

NC 0020996 1



**The
National
College
of
Art
and
Design**

Faculty of Design
Department of Visual Communications

Shirley Dalton

**REFLECTIONS
BARBIE**

1996

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and
Complementary Studies in Candidacy for the Degree of:

Bachelor of Visual Communications

Acknowledgement must go to Joan Fowler who helped in producing this thesis. Also thanks to Elaine Sisson who helped plant the idea for the dissertation in the beginning.

CONTENTS

| | | | |
|------|----|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| page | 2 | Illustration Plates | |
| page | 4 | Introduction | |
| page | 9 | Chapter One | The discussion to date |
| page | 20 | Chapter Two | Parenting and schooling |
| page | 28 | Chapter Three | Magazines & Barbie |
| page | 41 | Chapter Four | Hollywood cinema & Barbie |
| page | 52 | Conclusion | |
| page | 54 | Plates | |
| page | 73 | Bibliography | |

ILLUSTRATION
PLATES

figure

| | |
|---------|----------------------------|
| page 54 | 1. Bild Lilli Doll |
| page 55 | 2. Silken Flame |
| page 56 | 3. Enchanted Evening |
| page 57 | 4. Solo In The Spotlight |
| page 58 | 5. Barbie Goes Babysitting |
| page 59 | 6. Senior Prom |
| page 60 | 7. Benefit Performance |
| page 61 | 8. Colour Magic Barbie |
| page 62 | 9. Malibu Barbie |
| page 63 | 10. Fashion Photo Barbie |
| page 64 | 11. Gabrielle Reece |
| page 64 | 12. Sally Gunnell |
| page 65 | 13. Busy Gal |

| | |
|---------|---------------------|
| page 66 | 14. Slumber Party |
| page 67 | 15. Poodle Parade |
| page 68 | 16. Dr. Ken |
| page 69 | 17. Army & Airforce |
| page 70 | 18. Graduation |
| page 71 | 19. Dazzlin' Date |
| page 72 | 20. Red Romance |

INTRODUCTION

When the concept of the Barbie doll is first brought up in conversation generally she is seen merely as a 'bimbo'. However on closer inspection the image becomes more problematic and ambiguous since she tends to embrace "highflying" roles such as the doctor, astronaut or pilot. It was this ambiguity which prompted the following analysis of Barbie in relation to gender stereotypes or gender representations. This will lead not to a definite conclusion, but rather to a variety of possible suggestions.

Today, controversy over the doll seems to be mounting. From all sides she is being condemned as the cause of problems such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia, oppression of women and degrading images of femininity! Is she not a cause but merely a symptom?

There is an enormous difference between gender, as learned, and sex, as given, which must be highlighted here in order to continue to speak of Barbie as gendered and gendering, i.e. involved in the ongoing cultural process of gendering and gender stereotyping. While a person is born with an assigned sex, he/she learns or is taught his/her gender, masculinity/femininity, through culture codes.

Through books, magazines, and the world of mass media cinema, video, television etc., ideal images have been created and reflected which force us to re-examine ourselves, our gendered selves in relation to society, time and time again. The extent to which these ideals have an

effect often depends on the individual. However the barrage of images most people, especially young children see, must carve out subconscious impressions about the nature of our world, (Sharpe, 1994, p.63).

This dissertation is concerned with how the projection of gender stereotypes in the different areas of parenting/schooling, magazines and cinema, are sustaining *Barbie as a concept, as a commodity, as a consumer*. She has commodified the concept of femininity and sold it to the public. The public as consumers are taught the style of consumption by the very item they consume. This “packaging” of herself in order to sell has turned Barbie, the commodity, into a consumer. In other words it could be suggested that the Barbie concept merely reflects what society demands of women and not the other way round. The first chapter is an account of the attention Barbie has received to date, it will introduce the idea of voyeurism, the look, the idea of Barbie as a performer of the female masquerade.

