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GODDESS WORSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

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Introduction.....

Marina Warner, who has written among other things, lengthy studies of the Virgin Mary and Joan of Arc, has written that '*the tradition of female allegory is underpinned by the assumption that woman is tabula *rosa*, on to which we inscribe meanings. She does not say her own name or control her own destiny; no person inhabits her body, only the ideal that someone has poured into it.*' Her statement is aptly illustrated by the barrage of female forms which assault us as we live out our daily lives, on coins, on postage stamps, on buildings, in magazines. Images of women which are often used to represent or reinforce cultural ideas about female existence. While the masculine position in culture, subject of course to social and economic change, has remained relatively constant, the feminine position has been sub-divided and fragmented to such an extent that women are presented with a wide array of variables which they may use to identify themselves.

The best way to examine this ambiguity which surrounds the female element is to examine the mythologies which have helped create it. Myth is the characteristic expression of idolatrous thought. This thesis will be based around a particular mythology, exclusively female in nature, the myth of the goddess. The definition of the word goddess, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is a female deity in polytheism. The majority of historical goddesses were pagan icons although monotheistic traditions had goddesses also, for example the Virgin Mary of the Christian tradition. The term goddess is one which is widely understood in western culture, although sometimes with limited meaning. The aim of this thesis is to locate contemporary 'goddesses' and to look at how their images have been represented in contemporary culture. I chose to look at three particular women whom I felt could be seen as 'goddesses', or who seemed to have been accepted as such by mass culture. Female figures who for varying reasons had a high media profile in the last decade.

The first female figure I will be examining is Margaret Thatcher. My reason for choosing her was because she seemed to be the closest contemporary equivalent to the the closest contemporary equivalent to the warrior goddess of mythic traditions. My analysis of her will include an examination of her physical appearance, of her very dominant personality and the manner in which she expressed herself. Reference material used will include drawings of Thatcher done by the cartoonist Gerald Scarfe and a 'psycho-biography' written by Leo Abye, an ex-Labour M.P. Similarities between Thatcher and Athena, the warrior goddess of the Greek mythic tradition, will be explored.

Madonna is the second figure in this analysis ; she will be examined as the contemporary ' sex - goddess '. The ' sex - goddess ' being probably the most widely understood manifestation of the goddess in contemporary western culture . The way in which she projects her sexuality and public reaction to this will be discussed . Madonna's costumes , the various sexual personae which she embodies and her experimentation with traditional gender codes will provide the basis for the analysis of Madonna as the ' sex - goddess '.

The third potential goddess to be considered in this thesis is Diana , Princess of Wales . Her image , as as both a fairytale heroine , and as a mother goddess , will be examined . Not , however , as a mother goddess in the Earth mother type tradition , but as the Virgin Mother , the image characterised by Mary , the Mother Goddess of the Christian tradition . References for this chapter will mainly comprise of photographs of her which have been printed in the popular press . These are of interest because they illustrate the manner in which she was portrayed in the media . I will be looking at her physical appearance , and discussing the way she interacts with the camera .

The aim of this thesis is not to attempt to identify any of these women as a *personalised* image of a female deity. But I will be trying to discover what that image *represents* in contemporary culture . Anne Baring and Jules Cashford have suggested in ' *The Myth of the Goddess* ' that 'the goddess' can be understood as a metaphor for the feminine *principle* manifesting itself in society . Therefore , I will be examining traditional definitions of femininity and seeing how Thatcher , Madonna and Diana differ or conform to these . This thesis by its very nature is limited , however I hope to make some thought provoking speculation in an area which has in this particular context has not been widely written about .

Chapter 1.....

Margaret Thatcher - Warrior Queen

'In a way that Labour could never manage, Margaret Thatcher, the grocer's daughter who leads the party that was rooted in privilege, is carrying the banner for ordinary people.'

The Sun , 9th June 1983 (Election Day in Britain)

Margaret Thatcher made history by rising from her modest rank as a grocer's daughter to international prominence when she became Britain's first female Prime Minister and also the first British Prime Minister this century to win three successive general elections . She is a figure who, despite the fact that she has retired from public life is still closely followed and reported in the media , particularly in recent months due to the publication of a controversial and politically provocative autobiography .

As an icon of womanhood she presents an interesting complexity of representation . She found herself in the relatively rare position of being a female leader in a traditionally male domain . Thatcher's gender difference allied with her very dominant personality created a powerful image of female leadership , which imprinted itself indelibly on the imagination of the British public . Her successor , John Major , is often perceived as operating in her shadow. Thatcher's external appearance , her very dominant facial structure , her rigidly sculpted hair-style , her severe line of business suit became inextricably linked with the essence of Thatcher - her political and personal opinions and achievements . The particular quality which one freely associates with Thatcher is her hard metallic flintiness and iron resolve , emblems of weaponry and war. It was this quality which resulted in the soviet nick-name of the ' Iron Lady ' . (The Soviet newspaper 'The Red Star' gave her this title in Jan . 1975 ₁) It was a title which stuck and one in which Thatcher herself took personal pride . Indeed it subsequently became a positive description of her resoluteness . Margaret Thatcher has never repudiated as alien or undesirable the image of strength which surrounds her , rather interiorized it with apparent eagerness , for it provided her with a dimension which traditional definitions of female nature exclude . After the Falklands victory she said on American television , ' I have the reputation as the Iron Lady. I am of great resolve - that resolve is matched by the British people . ' ₂

Despite the hostile analysis the whole Falklands conflict received when the expensive and temporary nature of Britain's ' victory ' was fully realised , Thatcher as its indomitable

figure-head benefited enormously by it. The victory over Argentina was considered to be the main contributor to her smooth victory in the 1983 British general election. British enthusiasm during the Falklands was in part triggered by Thatcher's evocation of Empire, of Britain's past military glories which gave rise to a nostalgia for the Britain-that-was and that-could-be-again again under the firm guidance of their authoritarian ruler and warrior queen. Thatcher's evocative manner is aptly illustrated by a quotation from a speech she made at a Conservative rally at Cheltenham racecourse on July 3rd, 1982;

*'There were those who would not admit it - even perhaps some here today - people who would have strenuously denied the suggestion, but, in their heart of hearts they too had fears that it was true that Britain was no longer the nation that had built an empire and ruled a quarter of the world. Well they were wrong. The lesson of the Falklands is that Britain has not changed and that this nation still has those sterling qualities which shine through our history.'*³

The identification of Thatcher with this renewed military grandeur of Britain was accomplished in part by the language of female representation. In the past, the spirit of Great Britain has been characterized by its famous queens and also by the female icon of Britannia, a warrior goddess who represents the virtues of British law and the embodiment of Britain's identity. Therefore, in continuation of this tradition of female allegory, it seemed natural to perceive Mrs. Thatcher as the embodiment of the British spirit in conflict and then in triumph.

The conception of Britannia as imperial figurehead first appeared on British coins in 1672 under Charles II. (See Plate 1) Her image was partly modelled on the Britannia represented on the copper coins engraved by Roman emperors Hadrian and Antonious Pius to celebrate their colonisation of Britain (ironically enough). The principal model for Britannia, however, was Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and war and protectress of Athens.

'Wise Zeus gave birth to her himself out of his majestic head, Golden Armour clothed her, All the gods who saw her were overcome with awe.' (From the Homeric Hymn to Athena.)⁴

Athena, also known as Pallas Athena or Athena Parthenon (meaning maiden), was according to myth born from the head of her father Zeus, who had swallowed her pregnant mother Metis, goddess of wisdom, whole. One tradition relates that Athena's mother forged armour for her at her conception and that when she sprang from the head of Zeus as a full grown woman she was in battle-dress and wielding a sword. The aegis is the goddess's distinguishing dress. It is leathery and functions as both a shield and a cloak. It covers and protects the wearer and constitutes a sign of the special favour of the gods. According to a famous cycle of stories, Athena's aegis bore the head of the gorgon Medusa, killed with her help by the hero Perseus. Athena was responsible, according to myth, for

transforming Medusa's head into snakes and when Perseus had severed her head the goddess impaled it on her aegis as a grisly war trophy. Medusa , queen of gorgons with eyes which turned men to stone , was one of the many granddaughters of Gaia , the Great Goddess . Freud saw Medusa's head as a symbol of female castration and consequently an instrument of terror for men . *'To decapitate = to castrate'*, he wrote, and also that ; *' The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something . Numerous analyses have made us familiar with the occasion for this; it occurs when a boy who has hitherto been unwilling to believe the threat of castration, catches sight of the female genitals, usually those of an adult, surrounded by hair and essentially those of his mother . '*⁵

Outside of the domestic sphere (Gaia, Aphrodite, Artemis.) , Athena was the Greek's greatest goddess , posited right at the heart of a male tradition , the business of war . (See Plate 2)

The quote from *'The Sun'* at the beginning of this chapter endorsing Mrs. Thatcher for a second term in office is accompanied by , on the front page , an illustration of her in the regalia of Britannia ; trident , helmet and shield and holding aloft the olive branch which appeared in the hand of Britannia during the reign of Charles II.- See Plate 3 (Athena , according to myth gave the first olive branch to her city Athens) . In the Falklands aftermath as Thatcher's popularity gathered momentum, she came to be associated more and more with the symbol of Britannia\ the Nation , until one could almost be conflated with the other . By association this could be taken to mean that any dissent from her views and those of her party was unpatriotic . The identity of a nation and the identity of a political leader becoming intertwined , in a democracy , is unusual and indicated a notable propaganda success for Thatcher and her party . Thatcher naturally did nothing to deter this perception of her . Caricaturists , always a rapid indicator of public opinion , were quick to notice this transformation and began to depict her more and more as the nation personified . (See plates 3 to 7) The cartoonist Gerald Scarfe frequently depicted her as Britannia ,but while Britannia's actual physical appearance can appear wooden , even static , despite her warrior appendages ,Thatcher lends her armour a lusty aggression of a more Athenian spirit and a frosty ferocity which suits her to perfection . Scarfe elongates her aristocratic nose and haughty nostrils to reach a rapier sharp point ; her curling , lipsticked mouth bares its ferociously pointed teeth , spearheads protrude from her breastplates; the famed handbag decorated with delicately chiselled iron spikes dangles from an elegant iron claw ; and , a large , curling , serpent-like phallic symbol rears its head from between her legs . (See Plate 4)

Weaponry and artillery are often associated with phallic power . Thatcher ,by her militant attitude and combatative identity appears to endow herself with an imaginary

penis and all that the penis signifies - male power . Thatcher identifies closely with male power she understands its language and its practical application . If she did not it would have been impossible for her to have retained her position for the length of time she did , a position in which she was often in political conflict with world leaders , all of whom were male . However , she deliberately chose in her political life to surround herself exclusively with men . Her Cabinet after each reshuffling remained peopled only by men . In an entry to *Who's Who* , which she composed herself , she describes herself only as ' *the daughter of Alfred* ' as if trying to ignore her mother's very existence .⁶ She has spoken often of her indebtedness to her father while rarely acknowledging her mother . As Athena sprung fully armed from the head of Zeus so Thatcher seems to try to claim a parthenogenic birth.

Of his many caricatures of Thatcher , Scarfe has said , ' *Mrs. T . Now There's a face to launch a thousand nibs . In truth her nose is not too big but the aggressive , probing , cutting , slicing , ever - advancing nose that I gave her seemed to speak of her character . Gradually in my drawings , she turned from flesh and blood into pure polished , dangerous , unyielding , crushing , cutting metal .* ' ⁷ The rich choice of metaphors which Scarfe uses here to describe Thatcher , 'aggressive' , 'cutting' , 'slicing' , illustrate the perception of Thatcher as a dangerous , threatening female , and also how her sharp , metallic , weapon- like qualities became her predominant characteristic . Also the word ' ever -advancing ' conjures up images of the relentless warrior , advancing inexorably toward his prey . And certainly Thatcher pursued her goals relentlessly and tirelessly . Gerald Scarfe also built a large metal sculpture of Thatcher , again as Britannia . But instead of a handbag and phallus she wields a trident and shield . She stands , arm outstretched , trident pointed outward , breast thrust forward (spearheads on each) , head flung back , sword like nose piercing the sky . (See Plate 8) It is the gesture and posture of the classical hero , a very cleverly crafted satire both on Thatcher herself and on the abundance of sculptures , classical and otherwise , representing this kind of exaggerated victoriousness . She stands atop a 'Tomb to the Unemployed' , a jibe at the results of Thatcher's capitalist policy-making . Under Thatcher's reign , to coin a well known phrase , 'the rich got richer and the poor got poorer' . Thatcher was essentially an imperialist : she identified only with success . She was no more interested in the disillusioned and disinherited of society than she was interested in feminism .

