam enables advertisers to portray a post-feminist view of masculinity, where the male may be passive, but nevertheless embody physical strength and power. These images of Adam convey an underlying theme of ability to dominate through superior strength. In both types of representation, the body is the locus of power. Marketing images of Adam and Eve allow us to see how advertising, the most influential institution in popular culture, represents the problematic gender relations experienced in post-feminist Western society.

Moreover, in the post-feminist social climate, men are becoming increasingly objectified in advertising because it is an unusual and, for the consumer, unexpected change of tactic. The advertiser gives the post-feminist consumer a knowing wink when it portrays a muscle-bound male as a sex object. It is the insertion of men into the traditional role of women as provocateur, as Cortese puts it, and it is good business. Images such as figure 3.43, the image of Adam's cropped torso advertising Leeds Victoria Quarter, target both male and female consumers. Muscularity as

Figure 3.43: Promotional Flyer for Leeds Victoria Quarter, August, 2004

masculinity is a motif in ads that target upper-income men as well as those in the lower range of social stratification. Advertisers often use representations of physically rugged or muscular male bodies to masculinise goods and services aimed at elite male consumers. What is particularly striking and unusual about this ad is its use of cropping. I discussed above the technique of cropping as applied to the female body. Here all we have of Adam is his torso. Just as a cropped image of Eve is 'every-woman', Adam here is 'everyman', and this advert could be defining the fashionable male of the moment as athletic, with an impossibly idealised body, and physical power and strength. This form of advertising to the male market does just what adverts of Eve do for female consumers: encourage them to buy a product or patronise a shopping venue by selling a prescriptive and unrealistic body image and the encoded gender messages that those idealised body images communicate to the viewer. Interestingly enough, images of Eve are rarely cropped to show only a torso without a head. As this Chapter has illustrated, the occasions when her image is cropped are images that are sold to the male glamour magazine market or when the postfeminist message is either undermined or not present. Eve is more likely to be found with various props and, rather than physical power or strength as is the case with Adam, the site of Eve's power is her sexuality. She is more likely to be portrayed in a semi-pornographic pose with a python as this brochure cover illustrates:

Figure 3.44: Cover of *Bizarre* Magazine, February, 2001

Eve is all about sex. Her power is her sexuality. Her relationship with the serpent is sexual. The forbidden fruit that she offers to the viewer is her sexuality, her power. Compare the image of Eve above with the following one of Adam:

Figure 3.45: Print Advertisement for *Tabok* Food Produce, *Men's Health* (German Edition), 1999

In this advertisement Adam has the serpent. Again, Adam is muscular, powerfully built and obviously physically strong. Adam is selling the traditional concepts of masculinity to the viewer; although increasingly found in advertising, it is still relatively rare to find images of men portrayed in this way in popular culture and certainly not to the extent that women are represented.

Figure 3.46: Print Advertisement for *Mey* Underwear, *Men's Health* (German Edition), 2000

The image above shows the hyper-masculinised Adam. He is muscular, athletic looking and he is in licensed withdrawal. In fact, the audience can barely see his face, which is in shadow. This refusal to return the viewer's gaze is common in advertising images where a man is objectified. Adam is displayed as a sexual object, appealing to both the heterosexual and homosexual consumers. The significant thing is that Adam does not raise his eyes to the viewer, he does not accept his role as a sexual object in the way that he does in images where she is pictured alone. Both Brian Pronger and Kenneth MacKinnon, critics of popular cultural images of men, agree that the vast majority of contemporary images where the male is made a sex object include a disavowal of the male gaze.[208] While the advertisements may attract a gay male consumer the man in the image does not risk putting off heterosexual male consumers by returning the gay male gaze. This technique offers advertisers a wide-ranging consumer appeal and manages to appeal to the gay market, a market notoriously difficult for advertisers to harness.[209] Advertisers must tread a fine line because they have to try not to alienate the heterosexual market while simultaneously reaching out to the homosexual market. As in the Versace advert, usually in Adam and Eve advertisements where the couple are pictured together, the homoerotic implications of this representation are kept at bay by the presence of Eve. In advertisements where Adam is pictured alone he must deflect the homoerotic implications of his representation by appearing in licensed withdrawal just as he has no responsibility in the transgression episode, he has no responsibility for his objectification. At present, advertisers seem to agree with God in Genesis 2 that it is not good that the man should be alone.

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[208] See Kenneth MacKinnon, *Uneasy Pleasures: The Male as Erotic Object* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1997); Brian Pronger, *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality and the Meaning of Sex* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1994).

[209] The gay male market is an extremely valuable market sector for advertisers because on average gay men have a greater disposable income than the rest of the general population.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that 'bad girls sell well'. Postfeminist advertising that uses the image of Eve has been successful in promoting the idea that female power can be brought about only through desirable sexuality, and desirable sexuality can be brought about only through consumerism. In postfeminist popular culture, consumerism *is* female power.

Through the analysis of over forty contemporary advertising images, I have argued that Eve imagery has been the subject of a resurgence of popularity because Eve embodies the *Zeitgeist* of the postfeminist consumer era. In exploiting the stereotype of Eve as sexual temptress, advertisers, targeting the highly profitable 18-34 year old female market, are simply recycling the idea of women's sexual power over men as though it were a new and subversive idea. Their message is that a woman's power lies in her ability to attract the male gaze, and that sexual power can enhance her social and economic status.

Contemporary postfeminist advertising promotes this notion of women's sexual power as the route to female socio-economic success as an exciting, adventurous and revolutionary new approach to gender relations for young women. Analysis of examples of contemporary Eve advertising for the gender messages encoded within them, however, reveals that, far from being revolutionary, these images actually reinscribe traditional gender roles. Not only are the roles they represent not new, they reflect the status of the woman in the biblical text. In Genesis 2-3 Eve's role is to be a sexual help-mate for Adam; in advertising Eve keeps her function as sexual mate, with the difference that advertisers promote this traditional function as a means by which women can dominate men and gain the upper hand in gender relations. Although advertising celebrates both Eve's transgression and her sexuality, it also, insidiously, controls women by defining for them a particular role. It tells them that their most important attribute is their sexuality and that, in order to have status and acquire wealth and power, women must be both attractive to men and *more* attractive

than other women. Postfeminist advertising rehashes the old stereotype of woman as sexual temptress, as discussed in detail in chapter 2 of this thesis, in order to promote consumerism as women's route to achieving their aim: to be as sexually attractive to men as possible.

The advertising images of Adam that are analysed in this chapter merely underscore the importance of sexuality in the representations of Eve. The naked representations of Adam do not signify sexuality in the same way that naked representations of Eve do. This chapter has argued that an image of a naked Adam signifies athleticism, discipline and physical strength, as opposed to the naked body of Eve, which signifies female (hetero)sexuality. The fact that the naked male body can symbolise different qualities and values is testament to the deeply embedded stereotypes prevalent in contemporary postfeminist popular culture.

CHAPTER 4

NOW AND THEN: REPRESENTATIONS OF EVE IN 1960s AND POSTFEMINIST FILMS

> How we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation.[210]
>
> Representations here and now have real consequences for real people, not just in the way they are treated as indicated above, but in terms of the way representations delimit and enable what people can be in any given society.[211]

As I have shown throughout this thesis, stereotypes of Eve are so deeply embedded in Western cultural consciousness that all advertisers need to do to sell their products is rely on consumers' instant recognition of her image as temptress and giver of sexual knowledge. A picture of Eve is worth a thousand pounds; it needs no words. Her image is not restricted only to advertising, however. Eve also appears in film in what might seem to be a wider range of roles. But when one investigates these roles closely, one finds the same stereotypes still perpetuated. This chapter focuses on the representation of Eve in films from two periods, the 1960s and 1990s, to illustrate that, just as we saw in Chapter 2 that contemporary Eve advertisements reproduce the same gender stereotypes as images in nineteenth-century art, so 1990s films, although they appear to be very different from 1960s films, actually retain many of the stereotypes of Eve as temptress and bringer of sexual knowledge. The earlier, 1960s Eve films, such as *Adam and Eve, The Sin of Adam and Eve,* and the epic *The Bible: In the Beginning,*[212] attempt to retell the story in Genesis 2-3. They take us to a garden and show us the creation of Adam and Eve, the temptation and its consequences, all with a nice dose of

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[210] Richard Dyer, *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 8.
[211] Dyer, *The Matter of Images*, p. 9.
[212] Albert Gout, *Adam and Eve* (American Federation of the Arts Film Program, 1956); Michael Zachary, *The Sin of Adam and Eve* (Dimension Pictures, 1968); John Huston, *The Bible: In the Beginning*, (Twentieth Century Fox, 1966).

sex to help sell the film. In the 1990s, however, rather than retelling Genesis 2-3 for a now mostly secular audience, the makers of films such as *Bedazzled* and *Pleasantville* use Eve as a 'type'.[213] They do not represent the biblical Eve but rather offer us characters who evoke Eve, with her close connection to sex and temptation, and her role in dramatically changing the lives of those around her. Of the films produced in the 1990s and 2000s that include representations of Eve, I treat *Bedazzled* and *Pleasantville* because they can be compared to 1960s films in terms of both audience share and distribution. I ask four main questions of the films: How does the image of Eve function in the narrative of the film? What concepts does she signify, or what connotations could images of Eve provoke for an audience? Do the films reinforce or subvert traditional stereotypes of Eve? And, why is it important to represent Eve in the film? I argue that Eve's representation in film does not change considerably from the 1960s to the 1990s.