The second chapter will look at the processes of parenting and schooling where the child comes in contact with gender stereotypes. It is at this stage in a child’s life that she/he is most susceptible to influences from the people around her/him. Through traditional methods of child rearing, gender typing and gender stereotypes are being passed on from one generation to the next.

Gender typing is the process through which we teach young girls and boys the appropriate mannerisms and characteristics associated with their sex according to our social laws. Stereotyping is when we take an idealistic model of either of these gender types and enforce it as the only acceptable form of it's sex. This exploration of the social and situational factors of parenting as well as education within the area of gender typing and stereotyping will help to highlight some of the factors involved in society which contribute to the sustaining of this icon, unique in its consumer success, the Barbie doll.

The third chapter is concerned with magazines and their exploitation of the now embedded stereotyped conceptions of femininity. The chapter begins with a short historical background documenting the emergence of the first magazine solely devoted to women, *The Ladies Home Journal*. Moving on to modern magazines, parallels will be drawn with Barbie, viewing her, like girls' magazines, as part of a construction of femininity. The idea of the female performer as suggested in chapter one will be developed and linked to the concept of the cinematic gaze through a discussion of the Barbie outfits. Consumerism and patriarchal ideologies of femininity, a hegemonic structure working most effectively in the area of the body, is crucial to the analysis as it illuminates the powers of both these systems to force the female to look at herself in an unconscious judgemental manner, therefore she is effectively her own oppressor.

The final chapter examines masquerade and the presentation of the female in classic Hollywood cinema. Barbie is a construction that is similar to the “to-be-looked-at-ness” of the Hollywood stars and can be seen as a masquerade. However, this is not to suggest that the masquerade is covering up something more real, the masquerade is the vacuity at the heart of ‘femininity’ as defined by patriarchy. The discussion will focus on the medium of dominant cinema through which gender stereotypes have towered over us, giving pleasure to both male and female audiences. Like magazines it provides a certain kind of pleasure through the commodification of people. It is there to be consumed.

Dominant conventions of femininity have suggested that the feminine ideal is gentle, demure, sensitive, submissive, non-competitive; she is a sweet natured and dependent dream girl who is going no where near the form of equality society offered the male. If we look back to the Victorian period it is possible to see that twentieth century cultural stereotypes of modern womanhood can be easily traced to the rigid middle class stereotypes of the Victorian era. She must be pure, humble and intensely sympathetic, unselfish, and totally dedicated to family life: “Eyes must be cast down, they must not glance left or right ...they must neither look at or address a man, and must not swing their arms when walking, or cross their legs when sitting, their hands must be hidden in their cloaks” (Butler, 1990, p. 89).

According to Frank W. Hoffman who wrote *Fashion & Merchandising Fads*, Barbie's appeal seems to rest largely on the fact that it enabled young girls to "vicariously" live out their fantasies of the adult world (Hoffman, 1994, p. 27). She is seen to embody all that is American popular culture. Her houses, friends, clothes and careers provide a window onto the very often contradictory demands that society has placed on women. She has become an American and now world wide icon that, unlike her predecessors, will never age. She can never bloat, wrinkle and, as long as parents continue to see her as a good role model for their daughters, she will never go out of fashion.

For every mother who introduces Barbie to her child there is another mother banishing her from the house. For every young girl proudly jumping into a stereotyped feminine role there is an anorexic recoiling, refusing to take on board her role as a woman. Barbie's houses, clothes and friends have provided a window onto the contradictory demands that our culture has placed on woman today and it is from this point that I will begin my analysis.