Scarfe's satirical sculpture underlines how aptly Thatcher fulfilled this role of authoritarian controller to the nation , an impaled gorgon's head could only complete the picture . Leo Abysse , (who has written a 'psycho- biography of Margaret Thatcher) has written that ; ' *In political terms , the incapacity of the Tory MPs to emancipate themselves from the thralldom*

has left the nation for a longer period than ever before in this century at the mercy of a prime minister unchecked by the operation of a genuine Cabinet and collective decision - making. The sight of the terrible Medusa made a man stiff with terror and froze him ; and thus has Thatcher terrorized the Tories in the House.'⁸ Abyse , an ex -Labour MP, uses the image of the Medusa as an all-egory for Thatcher , the threatening castrating female . Scarfe often depicts Thatcher as the devouring feminine grotesque. In addition to her hard metallic qualities Scarfe's drawings of Thatcher are characterised by the sharp , carnivorous teeth he gives her. (See Plates 9 to 13) ' It doesn't pay to stand too close to those with predatory teeth' ⁹ , is the punch-line to one of these drawings , and Scarfe goes on to illustrate his point with a three- frame cartoon which shows an apparently effusive Thatcher reaching out to embrace John Major . She then grasps him by the neck and bites off his head! (See Plate 9) Scarfe invokes the Freudian castration theory , which equates de-capitation with castration . Thatcher as de-capitator / castrator features in another of Scarfe's cartoons , one printed in the book ' Scarfe's face ' , a study of the human face in caricature . This illustration depicts Thatcher's face as the head of an axe , her predatorial teeth protruding from the sheer surface of the axe , ' cutting her swathe across Britain ' ¹⁰ , as Scarfe so eloquently puts it . Thatcher , who has now literally , rather than metaphorically been transformed into a vicious weapon , swings back her axe-head , which is dripping with blood , as she has just de-capitated two unidentifiable individuals. These individuals , Scarfe tells us , represent the unemployed and presumably the figure who has retained his head is next in line . (See Plate 11)

Spitting Image , the satirical television programme has in the past portrayed Thatcher as a cigar smoking , handbag wielding dominatrix . Her Cabinet , particularly the long suffering Sir Geoffrey Howe , were depicted as a cowed and blubbing mass who bowed and scraped to her every command. Satire would not be satire if it did not contain some unfortunate truths . Thatcher was indeed perceived to rule the roost Victorian style. For Thatcher , while very much a proponent of male power , also succeeded in tapping an enormous source of female power. Her political and personal identity was very much rooted in a female tradition of the domestic victorian kind , her stately appearance , strident tones and authoritative manner evoked images of the traditional British governess or nanny ;women of discipline , like Thatcher , but also women who wield the power to command obedience. Scarfe , naturally , has also caricatured Thatcher in some of these capable female roles . In a pun on Jaques' speech recounting ' the seven ages of man ' , from Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' , Scarfe portrays an horrific , salivating , infant Norman Tebbit , being carried by Thatcher . She wears the costume of a Victorian nurse-maid , apron , cap and gown . The

caption above the illustration titles it *'The Seven Ages Of Man'*, the punchline beneath reads *'At first the Tebbit mewling and puking in the nurse's arms'* ¹¹. Jaques' line *"At first the infant, Mewling and puking in the Nurse's arms;"* ¹² is replaced by Scarfe's contemporary interpretation. (see Plate 14) Scarfe has also depicted Thatcher in the role of the capable matron / nanny doling out medicine. In an illustration from the book *'Line of Attack'*, in anticipation of Thatcher's 1983 election victory, he portrays a robust, authoritative Thatcher, pouring medicine onto a large spoon. The caption reads *'Ugh! , Looks like more medicine'*, and according to the label on the large medicine bottle it will be *'As before'*, *'Only more so'* ¹³. (See Plate 15)

According to Leo Abyse, Thatcher's domination of her party and of the electorate for 11 years was permitted in part by a particular cultural vulnerability which existed in the ranks of Britain's politicians. He says of the Tory MP's,

'They laboured under the handicap of being brought up within the constraints of the English upper middle-class families from which at the time most of them had sprung. They had been tutored to respect the stereotype of the stiff-upper-lip, to be controlled Englishmen by mothers and nannies who were governed by a culture which disapproved of indulgence to children; they were not reared by the disciples of Spock. Under such harsh regimes they passed through the cycle of infantile sexual life which Freud has told us is man's inheritance.' ¹⁴

Abyse reiterates that Thatcher's position in her party as that of the phallic woman, or phallic mother (Medusa). In fact Thatcher's accessories, her handbag, her high heeled shoes, her matronly figure, have fetish like associations. In the pornographic realm one of the most common scenarios is that of the female dominator who is very often depicted in the fetishistic uniforms of traditional female figures of discipline; the nurse, the nanny, the governess. The notion of a whip-wielding Thatcher is not altogether inappropriate! Abyse describes Thatcher's fellow Tories as turning away from *'manliness'*, *'to obtain the protection of the woman they believed would be their Britannia; a goddess who was later to have her phallic nature made explicit by accepting as her title the Russian soubriquet of the Iron Lady.....'* ¹⁵ This perception of Thatcher as bully and dictator to her party reflected badly on them but seemed only to add to her almost legendary status as Britain's ruling matriarch. For, due to traditional codes of gender orthodoxy, a female to male bully reflects shamefully on the male in a way which a male to female bully does not.

Marina Warner, in her book *'Monuments and Maidens'*, speculates as to whether Margaret Thatcher's fulfillment of women's role as wife and mother provided her with a legitimacy without which her influence could have been lessened. She was, after all, a

potentially subversive female , figure-heading an extremely conservative political tradition . According to Warner ,

*'Though she possesses so many of the very characteristics which men have long diagnosed in pushy women and heaped with scorn , she does not earn traditional costumely , for she meets traditional demands on women in all that she has accomplished as housewife and wife and mother. And in doing so she earns the right to inspire traditional, chivalrous , even exaggerated praise '*¹⁶

Thatcher was indeed careful to subscribe to the female ideal prescribed for women by the Conservative Party . Despite the image of her as 'the one who wears the trousers' , she never wore trousers . In her dress code she represented to perfection the ideal of the traditional British female . She was also careful to emphasize her female experience . Warner tells us that she ;

*' allows photographs of herself doing the washing -up , stocking her larder , hanging wall-paper , wearing a lacy mop cap , she tells the nut- sorter in the marzipan factory that marzipan is difficult to make , she knows . She cooks for her ministers , she attends formal conferences in shoes that make her teeter. Her hair is in place.'*¹⁷

Thatcher also has no qualms about readily mixing combatative and domestic metaphor, describing her colleagues attitude as her leadership was reaching its close she was heard to say that ' they couldn't *stand* the heat in the kitchen - I , of course , was *used* to the heat in the kitchen .' (her emphasis)¹⁸ Margaret Thatcher helped to create her unique position by being careful to keep a finger in both pies as it were . In a neat double manoeuvre she managed to enjoy the benefits of maleness (symbolically) and femaleness at one and the same time . However , her predominant political characteristic remained her hard metallic quality : she was compulsive , humourless and remorseless . Political journalists often stressed how she appeared to languish in her own estimation and in that of the electorate when there was a period of calm in political affairs . As David Howell a Minister in her government for four years has put it :

*'I think the general atmosphere in the government of which I was a member was everything should start as an argument , continue as an argument and end as an argument.'*¹⁹

Thatcher has also urged and voted for the return of capital punishment , a further indication of her very regal 'off-with-his-head' type mentality . Athenian -style she embraced conflict with eagerness , and the language which she used in her political life was the language of the battle-field , the language of conflict and intolerance .

She did not survive her third term in office ; the social mood in Britain was changing and Thatcher's increasing unpopularity was beginning to threaten the stability of her

her government . She had remained in power for so long that she had begun to exhibit signs of a dangerous autonomy which many of her fellow Tories found alarming .²⁰ In 1988 while she was in Paris attending to foreign affairs, the conservative party held a vote of confidence in her leadership , which she lost . When she hastily returned to Britain she discovered that many members of her faithful cabinet (which she referred to as her 'ship') no longer supported her . Inevitably she was deposed and replaced by one John Major . To quote a disbelieving Thatcher , ' it was *Treachery* with a smile on its face .'²¹ Margaret Thatcher's incredulity at the fate which eventually befell her is patently obvious in her post-resignation media appearances which have been many . Nevertheless ,the magnitude of her achievement remains , as do the interesting parallels with Athena , warrior goddess of old . Certainly , Margaret Thatcher is a fair approximation of a 20th century goddess of war and as she learnt at her peril on the battle-field one must eventually lose . She is a woman whom it is possible to loath intensely , as undoubtedly many did , but whom it is difficult not to , even reluctantly , admire .

*' My life was a daily battle and I never gave up . '*²²

(Margaret Thatcher)

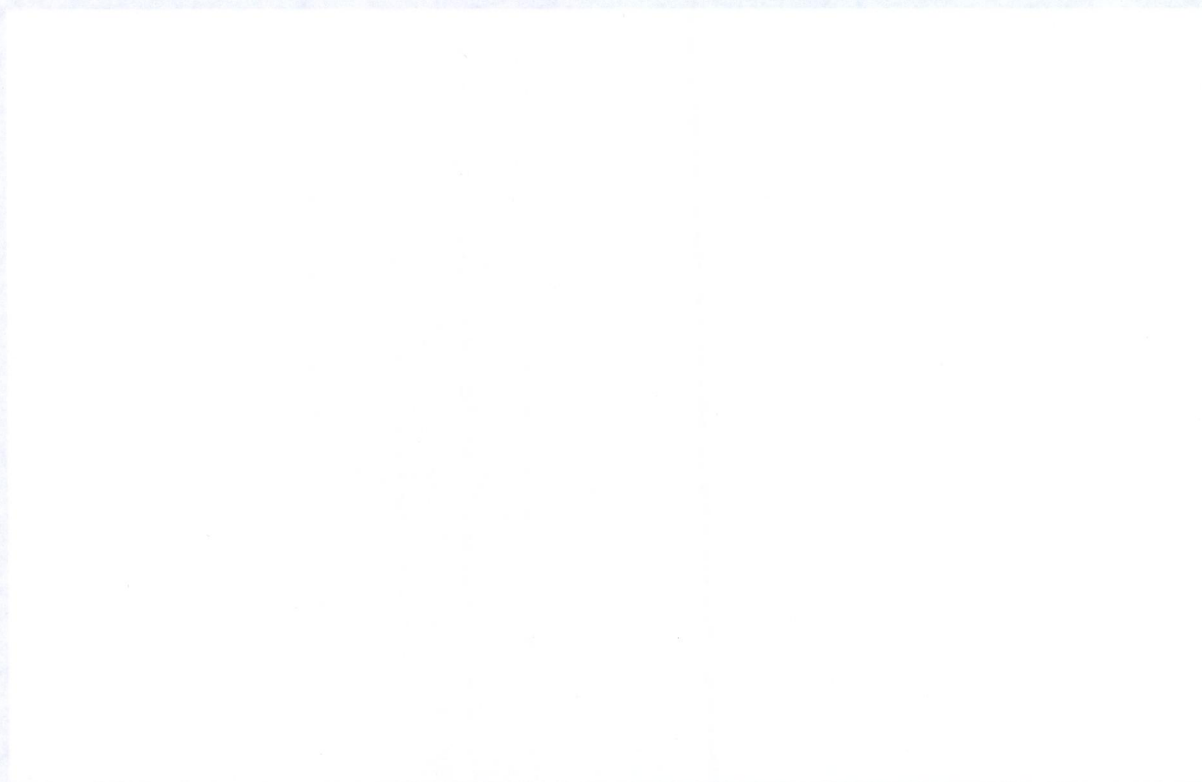
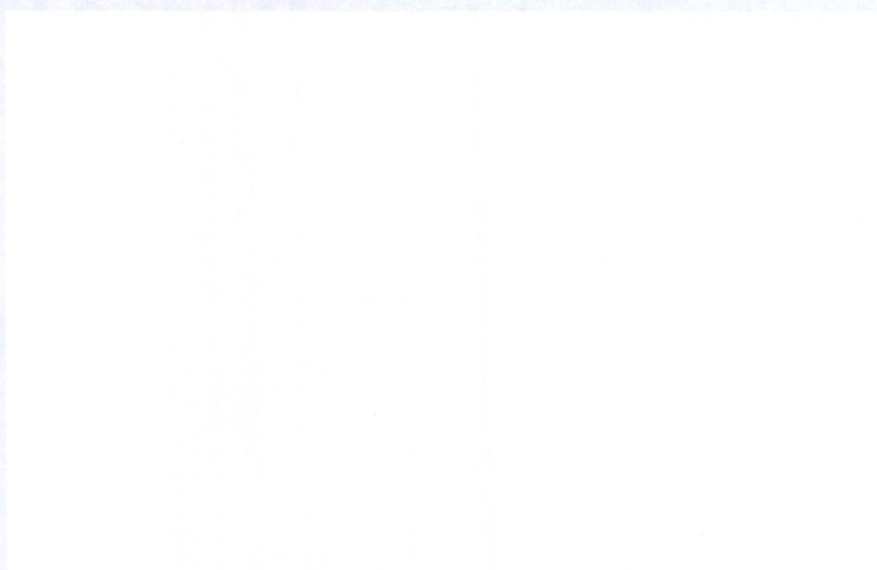


Plate 1



Figure 18. (a) Athena, winged, with snake robe; and (b) Athena with shield; painting on two sides of black-figured cup.