The films of the 1960s are remarkably similar in their portrayals of Adam and Eve. Eve is consistently portrayed as narcissistic, seductive and actively disobedient, flouting God's and Adam's authority in the films. Adam, like his contemporary representations in advertising is depicted as trusting of Eve, close to God and content with his life in the garden. The films also share further similarities of gender representation. In each of the films a famous beauty is chosen to play Eve, who is naked except for her long hair that covers her breasts in most of the camera shots.[214] Eve is always curious, but curious because she is discontent. Two of the films (*The Sin of Adam and Eve* and *Adam and Eve*) attribute this discontent to Eve's vanity: she constantly wants her beauty to be admired and appreciated. Her apparent negative traits are foils to Adam's faithful and trusting character. The films' characterisation of Eve as villain, although a villain because of vanity and discontent rather

[213] Gary Ross (director and producer), *Pleasantville* (New Line Productions, 1998); Harold Ramis, Bedazzled (Twentieth Century Fox, 2000).
[214] Surprisingly, given that the film was made in the sixties, in *Adam and Eve* there are at least two shots when Eve's breast is briefly exposed.

than evil or maleficence, emphasises the virtuous character of Adam. The films go one step further than the biblical text by removing Adam from the transgression scene altogether. By making Adam unconscious during Eve's eating of the fruit the woman alone is blamed for the transgression.

The films were released at a time when second-wave feminism was beginning to take hold in the US, and the films can be viewed as a response to political ideas and events in the wider society. They may not be direct response to feminism, but they nonetheless exhibit latent misogyny, in particular in the close relationship they show between Adam and God — a relationship that Eve does not share. Women are not demonised in the films so much as villainised. Like the biblical text they offer the encoded message that women cannot be trusted to make decisions, nor should they be left unsupervised.

For instance, the 1966 film epic *The Bible: In the Beginning* has the serpent singling out Eve to tempt with the forbidden fruit by calling her name when Adam is asleep. The companion created for Adam to prevent him from being lonely turns out to be the cause of the breakdown in his relationship with God. At first, the viewer sees Adam pining for a mate. The film depicts Adam looking at his face, reflected in a pond of water, a scene that is repeated in the other films to convey Adam's loneliness and his need for a companion. He tries to touch the reflection and a voice-over states, 'It is not good that the man should be alone'. Adam is put to sleep and on his awakening, both he and the viewer are introduced to Eve. We see what Adam sees on awakening: a woman placed in shadow in a way that emphasises her shape, which is further enhanced by the traditional feminine display pose she adopts. Adam, in awe of the new female before him, touches Eve's face and says, 'This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh'. Eve, however, says nothing and remains expressionless, which reflects her silence in the biblical text.

Adam and Eve are both given the commandment not to eat any of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and thus, unlike the biblical account, the questions whether or not Eve knows the command or that her actions are disobedient are not raised. There is no ambiguity. In this film, Eve is clearly disobedient and Adam has virtually no responsibility for the transgression. Adam's innocence is underscored by the fact that, at the start of the transgression scene, he is asleep when Eve hears the serpent calling her name. The fact that the film-makers have chosen to have the serpent hissing Eve's name and to show her respond by searching for the snake is significant, since it makes clear that the serpent tempts the weaker character. The serpent waits until the man is asleep to make its move. The implication is that the man would have resisted temptation himself, and would have prevented the woman from eating the fruit. When Eve takes the apple and eats, Adam is not with her. She has already eaten the fruit by the time Adam arrives. After taking a bite of the apple, an experience that Eve appears to find highly sensual judging by her response, she adopts a new, knowing expression for use on Adam when he finally arrives at the scene. When Eve offers the apple to Adam, he resists and tells her, 'it is disobedience', making clear what was implied by having the serpent tempt Eve alone: that Adam would not have intentionally been party to any wrong-doing, unlike Eve, who also was commanded not to eat the fruit but did so anyway. Eve encourages Adam to eat the fruit by reassuring him that there is no harm and that it will make them wise. He relents and eats. His response to eating the fruit is not nearly so dramatic as the woman's: there is no orgasm for Adam, he freezes and drops the apple. The forbidden fruit was not as pleasurable for him, the obedient human, as it was for Eve, the disobedient one.

Like *The Bible: In the Beginning*, the film *Adam and Eve* includes an image of Adam staring at his reflection in the water and attempting to touch it in order to convey to the viewer his feelings of loneliness in the garden of Eden. This film, however, includes a scene

before Eve is created, in which Adam attempts to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Adam reaches for the red apple hanging from the branches, God speaks and commands Adam not eat. Not only does Adam obey but he raises his arms to God in praise, highlighting Adam's positive relationship with God in the garden before the woman appears.

At the creation of Eve, it is clear that Eve is meant to be both a sexual partner for Adam and a sexually arousing sight for the (male) viewer. On his awakening from sleep after the creation of Eve from his body, Adam sees the woman lying next to him. The camera pans up and down her body, following Adam's gaze and allowing the audience to savour the woman's body part by part just as Adam does. Eve, however, does not return his gaze. She does not take in Adam's body with desiring eyes the way he has done with hers because she is an object not a subject. Adam plays with her arm, moving it up and down in wonder, but Eve does not return the gesture to investigate Adam's body. She remains motionless, expressionless and wordless — the ultimate in passive femininity.

As the promotional poster for the film, below, illustrates, Eve is connected with sexuality and enticement in the film, for the audience as well as for Adam.

Figure 4.1: Promotional Theatre Poster for *Adam and Eve*, 1956

Eve is played by the former Miss Universe, Christiane Martel, a fact that is advertised on all the promotional material for the film, including the poster above. Casting a woman famous only for her physical beauty to play Eve is a move to help the audience to understand why Adam eats the fruit as well as Eve. She serves as a signifier of his desire.The audience is encouraged to be sympathetic to Adam, who is close to God and obedient to his word, and who transgresses only because the beautiful but vain mate he is given tempts him into it.

The relationship between Adam and Eve is represented in this film as being like that of parent and child. When Eve is first created, she is nervous and weak. She needs help and direction in the form of physical support, as Adam leads her through the garden, and she needs guidance from Adam in all her movements too. Despite the guidance Adam must give to Eve, he is not gentle with her. On a number of occasions throughout the film Adam roughly pulls or pushes Eve's head to see whatever it is Adam thinks important. For instance, shortly after she is created, Adam pushes the woman's head down to see her reflection as they sit by the pond. He also pulls her head back to squeeze grape juice into her mouth.

Adam acts as father to Eve's naughty child. In one scene Eve is told explicitly, by God, that she must not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve sees a red apple hanging from the branches of the tree and, while Adam is eating nearby, she starts to reach for it. Adam prevents her from taking it and offers her fruit from a different tree instead, which she refuses. He takes her back to the forbidden fruit, and God speaks again to give the commandment not to eat the fruit. After Eve has eaten other fruit instead of the forbidden apple she wanted, Adam roughly washes her face, again highlighting the dependence of Eve on Adam for basic guidance, as the first image in the selection of stills from the films shows:

Figure 4.2: Promotional Stills from *Adam and Eve*, 1956

Eve, although physically weak and in need of Adam's direction, is as in love with herself as she is with him. When the snake is introduced in the story, Eve is enjoying her reflection in the water, while Adam is sleeping nearby. She plays with her hair and smiles, which she does infrequently during the film — except when she is showing pleasure at her own body — as she looks at herself in the pond. The snake appears at the other side of the pond and Eve is simultaneously intrigued and repelled. There follows a long period of shots that alternate between Adam sleeping, the serpent, the apple and Eve's desiring expression (both for the apple and for Adam). Eve now gazes at Adam, much as he had gazed at her when she was created. With her eyebrow raised, she casts her eyes over him while he sleeps. Apparently, just the thought of eating the apple has transformed Eve from passive object to active agent. Previously in the film she had been reticent to return Adam's touch, preferring to touch her own hair and face, but now, with the serpent nearby, her attitude to Adam has become one of desire, as opposed to the indifference or even irritation that she displayed earlier. No sooner has Eve eaten the apple than Adam wakes from his sleep. He goes toward

her. She is eating the fruit with a knowing look, a look that is shared by all the representations of Eve in these 1960s films. But her expression changes to one of fear as she sees Adam. Her fear does not last long, however, because the next lingering camera close-up on her face reveals an expression of sexual desire as she gives the fruit to Adam. There is no discussion between them and no resistance from Adam: he eats and then drops the apple to the ground.

The scene cuts to show Adam and Eve sitting apart on ground, facing in opposite directions. The companionship they shared earlier is broken, and separately they try to find cover for their bodies. God's voice booms out, 'What is this you have done?', and a spotlight appears on Adam, but then quickly shifts to Eve, on whom it rests. Eve looks guilty, while God's spotlight on her, rather than on both humans, shows that he thinks she is guilty too. The couple are banished from the garden and Eve resumes her child-like nature of before. She stumbles and falls and needs Adam's help to negotiate the difficult walk through the desert.