CHAPTER ONE

“Barbie is a direct reflection of the cultural impulses that formed us. Barbie is our reality. And unsettling though the concept may be, I don’t think its hyperbolic to say: Barbie is us”

(Lord,1993, p.17)

Barbie is the most popular toy in U.S. history. First marketed in 1958, the doll helped make her creators, Ruth and Elliot Handler of Mattel Inc. the biggest U.S. toy company by the early sixties. By 1967 their annual earnings had exceeded \$100 million. In 1994 Barbie accounted for more than \$1 billion of Mattel’s \$3.2 billion sales dominating more than thirty per cent of the doll market. With the prospect of a merger between Mattel and Hasbro, creators of the Cindy doll, Mattel stand to take over 30 per cent of American market. The Irish *Sunday Independent* news paper reported that the average American girl is said to own approximately eight Barbies (*Sunday Independent*, Feb. 4, 1996, p.9). In addition her extensive wardrobe has made Mattel the top earner in the number of outfits ever made for a doll. Barbie also populates the art world. Marge Piercy wrote a poem about her, Andy Warhol painted her, Cindy Sherman cites her as her muse, Jeffrey Essann impersonated her, designers like Oscar De La Renta and Bob Mackie created clothes for her, Vidal Sassoon coiffed her and museums such as New York’s Modern Museum of Art, London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, Washington’s Smithsonian Institution and the Oakland Museum exhibited her.

Barbie was a copy of the “Bild Lilli” doll (fig. 1), a sexy toy for adult men that was based on a post war comic character in the *Bild Zeitung*, a downscale German newspaper similar to Ireland’s *Star*. The doll, sold mainly in tobacco shops, was marketed as a three dimensional pin-up (Boy, 1986).

She was a German ice blond, nymph like creature who embodied just about all the ingredients of a full blooded male's fantasy. Physically Barbie and Lilli are almost identical. However in terms of their disposition they couldn't be further apart, or so the manufacturers thought. Lilli was a gold digger, an exhibitionist and a floozy, she had the body of a super model and the brains of Einstein. She took money from men and was involved in situations where she wore few clothes. Barbie from birth was the quintessential all American Girl, wholesome all the way (Lord,1993, p.25). However over the years similarities can be seen between herself and Lilli, for example the Barbie Game, a game for young girls first issued in 1961, was based on tempoying a stereotyped feminine manner, for financial gain. It's rewards where not achieved for great skill or knowledge but for physical appearance.

At the time of her birth in 1958 Barbie could be seen as a doll designed by women for women to teach women what was expected of them in society. For girls growing up at this point, Barbie was a revelation. Unlike the media - a dominant ly male structure - during the fifties, it promoted certain independence and was a woman for women. Barbie's world, and that of the urban fifties and early sixties families, were miles apart. There were no parents, spouses or offspring in her world; the closest she came to motherhood was, *Barbie Goes Babysitting*.

True, she has a sister Midge who has come and gone over the years and is presently back in fashion but she is more of a friend, she has independence and does not rely on Barbie. Barbie isn't defined through responsibilities to parents or men. Nor is she tied to the kitchen sink. Yes, her boyfriend Ken is teetering on the verge of being redundant but he is only an accessory like the pink porche. In her early years the doll's creator, Ruth Handler, turned down a vacuum company's offer to make Barbie-sized vacuums because Barbie didn't do what was termed 'rough house work' (Lord, 1993, p 246). At a time when women were expected to perform all sorts of social activities to show how prosperous their husbands were, Barbie had no husband. She performed for herself.

In 1960, Mattel eliminated *Gay Parisienne*, *Roman Holiday* and *Easter Parade* from Barbie's wardrobe. It is interesting to note here that these are also the titles of popular Hollywood musicals released in the cinema in the late forties and early fifties. The outfits (both Barbie's and those of the movie stars) demanded an audience, they enhanced Barbie's code of feminine performance which has been so successfully done in the movies. In their place, Charlotte Johnson the current designer, launched *Silken Flame* (fig. 2), a knee length white satin skirt with a red velvet bodice, *Enchanted Evening* (fig. 3), a pale pink floor length gown with a rabbit fur stole and *Solo in the Spotlight* (fig. 4), a strapless black sequined dress with a tutu at the ankles. While their titles indicate a new sexy image the outfits were

still of the wholesome all American girl variety. This revamping could be seen as cultural updating.