Plate 2



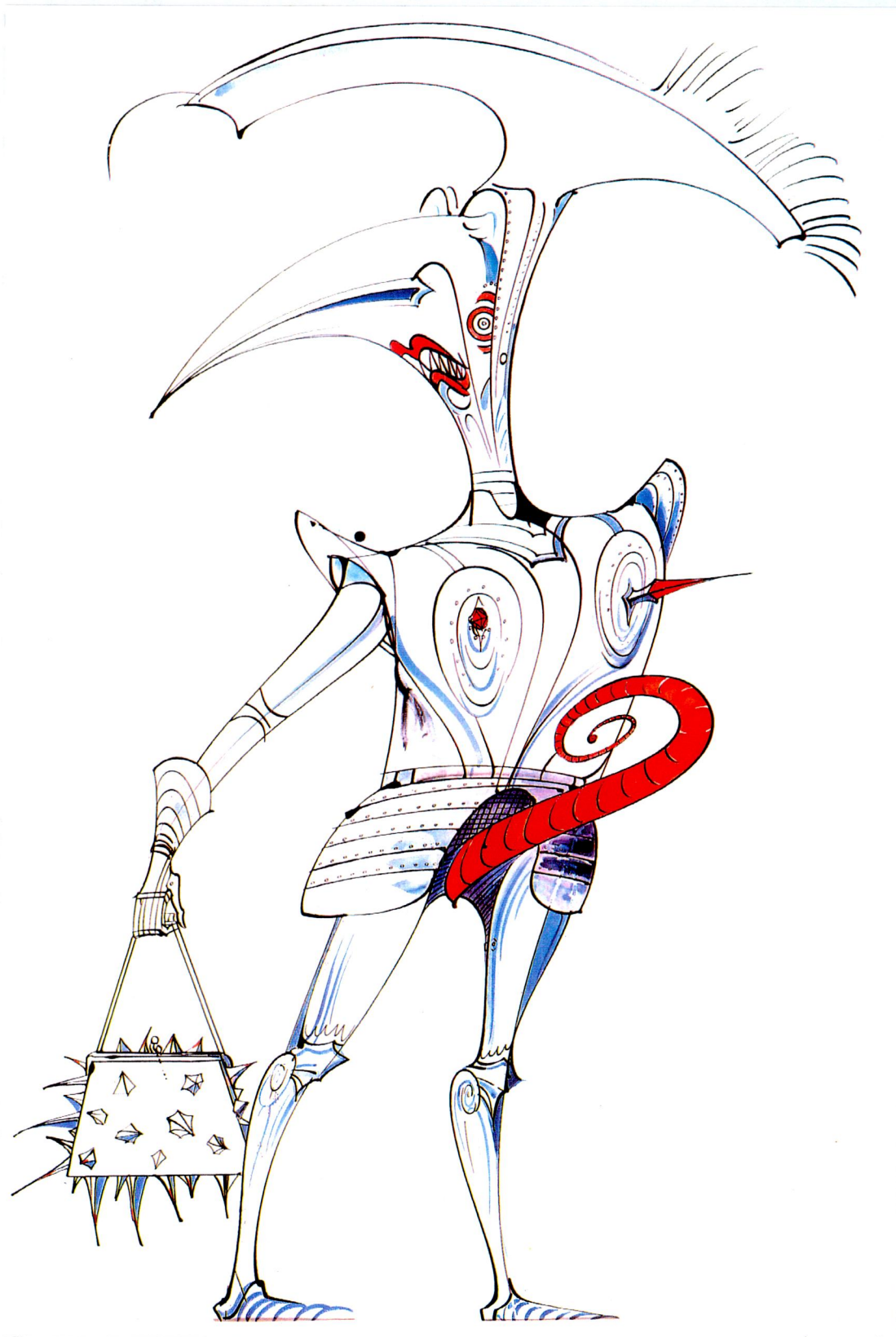


Plate 4





Plate 3

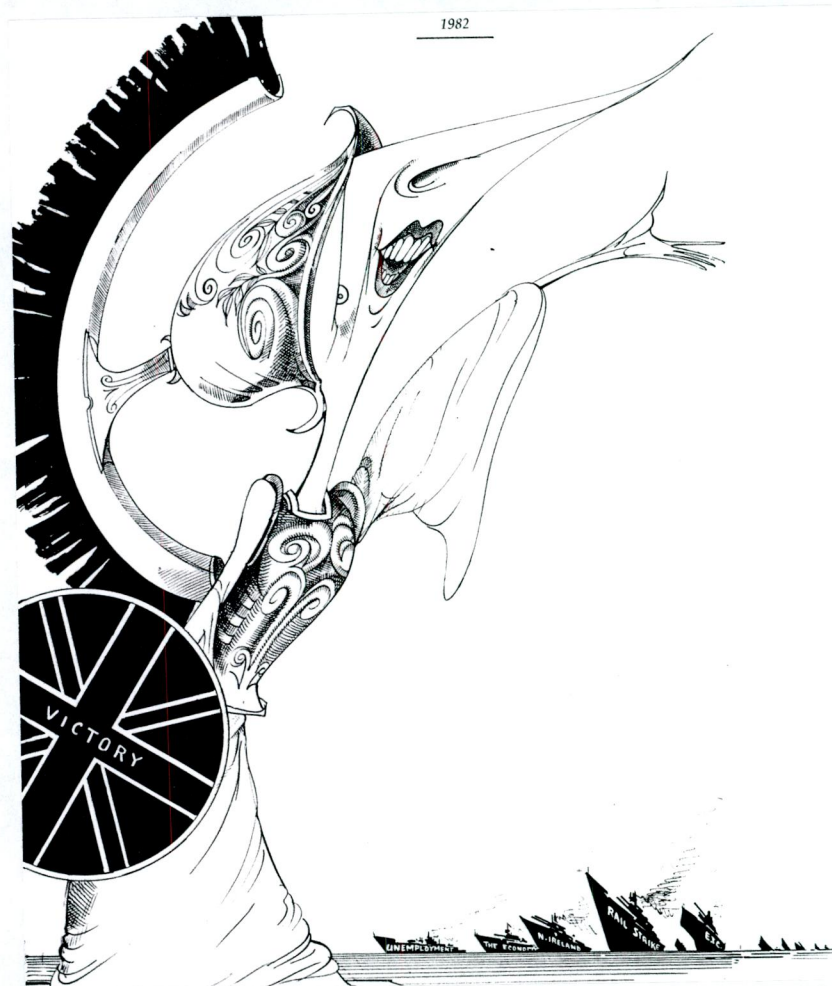
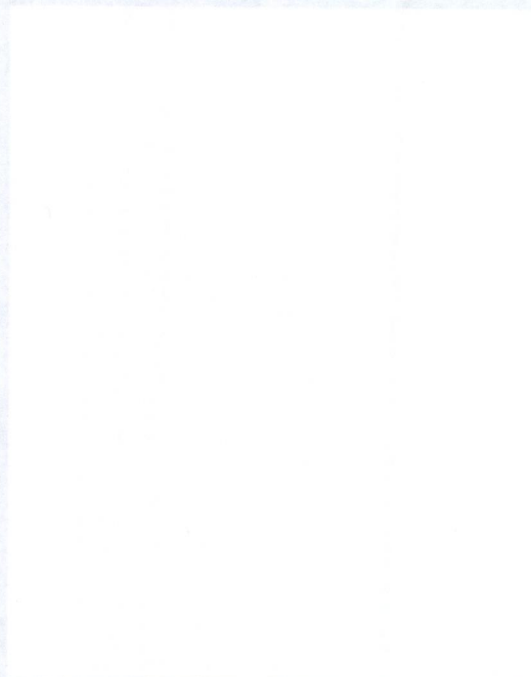


Plate 5



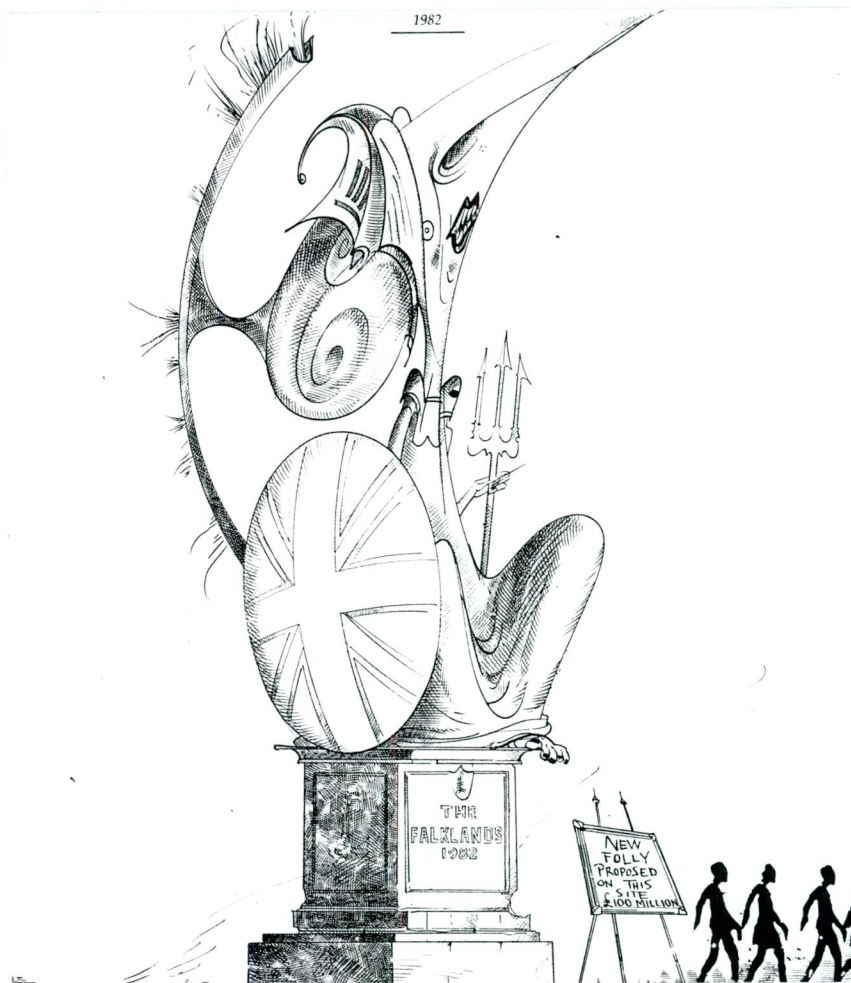


Plate 6



Plate 7



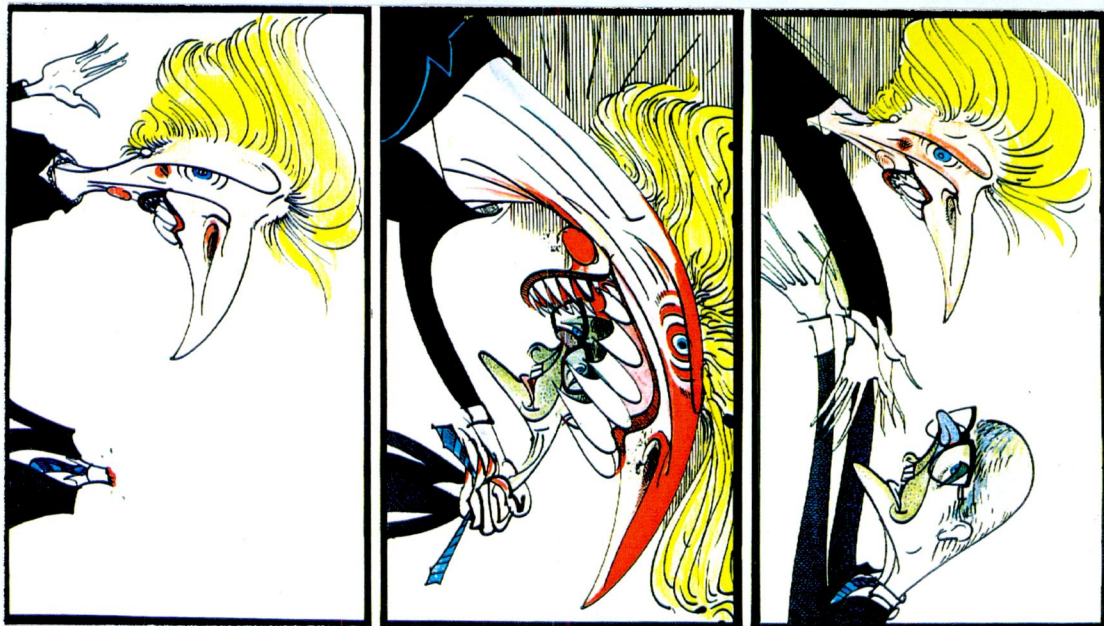


Plate 9

Mrs. T. Now there's a face to launch a thousand nibs. In truth her nose is not big but the aggressive, probing, thrusting, cutting, slicing, ever-advancing aquiline nose I gave her seemed to speak of her character. Gradually, in my drawings, she turned from flesh and blood into pure polished, dangerous, unyielding, crushing, cutting metal.

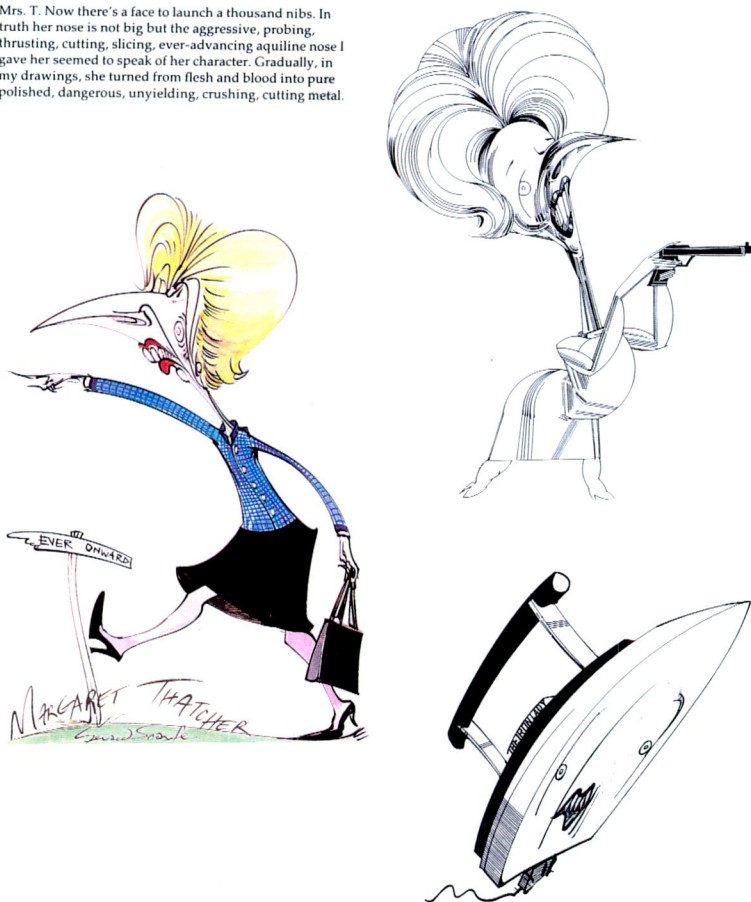


Plate 10



Mrs T. and the unemployed. Finally her face turned into a gigantic axe, cutting her swathe across Britain.