In the 1968 film, *The Sin of Adam and Eve*, the representation of the biblical characters by *Adam and Eve* is repeated. As in *Adam and Eve*, an ex-model has been cast as Eve. Here too the film is more interested in the physical attributes of Eve than in her acting ability, and it even more explicitly associates Eve and her sexuality with sin, as the promotional poster below shows:

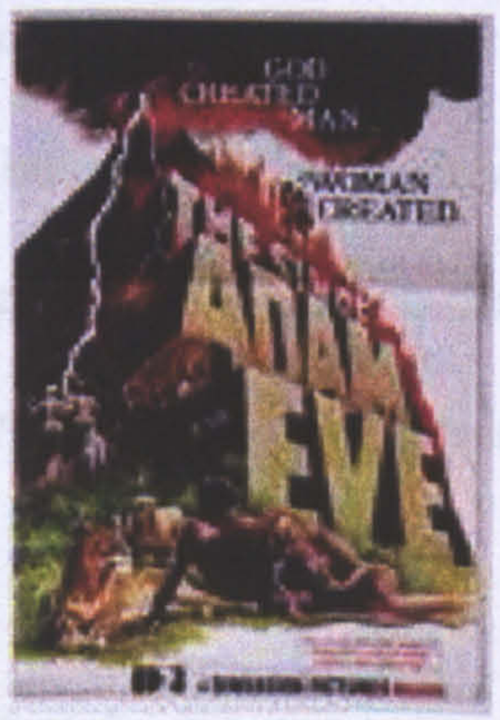

Figure 4.3: Promotional Film Theatre Poster, *The Sin of Adam and Eve*, Dimension Pictures, 1968

The poster's by-line is 'God Created Man ... Woman Created ... The Sin of Adam and Eve', simultaneously blaming Eve for the transgression and making clear the close association between man and God and woman and sin. As in *Adam and Eve*, before Eve is created, Adam attempts to approach the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but is stopped by God, who gives him the commandment not to eat of its fruit. This has the effect of showing Adam's relationship with God, especially since, again as in *Adam and Eve*, Adam receives the commandment and then throws his arms in the air in awe of God. He then rejoices by shouting his own name, Adam, into the sky. Adam is happy in the garden before Eve; he respects God and his relationship with God is strong. Since it transpires that it is not good that he should be alone, however, Adam is put to sleep for a mate to be created for him.

When he awakes, both Adam and the audience see the woman God has created for him. Eve stands in a pose of traditional feminine display (exactly the same pose that Eve makes after her creation in *The Bible: In the Beginning*) with one leg bent at the knee and turned to cover slightly the other one — a pose used by models to emphasise the length and slenderness of the legs.[215] Eve may be displayed to her best advantage for Adam but, as in *Adam and Eve*, she is also fearful of him and shoves his hand away as he approaches to touch her. The theme of female narcissism is present once again as Eve displays and grooms herself. She can see her own face reflected in his eyes. As in *Adam and Eve*, Eve's greatest love is not Adam but herself, and she tries to prise his eyes wider so she can get a better look at herself. At this point the voice-over states, 'Man begins by loving love and ends by loving woman. Woman begins by loving man but ends by loving love.' This observation is ambiguous, however, since Eve is apparently born a narcissist and appears not to love Adam at all. She even bites Adam's hand for ruining her reflection in a scene where she grooms and

[215] The same pose that Claudia Schiffer strikes in her representation of Eve in the Versace advertisement analysed in Chapter 3.

enjoys her reflection in a pond. She also tries to decorate herself by fashioning a hat from flowers and, when she models it for Adam and he laughs at her, she cries.

It is through appealing to Eve's vanity that the serpent tries to persuade Eve to eat the forbidden fruit in the first of three attempts. The serpent tells Eve that Adam will be blind to her beauty until she eats of the fruit, but, although Eve is tempted, she refuses to eat. A voice-over condemns her anyway, saying, 'from now she shall attempt to rule her mate through artifice and guile'. During the serpent's second attempt to tempt Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, Adam sees Eve reaching for the fruit and stops her. He tells her 'no', and draws her away. She eventually eats the fruit out of defiance and vanity, and tells Adam to do the same. Once again, the blame for the transgression is laid at the feet of Eve, who is able to lead a trusting and obedient Adam into transgression because he loves her. The promotional poster-book accompanying the film makes clear that Eve is wholly culpable for the 'sin of Adam and Eve' in its story synopsis:

> And together the man and the women discovered the joy and wonder that was life. But Eve, the woman, was often discontented, for what had made her happy today would displease her tomorrow. Her attitude bewildered Adam. She was that which he loved above all else and was made by the Lord God Himself of the flesh and bone and blood taken from Adam, but she was worlds apart from him. Never did she hesitate or fumble in her first steps as Adam had. Curiosity always led her onward. Her vanity seemed to be constantly growing and with it increased her frustration because Adam did not seem to appreciate her beauty.[216]

The misogynous overtones in these early Adam and Eve films are not totally discarded by the films created in postfeminist popular culture. The idea of Eve as narcissistic, vain, fickle and self-centred is carried through to the 1990s, when the films *Bedazzled* and *Pleasantville* were made. Contemporary film-makers, however, are not always aware that they are reproducing familiar portrayals of Eve. For example, Gary Ross claims that his film

[216] Promotional poster-book, *The Sin of Adam and Eve* (Dimension Pictures, 1968), p. 2.

'blows open stereotypes', and yet *Pleasantville* does not portray Eve, or gender relations, in a very different light from the films created in the 1960s.

Pleasantville tells the story of two teens, from a single-parent family in 1998 America, Jen and David, who, after a visit from a strange TV repairman, are zapped accidentally into the seemingly flawless world of a 1950s TV sitcom, 'Pleasantville', where fathers work, mothers keep house, divorce is unknown and racism does not exist.[217] None of the social ills Jen and David experience in the late nineties, such as AIDS, racism, unemployment, broken homes, exist. In particular, sex is absent because sex never appears on screen in 1950s sitcoms.[218] In the beginning David (who becomes the Pleasantville character Bud after the transition) is respectful of the fragility of the social fibre of the town: nothing can be changed, no new concepts can be introduced, and no innocence lost or wisdom gained without the social fabric of the town being destroyed. David's sister, Jen (who becomes the Pleasantville character Mary Sue), unlike David, is unhappy about living in 1950s-sitcom 'Pleasantville'. She refuses to repress her modern sensibilities in her new surroundings and, most significant for the development of the film's plot, introduces sex to the town by seducing the captain of the Pleasantville basketball team, Skip. This sexual awakening, in turn, introduces the first instance of colour into Pleasantville's monochrome.[219] As a result of this first transforming event, the whole of Pleasantville is changed irreversibly—not unlike the way Eve changes the fate of humanity (through sex as far as the popular appropriation is concerned). Jen, as we shall see, is one of three representations of Eve in this film. Ross comments on his theory about Jen's function in the film:

> There are people who would like to return to an unconscious
> Eden devoid of sex, before there was Eve when there was only

[217] There is no racism because all the characters in the sitcom are white.
[218] The only world that exists for the characters in the sitcom is the world of the sitcom, nothing beyond it.
[219] Before Jen enters Pleasantville, the concept of sex does not exist. Characters are married but there is no sexuality and no sexual relations. Jen changes all of this with her seduction of Skip.

> Adam, and there was none of the 'attendant complications'. I mean, she's [Jen] the person who brings knowledge and what does knowledge create? And he [Bud] unconsciously brings the other piece of knowledge.[220]

Ross's remarks here are significant because not only does he equate Jen with Eve but he also equates Eve with sex, and an Eve who consciously brings sexual knowledge into Eden as opposed to Adam/ David, who unconsciously brings the knowledge of free will. Jen and David are the instigators of revolution in a chain reaction of events leading from Jen's seduction of Skip to David's introduction of free will to Mr. Johnson (the owner of the ice-cream parlour where David works) by suggesting that he, rather than David, make the ice-cream sundaes for a change instead of wiping down the sides[221] to Pleasantville's transformation from black and white (signifying the town's innocence) into Technicolor (signifying its knowledge).

What is so interesting about the film is that the two major events it depicts as the genesis of the town's evolution reinscribe gender stereotypes. Jen brings about change through sexual activity and David brings it about intellectually. So, while Ross believes that he is 'tearing down iconography' with the character of Jen,[222] I contend that this film is only partially successful in challenging stereotypes. To be sure, Jen is a sexually aggressive young woman who brings about massive change with her powerful sexuality,[223] but, and herein lies the rub, whereas she introduces sex and begins the change, the real 'nuanced'[224] change to Pleasantville is brought about by David, who takes over the hero's role while Jen's role diminishes dramatically in screen time. Bud (David) brings knowledge of literature to the young people of the town by telling them the plot of *Huckleberry Finn*. This information fills

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[220] Gary Ross, 'Director's/ Writer's Commentary', on *Pleasantville DVD* (New Line Home Video, 1999).
[221] David introduces free will to Mr. Johnson by suggesting that he could add variety to his day by making the ice-cream sundaes, a concept that has never occurred to Mr. Johnson who spends has spent his days repetitively wiping the sides until now.
[222] Gary Ross, *Pleasantville* DVD Commentary.
[223] I call Jen's sexuality 'powerful' because she begins the social revolution in Pleasantville through her sexuality. Without her seduction of Skip the town would not have transformed into Technicolor and the further social and cultural changes, brought about by David, would not have been possible. I will go on to critique Jen's role as seducer and giver of sexual knowledge later in this chapter.
[224] Gary Ross, *Pleasantville* DVD Commentary.

the books of the library, whose pages have been blank, in a metaphorical 'filling' of the minds of the townsfolk. It is revealing that Jen is incapable of this task. Although it she who begins to tell *Huckleberry Finn,* she has to pass the book to David to complete because she cannot remember the story.

