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"See Me, Touch Me, Feel Me": (Im) Proving the Bodily Sense of Masculinity

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In this essay, Marc A. Ouellette discusses changing norms for male beauty and the creation of the "new man" in popular advertisements. A substantial contribution to the rapidly growing field of masculinity studies, this work re-evaluates many of the conventional arguments of feminist discourses of beauty and challenges those claims, making it an exciting new contribution for all scholars who are interested in the politics of gender, identity, representation, and governmentality.

"See Me, Touch Me, Feel Me": (Im)Proving the Bodily Sense of Masculinity [printable version]

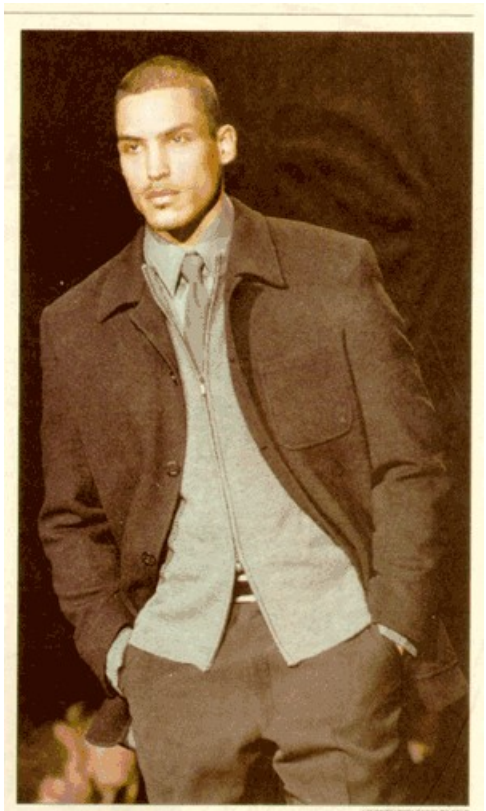
Marc A. Ouellette

<1> Ultimately, this paper stems from two cultural strands which intersect in one cultural form, self-improvement advertising aimed at men. The first of these is the figure of the "new man," which appeared in the mid-1980s. The novelty lies in the positioning of masculine bodies precisely for the purpose of being seen. The available criticism was not equipped to account for these positionings. The second cultural strand, the proliferation of technologies which alter the body itself, as opposed to its coverings, makes the gap in the criticism more apparent. The two cultural trends intersect most noticeably in the advertisements for the products and procedures aimed at enhancing the bodily sense of masculinity. Product plugs and placements not only reflect societal trends, their entire purpose is to convince consumers that they "need" the good or service portrayed. Thus, the advertisements examined must be considered as an important part of the modern normalizing machinery of power, in general, and especially as it functions to reproduce gender-relations. While this has become a critical commonplace in terms of the impact on the perception and production of femininity, the representations of contemporary men in body enhancement advertisements demonstrate the ways in which idealized masculinities are portrayed and even enforced.

<2> Sean Nixon (1997) attributes the term, "new man," to a series of advertisements for menswear that simultaneously depicted muscular masculinity and a passive mode of male sexuality. Considering the clothing ads, Nixon notes that

> It was the innovations in menswear design -- for example, broader shouldered suits, more flamboyant coloured ties, shirts and knitwear, figure-hugging sportswear lines -- which established the key terms for the coding of the "new man" as a distinctive new version of masculinity. It was through the presentation of these menswear designs in popular representations that the "new man" was often coded. (295)

The trend in clothing has continued, as seen in Fig. 1, with broad-shouldered double-breasted jackets giving way to more fitted three and four-button single-breasted jackets. The white dress shirt has been replaced by boldly coloured shirts with matching ties and, more commonly, knitwear. However, there was more to the "new man" than just wearing the right clothes. When considering how the image of the "new man" is consumed, we are reminded immediately of critiques of the "male gaze."



DRESSING UP: New York designer Kenneth Cole presented this suit and tie look at the recent New York fall fashion shows.

Figure 1

<3> In such critiques, the main controlling figure is assumed to be male and the object of the heterosexual gaze is consequently female. Given the premise that the visual media exist to portray women as passive sexual objects for the consumption of the male gaze, it is not surprising that the "new man" advertisements seemed somewhat new and paradoxical to scholars. The possibility that men could be anything other than controllers of the gaze had yet to be given a great deal of critical attention. However, the "new man" may not necessarily be entirely new. Instead the ways of looking at the man, both literally and metaphorically, have changed, and with them, the ways of being and becoming a man may be shifting. For Nixon, what stood out about the "new man" advertisements was "a new framing of the surface of men's bodies; one that emphasized not so much the assertive power of a muscular masculine physique as its passive sexualization [. . .] These were men's bodies openly inviting a desiring look" (304). Yet this is still in keeping with Robert Connell's position regarding the body:

> in our culture at least, the physical sense of maleness and femaleness is central to the cultural interpretation of gender. Masculine gender is (among other things) a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex. Bodily experience is often central in memories of our own lives, and thus in our understanding of who and what we are. (1995, 52-3)

While Nixon writes about clothed bodies, they are bodies nevertheless. The difference lies first in the fact that these are masculine bodies positioned precisely for being seen and second in the fact that the criticism was not equipped to account for these positionings. The proliferation of technologies which alter the body itself, as opposed to its coverings, makes the gap in the criticism more apparent. These technologies -- Viagra, Rogaine, hair replacement and hair removal surgeries, *etc*. -- and more importantly the advertisements for them -- comprise the second cultural strand.