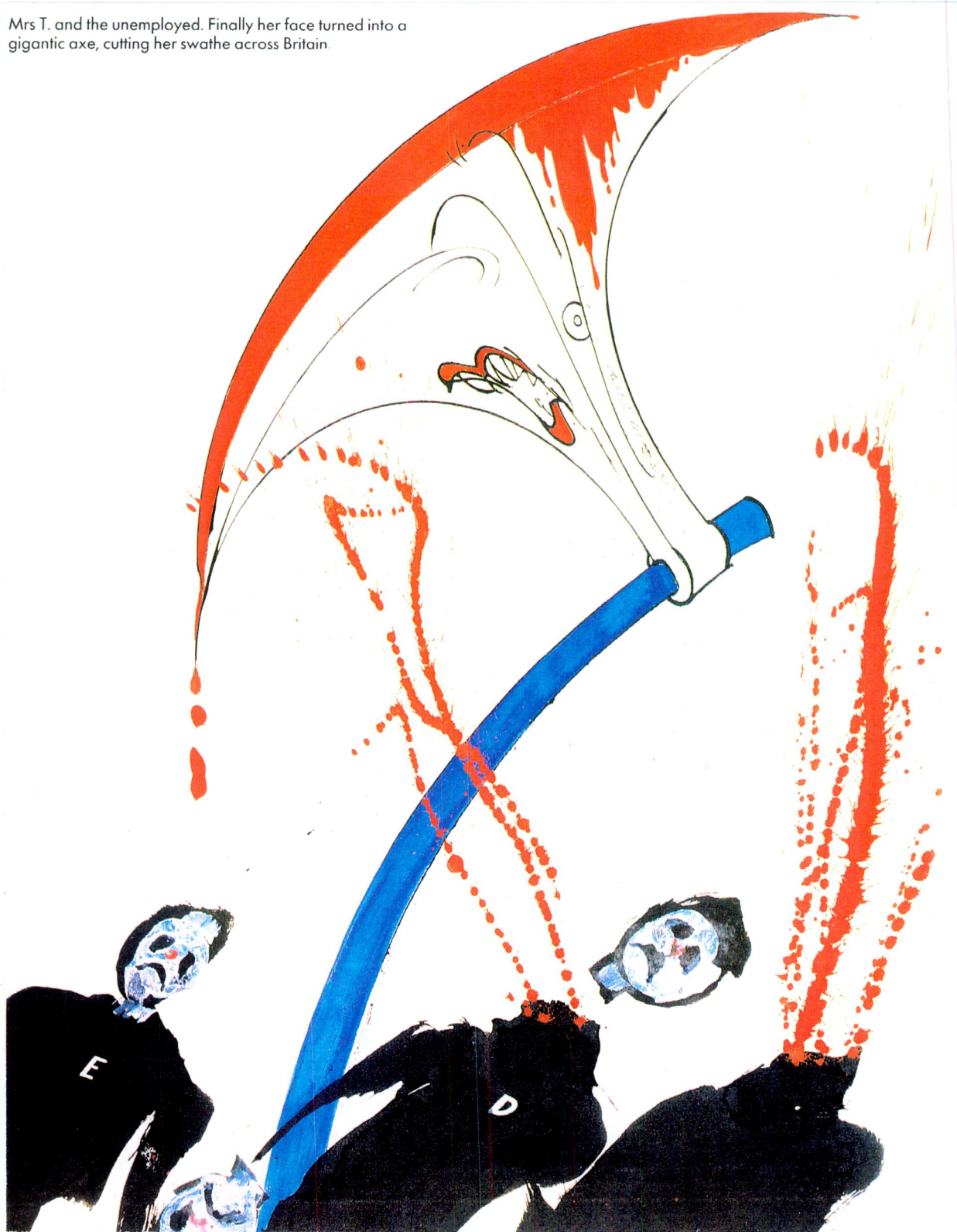


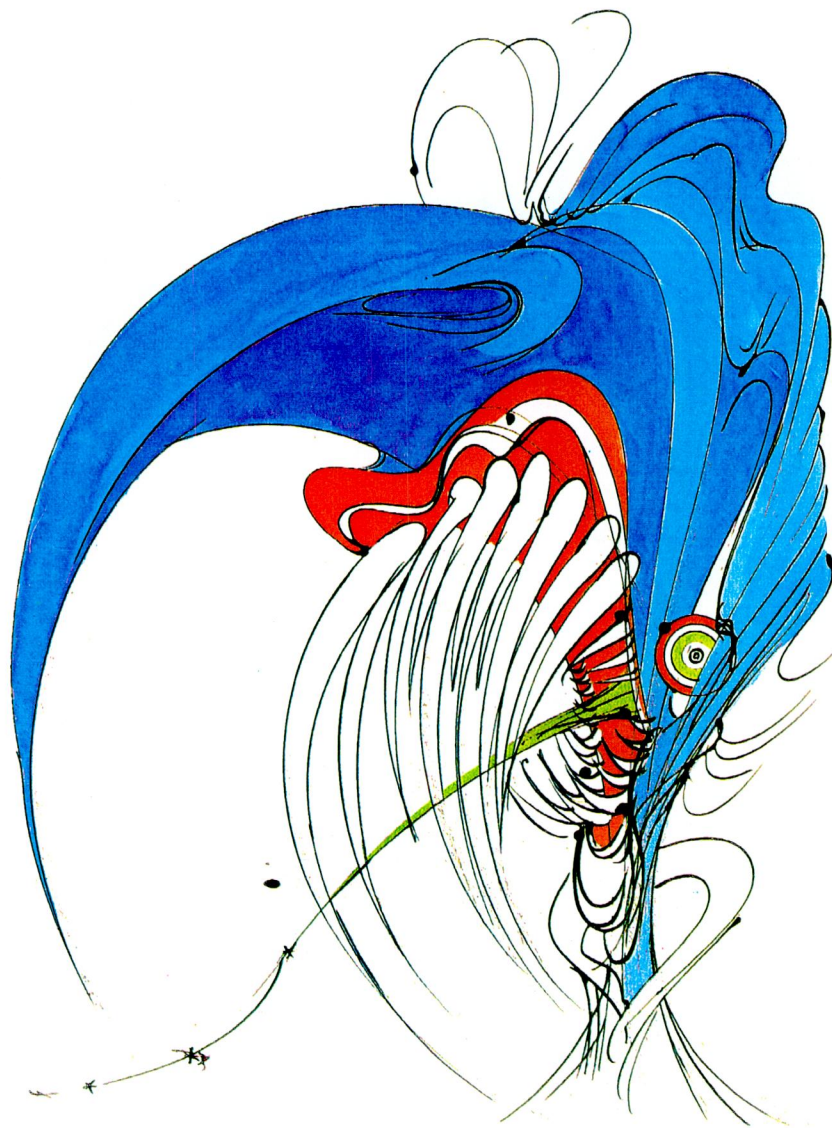
Plate 11





Plate 12





It doesn't pay to stand too close to those who have
predatory teeth.

Plate 13

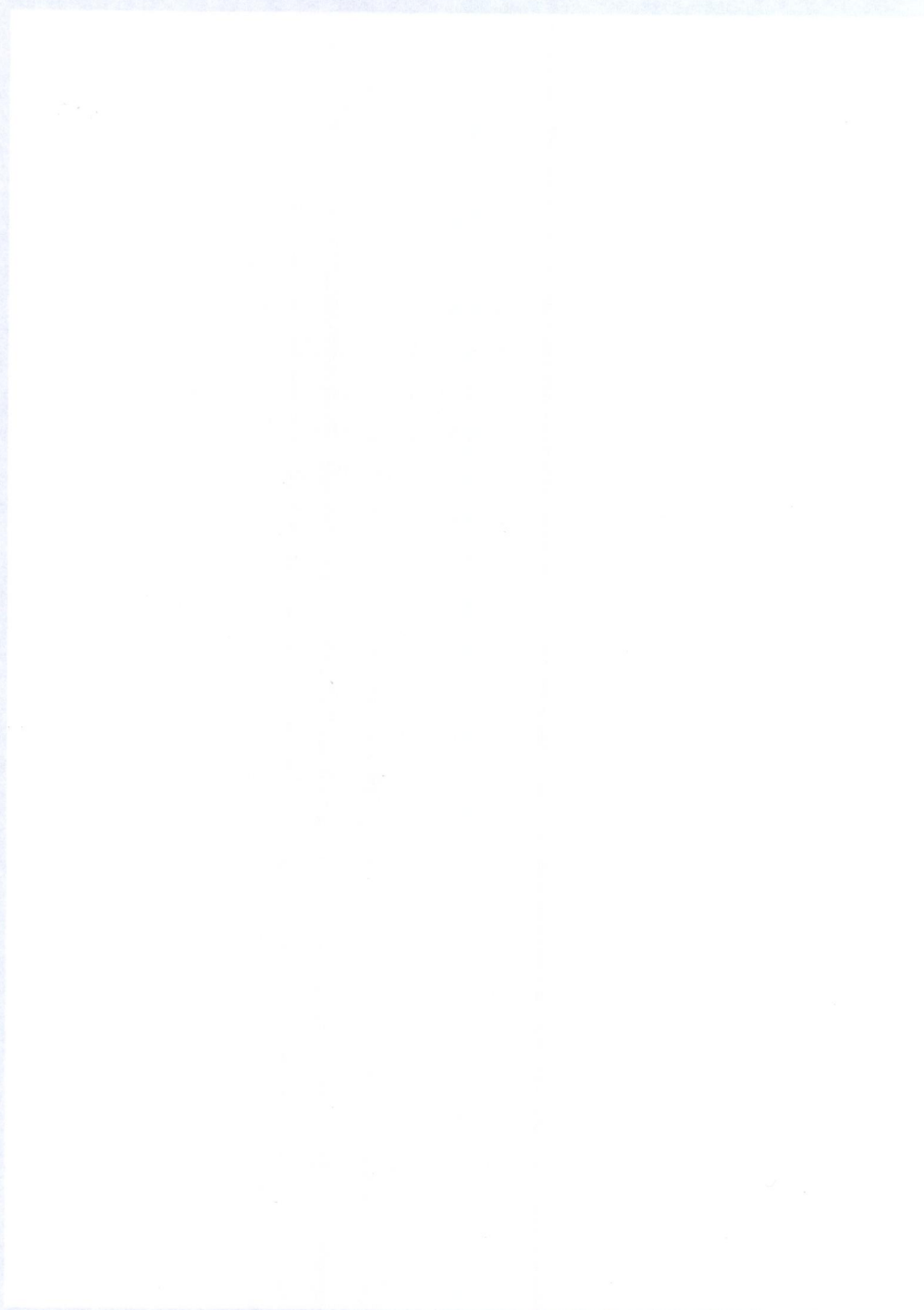
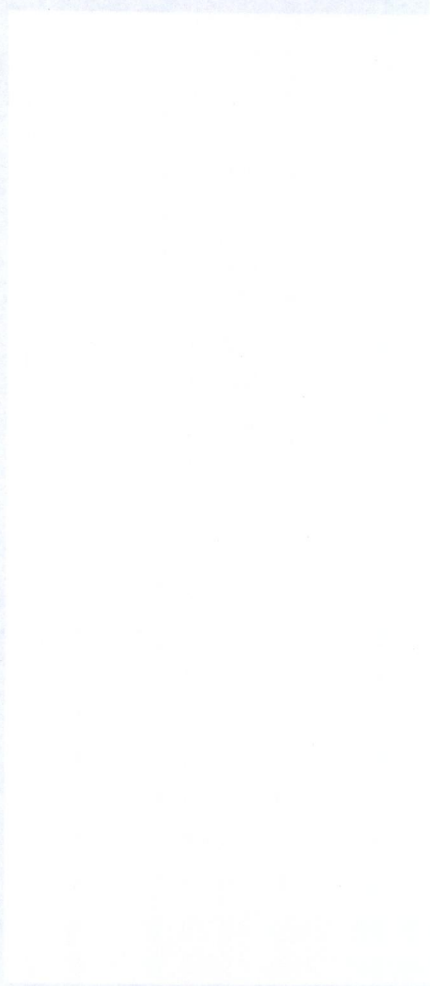


Plate 15



Plate 14





Madonna - Sex Goddess

A pop-star who has created a multi-million dollar industry and spawned an academic subsidiary devoted to deciphering her cultural role is a rare phenomenon. When the gang members argue over Madonna in the opening sequence of Quentin Tarantino's *'Reservoir Dogs'*, the young director is sharing a sly joke with us. Madonna Ciccone, enjoyed a meteoric rise to fame in the mid-80's and has since evolved into a major contemporary female icon. The *'Reservoir Dogs'* exchange alternate meanings for her *'Like a Virgin'* lyrics over breakfast, and as Tarantino seems to know, de-constructing Madonna is proving to be a favourite past-time for many. Speaking of Madonna, Anne Barton-White has said; *'Her fans idolise her, she is worshipped, a post-modern deity.'*¹ And certainly, this woman who is subject to so much close scrutiny is an object of idolatry. As such, the term 'goddess' is one which has frequently been associated with Madonna. Particularly 'sex-goddess' as she has come to represent one of the most powerful images of female sexuality in popular culture.