A few years on in 1963 the market researchers at Mattel discovered that the public were demanding that Barbie have a baby hence *Barbie Goes Babysitting* (fig. 5). This demonstrated her nurturing skills, vital to the ideal of femininity, without destroying her figure. The set also came with three books: *How To Get A Raise*, *How To Lose Weight* and *How To Travel*. Ruth Handler herself was very much the business woman who had no desire to engage in the domestic side of life. From this, it can be seen how much of Ruth Handler is injected into Barbie. She refused to give her the constraints of post-nuptial life; this doll would always be independent, subject to no one. *Barbie Goes Babysitting*, or rather its message, had a striking resemblance to Helen Gurley Brown's publication, *Sex & The Single Girl*, which came out the following year, (Lord,1994). The idea of stardom is present in both of these female ideals. Her appearance and performance are more important than family life.

These three books suggested that Barbie's designer was moulding her in the image of Brown's model woman. The single girl, Brown wrote, "supports herself". It is no surprise then that Barbie's book titles bear a strong resemblance to Brown's chapter headings: *Nine to Five*, *The Shape You're In*, and *The Rich, Full Life*.

The Barbie concept's resemblances to Brown's girl were more than just advancements, they made Barbie look like a revolution. Brown was, "the first spokeswoman for the revolution" says Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs in *Re-Making Love: The Feminization of Sex* (Ehrenreich, Hess, Jacobs, 1994, p.112). In choosing clothes, Brown says "copycat a mentor with better taste than yours" (Brown, 1962, p.193). Barbie not so much copied her designer as had the designer's tastes thrust upon her. More importantly, the doll in turn was a mentor for young girls by constantly updating her appearance and wardrobe. Like Brown's heroine, Mattel was obsessed with the Barbie doll's appearance, realising its importance in securing a mate, and, large profit margins.

Next came the competition. Not surprisingly, competing toy manufacturer's tried to cash in on the success. Between 1962 and 1967 three new dolls were introduced onto the market. One of them, Tammy, from *The Ideal Toy & Novelty Corporation* seemed initially to pose a threat but this was short lived. Tammy was a home girl, had a brother, no boyfriend and a mom and dad. Barbie, even with a 1950s style, had a cultural code that was very much of the sixties.

In 1963 a new socialist movement, concerning women's rights, was taking place. Betty Friedan in her revolutionary book, *The Feminine Mystique* put a title to a problem, "a gender based malaise affecting millions of women" (Friedan, 1963, p.168) and set up the National Organisation

for Women (NOW) to combat it. The aim was to achieve equal rights for women mainly in the area of women working in spaces dominated by men. As if this upheaval wasn't enough to start Mattel worrying, growing controversy over the Vietnam War was creating a lot of discontentment within the United States, leaving behind the element of fantasy, the Barbie concept aka: The American Dream so dear to Americans.

Barbie embodied all that was the dream: equality, democracy and material prosperity. Her world was, ethnically fair and democratic. She was successful in any career she turned her hand to and she radiated all that was considered feminine.

In order to try and protect her from the cross fire, Charlotte Johnson decided to copy the outfits of a seemingly safe model, Jackie Kennedy. This suggests a raise in Barbie's class, switching from *Senior Prom* (fig. 6) to *Benefit Performance* (fig. 7). Jackie, however, was quickly dropped as a mentor when she took another surname.

As the political climate continued to dominate people's lives Barbie retreated into a world of fantasy. Outfits that were once named after her activities were now named after the fabric they were made of. Beginning in 1966 with *Color Magic Barbie* (fig. 8), a doll whose hair and clothes changed colour when dipped in the 'magic' solution, Barbie broke the last ties she had with the real world.

By the time the seventies had arrived, the age of the glamour girl of the fifties had died. Mod fashions, (“a systematic effort to throw off the codified fashions of the fifties” (Lord, p.62)) shipped over from London, reflected the new codes of youth. The clothes, probably created in response to the Beatles offered, as Ehrenreich, says: “a vision of sexuality freed from the shadow of gender inequality” (1991, p.35). It was time for Barbie to change.