<4> The advertisements for the products and procedures of body enhancement for men provide the location of intersection and fusion for the two cultural trends. In keeping with feminist critiques of analogous cultural texts, the focus of the remainder of the essay is on the contemporary preoccupation with "improving" the male body as part of a larger analysis of representations of contemporary masculinity within a modern normalizing machinery of power in general, and, in particular, as it functions to reproduce gender-relations. Considering the representations alone is not enough. In "The Body and the Representation of Femininity," Susan Bordo observes that "the study of cultural 'representations' of the female body has flourished, and it has often been brilliantly illuminating and instrumental to a feminist reading of culture. But the study of cultural representations alone, divorced from consideration of their relation to the practical lives of bodies, can obscure and mislead" (1989, 27). However, representations are still the primary focus of the discussion for several important reasons. Advertising is omnipresent and invasive. As well, ours is an increasingly visual culture. The images with which we are bombarded serve as role models and measuring gauges for both the self and the lifestyle. Thus, they become both the curriculum and the rubric by which the self is disciplined and evaluated.

<5> In addition to the coming together of cultural strands, there is a joining of critical thought. Sean Nixon's

approach to the "new man" is part of a movement to "advance a more general argument about the representation process itself, its centrality to the formation of cultural identities (in this case masculinities), and to reflect on the role of spectatorship and looking in this process" (295). As noted before, Nixon is concerned with clothes and the appearance of the body. Although he considers the social and economic aspects of power entailed by the "new man" trend, he does not consider the actual body. Bordo explains the need for the inclusion of the body in feminist work: "Exposure and cultural analysis of such contradictory and mystifying relations between image and practice is only possible if one's analysis includes attention to and interpretation of the 'useful' or [. . .] practical body" (1989, 27). This type of analysis, which Bordo characterizes as theoretically unsophisticated, was central to the beginnings of what came to be called Second Wave Feminism. The lack of theoretical rigour, as well as charges of essentialism (due to the focus on the body), led to the abandonment of such approaches. However, "for the feminisms of the present decade, such focus on the politics of feminine praxis, although still maintained in the work of individual feminists, is no longer a centerpiece of feminist cultural critique" (1989, 27). Yet Sandra Bartky finds that "normative femininity is coming to be more and more centred on woman's body [. . .] its sexuality [and,] more precisely, its presumed heterosexuality and its appearance" (1988, 81). In her work, which precedes Bordo and Nixon, Bartky examines representations and their impact; however, she considers not the draping but the shaping of the body through the coercive nature of the exemplary images. She elaborates:

> This disciplinary power is peculiarly modern: it does not rely upon violent or public sanctions, nor does it seek to restrain the freedom of the female body to move from place to place [but there is] regulation that is perpetual and exhaustive -- a regulation of the body's size and contours, its appetite, posture, gestures and general comportment in space, and the appearance of each of its visible parts. (80)

Not surprisingly Bartky believes that this type of disciplining is a result of "patriarchy" and applies only to women. She claims that "since it is women themselves who practice this discipline on and against their own bodies, men get off scot-free" (81). In her formulation, men are absolved of any responsibility for enforcing or serving the "sentence" involved.

<6> However, Bartky's lack of foresight is not unique, nor should she be dismissed because of it. Neither Sean Nixon nor Robert Connell, both specialists in Masculinity Studies, foresaw men's rush towards cosmetic enhancement as the technologies became widespread. The following passage from Connell is especially poignant when one recalls that his study was published as recently as 1995. Connell observed:

> Cosmetic surgery now offers the affluent an extra-ordinary range of ways of producing a more socially desirable body, from the old 'face-lifts' and breast implants to the newer surgical slimming, height alterations, and so on. [. . .] cosmetic surgery is now thought natural for a woman, though not for a man. Nevertheless, the technology now extends to the surgical production of masculinity, with penile implants, both inflatable and rigid, to the fore. (50)

The technologies have not only expanded but so has the acceptability of the procedures for men. In cases such as body hair removal, it is becoming more socially acceptable to have cosmetic procedures than not to have had any. Retired professional athletes have long endorsed pain medications and, since the late 1980s, hair replacement products. Such is the reach of the enhancement products that *active* professional athletes -- the ultimate mainstream hegemonic males in North American culture -- including the Texas Rangers' all-star first baseman, Rafael Palmeiro, and NASCAR driver Mark Martin, endorse Viagra! Interestingly, Connell chooses the word "natural" to describe prevailing attitudes regarding cosmetic surgery, for both women and men, though not to invoke the "nature" vs. "culture" debate that has raged for millennia. However, as will be discussed, body altering practices provide another context for other to continue this debate.

<7> The current emphasis on improving the male body comes at a time when that body is having its usefulness reduced. Connell recognizes new technology's impact on masculinity. With respect to the influence of computers, he writes

> The new information technology requires much sedentary keyboard work, which was initially classified as women's work (key-punch operators). The marketing of personal computers, however, has redefined some of this work as an arena of competition and power -- masculine, technical, but not working-class. These revised meanings are promoted in the text and graphics of computer magazines, in manufacturers' advertising [. . .] and in the booming industry of violent computer games. Middle-class male bodies, separated by an old class division from physical force, now find their powers spectacularly amplified in the man/machine systems of modern cybernetics. (55-6).

This is in partial contrast to the previous emphasis on masculine qualities in the work force. As opposed to desk work, "Heavy manual work calls for strength, endurance, a degree of insensitivity and toughness, and group solidarity. Emphasizing the masculinity of industrial labour has been both a means of survival, in exploitative class relations, and a means of asserting superiority over women" (Connell 1995, 55). In either case, competition and power are part of the equation. It has been a given that superiority over women is inherent to any assertion of masculine power, but superiority over other men -- the perceived main competitors -- is just as important.