Madonna continues to enjoy undoubted influence over a particular (largely female) audience. What differentiates her from her peers in the music industry is that this influence does not stem from her music, which in the refracted world of 'Madonna studies' seems to have become one of the least interesting things about her. Peter Aspdén, discussing the 'Madonna Symposium' at the Tate Gallery on 28th Nov. last, notes this lack of emphasis on her musical ability and records a revealing comment from one of the participants; *'I notice there is very little mention of her music, perhaps because we do all think it's crap?'*² Also, the many academics who have written about her - bar Camille Paglia - have tended to exclude her musical achievements from their debate. Her music, despite the fact that it is the medium through which she perpetuates her popularity, is perceived as a vehicle within which she displays a dazzling array of female personae, which she embodies and discards with a rapidity symptomatic of 20th century culture. Madonna herself seems to acknowledge that her music is not her primary concern in a scene from *'Truth or Dare'*, a film combining concert footage from her 1990 *'Blonde Ambition Tour'*, with behind-the-scenes

material , directed by Alex Keshishian . (Released in Europe as ' *In Bed with Madonna* ')
 In a conversation with her two female support singers and dancers , she confides to them ;
 ' *I know I'm not the best singer , I know I'm not the best dancer , but I'm not interested in that .
 I'm interested in pushing people's buttons . I'm interested in being provocative and political .* ' ³

Madonna , like Thatcher has used her gender difference in her career . Indeed , it
 might be said that Madonna's career has been based around her gender difference . Madonna
 however seeks empowerment through sexual rather than governmental politics . Throughout
 her career she has insistently displayed her sexuality , from the navel wriggling of her early
 days to the languid eroticism of ' *Justify my love* ' . (See Plate 1) However , her play with
 gender conventions reaches beyond mere bodily display . In her exploration of cultural
 constructions of *femininity* , Madonna's body functions as a *prop* , which simulates the exce-
 ssive femininity of patriarchal projections . With obvious enjoyment she experiments ,
 tongue in cheek , with various female stereo-types : the blonde , bimbo , the innocent virgin ,
 the movie star , the whore . Cathy Schwichtenberg has said of Madonna that she ; ' *bare the
 devices of femininity , thereby asserting that femininity is a device .* ' ⁴ By recognising the
 constructedness of familiar images of femaleness/female sexuality , Madonna reveals that
femininity as it is represented in mass culture is essentially a masquerade . The hard -edged
 sexuality which she projects is often of an exaggerated , theatrical kind . Her overtly
feminine appearance is often so exaggerated that it becomes a parodic performative achiev-
 ment rather than a display of a ' natural ' self .

Examples of this parodic femininity and gender play can be found in many of her
 videos and also in much of her concert footage . In ' *Material Girl* ' , a pastiche of Marilyn
 Monroe's ' *Diamonds are a girl's best friend number* ' from the film ' *Gentleman prefer Blondes* ' ,
 Madonna sashays around in a pink satin gown with a large bow at the back . (See Plate 2)
 Appropriating the passive allure of 50's Hollywood screen goddesses , the heavily be-jewelled
 Madonna is suitably coy and giggly as she receives the adulation of her many rich suitors .
 In this text Madonna masquerades as the fetishized woman par excellence . The pink bow
 and glittering diamonds draped around her shapely form give her the appearance of an
 expensive present . And , of course , this image of woman as a luxurious commodity is one
 which Hollywood helped perpetuate . Also , marriage to a rich man is the traditional image
 of female success . In this video Madonna adopts the fetishized female sexuality which
 Monroe's image has come to represent in the history of mass culture . However , in her
 1980's adaption of this female role-model , she subverts its meaning . Unlike the sexual

icons which she emulates Madonna is the director and controller of her own image . She is her own creator , while the 'screen goddesses' of the 50's were created and controlled by the Hollywood establishment and given little choice as to how their image was represented . David Tetzlaff has written that ' the purpose of 'Material Girl ' is for Madonna's audience to witness her playing with her own persona , to indicate that she is the author of her image , that she constructs it to suit her own desires , and that she can change it as she likes . ' ⁵ Also , the exquisite irony of Madonna's rendering of the passively seductive female is not lost on her audience . Because , to quote E . Deirdre Pribram , ' (Madonna) is not soft and alluring but sharp and dangerous . ' ⁶ The image which Madonna represents is that of a challenging , threatening female sexuality . So that even when she embodies traditional , passive , patriarchal images of women , as in ' Material Girl ' , an underlying parodic intent is transmitted to her audience .

Likewise , in the costumes that she wears Madonna has appropriated many of the fetishized symbols of the *patriarchal feminine* . Most notably the corset which as a symbol is loaded with signifiers about female sexuality and the fetishization of the female body . For this reason the corset features prominently in the pornographic realm , an industry which revolves around accepted codings of sexuality . Indeed Madonna's first experimentation with the corset symbol was in the video for ' Open your heart ' , where she performed as a prostitute in a peep-show scenario , wearing a black satin corset with exaggeratedly pointed conical breasts . These , pointed aggressive bras have since become an emblem of Madonna .

(See Plates 3 - 14)

In her performance of ' Express Yourself ' , from ' Truth or Dare ' , Madonna ascends to the stage dressed in a pin-striped business suit . (Plates 7 -8) The suit jacket is slit open at the breasts and the exaggerated cups of her pink bra protrude . As she takes off the jacket the audience see that the bra is actually a corset , with garters , worn over the baggy trousers of the suit . She references both genders simultaneously , signified by the combination of the (male) business suit and (female) corset . The male side of the parody is extended by the monocle she sports , an item⁹, an item which could also be understood as a symbol for voyeurism . (Madonna's exhibitionist and occasionally explicit style openly incites voyeurism . However , whose gaze she is inviting is debatable . Her audience's knowledge that she is the director as well as the performer in the sexual role-playing she enacts , and the parodic nature of her sexual imagery leaves this open to interpretation .) Most notably , the corset worn over the suit trousers with the attached pink garters dangling free undermines the traditional ' sexiness ' of the corset itself . The corset alone is reminiscent of the showgirl outfit , worn

by female dancers , especially in the classical Hollywood musical . However by wearing suit trousers as opposed to stockings Madonna departs from the traditional display of legginess , subverting the glamour of the show-girl . Her parody of gender roles is also indicated by the stiffness of the corset's bra , over defining female sexuality and thereby altering its meaning .

In another footage clip from ' *Truth or Dare* ' , Madonna's performance of ' *Keep people together* ' , she continues this gender blending style . She comes onstage wearing a black bowler hat , bulky black knee-pads , black shorts and another aggressively pointed black bra-top . (See Plates 9 - 11) The bowler hat is a symbol of the Establishment , the traditional male controlling class , and an accessory which is associated with the pin-striped suit which Madonna has earlier paired with the pink corset . Madonna subverts the constructed meanings which these familiar costumes hold , and reconstructs them to give them a new , altered significance . By combining the bowler hat , which symbolises power and control , and combining it with her over-emphasised , pointed breasts , and the knee-pads , which evoke images of athletic vigour and aggression (traditionally male qualities) , Madonna clearly signifies that she is in control . This performance is shown at the very end of ' *Truth or Dare* ' , and is the finale of her show in Paris . Madonna stands , chanting the chorus , muscular arm upraised , as one by one , her troupe of dancers and singers come and kneel by her , as if paying homage to her , before disappearing down a chute and out of sight . When wearing one of her more revealing costumes , such as the one in the above performance , we see how Madonna has moulded her body from the soft , curvaceous , Rubenesque figure which led Camille Paglia to describe her advent onto the American music scene as ; ' *Venus rising from the radio waves* ' ⁷ , to the taut , muscular , acrobatic body she now displays.

Madonna further pushes the limits of gendered sexuality in her performance of ' *Like a virgin* ' , also from the ' *Blonde Ambition Tour* ' . This performance , (which the Metropole Police and Crown Attorney of Toronto deemed ' *lewd and obscene behaviour* ' ⁸ and for which they threatened to arrest her) , features Madonna wearing a gold corset , and apparently masturbating on a red velvet bed . Two gay male dancers stand either side of the bed and fondle and lick her , and each other . These dancers wear enormous , conical breast-pieces which make Madonna's seem diminutive in comparison . Cindy Patton describes these Jean Paul Gaultier breast-pieces which they wear as ; ' *either , paired , chest-mounted penises or dagger-like breasts* ' ⁹ . Here Madonna takes her gendering of the breast a stage further. The gay male dancers elegantly fondle their ' breasts ' as they watch Madonna do an

aggressive solo sex performance . While tenderly fondled from either side by the dancers , the spotlight is on Madonna as she thrashes around violently on the bed . Madonna , then , is the penetrator as well as the penetrated . She appears to assume the ' male ' sexual role while her dancers assume the passive , posturing role traditionally ascribed to the feminine.

(See Plates 12 - 15)

In the same way that Madonna ' feminizes ' her gay male dancers , she often appears to ' masculinize ' herself . She has repeatedly quipped that she and her two female dancers are ' *the only real men on stage* ' ¹⁰ , thereby questioning what it is that constitutes a ' real ' man or a ' real ' woman . The type of sexuality which Madonna projects is often associated with ' maleness ' rather than ' femaleness ' , in many of the sexual scenarios which she depicts she is the initiator and the controller of the proceedings . In her production of ' *Express yourself* ' , the pink corseted , suit-trousered Madonna , falls on a male dancer who lies prone on the stag . Crouching above him she moves her pelvis in rapid , aggressive , thrusting motions for several minutes before jumping to her feet . (See Plate 16) Throughout all of this the male dancer remains prone and inactive . During her entire concert performance Madonna spits on stage , gyrates her pelvis vigourously and grabs her crotch . (See Plates 17 - 18) Actions which are usually associated with an active (male) sexuality . Melanie Morton has written that ; ' *Madonna challenges Freudian and cultural conventions that ground woman's identity around the lack of a penis and consequent penis envy* ' ¹¹ Madonna challenges the myth of a female lack and illustrates that what women have been lacking is not a sexual organ or libido of their own , but the power that arises from discursive participation in culture . Madonna herself has said , ' *I think I am a sexual threat and I think if anything there's a prejudice against that . I think that it is easier for people to embrace people who don't poke at their insides and make them think about their own sexuality* . ' ¹²

Madonna has described her concerts as ' journeys ' and appears to see herself as a sexual crusader . A perception of her which appears to be shared by many of her devotees - In the words of Camille Paglia , self-styled anti-feminist , feminist ; ' *Women's sexual glamour has bewitched and destroyed men since Delilah and Helen of Troy , Madonna , role model to millions of girls world-wide , has cured the ills of feminism by reasserting woman's command of the sexual realm* ' ¹³ However , cultural responses to Madonna have tended to divide into two definite camps . Those , like Paglia , in whose eyes she can do no wrong because they perceive her as celebrating an element of female sexuality which has often been deemed unacceptable and consequently repressed . And also , importantly , because they perceive her as always being in control - in control of her career , in control of her sexuality , in control of her body and

were opened was that they were naked . Before the apple they were naked and unashamed, afterwards it is implied they were ashamed because they were naked , not because they had broken the word of God . Thus it was Eve who first introduced the element of sin to sexuality.

Barton White has said that , ' *Madonna may not intend that she be read as a modern Medusa , but it is clear that some audiences are quite actively producing meanings that place her in the pantheon of female grotesques and feminine monsters . When Madonna haters say that she is "disgusting" and "nauseating" or that "she makes me retch", one can almost feel the maelstrom of repulsion and desire that threatens to pull them down but nevertheless also fascinates them .*' ²¹ Madonna , by her aggressive , threatening, interpretation of female sexuality becomes , in the eyes of some , the embodiment of the mythical monstrous female , Medusa , or a kind of second Eve . Eve , the destructive temptress , being the original femme fatale . It is precisely , however , the kind of dangerously autonomous sexuality that Madonna projects that has resulted in her enduring popularity . And that has earned her the title of ' Sex Goddess '.

' It's flattering to me that people take the time to analyse me and that I've so infiltrated their psyches that they have to intellectualize my very being . I'd rather be on their minds than off .' (Madonna) ²²

7/17 + 16 4
18
out of
order

woman who describes Madonna as portraying ' a young woman longing for sex to be her door to love and yet wants to be in control of her male victims ' ¹⁸ , and another as saying , ' Over time I've come to loath her and her metal tits ' ¹⁹ This reference to Madonna's ' metal tits ' is again similar to popular perceptions about Thatcher . Madonna is seen as a sexual warrior , her protruding sharpened breasts as a weapon -like threat . Thatcher was represented in the armour of Britannia / Athena , Madonna's rigid corsets and dagger-like projectile breasts are likened to a suit of armour which she wears in her forays onto the sexual battle-field . Also , like Thatcher , Madonna is seen as a powerful controlling female force who leaves male ' victims ' in her wake . Dark goddesses who leave the unfortunate men who come in contact with them drained and depleted .