In the Huckleberry Finn scene, Jen's contribution of sex to the evolution of the town is effectively devalued, and education is presented as the being the real route to social revolution. Jen's voracious sexuality offers only limited change (Skip's character changes for the worse as a consequence of his dalliance with Jen) and the town progresses most noticeably through Bud's literary knowledge and intellectual capacity. Jen's role is that of initiator of sexual desire and giver of sexual knowledge, yet even this role, which begins the great change in the town, is taken from her altogether at the end of the film, when she forgoes her sexuality in order to further her education at college (a 'Pleasantville' college no less). Ross has set up an all too familiar binary opposition. Jen can be educated, she can sexual, but she cannot be both educated and sexual. She decides that education is more important than sex. Her words to David in her penultimate screen appearance are: 'I did the slut thing, David ... It got kinda old.' Putting these words into this character's mouth effectively removes her from the temptress category and places her in the realm of safety, back in the 'pre-fall' garden so to speak. In fact, Jen is not in the final scene when David returns to his home in 1998 America. At the end of the film, whereas David enjoys an exchange with his real-life mother, from whom he was previously very withdrawn, Jen has chosen to remain in the artificiality of Pleasantville to become a chaste student. David's transformation illustrates his new desire to 'engage' with his social environment and proves his Pleasantville-acquired higher consciousness to the viewer. Thus David, it would seem, is reintegrated into his rightful society but Jen is not allowed to make a successful transition. David is socially 'disengaged' at the start of the film but becomes 'engaged' at the end as a result of his

transforming experience in Pleasantville. Jen's transition from promiscuous but socially engaged teen at the opening of the film to a chaste student who has transferred her desire from sex to learning at the close is, in effect, a 'disengagement' from society. Although she appears happy with her new role, she no longer lives in the 'real' world.

The two siblings are shown at the end of the film, with David's relationship-affirming scene with his mother juxtaposed to a shot of Jen in fictional Pleasantville, wearing 1950s clothes, laughing and reading with a similarly attired young man. In other words, the bad girl turns good and everyone is happy living in 1950. Why could Jen not also come back home to 1998? Is she simply a character caught in the director's sexist binary opposition between sexual woman and intellectual woman? Or is there something inherently disruptive about this Eve-based character? It seems that Jen could not be allowed to return to her old life of sexual promiscuity despite the positive effect that her sexuality (and her promiscuity) had on Pleasantville because the film does not celebrate or encourage such unfettered female sexuality. So much for ripping apart those stereotypes.[225] Not just Jen, but three female characters in the film represent varying cultural roles of Eve. Jen is the sexual temptress, Betty the curious innocent and Margaret is the wife, the 'helper'.

Because the film is not consciously retelling the biblical account, it is possible to discover in this film different cultural expressions of female sexuality all expressed through the archetype of Eve. Whereas Jen's powerful, transforming sexuality proves troublesome enough to contemporary sensibilities that it has to be quashed, and not celebrated, in the film, Betty's sexuality is celebrated. Her first sexual sensations set a tree outside her house on fire, which suggests that she has experienced her first orgasm.

Betty, Jen's Pleasantville mother, is linked with Eve by Ross, who comments that, when the actress, Joan Allen, plays Betty, she is actually playing the part of Eve. She is Eve

[225] This could explain Ross's statement in his commentary that the film is most satisfying for the audience who 'rolls with the film' as opposed to those who try to 'quantify it' and who find some aspects 'problematic'. Gary Ross, *Pleasantville* DVD Commentary.

before she eats the fruit, a woman living in 'Eden', who is completely unaware of the concepts of sex and free will. Like Eve, she is curious. She seeks the knowledge she does not have when she asks Jen to explain 'What's sex?' This encounter leads to a scene of autonomous sexual experimentation for Betty, and, as a consequence of the knowledge she gains from this experience, she becomes Technicolored.

Betty, now sexually aware, finds romance with Mr. Johnson, who loves her Technicoloured skin, and paints a naked, colour portrait of her on the window of his shop. By showing these new experiences in her life the film celebrates Betty's transforming sexuality. In contrast to Jen's wayward and irreverent promiscuity, however, Betty's sexuality is a relatively contained and controlled one. She is not sexually aggressive like Jen; indeed, her first sexual experience is solitary. Although she and her husband have children, Jen and Bud, we are made aware of her having sexual relations with only one man in her life, Mr. Johnson.[226] Their love scene is very tastefully and subtly communicated to the audience, unlike Jen's sexual initiation of Skip. Betty's representation as Eve is as an innocent woman taking the fruit of knowledge out of curiosity and a desire to learn more about the world.

The third portrayal of Eve in the film is Margaret Henderson, David's Pleasantville girlfriend. Margaret is very curious to know of the world outside of Pleasantville; she encourages David to share his knowledge and experience with her and the other Pleasantville residents, and she is the catalyst for his first moment of change. In Margaret David has found a helper fit for him. In their first scene together, Margaret, who loves to bake cookies for her boyfriend (soon to be replaced by David), offers a plate of cookies to David, which she holds up level with her breasts. The scene inevitably suggests to the viewer Eve's offering of the fruit to Adam. Ross acknowledges the connection of Margaret's offering of cookies to Bud with the offering of her body to him with this comment:

[226] Sex and sexuality did not exist before Jen introduced it to the town.

> When she offers him her cookies … I have to admit that the metaphor is not lost on me either … but the first moment of change for him is when she offers these things to him, and he is not above that, or immune to that.'[227]

David gradually becomes more socially engaged because of his interaction with Margaret. She changes him through sex. What is suggested in the scene about the cookies is made explicit on Bud and Margaret's first date, a scene entitled 'Tree of Knowledge' on the DVD version of *Pleasantville*. In the most direct biblical allusion in the plot—one that Ross refers to as a 'satire'[228] —Margaret takes David to Lover's Lane. She tells him that lovely fruit grows there. When he asks, 'Like what?', she replies that she will show him, and runs to a nearby tree on which a single red apple is hanging. She plucks it and offers it to him, saying, 'Eat it'. He hesitates and she encourages him to 'Go on'. While the audience does not see him actually eat the

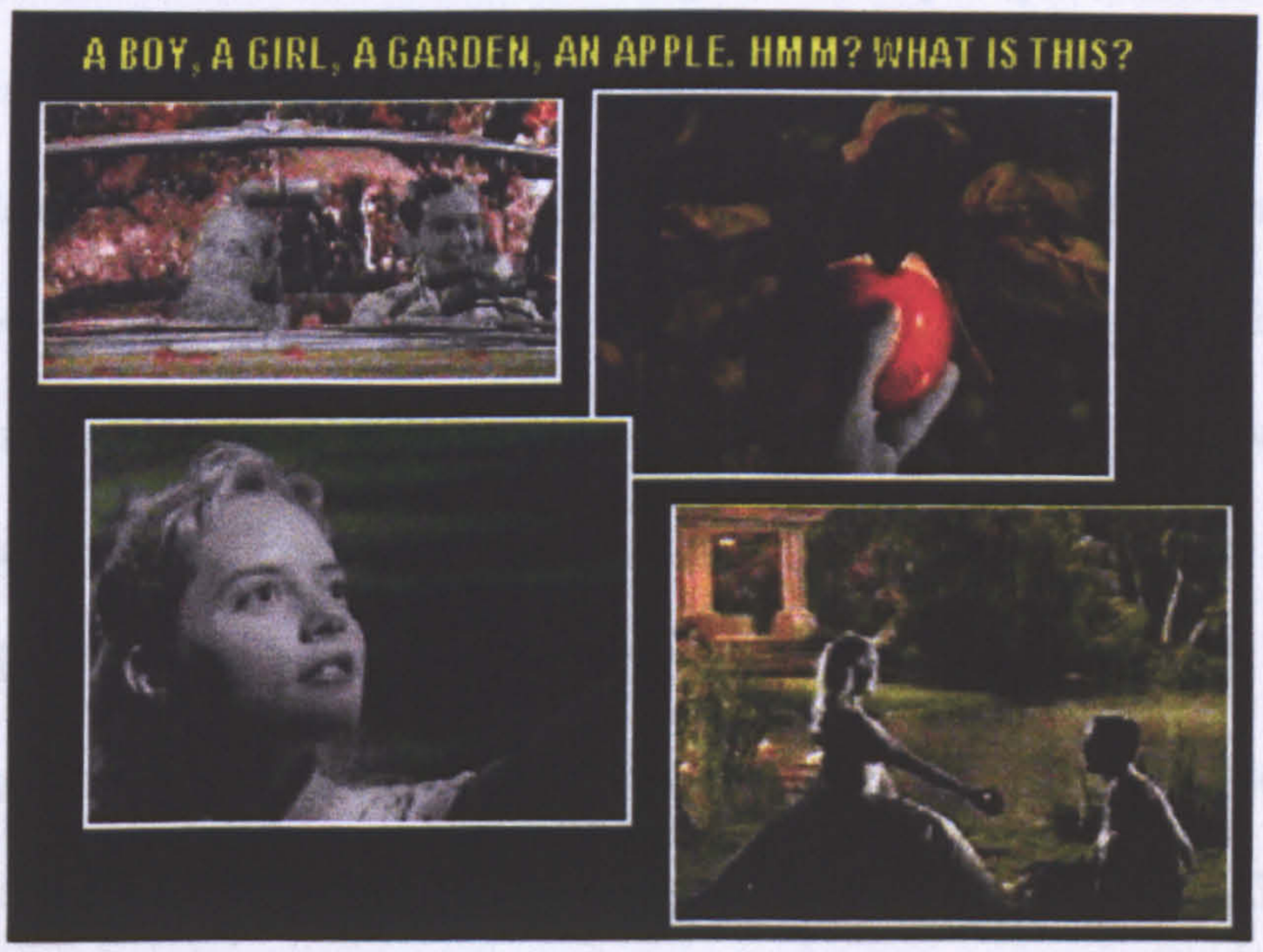

Figure 4.4: Image Montage of Temptation Scene in *Pleasantville*, www.hollywoodjesus.com[229]