Figure 2

<8> In terms of the representations of masculinity, one of the more interesting developments has been the so-called "business casual" or "geek chic" trend in menswear. This look is typified by Microsoft bosses Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer, seen in Fig. 2. The primary claim for this suitless, tieless wardrobe is that it represents a "relaxed" and "non-threatening" manner. The reality is that the poster-boy, Gates, is incredibly threatening in his business practices and, as wealthiest man on earth, can dress any way he likes (Rushe, 2000) [1]. In contrast is the trend of "bigorexia," a body dysmorphic disorder which affects men who feel they do not have enough muscle development (AP, 2000). Admittedly, these conditions afflict a very small proportion of the population. Dr. Eric Holland of Mount Sinai School of medicine explains that "Body dysmorphic disorder affects probably 1 to 2 per cent of the U.S. population" (AP, 2000). This figure includes both 'bigorexics' and male anorexia patients. The latter category represents "about one in 10 people currently in treatment" for body dysmorphic disorders (Kane, 2000).

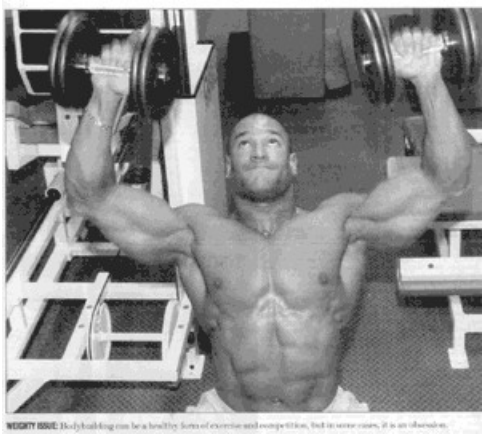


Figure 3

<9> Admittedly, the images of Gates and Ballmer are juxtaposed with the image of the body builder to depict extremes. Yet this is precisely the method of Susan Bordo and Sandra Bartky; they extrapolate their conclusions to the general population based on observing the extremes. In "The Body and the Representation of Femininity," Bordo concentrates on hysteria, agoraphobia, and anorexia. What is important is that we find "the body of the sufferer deeply inscribed with an ideological construction of femininity emblematic of the periods in question. That construction, of course, is always homogenizing and normalizing, erasing racial, class, and other differences and insisting that all women aspire to a coercive standardized ideal" (1989, 16). Although she never really addresses the problematics of trying to universalize from the extremes, as psychology often does, Bordo attempts to extrapolate from the extremes to the mainstream. While this is also a common practice in social or cultural criticism, the problem is that the worst-case scenario Bordo presents -- this is what patriarchy does to women -- obscures the "coercive standardized ideal" that applies to masculinity. In the process, Bordo finds that femininity is largely a matter of constructing "the appropriate surface presentation of the self" (1989, 17). In this way, "we learn the rules directly through bodily discourse: through images which tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behavior is required" (1989, 17). Perhaps gender is similarly constructed, but we never find out in Bordo's essays.

<10> In a later essay, "Reading the Slender Body" (1990), Bordo points out that the body indicates one's place in society. As the cultural emphasis on the appearance of the body grows, "Increasingly, the size and shape of the body has come to operate as a marker of personal, internal order (or disorder) -- as a symbol for the state of the soul" (1990, 94). As proof, she cites the changes in attitudes towards the muscular body. Whereas "muscles have symbolized masculine power," today "the well-muscled body has become a cultural icon; 'working out' is a glamorized

and sexualized yuppie activity [. . .] the firm, developed body has become a symbol of correct *attitude*; it means that one 'cares' about oneself and how one appears to others, suggesting willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to 'make something' of oneself" (1990, 94). The theme of progress, or improvement, entailed in "making something of onself" is one the foremost naturalizing techniques employed to sell body improvement products and programs. That is to say, progress is part of the normalizing discourse.

<11> Obviously, progress is also part of the normalizing discourse of western capitalism. In fact, this is part of the argument for cosmetically altering -- usually permanently -- the body. There is even a magazine, Elevate, devoted to the subject. Greg Robins, editor of *Elevate* claims in a headline, "Cosmetic enhancement is natural" (2000, 8). Robins confidently asserts, "People have been changing their looks for thousands of years, and now we have science and expertise to alter our very bodies to suit our whim. There is nothing unnatural about this at all" (8). Here, Robins invokes the nature-culture debate in his defense of cosmetic procedures. In so doing, Robins cites the second argument offered as a legitimation for cosmetic enhancement: scientific discourses. Frequently the scientific discourses take the form of medical practices because medicine is virtually sacrosanct in North America. Feminism has been quick to criticize these discourses, but only as they pertain to female bodies. For example, Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Keller, and Shelley Shuttleworth begin their collection, *Body/Politics* (1990), by asserting that "Increasingly in the modern world, scientific discourses have come to articulate the authoritative social theories of the feminine body" (1). They recognize the ideological underpinnings of these discourses and how they function. Instead of empirical objectivity, Jacobus, Keller and Shuttleworth note that the

> discourses of science, so far from transparent or objective, are animated by narratives. Especially [when] peopled by feminine bodies, they are viewed in ways at once conservative and regressive, technological, and biologically impelled. [. . .] twentieth-century discourses make the feminine body the site of its contradictory desires and social theories, including those of feminism, itself. (9)

For Bordo, the effect is clear: "Through the exacting and normalizing disciplines of diet, make-up, and dress [. . .] we are rendered less socially oriented and more centripetally focused on self-modification. Through these disciplines, we continue to memorize on our bodies the feel and conviction of lack, insufficiency, of never being good enough" (1989, 14). Herein lies one contradiction. Satisfaction is never attainable. Sandra Bartky summarizes nicely:

> The strategy of much beauty-related advertising is to suggest to women that their bodies are deficient; but even without such more or less explicit teaching, the media images of perfect female beauty that bombard us daily leave no doubt in the minds of most women that they fail to measure up. The technologies of femininity are taken up and practiced by women against the background of a pervasive sense of bodily deficiency (71)

Yet this is in keeping with the underpinnings of North American consumerism. In the famous words of Charles Kettering, "the key to economic prosperity is the organized creation of dissatisfaction" (qtd. in Rifkin 1995, 17). Although Kettering was the top executive at general Motors, the application of his axiom is in no way restricted to automobiles.