Another feminine monster summoned up to make sense of Madonna is the succubus. ' Madonna ' says Boston Phoenix editor Milo Miles , ' is the kind of woman who comes into your room at 3am and sucks your life out ' . ²⁰ A succubus according to legend is a female demon , a sexual predator . While men lie sleeping , the succubus descends on them , and essentially rapes them , forcing them to have sexual intercourse with her . The proximate root of the word is the late Latin succuba which means prostitute . This myth of the succuba is strikingly similar to a myth which existed in Hebrew mythology , the myth of Lilith . In the first creation myth (Genesis 1) Lilith was Adam's wife . In this first Creation myth Lilith was created equally with Adam from dust . According to myth , Lilith refused to lie beneath Adam in sexual intercourse because she considered it to be a subordinate position . (This problem of Lilith's equality and independence was rectified with Eve who in the second Creation myth is created from Adam ensuring that she is his subordinate and dependant) The dissatisfied Lilith flew away to the wilderness of the Red Sea , where , according to myth she gives birth to broods of demons . It was believed that Lilith could appear in the night and take possession of a man while he slept . He would realise that he had fallen into her power if he found traces of semen when he awoke , for then he would know that Lilith had , had intercourse with him . Lilith has sometimes been equated with the serpent of the second creation myth and the serpent drawn with a woman's body . A 15th century woodcut by Holzshmitt depicts Lilith , winged and crowned with a serpent's tail , tempting Eve with the apple in the Garden of Eden . Eve has also been associated with the serpent . Her name in Hebrew is Hawwah , which also means serpent . Thus a seductive , evil sexuality pervaded myths about Lilith and also about Eve , as the character of Lilith underpins the character of Eve . Also , Eve as the instigator of the Fall was also seen as the instigator of sinful sexuality . The first thing that Adam and Eve ' saw ' when their eyes

every use thereof . To her detractors however , Madonna represents at best a shallow , meaningless icon and at worst a subversive , potentially damaging influence . The British MP Clare Short , in a review of Madonna's book ' *Sex* ' , concludes that , ' *Madonna and her organisation are nothing but nasty , money -grabbing people who understand nothing of the beauty of sex and eroticism and have no finer feelings.* ' ¹⁴ She has also been called ' *America's favourite social disease* ' ¹⁵ It is precisely this kind of dis - ease , or unease , which she seems to provoke in people . Madonna's message about female sexuality does not concern itself with husbands or babies , her sole primary concern seems to be with 'self' , with personal pleasure and satisfaction . Thus she has also been called ' anti-family ' , 'anti-Christian ' , ' a bimbo ' , 'a tart ' and 'a man-eater ' . Her active display of female sexuality, while empowering to some is perceived as a threat by others . Excessive femininity is aligned with the ' femme fatale ' and also with the ' whore ' , a woman who is represented as having a sexuality which is in excess . Madonna is often represented as having this fatalistic female quality . She has frequently been given the title 'whore ' or ' harlot ' . Also to term her a *disease* denotes a perception of her as an infecting , defiling presence which coincides with the traditional idea of the prostitute as ' impure ' . Madonna's commanding sexuality incites repulsion and fear as well as fascination . She has frequently been termed a ' man-eater ' , the sexuality she projects seems devouring and dangerous to the male . She is seen as the feminine grotesque , a frightening contemporary female monster . Madonna is reviled by those who dislike her for her carnivalesque transgressions of traditional gender roles and sexuality that characterise her various persona's and performances . One critic has called her a ' *Sacred monster in her prime* ' , a description which perfectly characterises the double-sided emotions of repulsion and fascination which she incites . Anne Barton White quotes a critic who has described Madonna as , ' *That bad girl of boy dreams and bawdy snatcher of hearts.....who has plowed through boyfriends like party snacks* ' ¹⁶ Barton White goes on to say that Madonna , the ' *bawdy snatcher of (boy's) hearts* ' , is really ' *the snatch that eats boys , a voracious over-appetited , feminine monster , the vagina dentata .* ' ¹⁷

Madonna , like Thatcher is likened to Medusa , the phallic woman who threatens men with the fear of castration . Madonna's reappropriation of female sexual aggression and activity and also her aping of ' male ' sexuality (pelvic thrusts etc.) seems to reinforce this image of her as the mythical , castrating , paralysing female . Barton White , in an analysis of negative responses to a survey on public reaction to Madonna , quotes one



Plate 1

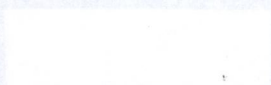




Plate 2

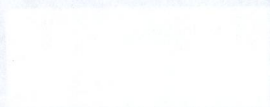




Plate 3



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Plate 5

Plate 6

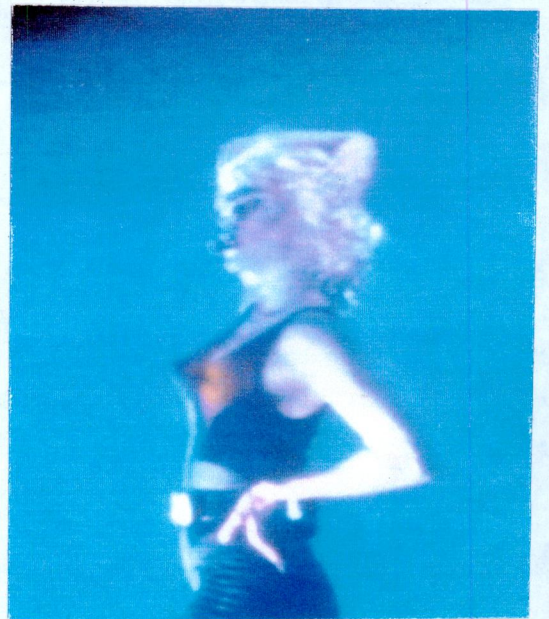






Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10

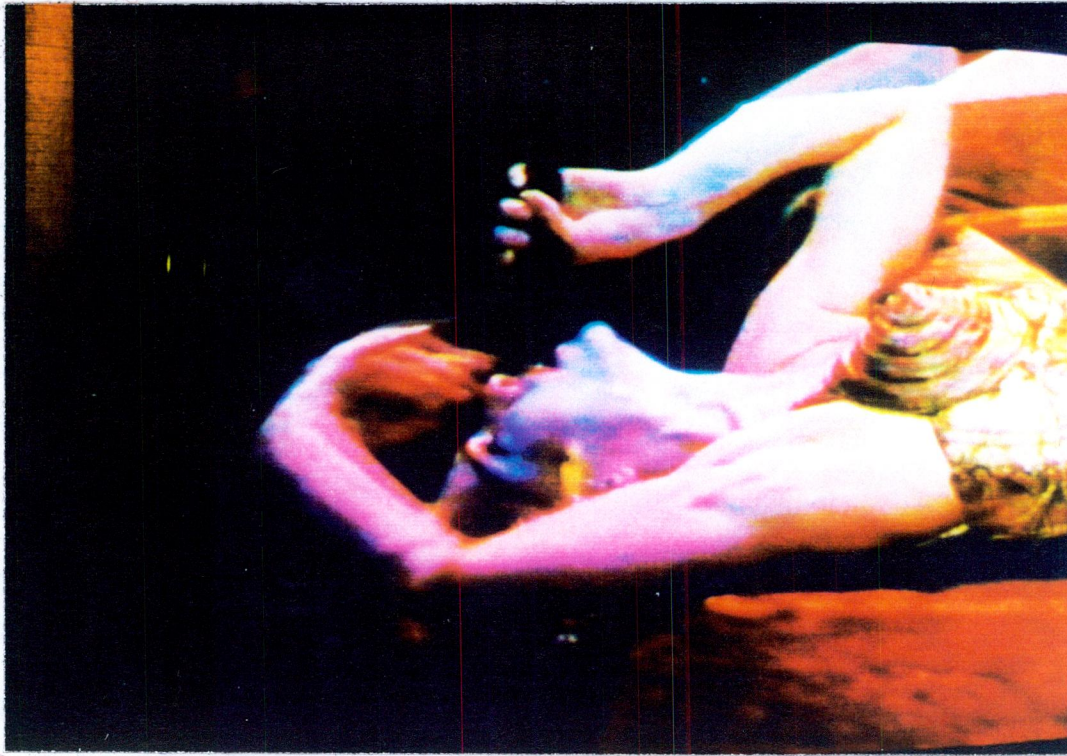
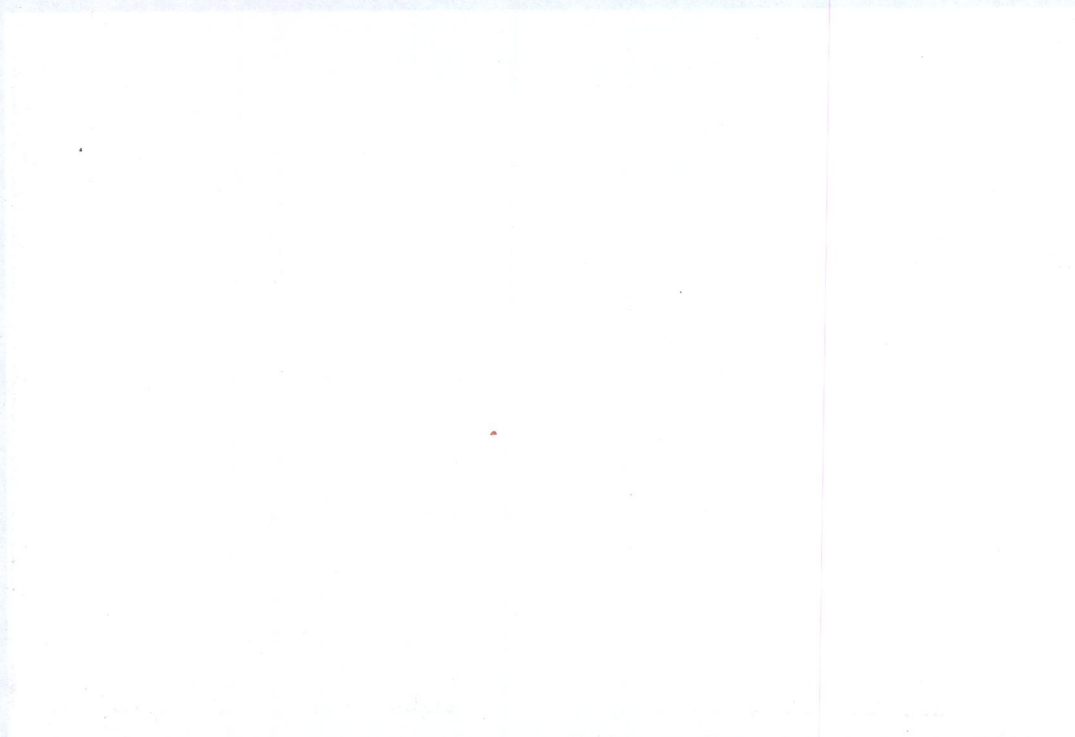


Plate 12



Plate 13



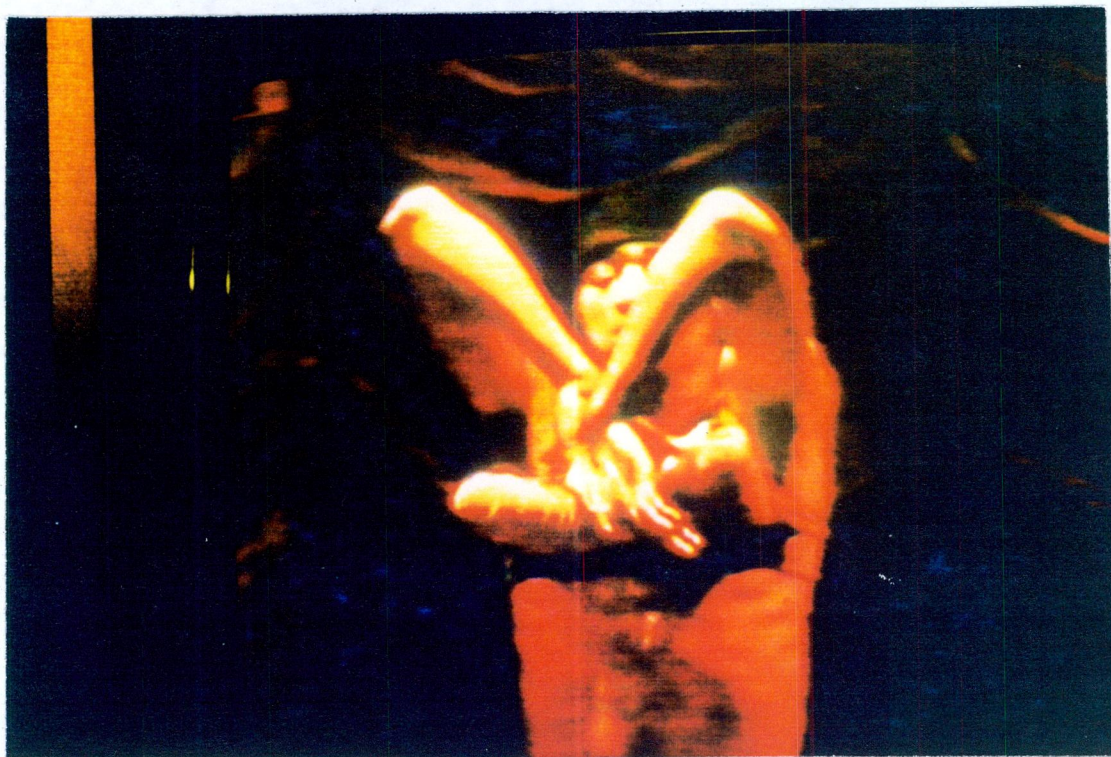


Plate 15



Plate 14

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Plate 16



Plate 17





Plate 11



Plate 18

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**Diana - Fairy-tale princess /
Mother-goddess**

When Lady Diana Spencer , a 19 - year old school teacher married into the British royalty on July 29 1981 , amidst a whirl of media excitement , she seemed the epitome of the perfect fairy-tale princess . The first televised royal wedding , it set the scene for the future , as an almost soap-operatic drama unfolded around the royal family with Diana as its central cast member . Millions of British viewers excitedly joined her as she walked up the aisle of St. Paul's Cathedral , clad in the regalia of the blushing bride . And perhaps because of this illusion of participation , the public seemed to forge an empathy with their new princess . This was not to be the last time that ' Princess Di ' would be beamed into their living rooms . Over the next decade she was to become the media's darling and feminine ideal , spawning a cult of devoted ' Diana watchers ' . The endlessly viewable heroine of an obsessively viewing age

Diana , Princess of Wales is a particularly interesting contemporary ' goddess ' . The royal line-up which she was to join was one which had a rather stagnant media image ; staunch traditionalist upholders of a somewhat archaic British monarchy . However , Diana's public figure received such universal approbation that she almost single-handedly rejuvenated the royal institution . As noted in the first chapter Britain has often been characterized by its famous queens . Diana's image , however , has never been portrayed in this matriarchal , authoritarian mould , in the way that Margaret Thatcher's was . Her image does , however , have a distinct link with the tradition of female allegory . In this chapter I will be discussing the relationship between Diana's image and two mythic females , Cinderella , the popular heroine of the fairy-tale , and Mary , the unrecognised mother goddess of the Christian tradition .