[227] Gary Ross, *Pleasantville* DVD Commentary.
[228] I interpret this comment to mean that this scene of Margaret giving fruit to David was a satirical acknowledgement of the cultural memory of Genesis 2-3 and its connections with this film.
[229] The website *Hollywood Jesus* lists films with Christian themes.

fruit at this point, we are shown the scene later on in a flashback that identifies this as the defining moment of 'downfall', and, therefore, the reason David must leave Pleasantville. Through David humanity is given a second chance to refuse the fruit of knowledge, but David accepts it and eats it, fully aware of the consequences of his actions. He chooses free will over life in Eden. In the end, then, the fate of Pleasantville lies with David, despite the transforming 'power' of the three female characters. David becomes a better man because of the influence of these women and their encouragement to embrace change, yet the women's only power to change their lives is through sex.[230] The three important female characters are linked with sex in a way that David is not.

Harry Ramis's 2000 remake of *Bedazzled* also links Eve imagery with provocative female sexuality, albeit in a more obvious manner than does *Pleasantville*. In this film, the main character, Elliot Richards, is a well-meaning but socially inept technical-support advisor who is in love with Alison Gardner, a female co-worker. Unfortunately she barely knows that he is alive. Desperate to gain Alison's affections, Elliot strikes a deal with the Devil, played by Liz Hurley.[231] In exchange for Elliot's soul, the temptress will grant him seven wishes; however, with each wish the Devil gives Elliot a version of his wish that makes his life a living hell. For instance, when Elliot asks to be rich, powerful and married to Alison, he awakens the next morning to discover that he has been transformed into a Colombian drug lord. He then makes a wish to become the most emotionally sensitive man in the world but ends up as a victim of bullying through his constant weeping. When he asks to become a seven foot six inches tall basketball superstar, Elliot breaks all NBA records, but

[230] Margaret's role overshadows that of Jen's in the second half of the film, but, like Betty, Margaret's version of female sexuality is much less threatening than that of Jen because her desire is focused on one man and she remains demure even though she is sexual. Betty's and Margaret's lives improve because of sex; Jen, the sexual woman, changes her life through renouncing her sexuality.
[231] 'The Devil' is how the film names the character.

unfortunately his 'equipment' does not measure up.[232] When another wish turns him into a literary star, he finds that he is also gay.

Bedazzled conflates woman with the serpent. It portrays Satan as a glamorous, persuasive and alluring woman, frequently wearing either a live snake or snakeskin clothing, a theme often reproduced in art and advertising, as we saw above in Chapters 2 and 3. The stereotypical image of woman and serpent occurs in two of the three scenes of temptation, the first of which is early in the film, when the Devil reveals her true identity as Princess of Darkness to Elliot. Behind them during this exchange is a large billboard advertisement bearing the image of a seductive-looking female (possibly Hurley) wearing a skin-tight snakeskin dress, the top of which barely covers her exaggerated breasts. The dress creates the illusion of a serpent-like body with female feet and head. In her left hand she holds a red apple,[233] connoting the link between woman, the serpent and temptation, and above her is the heading, 'In Your Dreams…'

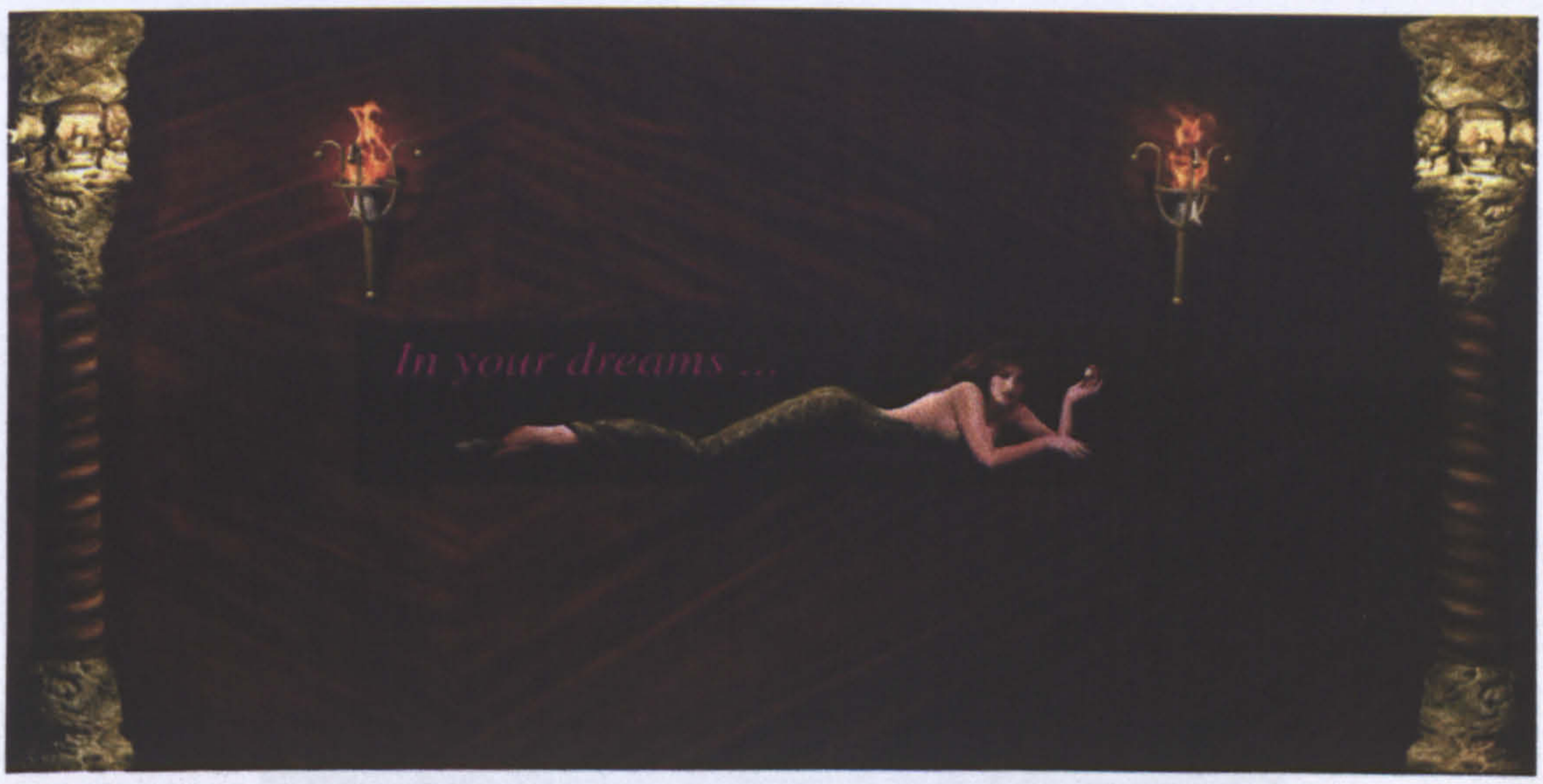

Figure 4.5: Still from *Bedazzled* DVD, Twentieth Century Fox, 2000

[232] 'Equipment' is the word used in the film.
[233] Despite the biblical account specifying only a 'fruit' in its description of the fruit of knowledge, popular culture has adopted the red apple as the fruit of temptation. It is used in all the films and advertising I am to analyse in this thesis.

This image is somewhat ironic, for in daily life the audience will be familiar with Hurley's face and body advertising products on billboards, magazines, newspapers and television. This background prop appears to mock the concept of woman as a commodity (despite the film's use of the very same concept to advertise itself and other products) by explicitly presenting itself as an illusion. This temptress image is, quite literally, 'in your dreams'.

Nevertheless, despite this and other parodies of male fantasies of women in *Bedazzled*,[234] the marketing behind the film fully exploits the female temptress stereotype in order to attract an audience. Two of the frames from the trailer used to promote *Bedazzled* explicitly connect the narrative of the film with the story in Genesis 2-3 and with the concepts of sin and sex, thereby creating a connection between these concepts and the biblical text. In the first scene, Hurley, wearing a red, sequinned bikini and a large serpent around her shoulders, stands in front of mural depicting Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden of Eden.

Figure 4.6: Promotional Image for *Bedazzled*, Twentieth Century Fox, 1999

[234] In an interview with Hurley, included on the *Bedazzled DVD*, where she talks about her character's wardrobe in the film, she describes the Devil's outfits (which include provocative takes on a nurse's uniform, a traffic warden and an angel not to mention the various bikinis she dons for numerous scenes) as 'very, very, very hackneyed male fantasy'.