Figure 4

<12> The strategy that led to planned obsolescence for computers and cars has been turned, to an extent, on the male body. The pair of advertisements in Fig. 4 -- one for hair removal, and one for sexual dysfunction -- operate together, as one text. In these ads, two seemingly contradictory discourses are at work, yet they are part of the same overall process. The male figure has his (muscular and well tanned) back to the camera. This could be interpreted as refusing to be looked at, but the text indicates that back hair removal is one of the treatments offered. Once a sign of having reached sexual maturity, male body hair now has negative connotations attached to it. In this regard, Mark Kingwell observes, "Hair plays a large role in male entry to adulthood, of course, from the first sproutings on groin and chest to the first shave, an act of initiation so common and apparently unremarkable as to have escaped sustained theoretical attention. But that is too bad, because the act of shaving, for many boys, marks their passage to a self-image of manhood" (2000, 336). Dr. Frank Beninger, a plastic surgeon in Toronto notes that "approximately 70 per cent" of his patients have back hair removed and "almost 30 % do their chests" because these are "associated with being older" (qtd. in Paradkar, 2000). Erectile problems and diminished sex drive are also "associated" with getting older.

<13> Bordo acknowledges that much has been made of eating disorders or body dysmorphic disorders from psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives but she wants to pursue the images in another direction than that of gender symbolism: "I want to consider them as a metaphor for anxiety about internal processes out of control -- uncontained desire, unrestrained hunger, uncontrolled impulse" (1990, 89). What is interesting is that she then cites several (then) contemporary films in which "images of bodily eruption function symbolically in this way" (1990, 89). All of the movies she cites -- *The Howling*, *A Teen-Age Werewolf in London*, *The Fly*, *Alien* -- feature male, not female, protagonists whose "new, alien, libidinous, and uncontrollable self literally bursts through the seams of the victims' old flesh," yet Bordo does not remark on this at all (1990, 89). The fact that the monster bursts from the abdomen of a male crew-member in the legendary scene in *Alien* is not considered. She admits to overlooking gender symbolism in her study but does not delve into the "deeper psycho-cultural anxieties [which] are being given form" when the figure is male (1990, 89). In a later essay about the male form, Bordo goes little farther than expressing surprise and delight over clothing ads depicting men offering themselves "nonaggressively to the gaze of another" (1999, 171). She focuses primarily on the look and asserts that such advertising is not aimed at heterosexual men and is therefore only harmful to gays and minorities. Yet many ads appear in newspapers' "Sports" sections, which are aimed directly at white, middle-class, heterosexual men.

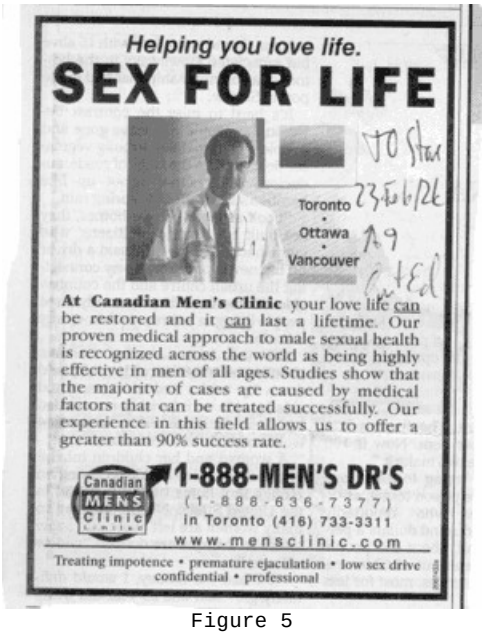


Figure 5

<14> Although they were not published together the second pair of advertisements add another layer to the message. Fig. 5 exclaims "Sex for life" and depicts a doctor-figure: he has a lab coat, a stethoscope, a pocket protector, and an authoritative look. This type of discourse of legitimation was practiced frequently at the "New You" trade show which I attended in Toronto, 11-13 Jan. 2002. Lab coats abounded among the exhibitors at the cosmetic enhancement show. It did not matter whether the presenter was a doctor, a technician or a salesperson. Nevertheless the ad's message is clearly that being an aging male is a medical condition. The ad for hair removal in Fig. 6 introduces sex to that procedure. The female is draped across the man's chest -- a medal or trophy -- as he stares defiantly into the camera. He is demanding to be looked at. The headline directly addresses the viewer, who is most likely heterosexual. Hair has become a bodily discharge -- not unlike urine, feces, saliva or sperm -- that needs to be denied and desire is something over which one can now have precise control, based on the timing and number of pills one takes.