The initial fascination with Britain's new princess was of a sentimental , romantic nature . Her marriage to Charles seemed to restore some of the glamour which had been lacking in the Windsor's life-style . Also , she seemed the embodiment of the Cinderella myth . A myth which Suzanne Lowry suggests in the ' *Cult of Diana* ' may be one of the most necessary female myths of all .¹ This romantic , idealistic perception of Diana was derived from the circumstances surrounding her marriage and her physical appearance

helped to sustain it . Quickly nick-named ' Shy Di ' by the popular press because of her manner of peeping coyly at the camera from beneath a heavy fringe , Diana's youthful and innocent countenance gave her the appearance of the traditional ' English Rose ' . To vindicate these sentimental mythologies which were projected onto her by others Diana was not required to actively ' do ' anything , she simply had to ' be ' . Lowry goes on to say that ,

' What the real Diana sees in the eyes of those who press around her or in her own carefully and increasingly heavily made up eyes , as flashed back at her from those magazine covers and newspapers can only be guessed at , or speculated over as if she really were the star of a television soap-opera . What we project onto her , the demands that are made on her , are another matter . She has to be , first , a re-presentation to us on a gold plate of ideal love , beauty , youth She must also appear as the quintessential happily married mother and wife . ' ² Diana , then , was expected to function as the passive embodiment of an ' idyllic ' female existence . The perception of her as the maternal Madonna was in some ways a progression of the Cinderella image . The image of Diana as the Madonna however , arose from her ' actions ' , from a choice on her part to actively rather than passively ' be ' . Therefore the Madonna image is the more fully developed one .

In the realm of the fairy-tale certain specific conventions tend to recur . The heroines usually embody prescribed feminine virtues , sweetness , passivity and submission . In the course of each narrative they function largely as the prize for some daring prince , illustrating the traditional consideration of woman as a commodity or asset . These heroines also habitually spend their adolescence in servitude to an evil step-mother , father or beast , or in an enchanted sleep , existences which they endure with forbearance until they are rescued by an external agent , the prince usually , and their lives transformed . The theme of transformation is an integral part of the fairy -tale and particularly so in the Cinderella story . This transformation of Cinderella is realised through her marriage to the Prince . Marriage , the fulcrum and major event of every fairy - tale is perceived as the heroine's reward . Marriage , in the mythologies of the fairy-tale is also associated with accumulating wealth . Good , poor , and pretty girls always win rich and handsome princes , never merely handsome , good but poor men . If the heroine is already rich as in the story of ' *Sleeping Beauty* ' then she marries someone who is wealthier . Again we see how the conventions of the fairy-tale reflect traditional attitudes , which see marriage to a wealthy man as an image of female success . The system of rewards in fairy-tales comprises of three factors , being beautiful , being chosen and becoming rich (or richer) . The heroines win the prize

(marriage to the prince) only if they are the ' fairest of them all ' . Being the ' fairest of them all ' , implies firstly that the heroine is ' chosen ' from a number of other prospective princesses because of her superior quality , and secondly that this superior quality is physical attractiveness . In the fairy-tale , however , physical beauty is usually equated with moral ' goodness ' , chastity , forbearance and general good temper . Since the heroines are chosen for their beauty , not for anything they actually do , they seem to wait passively until they are seen by the hero . In this causal chain of events heroine's wait , are chosen , and are then rewarded .³

Andrea Dworkin , speaking about the effects of the fairy-tale on culture , has said that ; *' The point is that we have not formed the ancient world - it has formed us . We ingested it as children whole , had its values and consciousness imprinted on our minds as cultural absolutes long before we were in fact men and women . We have taken the fairy-tales of childhood with us into maturity , chewed but still lying in the stomach as real identity . '*⁴ Dworkin makes the point that fairy-tales are not just entertaining fantasies , but powerful transmitters of romantic myth which encourage the consumers of these myths , and particularly women to internalise aspirations to a cultural norm . She also notes that it is no coincidence that cultural ideals are reflected so closely in the idealisations of the fairy-tale . Fairy-tales evolve differently from culture to culture as often a particular culture will integrate elements within a myth which have a particular meaning in the specific , local context of that culture . Thus in China , where the ' lotus foot ' or tiny foot was such a sign of a woman's worth that the custom of foot-binding developed , the Cinderella tale laid emphasis on an impossibly small slipper as the clue to the heroine's identity .⁵ This Chinese variant is one which has frequently been incorporated into western versions of the Cinderella story .

Karen E. Rowe writes , in her essay *' Feminisms and Fairy-tales '* , that ; *' As long as fairy-tale paradigms accord closely with cultural norms , women can and have found in romantic fictions satisfying justifications for their conformity . '*⁵ By conformity she presumably means the cultural imperative to wed . And indeed the idealisations of romantic myth do represent a female choice of marriage and maternity as commendable , if not predestined . A view which in general has cultural approval . Rowe also states that ; *' Few women expect a literally ' royal ' marriage with Prince Charming ; but , subconsciously at least , female readers assimilate more subtle cultural imperatives . They transfer from fairy-tales into real life those fantasies which exalt acquiescence to male power and make marriage not simply one ideal , but the only estate toward which women should aspire . '*⁶

The extent to which Diana must have seemed the vindication of this romantic , Cinderella-type myth is clear . Through her realisation of the 'actual ' royal marriage , recounted in the fairy-tale , but accessible to few , she was seen to possess many of the prerequisites of the classical fairy-tale heroine . Diana had been specifically ' chosen ' from a number of candidates as the most eminently suitable for the role she was expected to perform . Loyal wife and support to Charles , Britain's future king , dedicated participant in the royal duties she would be expected to perform , and dutiful mother to the heirs she would presumably produce . Also , as future queen of Britain , it was vital that her image remain untarnished and therefore the royal hierarchy sought ' a woman without a past ' . In Diana Spencer they felt they had found the perfect specimen . She was an aristocrat and therefore from an acceptable background . Her youth and inexperience were considered advantageous , the assumption being that she could be suitably ' moulded ' . But also , and most importantly , it was tacitly understood by all that she was ' virgo intacta ' .

Patriarchal cultures and religious systems have throughout history placed enormous emphasis on the importance of virginity in women . Naturally this important female virtue was stressed in the realm of the fairy-tale , where the chastity and purity of its heroines was always implied . In the story of ' *Beauty and the Beast* ' , the disenchanted prince attributes his monstrous disguise to the wiles of ' *a wicked fairy who has condemned me to remain under that shape until a beautiful virgin should consent to marry me .* ' ⁷ The assumption made is that only a virgin will be able to transform the beast back into a prince . In the Judaeo-Christian tradition virginity is often associated with the possession of magical or special powers and the majority of its important idols are proclaimed virgins (particularly , of course , the *Virgin Mary*) .

Diana , then , to all intents and purposes was perfect princess material . The embodiment of traditional and mythical ideals about female existence . Also , she had fulfilled the specific order of events as laid out in the fairy-tale . She had waited , if not quite in passionless isolation , in a state of virginal innocence . She had been ' chosen ' as the ' fairest of them all ' . And now she was to have her reward through a ' fairy-tale ' marriage and the transformation of her life , into one in which she would enjoy wealth , glamour and presumably happiness . She even had a step-mother ! (with whom , the press were quick to report , she had never had a good relationship) . Press photographs taken after the wedding ceremony show the Prince of Wales raising the new princess's hand to his lips , a traditional gesture of courtly love . (See Plate 1) The Prince's chest is emblazoned

with an array of medals and ribbons and Diana , alongside him , appears the essence of demurity as she glances sideways at him from beneath her long white veil .

Colette Dowling , author of ' *The Cinderella Complex - women's hidden fear of independance* ' , which was published the same year as the royal wedding , defines this Cinderella Complex ' as ; ' *a network of largely repressed attitudes and fears which keeps women in a kind of half-light , retreating from the full use of their minds and creativity . Like Cinderella , women today are still waiting for something external to transform their lives .* ' ⁸ Dowling's assertion would seem to be supported by the inordinate supply of romantic myth which is produced and consumed , largely by and for women , in contemporary culture . By definition romance indicates the beautiful unreal , a fantasy of the world as we would like it to be . Female fascination with this abstract notion of romance is only too well documented . Ironically Diana's own step-grandmother , (that is the mother of her step-mother) , should turn out to be none other than the great high-priestess of love and romance , Barbara Cartland . Moreover , Cartland's professional success as author of several hundred re-worked Cinderella tales is a further indication of a female need for this kind of ' romantic ' , escapist fantasy . Cartland herself may be somewhat passe , but her modern equivalent , Jackie Collins et . al . continue to enjoy considerable financial success from the production of an endless supply of romantic myths , admittedly in a highly sexualised format . Likewise , the Diana myth has been sold to , and bought by , women . Her image seems to represent the fulfillment of this kind of romantic escapist fantasy . Her female followers seemed to be able to purge this internal quest for ' romantic ' fulfillment , by a measure of participation in her life , an opportunity afforded them by the media . Editors of magazines such as ' *Hello* ' and other ' royal-watching ' publications are well aware that their readership is mostly female and accordingly have provided the most lavish coverage of the princess's existence .

The initial romantic and sentimental fascination with this new princess could not , however , have sustained itself had Diana not proved herself to be a marked success in the public relations arena . As a cultural and social statement Diana rapidly , and unexpectedly , evolved from royal wife and mother into a distinct media persona in her own right . She became extremely active in her royal charity work , and the causes to which she chose to commit herself were of a very humanist nature . Her genuine concern for human well-being became increasingly apparent as she involved herself with the aged , the disabled , the sick , the suffering . Moreover her involvement was on a very personal level , which

was in marked contrast to previous levels of involvement by members of royalty . She endlessly toured hospitals and other health institutions . The obvious ease with which she related to people and the genuine concern and affection she showed them earned her the title of ' The Caring Princess ' . She was a people's princess and the media were quick to establish this . Photographs of an elegant , smiling princess, sharing in the activities of the disabled or chatting happily with the residents of a home for the elderly , became regular features of the popular press . As did pictures of the milling crowds who began to appear whenever she did . These ' Diana-worshippers ' waited for hours for her to walk past , hoping to shake her hand or perhaps exchanging a few words . Outside of Britain she also became immensely popular ; on foreign tours huge crowds turned out to welcome her , the angel of redemption in designer dresses . A photograph taken on a 1991 visit to Brazil shows the princess faced with an array of anonymous , outstretched arms . (See Plate 2) These outstretched arms and hands create an image of a faithful and devoted worship , and one seemingly desperate in its intent , to merely touch their object of idolatry . Diana , while turned toward these searching hands remains composed and slightly aloof . This picture aptly illustrates the prodigy of illusion which had transpired in the perception of Diana's image .