With her left hand she proffers the obligatory red apple, she says, 'Besides, do I look like somebody who could try to trick you?' These words with these props imply a kind of tongue-in-cheek reference to the cultural myths that this image evokes: this woman does indeed look like somebody who could try to trick you. *Bedazzled* relies on the viewers' knowledge of the story in Genesis 2-3, or at least what viewers think they know of the story, as an easy way to connect female sexuality and deception for the audience. This in turn, encourages the cultural habit of seeing Eve as a seductive trickster.

Figure 4.7: Still of *Bedazzled* Promotional Trailer, 1999

The second frame informs the audience of the opening date of the film in a way that leaves no room for the audience to miss the connections between the Genesis narrative, evil and female sexuality (signified by Hurley playing the role of Eve) that the film's promotional team are trying to promote. The season of the film's opening, 'the fall', becomes a further prop to tie the concepts of the frame together explicitly. The word 'fall' signifies not only the story in Genesis 2-3 but also the interpretation of the text that holds the woman, and specifically female sexuality, as responsible for 'the fall' of humanity. To ensure that the

audience gets the joke, the word is the only colour in an otherwise monochrome frame. Smoke rises from the red-hot word. 'The fall' and this film obviously have something in common, the trailer tells us. What do they have in common? The temptation of desirable but potentially corrupting female sexuality.

The still of Hurley with apple and snake, taken from the trailer discussed above, was the most-often viewed *Bedazzled* image, appearing in most media promotions of the film, and yet this scene did not appear in the film itself. Despite its apparent deletion from the film, this still is used as a kind of forbidden fruit, tempting a potential audience to watch the film. Why this particular image? Because this image is particularly powerful: its power lies in the cultural connection between Eve, evil and sexual temptation. The mural in the background serves as a reminder of the danger of the temptation trio, a serpent, a woman and a fruit (or popular culture's red apple). This one image summarises the evil seductress stereotype on which the film plays far more effectively than any image actually included within the film's narrative.

Certainly, this shot may be pleasurable to look at for some people: a world famous model wearing few clothes, who, as the distributors of the promotional picture are well aware, has the ability to sell magazines and cosmetics in mass volume. It exploits the cultural mythology surrounding Eve by depicting a highly sexualised female.[235] This representation functions to communicate an implicit social concept to the viewer by means of a recognised and widely understood cultural signifier: Eve. Furthermore, this imagery serves to enhance the concept of female temptation because of the 'natural' or 'obvious' stereotype that Eve evokes. In this way, 'Bedazzled' works on two levels: it pokes fun at the female masquerade by satirising it but at the same time advocates the cultural construct of Eve/female by using it to advertise the film. This not only occurs in the first temptation scene (where the billboard

[235] In popular culture a woman holding an apple and associated with a serpent has come to signify Eve, or certainly to symbolise the nature that she is supposed to embody (usually construed as sexual temptation, and 'wayward' nature).

implicitly injects the scene with parody) but also in the character of the Devil herself. She is a caricature of the traditional *Femme fatale* stereotype in that she is dressed in clothing that 'dwells self-consciously on the manipulation and exaggeration of femininity, the extreme artificiality of the *Femme fatale's* look, and the equally excessive innocence of her on-screen counterpart.'[236]

Indeed, the Devil's on-screen counterpart in *Bedazzled* is the rather less spectacular Alison, who is dressed much less provocatively than Hurley, who is dressed to be the focal point of every scene in which she is involved. Alison, who plays the object of Elliot's unrequited desire, has a far more subdued and conservative wardrobe than that of the Devil. Her key colour is blue, particularly pastel shades, in contrast to the scarlet, leather and snakeskin in which Hurley is clothed.[237] The contrast serves to highlight the integrity of Alison's character and the duplicity of the Devil. Further, in a humorous acknowledgement of the *Femme fatale's* 'persistent alteration of her look, her changeable wardrobe becoming a straightforward metonym for her untrustworthiness',[238] Hurley changes from her usual overtly sexual, stylised and spectacular scarlet clothing into an angel's costume, replete with halo. While Elliot is pleading with her to release him from his contract, she cuts him off to ask about her halo accessory: 'Is this too much?' Certainly, the film is very aware of the traditional *Femme fatale* stereotype, or as Bruzzi observes, Hurley, as the Devil, is:

> The embodiment of the self-conscious *Femme fatale* who successfully uses a conventionalised, overtly sexual image of femininity which acknowledges its cinematic antecedents and suggests a full awareness of how that image affects men.[239]

This is reflected in the many micro-miniskirted fetish outfits that Hurley wears after each wish episode in the film: she appears as a nurse, traffic warden, teacher, policewoman,

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[236] Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing the Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.125.
[237] 'Key colour' is Deena Appel's term in 'Bedazzling Designs with Deena Apparel', *Bedazzled* DVD (20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2000).
[238] Bruzzi, *Undressing the Cinema*, p.129.
[239] Bruzzi, *Undresssing the Cinema*, p.127.

cheerleader and lawyer, and all costumes are highly sexualised with the maximum exposure of flesh. Despite her sexual aggression and fondness for 'very, very, very hackneyed male fantasy',[240] the Devil is not the object of Elliot's desire. To Elliot she 'seems really nice ... in a strong ... scary kind of way'. But her sexual appeal does not appear to overwhelm him, and he later complains to her, 'Is that all you ever think about? Do you think everything's about sex?' She is more intelligent, more powerful and more able than all of the male characters in the film, but, instead of desiring her, Elliot is frightened of her. But, despite his fear, he does not see her as really evil, just playfully mischievous, again a filmic attempt to satirise the traditional evil woman type.

In spite of its attempts to lampoon the *Femme fatale* filmic tradition, *Bedazzled* is never really successful in challenging the stereotype of temptress because it also helps to perpetuate and promote a socially and culturally constructed ideal of femininity. The satire would work if Elizabeth Hurley had a different persona off screen, but instead she looks exactly the same in her role as the Devil as she does when the audience sees her out of role at film premieres or in advertisements. In casting a highly famous advertising model as the parody of the *Femme fatale*, and dressing her character in haute couture outfits,[241] Ramis has created a 'fashion show film',[242] or, a film whose glamour is more important than the plot or the acting. *Bedazzled* can be viewed as nothing more than one long advertisement for the main product: Elizabeth Hurley, Versace, the haute couture fashion company with which she is affiliated,[243] and the cosmetics company, Estee Lauder, for whom she models.

Versace, Sonia Rykiel and Fendi all receive acknowledgements in the credits, indicating that these companies have sponsored the film.

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[240] Elizabeth Hurley, 'Bedazzling Designs with Deena Appel', *Bedazzled* DVD.
[241] The distinction between Hurley as consumer commodity and as the character she plays is undefined throughout the film.
[242] Bruzzi, *Undressing the Cinema*, p. 3.
[243] Versace dresses Hurley for her public events in return for her endorsement of their clothing.