Figure 6

<15> Thus, in consumer culture we are what we consume. Much has been written on this topic and this is not really a study of consumer culture's effects on the self. Nevertheless the self becomes the contested terrain. This creates a double-bind in that the body must be both controlled and satisfied. Bordo neatly summarizes the double-bind: "we must be capable of sublimating, delaying, repressing desire for immediate gratification; we must cultivate the work ethic. [Conversely,] we serve the system through a boundless capacity to capitulate to desire and indulge in impulse; we must become creatures who hunger for constant and immediate satisfaction" (1990, 96). Bulimia provides the best example for Bordo because of the purges involved. But going to the gym after a weekend of indulgence is a purge too. The impulses to consume are turned towards the control of the body, solving the double bind by fulfilling both sides simultaneously. Bordo claims "total submission or rigid defense become the only possible postures" (1990, 99). I disagree. Hair needs "product" to maintain it. Men embarking on Rogaine applications will have to do so for the rest of their lives if they wish to maintain their hair. A commercial for the product advocates beginning use before hair loss occurs, just to be sure. The practice has been extended to commercials for Nicorette gum and Nicorest patches. These smoking cessation gimmicks, or "aids" require similar discipline and dedication; that is, repeat purchases. The body needs clothes, which have to show off the body and be updated as part of the ethic of caring for oneself. An entire lifestyle of consumption can be built around the precise control of the body in which you live that life. Weekends of indulgence can be "purchased" through compensatory hours in the gym. The consumer then becomes a self-regulating and self-perpetuating consumer. The work of control is done

entirely by the individual. This is how the power is seamlessly applied. Following Foucault's philosophy, Bordo stresses that we must abandon "the idea of power as something possessed by one group and leveled against another, and we must think instead of the network of practices, institutions, and technologies that sustain positions of dominance and subordination within a particular domain" (1989, 15). That is to say, we need to think of power in terms of acceptance and proliferation as well as collusion and complicity.

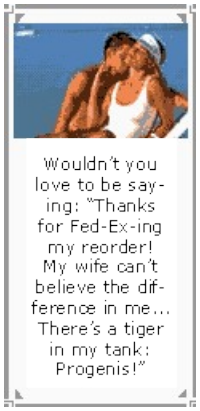


Figure 7

<16> No one is forcing men to attempt to mimic the men in the ads. In the pictures and captions for Progenis (Fig. 7, e.g.), most if not all of the legitimating discourses come together. Although it is supposedly a potency enhancing drug, neither Progenis nor the website has been reviewed by the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Since it is a "natural," or "organic," substance -- that is, an extract from a plant or animal -- as opposed to a synthetic chemical produced by a pharmaceutical manufacturer, Progenis does not fall under the auspices of the FDA. This means that neither its safety nor its effectiveness has been evaluated. These are assumed because the product is "organic." It is not with a little irony that Sophocles' hemlock and Coleridge's opium, among other "organic" products, are recalled. Progenis offers "nature" as a discourse in other ways. It depicts heteronormative couples, as do the ads for hair removal. It claims to put a "tiger in the tank." The tiger, of course is the largest member of the cat family and a fierce predator. Sadly, its body parts are said to have healing powers and this has led to its being hunted to near extinction so that several forms of "traditional medicine" can be practiced, many of which involve supposed aphrodisiacs. There is a discourse of technologization as well. The slogan, "put a tiger in your tank" is still used by an oil company to sell gasoline. Once again, the "classic" image of man and automobile is invoked and conflated. Moreover, on the website for Progenis, the manufacturer makes several "scientific" claims for the success rate of the potion. This is in spite of having neither FDA testing nor approval.

<17> However painful, plucking, sugaring, waxing, shaving, lasers or electrolysis might be for removing body hair, neither these procedures nor pills like Viagra or Progenis are particularly invasive procedures. Indeed, this is part of their appeal. One of my colleagues who is also a laser technician reports that many men now have the hair on their necks below the jaw-line removed to avoid the repeated agony of shaving the area. Kathryn Morgan, applying Bordo and Bartky's method to plastic surgery observes that "Now technology is making obligatory the appearance of youth and the reality of 'beauty' for every woman who can afford it. Natural destiny is being supplanted by technologically grounded coercion, and the coercion is camouflaged by the language of choice, fulfillment, and liberation" (1998, 274). Morgan does not elaborate on her definition of "natural destiny;" it may mean the aging process, it may suggest something essentially feminine, or both. Susan Faludi expresses a similar opinion regarding masculinity:

> the culture reshapes [a man's] most basic sense of manhood by telling him as much as it tells the celebrity that masculinity is something to drape over the body, not draw from inner resources; that it is personal, not societal; that to embody manhood is displayed, not demonstrated. The internal qualities once said to embody manhood -- surefootedness, inner strength, confidence of purpose -- are merchandised to men to enhance their manliness. What passes for the essence of masculinity is being extracted and bottled -- and sold back to men. Literally, in the case of Viagra. (1999, 35)

The question, then, is not what is the "essence" of masculinity or femininity, but what is the definition now and who decides what it should be. Morgan points the finger at the technologization of the body. She summarizes:

> The beauty culture is coming to be dominated by a variety of experts, and consumers of youth and beauty are likely to find themselves dependent not only on cosmetic surgeons but on anaesthetists, nurses, aestheticians, nail technicians, manicurists, dietitians, hairstylists, cosmetologists, masseuses, aroma therapists, trainers, pedicurists, electrolysists, pharmacologists, and dermatologists. All these experts provide services that can be bought; all these experts are perceived as administering and transforming the human body into an increasingly artificial and ever more perfect object. (265)

It is the relentlessness and the variety of the procedures available that helps the current preoccupation with beauty -- both male and female -- to proliferate. In addition, the seeming harmlessness of the "treatments" makes them easier to endure.