As stated in the beginning of this chapter , Diana was often portrayed in the media as a type of feminine ' ideal ' , meaning that she was perceived as displaying 'feminine' qualities which have been culturally approved . Mary , the unrecognised mother goddess of the Christian tradition and its female paragon represents the idealised virtues (for women) of the Christian ethic ; submission , compassion , chastity , and an unequivocal maternal devotion . Marina Warner , author of ' *Alone of all her sex - the myth and cult of the Virgin Mary* ' , an extensive study of Mariology , has written that ; *'The Virgin Mary is a manifestation of the principle the Chinese call yin and represents the quintessence of many qualities that east and west have traditionally regarded as feminine : yieldingness , softness , gentleness, receptiveness , mercifulness , tolerance , withdrawal . But whereas the Orient and to some extent Jung realised that both masculine and feminine qualities must be present in the whole individual in equal measure , it has been the constant tendency of western thought , both when it was dominated by the church and afterwards , to equate the feminine with the female of the species ; and to insist that the female sex was and should be feminine , according to its definition . '* 9

Warner takes the title of her book ' *Alone of all her Sex* ' from a phrase contained in a quotation from Caedilus Sedulius , ' *She . . . had no peer , Either in our first mother or in all women, Who were to come . But alone of all her sex , She pleased the Lord .* ' 10 Mary , by her life-long

virginity , and true femininity , was seen to redeem the transgressions of Eve . Her image was seen as representing the perfect female , freed from the taint of sinful sexuality , and also as representing ideal , divine motherhood . Marian idolatry was partly based on the premise that she was ' Mother of all ' , prayers recited in devotion to her often address her as ' Mother ' . In the Catholic prayer ' *Litany of the Blessed Virgin* ' , she is addressed as ' *Mother of divine grace , Mother most pure , Mother most chaste , Mother inviolate , Mother undefiled* ' ¹¹ The importance which was placed on Mary's eternal virginity is patently obvious in the quotation from this particular prayer , moreover her purity and chastity become quintessential motherliness . (The life-long virginity of Mary was such a sacred dogma of the Catholic Church that it was not until 1964 , when the Second Vatican Council refrained from proclaiming it an article of faith , that Catholics were permitted an open mind on the subject) Mary displaces Eve as ' The Mother of all Living ' , and becomes the essence of motherhood . In another prayer to the Virgin , ' *Hail , Holy Queen* ' , the Virgin is called upon as the ' Mother of Mercy ' , ' *Hail Holy Queen , Mother of Mercy , hail our life , our sweetness and our hope . To thee do we cry , poor banished children of Eve..* ' ¹² Mary is hailed as the salvation , the redemptress . Mary is also the ' Mater Dolorosa ' , the mother of sorrows , through her pure , perfect love for her son she suffered . Thus she is seen as a comforter to the afflicted , the ' *Memorare* ' , another prayer to Mary illustrates this understanding of her as the protective mother goddess , ' *Remember O most gracious Virgin Mary , That never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection , implored thy help , or sought thy intercession , was left unaided . Inspired with this confidence , I fly onto thee , O Virgin of virgins , my mother , to thee do I come ...* ' ¹³ Mary , the model of perfect femininity and motherhood , is seen as a goddess for the people and this may partly explain the immense popularity of her cult in western culture .

Suzanne Lowry has written that ; ' *Diana , Princess of Wales , combines the glamour of the movie-star with the power of the madonna ; sexual yet untouchable* ' ¹⁴ Diana , the ' Virgin ' princess began increasingly to be portrayed in the media as the personification of a contemporary madonna . Throughout her marriage and motherhood she seemed to retain an aura of virginal purity , and an aloof untouchable quality which Lowry has identified . Lowry's assertion that she is sexual , however , is debatable . Diana's initial adolescent plumpness had rapidly disappeared and a slim , sophisticated woman had emerged . However , her figure , while she is tall and slim , appears almost boyish . Her body is not soft and rounded , but angular and almost androgynous . Her figure is not really ' feminine ' in the traditional image of the female form , however in her demeanor and more importantly in her

actions , Diana represents the feminine ideal to perfection . She is perceived as caring and compassionate . She has also deliberately associated herself with the stigmatised and marginalised of society . A press photograph taken on her 1991 visit to Brazil shows her cuddling babies with A. I.D.S. in her arms , head bent to the side in a madonna-like pose . (See Plate 3) Another press photograph , shows her in Calcutta's Leprosy Mission Hospital , her hand under the chin of one of its patients , smiling and looking directly into the eyes of the other . (See Plate 4) Suzanne Lowry , has compared Diana to the star of a ' *long-running silent movie* ' because her image is portrayed by her appearance and her gestures not by anything she says . ' *The eyes have it* ' , she says , ' *someone wrote as a caption to an early shot of Diana peering out from under her fringe . They continue to speak in volumes .* ' ¹⁵ Diana , the silent star , communicates with her eyes . In Brazil , with the babies in her arms , she looks directly and tenderly into the eyes of the baby in her left arm . In the Leprosy Mission Hospital she again communicates her concern through her eyes , her hand lifts the chin of the sufferer so that their eyes are level . Likewise , in Indonesia in 1989 , a photograph of her seated on the edge of a leper's bed , shows her with one arm supporting her on the bed , and with her eyes gazing into those of the ill man . His eyes are trained on hers , and obviously they are relating to each other , despite the fact that they do not understand each other's spoken language . (See Plate 5) Diana , by communicating with these sufferers on a very human and direct level , and by her similar behaviour on the countless other visits which she made to hospitals and other institutions , helped to create the image of her as the caring , nurturing , female ideal . She retained her manner of peeping shyly at the camera from beneath her lashes , which in print gave her the appearance of a demure , contemplative madonna . However , when not watching the camera , her eyes are captured when wide and expressive . A photograph of her deep in conversation with a man in the final stages of A.I.D.S. , shows them leaning toward each other , Diana's eyes are opened wide as she assumes a gentle listening pose .

Diana has always been portrayed as being a devoted mother to her own two children . A photograph of her holding her youngest son as a baby was reproduced in ' *Hello* ' magazine , a devoted ' Diana -watching ' publication , with a caption reading ' *The Princess captured in a moment of serene motherhood* ' ¹⁶ . (See Plate 5) And , indeed the Princess does appear serene and content , her lashes are cast down onto her face , her expression is impassive . She holds the child close to her , his head on her shoulder , her own head is slightly bent . As an image , the photograph is startlingly similar to many of the familiar images of the Virgin and child . Another photograph of Diana with one of her sons , this

time the elder one , whose face is turned queringly toward her . Her head is bent toward him , her hands are joined together and tilted toward her son also , though they are raised up and held just below her face in the gesture of one who is praying . (See Plate 6) These gestures and postures which Diana takes up , in print , give her the appearance of the chaste , demure , maternal madonna . Diana's image , however , is not just an image of the maternal in a domestic , personal context . In the media representations of her she seems to rise to the status of ' Mother of all Things ' .

In December 1992 John Major announced that the Prince and Princess of Wales were to legally separate . Soon after the announcement it was reported in the media that the Prince was , and had been for several years , involved in a sexual relationship with another woman . This information seemed only to add to the perception of her as pure and chaste , the ' virgin ' mother . An interesting aspect of the princess's new situation is that unlike every other legally seperated woman in Britain , Diana is not really free to form a new relationship , as mother to the two princes , heirs to the throne , any attachments she might make would be subject to Palace approval . But also , and more importantly , because , as ' Hello ' magazine pointed out in one of its more perceptive moments ; ' *The fierce spotlight forever focused on her prevents her from forming a new attachment. The public's high expectations have placed her on a different level from normal , affectionate women.* ' ¹⁷

Conclusion.....

Christopher Ciccone , brother of Madonna , has said ; '*My sister is her own masterpiece*' One feature which these three ' goddesses ' have in common is that they are all essentially their own creators . Also , each of them has successfully carved a niche for themselves in a traditionally male , patriarchal system . Politics , the music industry , and certainly the royal hierarchy are all traditionally , and remain , male dominated worlds . The unifying feature among the three is this control which they have over their own image . They have all transformed themselves in some way . Thatcher took elocution lessons to bring her voice down several octaves , to make her sound more ' statesman-like ' and also deliberately cultivated the image of strength which surrounded her . Madonna , as we have seen , is a veritable chameleon , transforming herself at will . Diana transformed herself from the shy , passive bride into a woman who within a few years had become by far the most popular member of the royal family , and who in the guise of performing official duties managed to pursue her own agenda . All of these contemporary ' goddesses ' are in control of their images and in control of their lives . Of the three Diana has enjoyed by far the most favourable media image , because she is not seen as threatening in the castrating/devouring way that Thatcher and Madonna have been seen . Madonna and Thatcher have been portrayed as the ' other' of femininity because of their apparent autonomy and independence from the conventions of a male ordered society . Diana the ' virgin ' mother was perceived as embodying the traditionally acceptable face of femininity and therefore her independence from her husband was permitted . However it must be remembered that the title Virgin does not necessarily imply powerlessness , Elizabeth I ,the Virgin Queen was not so called because of any helplessness on her part . Neither was she called Virgin because of a lack of lovers . Venus , Ishtar , Astarte and Anat , the love goddesses of the near east and classical mythology are entitled virgin , despite their lovers ,who die and rise again for them each year. Elizabeth I was called Virgin as a sign of her independence from male control . Diana , while she may not display the same kind of flamboyant transgressiveness as Thatcher or Madonna , has nevertheless enjoyed power and control within the limiting confines of the British Royalty .

It has also , in the light of Baring and Cashford's assertion that the ' goddess ' can also be understood as the feminine *principle* manifesting itself in society , been interesting

to examine how these women have often been defined by their *femininity* , or by the perceived lack of it .

Thatcher , Madonna and Diana all have distinct links with the mythical traditions of female allegory as we have clearly seen . Thatcher is the warrior queen , the stony - faced maiden , the figure - head on the prow of the ship . Madonna , by her commandeering poly - sexuality , becomes in contemporary culture , the manifestation of legendary images of women as a source of destruction , a ' beautiful evil ' . Diana , the ' Mother of all ' , embodies the nurturing , compassionate female ideal . Her image reflects the cultural ideal for women which has been carefully distilled from interpretations of various mythical women . The Virgin Mary being the culmination of this construction of the ' perfect ' woman . In this thesis I have sought to show that the myth of the ' goddess ' remains an integral part of culture , and that although the actual title is often used in a limited context , it does not necessarily follow that the myth itself has become less relevant . This thesis , because of its limited nature , can only begin to examine this subject . However some of the interesting points which have arisen during the analysis of the subject matter indicates that a further and more detailed study would be merited .



Plate 1



Plate 3



plate 1





Plate 4



THE WORLD'S ATTENTION FOCUSES ON THE CARING PRINCESS



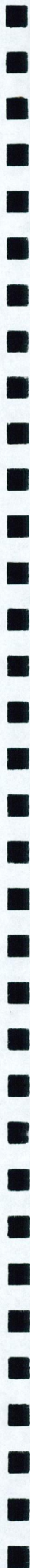
Plate 5



100



Plate 6



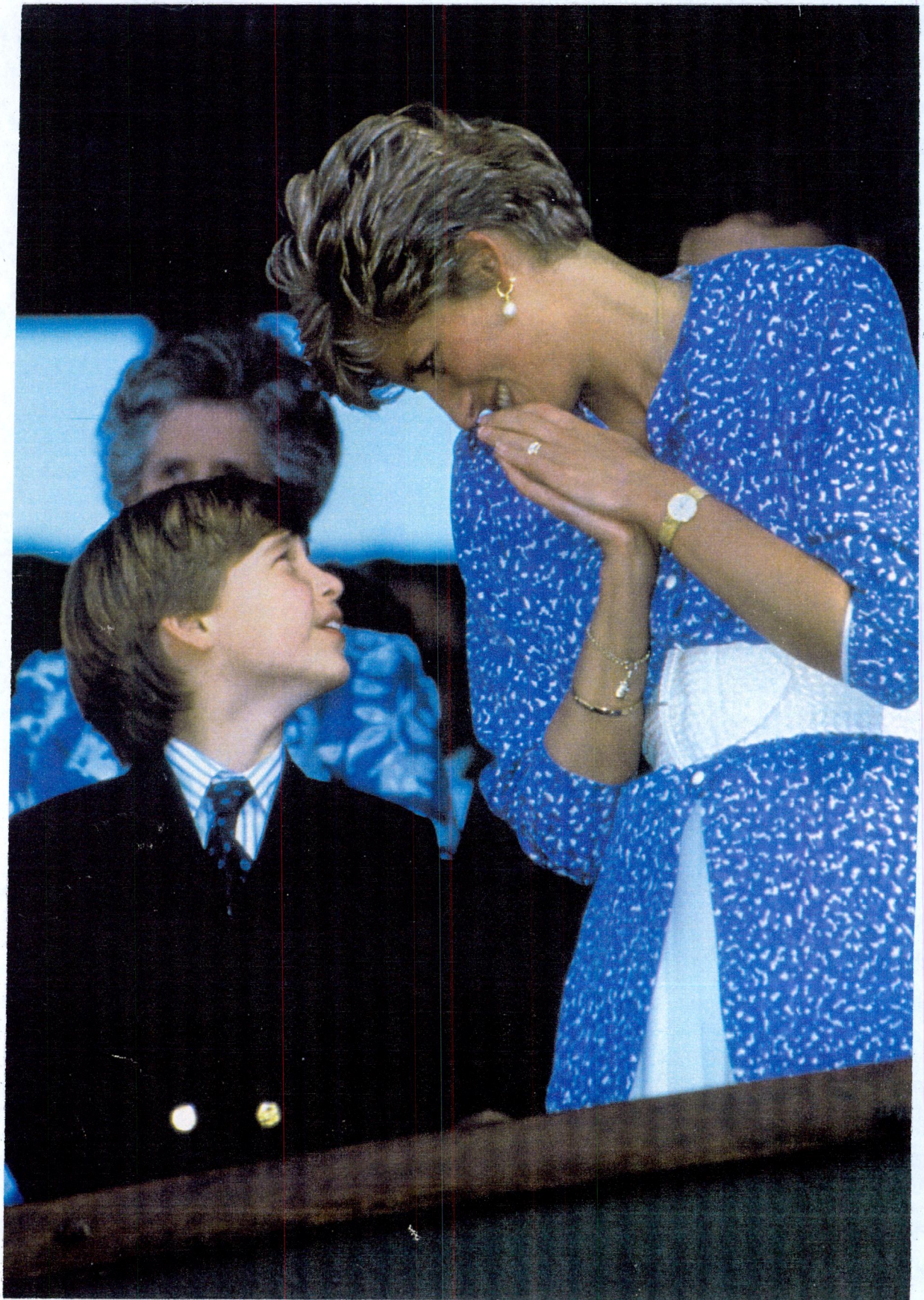


Plate 7



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