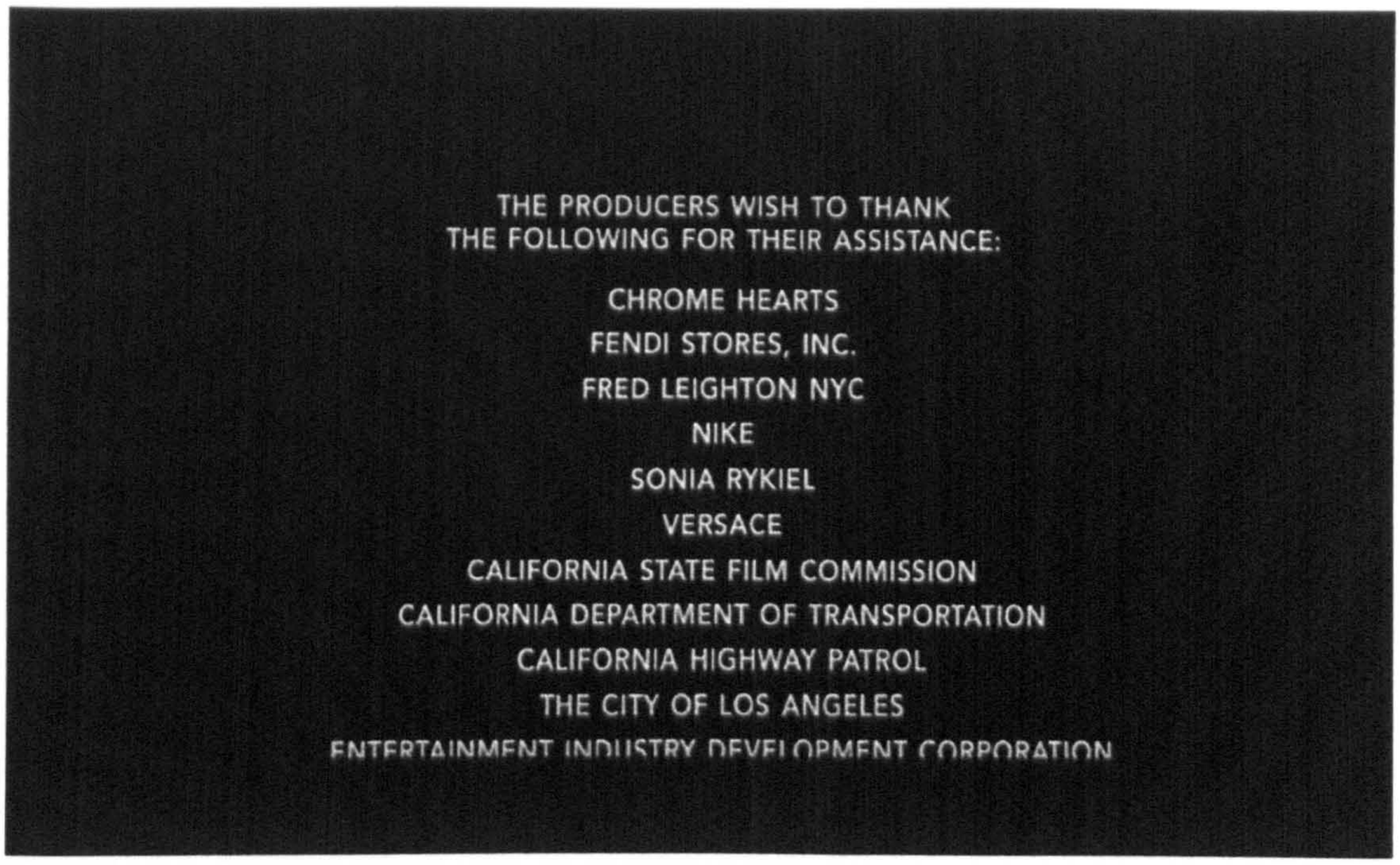

Figure 4.8: Still of *Bedazzled Credits*, 1999

It is vitally important to the social and cultural function of the film that the audience closely connect Hurley with these companies. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that when Eve imagery is used in advertising, it is mainly for fashion and cosmetics firms because of the concepts of sexual attraction and temptation that are inherently part of the selling point of these products. The personification of these concepts is the culturally appropriated version of Eve. Consequently, Hurley cannot be made too much of a comedy figure, or parody the feminine masquerade too effectively, because she has to perpetuate this particular version of Eve and promote it to the audience.

Hurley's function is to look good and sell her own masquerade in order to advertise the products she promotes. As Harry Ramis comments on Hurley's wardrobe for the film, '*Elizabeth decided* to make this a demo tape for all of her sexiest looks'.[244] Hurley had to control her image because she was product placement not only in the film but in real life

[244] Harry Ramis, 'Bedazzling Designs with Deena Appel', (emphasis mine).

where she was, and still is, contracted as 'spokes-model' for Estee Lauder.[245] Hurley is a model, not an actress, and she earns her living selling companies' products off her own good looks. She is simply not good enough as an actress that she can afford to be made to look unattractive in a film, and thus potentially cause damage to her advertising career.[246] Thus, in the film, the directors, producers and costume designers had to allow her control over her image, as opposed to dressing her specifically for the character she was playing, because her status as a glamorous icon is the major selling point of their film. She has to show herself, and therefore the clothes and accessories she is sponsored to model, to the best advantage, as alluded to by the costume designer on *Bedazzled*, Deena Appel:

> Elizabeth has very specific ideas about what
> works for her and what works for her body.
> I mean, you couldn't ask for someone with
> more fashion experience. Elizabeth's relationship
> with Versace is very deep and we did use a few
> pieces from Versace, as well as Fendi and Sonia Rykiel.[247]

Indeed, Hurley mentions these fashion houses and designers each time she is interviewed about her part in the film, and there is scene in the film where a Fendi bag gets shameless product placement when it is the sole focal point of the last, lingering shot. Furthermore, the designers each receive a mention at the end of the film's credits.

This attention to product placement is not surprising given the cinema's massive influence on attitudes, beliefs and buying patterns in contemporary society.[248] Cinema is not only popular and accessible, but, in our consumer-driven society, it is a major institution of social representation. The way that sectors of society are represented in the cinema is

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[245] 'Product placement' is an advertising term used to describe the way in which an advertiser will allow, or pay for, one of their products to be promoted in a high profile film that they believe will be beneficial to the image and reputation of their product. Another instance of product placement (although it happens very regularly, particularly in blockbuster films) was Julia Roberts drinking Diet Coke throughout the 1990 smash hit film *Pretty Woman*.

[246] There are other actresses who have contracts with fashion and cosmetic firms who are able to look unattractive in their films, for instance Charlize Theron in *Monster*; however, this only works because they are Oscar-winning actresses.

[247] Appel, 'Bedazzling Designs'.

[248] Note the popularity of 'celebrity' magazines that claim to reveal to the consumer how to achieve the 'celebrity body', 'wardrobe', 'makeup' and 'hair'.

internalised by the audience, who are encouraged, in product placement films, to emulate the image they are viewing. Certainly, it seems that Eve is a powerful advertising image for the fashion world, in that the dangerous, seductive but stylish vixen stereotype has proved very attractive to consumers. If Eve works for advertising, then she will work for a product placement film too, or at least in the case of *Bedazzled*. In representing the Devil as a female, and then employing Eve imagery to communicate the 'devilish' nature of this female, the film markets the female body and the cultural mythology surrounding it. Like *Pleasantville*, *Bedazzled* reduces the female to physicality. Her sexuality is her most influential tool.

The 'mystery' of femininity is not just a mystery to men, but also to women. If the audience of *Bedazzled* was mainly made up of women, then women seek to understand the 'mystery' of femininity too: If men want to know 'what do women want?'[249] women want to know: How does she manage to look like that? What brand of clothes does she wear? What does she use on her skin? Hence the success of using Hurley not just to play a character in the film but also to advertise products while she is on screen. She is a product, an object of desire, advertising other objects of desire.[250]

> The perfectly beautiful women in the glossy clothes and cosmetic ads of today hold out a vision of perfection which few of us can ever attain. The desire for such perfection which, even while we love the movies of Garbo, Hayworth and others, we may well realise is hopeless, is to be displaced onto a desire for the products they advertise or connote.[251]

We have a come full circle back to the power of advertising of which product placement film is an example.[252] The feminine ideal does not remain static but is in a constant state of

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[249] 'Was will das Weib?' – Freud's famous question.

[250] This is not to say that such product placement and promotion of fashion houses is not commonplace in Hollywood films and is exclusive only to films featuring Elizabeth Hurley, rather, many famous actresses endorse at least one designer in their films, and also act as spokesmodels for cosmetics companies (examples are Uma Thurman for Lancôme; Jennifer Aniston, Beyonce Knowles, Milla Jojovich and Charlize Theron for L'Oreal; Catherine Zeta Jones for Elizabeth Arden cosmetics).

[251] Annette Kuhn, 'Living Dolls and Real Women' in *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.13.

revision and change in order to create a sense of unsatisfied desire within the consumer. The consumer continues to buy in order to recreate the ideal, but they will never succeed, or, if they do, then they are forced to keep buying to emulate the latest definition of the 'ideal'. The goal is always beyond the consumer. Companies must keep selling, so the consumer always has to be kept striving for something, as Dyer persuasively argues:

> Representations here and now have real consequences for real people, not just in the way they are treated ... but in terms of the way representations delimit and enable what people can be in any given society.[253]

By subscribing to the pursuit of the feminine ideal, women encourage society to continue to judge them by means of their sexual attractiveness, or their success, or failure, to meet the conditions and requirements of the socially and culturally constructed ideal.[254] The companies who promote and sell this construct must offer the consumer of their product the possibility of something pleasurable and attractive in return. The film *Bedazzled* suggests that being a sex object is a way women can harness power for women, and in contemporary society it is a way of 'fitting in', a way of being admired and envied. How ironic, then, that the chorus of the song we hear at the end of the film is: 'If you want to be somebody else, change your mind'.[255] This may be the lesson for Elliot, the male hero of the film, but for women the motto is, 'If you want to be somebody else, change your clothes'. Herein lies the complexity of Eve-related stereotypes of women available in film and advertising: they promote the qualities that Eve is meant to personify and use them as an incentive for women to buy a particular product. The encoded message is: if you buy Versace clothes, then you too

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[252] See Wendy Chapkis, *Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance* (London: The Woman's Press, 1998) for a more intensive discussion of this issue.
[253] Dyer, *The Matter of Images*, p.3
[254] This ideal does not remain static but is in a constant state of revision and change in order to create a sense of unsatisfied desire within the consumer; therefore, the consumer continues to buy in order to recreate the ideal, but they will never succeed or if they do then they are forced to keep buying either to remain that way, or to emulate the latest definition of the 'ideal'.
[255] Sister Hazel, *Change Your Mind* (Universal Records Inc.).

could be dangerous and sexy like Elizabeth Hurley – or Eve. When advertising presents Eve to female consumers, the message is that the only way a woman can have power is to be sexually attractive – desired by men and envied by other women. The power advertisers offer is the power they think women want and, moreover, they offer it to women as what they should want. Often the power with which advertisers tempt women by using images of the sexually powerful temptress Eve. The cost of this power for women is immense. Women must make substantial financial investment and a great deal of time and effort to even attempt to compete in the pursuit for the feminine ideal. Even to women like Liz Hurley, who have achieved their fame and fortune through their ability to attain the current standards of female beauty, have to retain tight control over their image for fear of not being found attractive and therefore unmarketable. If the purpose of advertising is to sell to the consumer the promise of being something different than they really are via whichever product they are marketing, then these representations must not embody what women already are, but what they wish to be.[256]

Conclusion

Through the comparison of representations of Adam and Eve in films from two eras, the 1960s and the 1990s, this chapter has demonstrated that the treatment of woman in the guise of Eve as sex kitten in the 1960s and as harbinger of social change in the 1990s is not, in the final analysis, as different as it may appear at first sight. Just as the advertising images treated in chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, despite their appearance as subversions of conventional gender roles, reinscribe traditional male and female social roles, so too these cinematic representations of Adam and Eve, although they appear to overturn traditional gender stereotypes, actually reinscribe and perpetuate them.