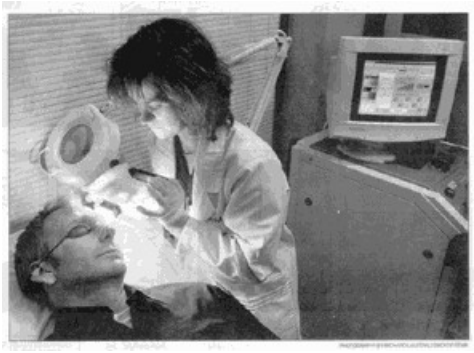


Figure 8

<18> Dr. Larry Freemont, a Toronto-based plastic surgeon, has made a career out of the speed and ease of his hair transplantation techniques. He has also made himself famous in the process. At the "Everything To Do With Sex" trade show, in Toronto, 26-29 Oct. 2001, Dr. Freemont performed a hair transplant in his booth. Only a window separated the "client" from the crowd [2]. Unfortunately, cameras were not allowed inside the building so I was unable to record the event. Dr. Freemont is performing a "hair restoration" in Fig. 8. Freemont is a world leader in hair transplant technique and he has clinics in eight countries; like McDonald's, this is a franchised business. Part of his notoriety is due to frequent "live" hair transplants to attract media attention. At the "New You" show he performed an eyebrow transplant! Usually the client is a media personality and the event is broadcast on radio or TV. The surgery at the earlier trade show was representative, so the associates said, of what happens in the office. The man was seated in a dentist-style chair and alternated among sipping coffee, reading a newspaper, and listening to music. Dr. Freemont estimates "about 10,000 transplants are done annually in Canada" (Mitchell, 1995). They cost between $3,000 and $10,000, depending on how many 5" x 1", or longer, strips of scalp have to be removed and diced into individual hairs. The hairs are then stuffed, like pimentos, into thousands of slits in the scalp. Although they were not performing anything at the show, Esteem Cosmetic and Laser Centre claims similar comfort and convenience. A typical laser wrinkle removal is depicted in Fig. 9. The dark glasses are not necessary for most hair removal procedures. The client is able to relax while skin and hair are burned away. I was given a "free consultation" by an associate -- it was not free, it cost $15 to enter the show. The estimate for hair removal was four to six treatments for the chest and two to three for the back, just to be sure. This is about average. Each session costs $750, which means a total of $4,500 to $6,000. Competitor LCI boasts a two-year warrantee for its procedures.

Figure 9

<19> The part that struck me most as I watched the hair transplant was not what this had to do with sex. That is obvious: without a youthful head of hair and a youthful hairless body, sex is not likely. Sandra Bartky lists the requirements: "skin must be soft, supple, hairless, and smooth; ideally it should betray no sign of wear, experience, age, or deep thought. Hair must be removed not only from the face but from large surfaces of the body as well, from legs and thighs, an operation accomplished by shaving, buffing with fine sandpaper, or applying foul-smelling depilatories" (68). Since she left out chest and back hair, Bartky obviously writes about women, but the regimes are nearly identical. Rather, what struck me was that I was watching a man in a fish bowl. Though hardly an original thought, the notion of always being watched recalls another critique of the normalizing discourses of the beauty industry. Foucault's notion of the Panopticon, which he borrows from Jeremy Bentham's prison design, offers an interesting line of criticism. For Foucault, the major effect of Panopticism is its power to

> induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning

> of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (1977, 201)

According to Bartky, "a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment. Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other" (72). Kathryn Morgan echoes this view. She believes that

> In some ways, it does not matter who the particular judges are. Actual men -- brothers, fathers, male lovers, male beauty "experts" -- and hypothetical men live in the aesthetic imaginations of women. Whether they are male employers, prospective male spouses, male judges in the beauty pageants, or male-identified women, these modern day Parises are generic and live sometimes ghostly but powerful lives in the reflective awareness of women. (270)

Both Morgan and Bartky allow for a same-sex gaze. For Bartky, "who but someone engaged in a project similar to my own can appreciate the panache with which I bring it off?" (72) Nevertheless, both Bartky and Morgan posit the female gaze as a surrogate for the male gaze. Bartky claims the "female gaze is trained to abandon its claim to the sovereign status of seer" (67). Morgan is more direct and damning: "A woman's makeup, dress, gestures, voice, degree of cleanliness, degree of muscularity, odors, degree of hirsuteness, vocabulary, hands, feet, skin, hair, and vulva can be all evaluated, regulated, and disciplined in the light of the hypothetical often-white male viewer and the male viewer present in the assessing gaze of other women" (270). What is interesting is that Morgan and Bartky arrived at the same conclusion -- that a woman's gaze is actually a white man's because it has been imposed on her -- via different critical paths.

<20> Bartky bases her conclusion on a combination of Foucauldian and object-relations psychoanalysis. In the latter regard, Carol Gilligan boldly states "women have traditionally deferred to the judgement of men" (1982, 69). The rationale behind assertions such as Bartky's and Gilligan's is that there is an essential feminine experience and a resultant essential feminine mode of reasoning, based on an ethic of care. In contrast, Morgan's assertion is based on John Berger's claims in *Ways of Seeing* (1972). With respect to the female figure in art, Berger generalizes:

> A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually (46).

Berger's belief is that there is a specific way of looking at women and even a way in which a woman looks at herself. Naturally, this is different than the ways in which men are viewed. Berger summarizes the difference between looking at men and looking at women: "*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" (47). One of Berger's main points of emphasis is that the person being looked at knows she is being observed. This occurs because of the arrangement of the image. Berger puts it simply: "Women are depicted in a quite different way from men -- not because the feminine is different from the masculine -- but because the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him" (64). The bit between the dashes is key. Berger does not necessarily assert mutual exclusivity. Instead, the emphasis is on the construction.

<21> John Berger's statements regarding the positioning of women were derived from his observations of the tradition of oil painting. Of this form, he explains that "Oil painting did to appearances what capital did to social relations. It reduced everything to the equality of objects. Everything became exchangeable because everything became a commodity. All reality was mechanically measured by its materiality" (87). Although no longer in vogue, the manner in which oil paintings were composed continues to influence contemporary images. The most significant of the current forms is what Berger calls "publicity" (131). Berger creates the nice category of "publicity" to deal with such things as advertisements: "Publicity is not merely an assembly of competing messages: it is a language in itself which is always being used to make the same general proposal. [. . .] that we transform ourselves, our lives, by buying something more [which] will make us in some way richer -- even though we will be poorer by having spent our money" (131). Berger summarizes: "publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour" (131). The connection between oil painting and publicity lies not just in the composition, but also in the fact that both are "derived from the principle that *you are what you have*" (139). They are forms of "showing off" one's accumulated wealth. A person's success and standing in society are directly proportional to accumulated capital. As it pertains to the current discussion of masculinities the concept of publicity has a definite analog in Susan Faludi's concept of "ornamental culture."

<22> Contrary to her assumptions, Faludi finds that ornamental culture has actually had a more profound impact on males than on females. In North America, Faludi asserts that "Where we once lived in a society in which men in particular participated by being useful in public life, we now are surrounded by a culture that encourages people to play almost no functional public roles, only decorative or consumer ones" (35). Faludi attributes the rise of ornamental culture to a fundamental shift in the organization of North American society. Although she still tries to place her argument in terms of masculine and feminine, Faludi (without realizing it) hits on the essential aspect of ornamental culture when she observes

> Ornamental culture has proved the ultimate expression of the American Century, sweeping away institutions

> in which men felt some sense of belonging and replacing them with visual spectacles that they can only watch and that benefit global commercial forces they cannot fathom. Celebrity culture's effects on men go far beyond the obvious showcasing of action heroes and rock musicians. (35)

Faludi persists in referring to the culture of sexualized, passive display, of appearance over substance, as being essentially "feminine." This is not necessarily the case.

<23> Again, the key lies in ornamental culture, or Berger's publicity. The two terms would seem to be virtually interchangeable, especially as they pertain to masculinity. In the case of the former, Faludi laments:

> Constructed around celebrity and image, glamour and entertainment, marketing and consumerism, [ornamental culture] is a ceremonial gateway to nowhere. Its essence is not just the selling act but the act of selling the self, and in this quest every man is essentially on his own, a lone sales rep marketing his own image with no paternal [influence] to guide him. In an age of celebrity, the father has no body of knowledge or authority to transmit to the son. Each son must father his own image, create his own Adam. (35)

In her slightly purple prose, Faludi compares the situation of contemporary men to *the* Biblical myth, Genesis, but also to *the* critique of the American dream, *Death of a Salesman*. Her reason for these allusions to American destiny is that "By the end of the American Century, every outlet of the consumer world -- magazines, ads, movies, sports, music videos -- would deliver the message that manhood had become a performance game to be won in the marketplace, not the workplace" (37). This is simply part of a process of taking the message of the oil paintings Berger considers to its fullest extent: you are what you can buy. In this regard, Kingwell cautions that

> The unspoken tragedy of urban life in our century is the constant struggle to afford the self-presentation we desire. I don't have to want the baggy convict-wear and brand-name jackets of the urban scene to appreciate the yearning evident in the startling statistic that the average inner-city African American spends $2,440 on clothes in a year, compared to the $1,508 considered sufficient by the average US consumer. (343)

Dr. Mark Kochman, a prominent Toronto cosmetic dental surgeon, concurs. Speaking of the demographics of his clientele, Dr. Kochman notes that they are more likely to be "stock boys than CEOs" (as qtd.). The rationale behind such seemingly outlandish expenditures is the desire to get ahead and to obtain any possible advantage in doing so. In contrast, CEOs have little to prove.

<24> The idea of publicity, Berger explains is to make oneself an envied object. An envied object has to be looked at; moreover, it becomes an object of desire. This occurs, in Berger's words, because

> Publicity begins by working on a natural appetite for pleasure. But it cannot offer the real object of pleasure and there is no convincing substitute fro a pleasure in that pleasure's own terms.[. . .] This is why publicity can never really afford to be about the product or opportunity it is proposing to the buyer who is not yet enjoying it. Publicity is never a celebration of a pleasure-in-itself. Publicity is always about the future buyer. It offers him an image of himself made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell. (132)

The pleasure is actually in being looked at, in being envied. Berger observes, "Publicity is about social relations, not objects. Its promise is not of pleasure, but of happiness: happiness as judged from the outside by others. The happiness of being envied is glamour. [. . .] The power of the glamorous resides in their supposed happiness" (132-3). This accounts for the unfocused looks Berger notes in many advertisements. The people in the ads are looking over the people who envy them. The logic is that we envy those in the ads and will be envied once we buy the product. There is a definite connection between the language of the ads and their success with an aging population. *Elevate* and "New You" are forthright in their focus on "Baby Boomers." Berger asserts that publicity is "in essence, nostalgic. It has to sell the past to the future. And so all its references to quality are bound to be retrospective and traditional" (139). The past, the way things were, becomes something to be envied. The ads for cosmetic enhancement claim to "restore," "renew," "revitalize," "replace" or "regain" some lost object [3]. As Berger summarizes, "The purpose of publicity is to make the spectator marginally dissatisfied with his present way of life. . . . It offers him an improved alternative to what he is" (142). The present is insufficient because it is the lived experience. The past and future live, unblemished, in fantasy.