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[256] In other words, the women who are targeted by 'fashion show' films and advertising campaigns that use Eve imagery to market their film/products wish to gain social power without sacrificing the desire of men as I argued in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Although the films analysed here were made in different eras, and so one would expect them to reflect different attitudes to gender and sexual roles, all these films promote an ideology that focuses on female sexuality and the use of traditional feminine wiles as a means for women to obtain power in society. This finding is particularly significant given the fact that, in the case of the films produced in the postfeminist era of the 1990s, society is assumed already to have achieved gender equality.

The analysis of cinematic representations of Adam and Eve in this chapter support the argument made throughout this thesis, that the gender equality that postfeminism assumes as a given in contemporary society is actually illusory. The representations of woman as sexual temptress and man as moral caretaker reproduced in the 1990s Adam and Eve films have changed little since the films of the 1960s were made, despite massive political, social and economic changes brought about by feminism during the thirty years in between.

CONCLUSION

EVE: THE CREATION OF A POSTFEMINIST ICON

Since the last decade of the twentieth century, representations of Eve have been exploited regularly by advertisers, film producers and celebrities to promote and endorse consumer goods. The biblical figure of Eve has not been the focus of such popularity since the 1890s, when she became one of art's most represented *femme fatales*, along with other biblical and mythological figures such as Salome, Ophelia and Pandora.

This thesis set out to examine these twentieth-century interpretations of Eve imagery in order to understand their function in contemporary popular culture. Throughout the chapters of the thesis several questions were asked: why has Eve imagery returned to popularity at the end of the twentieth century? What differentiates the contemporary interpretations of Eve from those popular in nineteenth-*fin-de-siecle* art? What social and gender messages are embedded in the images in which Eve appears and whose interests do they serve?

To answer these questions the thesis used research from studies of fin-de-siecle culture and social science. Eve imagery from end of the nineteenth and the end of the twentieth century were compared to investigate the differences in Eve's representation in the two eras. The comparison showed almost no differences between the nineteenth-century artistic images and the twentieth-century advertising images. Eve was pictured in the same poses, she had the same expressions on her face and her characterisation as sexual temptress remained intact over the hundred years between the two eras.

My argument about images of Eve at the end of the twentieth century builds upon Elaine Showalter's conclusions about the end of the nineteenth century.[257] Showalter suggested that the *femme fatale* imagery that was ubiquitous at the end of the nineteenth

[257] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*.

century was a response to the pressing social issues of the time, such as the syphilis epidemic, decreasing birth rate, unemployment and burgeoning feminism. She argues that in the final decade of the nineteenth century, society was in turmoil because of the various threats to the social structure caused by the New Woman. The threat of this New Woman was greatly exaggerated by the artists of the era, and most of the social issues, in particular the decreasing birth rate, the spread of syphilis and the rise of first wave feminism, were attributed to the woman, the sexual temptress.

Through analysing the very similar Eve imagery at the end of the twentieth century, this thesis found that the difference between the images of Eve produced in the two eras did not lie in the content of the images themselves, which has remained almost identical, but rather was the result of the cultural function of the image. In the nineteenth century Eve's image served to denounce female sexuality and convey the threat of a woman uncontrolled by a man. In contrast, Eve imagery from the twentieth century *celebrated* that same dangerous female sexuality. Far from being denounced, female (hetero)sexuality, and in particular women's exploitation of that sexuality to gain elevated social status and power, is actively encouraged by the producers of the images. This thesis concluded that, in spite of their pretensions, the contemporary images of Eve are not championing women or their ability to express their sexuality in whatever way they wish, but rather are simply rehashing and perpetuating the age-old stereotypes in order to serve the interests of the advertisers, which is to sell the maximum number of products to the maximum number of consumers.

Employing recent social science research by Janet Holland,[258] examining the sexual practices of young women and their attitudes to sexual relationships, the thesis showed that, far from being powerful in gender relations, young women in fact feel disempowered sexually, and, as Holland argues, feel unable to articulate their desires, needs or wishes in

[258] Janet Holland *et al*, 'Sex, Gender and Power'.

(hetero)sexual relationships. Many young women, according to Holland, enter into sexual relationships without wanting to because of pressure from their boyfriends. Holland also found that high numbers of young women prefer to expose themselves to the threat of HIV, AIDS, unwanted pregnancy and STIs through unprotected sex rather than risk offending their boyfriends or annoying them by insisting on protected sex. Consequently, the rising rates of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases among young women, she argues, are a side-effect of young women's inability to put their own needs and feelings ahead of those of their male partners. The thesis concluded that the postfeminist Eve imagery produced at the end of the twentieth century is an attempt to sell power and increased social status as desirable qualities for young women who feel disempowered in reality.

In the course of its argument (see especially chapter 3), the thesis drew upon advertising theory, in particular that of Erving Goffman from his seminal 1970s work, *Gender Advertisements,*[259] to investigate gender roles in advertising. Goffman found that overwhelmingly in advertising, images of women and men adhered to consistent patterns of representing gender roles and displays of power, intelligence and authority, which were conveyed using techniques of gender display commonplace in the advertising imagery of the time.

Using three of Goffman's concepts, 'function ranking', 'licensed withdrawal' and 'relative size', this thesis examined the body language, the poses and the layout in contemporary Adam and Eve advertising images. Significantly, the gender display techniques set out in Goffman's research are reversed in contemporary advertising images of Eve and Adam.[260] Where men were pictured as bigger or taller, or where they were simply placed higher than a woman or women to signify their relative strength, superiority or authority over women in the advertising images from the seventies that were treated by

[259] Goffman, *Gender Advertisements.*
[260] These gender techniques were reversed in some way in every Eve and Adam image I found through my research.

Goffman, in the advertising images from the 1990s-2006, women were now pictured as bigger or taller, or they hold an elevated position in the image. This reversal of Goffman's gender display techniques in modern advertising imagery does not, however, mean that Eve in modern advertising takes on a new role. Eve may be bigger, taller or elevated, but her position as sexual temptress and as dependent on the male for her power remains the same. Licensed withdrawal, as I have argued at length in chapter 3, simply serves to underscore Eve's culpability in the transgression episode. Moreover, there is a problem with licensed withdrawal, namely that, if Adam is not sufficiently interested in Eve, then the power the advertisers want to illustrate is undermined. Eve may be placed higher than Adam, or she may be larger than Adam, but her function ranking and relative size are undermined when Adam appears as muscular and hyper-masculine. Showing that the reversal of gender display techniques does not amount to a reversal of gender roles or stereotypes was highly significant for this thesis, helping to illustrate that Eve's role in contemporary popular culture had become that of a poster-girl for a postfeminist consumer ideology.

All the advertisements examined in this thesis suggest that female power is highly desirable to the target demographic of these advertisements, females aged 18-34. Female power can be achieved, according to these advertisements, only through the consumption of market goods. The images seek to convey to female consumers that they can be powerful only through the exploitation of their (hetero)sexuality. In order to achieve power in gender relations and to gain social status, a woman must not only enter into a pattern of consumption to maintain her sexually attractive appearance, which is prescribed in the advertisements, but also she must compete with other women to be the most sexually attractive to men. The images' encoded message to women is that only the most sexually appealing women can be powerful and only the regular consumption of products can make them sexually appealing.

In conclusion, this thesis has found that in contemporary popular culture Eve has become a postfeminist icon, a poster-girl for the illusory premise that a modern woman's route to power is through the exploitation of her own (hetero)sexuality, and through the consumption of goods to maintain her appeal.

AFTERWORD

THE EVER-CHANGING FACE OF EVE

Figure 5.1: Print Advertisement for *Nina* Perfume by Nina Ricci, *Glamour* Magazine, February 2007

From the late 1990s to very recently Eve has been represented as the ultimate post-feminist icon of female sexual power. This year, however, her image has started to develop into a

more romantic representation of the feminine ideal. The image above shows a recent advertisement for the new Nina Ricci perfume *Nina*. The image shows a young, beautiful woman with flowing curled hair in a pink ball gown. Red apples spill from the open door behind her and from a tree above her hangs a perfume bottle in the shape of a red apple. The woman in the image stares with desire at the apple, the by-line is 'le nouveau parfum magic'. Just as we saw in Chapter 3, the image of Eve has been conflated with the fairytale of Snow White. Far from being an appeal to women's desire for power, this image appeals to a desire for fantasy and romance.

The progression of the Eve image from *femme fatale* to fairytale princess is a further reflection of the progression of post-feminism. As society becomes ever more concerned with the breakdown of the family structure and the issue of working mothers and its effect on the stability of the family unit, post-feminist advertising images are beginning to lean more towards traditional images of romance, fairytale and fantasy taking women back to a feminine ideal of gentile beauty. The apple, of course, still stands for female individual choice and transformation, as in the image above it is labelled as magic, but Eve herself has transformed from temptress to fairytale princess who still desires but advertises idea of what she must desire has changed. The change in Eve imagery in advertising is not only down to change in issues of postfeminism but also down to the advertisers need to change the feminine ideals to which women must aspire in order to maintain women's levels of consumption. The image of Eve may change in popular culture but she always embodies the *Zeitgeist* of the era.

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