<25> The ultimate fantasy being sold is individuality and it is in this regard that Faludi most misses the mark. She assumes ornamental culture is an essentially feminine experience; that is, part of the experience of inhabiting a female body. Even as it relates to men Faludi considers ornamental culture in these terms:

> The aspects of this public "femininity" -- objectification, passivity, infantilization, pedestal-perching, and mirror-gazing -- are the very ones that women have in modern times denounced as trivializing and humiliating qualities imposed on them by a misogynist culture. No wonder men are in such agony. Not only are they losing the society they were once essential to, they are "gaining" the very world women so recently shucked off as demeaning and dehumanizing. (39)

But this ignores the reality that the dominant culture is increasingly focused on consumers who happen to be gendered as opposed to the other way around. Berger recognizes this situation: "Publicity is the life of this culture -- in so far as without publicity capitalism could not survive -- and at the same time publicity is its dream" (154). The ultimate goal of any producer is repeat customers. In other words, docile, disciplined bodies. Yet no one forces men to spend "$10 billion annually on their 'look.' [. . .] And insiders estimate its growing at

more than 10 per cent each year" (Graham). Bartky has trouble directly attributing the influences on femininity. She claims that since "the disciplinary practices of femininity produce a 'subjected and practiced,' an inferiorized, body, they must be understood as aspects of a far larger discipline, an oppressive and inegalitarian system of sexual subordination. This system aims at turning women into the docile and compliant companions of men just as surely as the army aims to turn its raw recruits into soldiers" (75). While the analogy is bombastic and dated, it is not entirely without merit. The disciplinary practices of masculinity and femininity do produce subjected and practiced, inferiorized bodies.

<26> Bartky cleverly returns to the notion of the Panopticon to describe the mechanism through which power is enforced. At some point, "knowing that he may be observed from the tower at any time, the inmate takes over the job of policing himself. The gaze that is inscribed in the very structure of the disciplinary institution is internalized by the inmate: modern technologies of behavior are thus oriented toward the production of isolated and self-policing subjects" (80). While she calls self-surveillance a form of obedience to patriarchy, it is also the means through which repeat customers are established. Hair colour needs to be reapplied every four to six weeks. Shaving, for instance, is a daily ritual. Indeed, Mark Kingwell remarks on the importance of such rituals for the reproduction of masculinity: "Learning how to shave -- to remove the very hair that marks puberty -- thus takes its place in the set of routine skills that modern urban fathers routinely pass on to their sons" (336). However, this ritual is no longer passed from fathers to sons. Fathers are no longer the ultimate role models. The (ever-changing) norms are dictated by the consumer culture. Increasingly, this culture is a visual one. The feminist scholars cited throughout this chapter recognized the pervasiveness and power of the media on femininity. However, they underestimated its power by assuming it only impacted women. Clearly, something more complex is occurring.

<27> Returning to the military analogy Bartky develops, it is worth recalling the absolute uniformity of the soldiers. They are stripped of any individuality and their appearance -- clean shaven, shorn hair, drab uniforms, caps pulled over eyes -- is a key contributing factor. This is the end result of cosmetic enhancement. Bartky observes that

> In the language of fashion magazines and cosmetic ads, making-up is typically portrayed as an aesthetic activity in which a woman can express her individuality. In reality [. . .] making-up the face is, in fact, a highly stylized activity that gives little rein to self-expression. Painting the face is not like painting a picture; at best, it might be described as painting the same picture over and over again with minor variations. (70)

A stable revenue stream needs a predictable consumer group. Although she does not acknowledge it, Bartky's statement regarding mass produced uniformity suggests comments about mass culture made by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their famous essay, "The Culture Industry: Deception as Mass Enlightenment" (1999).

<28> The Frankfurt School thinkers turn to the automobile as the best example of the effects of North American consumerism: "the difference between the Chrysler range and General Motors products is basically illusory" (34). They consider individuality to be an illusion in an age of mass production. In their view, the individual "is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned" (40). Adorno and Horkheimer refer to the effects of the consumption of mass produced goods; mass produced bodies were not yet a reality. Their Marxist view point is no more satisfying than any of the myriad positions -- materialist, psychoanalytic, post-structuralist, essentialist -- presented earlier for contained within their statements is the assumption that consumers are duped by producers and marketers. Therefore, the dominant culture actively enforces its will on the general population. This is clearly not the case. On the contrary, the exhibitors at the "New You" show were fairly explicit about the costs, pain, and recovery involved in their procedures. Consumers know in advance the cost, the pain, and the superficiality of the procedure involved and choose to do so anyway [4]. Speed then becomes a primary concern. Recovery time should be minimal in order for the process to seem "natural." As well, it is ideal to be the first person in one's peer group to acquire, as opposed to achieve, a perfect body. This results in a false sense of individuality based on the perceived ability to stand out in a crowd. However, the need to "keep up with the Joneses" -- that is, progress for the sake of progress -- means that others will endure similar treatments lest they stand out negatively. Sadly, this substitute for individuality is more short-lived than the effects of most treatments.

Notes

[1]This article originally appeared in the *London Sunday Times*. [^]

[2]In the language of cosmetic enhancement, those undergoing such treatments are usually called "clients" or "customers" rather than patients. The sense is that a service is being purchased rather than something being inherently wrong with the purchaser. Nevertheless, a doctor, or at least someone in a lab coat, gives the impression that the procedure is safe and the provider is reputable. [^]

[3]Other popular terms include "revive," "recover," "reactivate," "replenish," and my personal favourites, "reinvigorate" and "rejuvenate." [^]

[4]Indeed, the representative of Toronto's Lafontaine Clinic assured me that my nose, like every other nose, would have to be broken and would cost exactly $4,600 to fix. Given the other procedures that I "need" (as opposed to want) to achieve the body I "deserve" the total cost would be roughly $25,000. This includes crowns for my teeth, rhinoplasty, hair removal, and "ab sculpting." The teeth and nose, at least, are misshapen thanks to competitive sports and as such might once have been considered a proof of manhood. [^]

[5]Progenis.com is no longer available. The site was moved to www.progenis.net, but this too has been temporarily

shut down. [^]

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