Between 1970 and 1971 the feminist movement made significant strides for their cause. Mattel’s response was challenging. No longer did Barbie hobble around on tip toe, she now had flat feet with moveable ankles that allowed her to march with her sisters. However even though she adopted this new mod style, she still maintained her glamorous image which is what NOW objected to. Much as she tried, feminists would have nothing to do with her, the damage was done.

NOW’s first assault on Barbie happened in 1971. They released a press report condemning Mattel, among others, for using sexist advertising. Mattel had used ads showing boys playing with educational toys and girls playing with dolls. The following year at the *Toy Fair* in the United States, it was noted in *The New York Times* (February 29th, 1972), that they distributed leaflets alleging that Barbie encouraged girls “to see themselves solely as mannequins, sex objects or house keepers” (Lord, 1993, p.63).

If feminists had embraced her, embraced this small yet significant step Mattel had made bringing her down from tip toe, her image may have been very different today. Barbie could have been used as a key player in their battle. Considering she had built up such a large group of disciples, feminists could have used her powerful voice as a medium for getting across their argument. As history moved on, they didn't and so Mattel had no alternative but to withdraw these sexist advertisements and by default returned to the older model.

With the dawn of Saturday Night Fever in the seventies, Mattel resculpted Barbie's face and christened her a Superstar. Her radical change was a direct reflection of the sexual revolution then occurring. Until then her eyes had been down-cast and to one side, the averted submissive gaze, Barbie in her *Malibu*" (fig. 9) incarnation was allowed to have 'the body' and look straight ahead. Her mouth was set in a broad, almost stupid smile, a far cry from the smoldering sex symbol she descended from in Germany.

"The re-modeled Barbie changed the relationship between the doll and the little girl who owned it. Barbie could still function as an object onto which the child projected her future self; but because the doll had the trappings of a celebrity, the girl's imagined future had to involve being rich and famous" (Lord, 1993, p.102).

Once again the doll's 'to-be-looked-at-ness' was the most important part of her code. Lord suggests that *Fashion*

Photo Barbie (fig. 10) launched in 1978 established Barbie as a cover girl with a camera. It allowed the girl to be a model and at the same time the photographer. The idea of voyeurism-exhibitionism is highlighted here. The link between this model and the earlier, *Roman Holiday* and *Easter Parade* and the Hollywood musicals cannot be overlooked. The position of the viewer, the young girl, is similar to the female spectator in the cinema audience and Barbie in *Fashion Photo*. She can project herself onto Barbie or the movie star images of herself or read from it how she should "act". "Thus the toy encourages her to internalize a sense of herself-as-object; to split herself, in John Berger's words into "the surveyor and the surveyed" (Lord,1993, p.104).

In 1950s films the actress - whether as literal thespian or as a symbol for role-playing woman - is a key female figure in film history. This was particularly noticeable when the split between woman and the character, the persona, became a central theme in film. The actress legend took various forms: "the mystique of the actress, the myth of the movie, the mystique of the actress versus the myth of the movie star", (Haskell, 1987, p. 242).

It could be suggested that the actress merely extends the role-playing dimension of woman, emphasising what she already is. The concept of role play could be seen to be a form of self defence, allowing the female time to adjust to the given situation. She could also use the roles to have her personal

value confirmed through the attention she receives. There seems to be a link between acting and *woman*, the actress as a metaphor for *woman*. Acting could be said to be feminising. "Acting is role playing, role playing is lying, and lying is a woman's game" (Haskell, 1987, p.247).

Mulvey's analysis of the pleasures of Hollywood cinema lead her to believe that the female spectator would have to take the position of a masculine viewer. According to Mulvey there are three different looks within dominant cinema: the look or gaze of the camera man/director, the spectator's look and the look between the characters in the film, that is the male character objectifying the female ones - the male eye turning the female body into an object to be desired or fetishised - through their active and powerful look. Mulvey comments that in the dominant patriarchal system of visual representation, sexual difference decides the active/passive ; the active being the male voyeuristic/fetishistic look and the passive being the female as the object looked at or fetishised.

Expectations of how women should conduct themselves limited their involvement in the professional sphere. Motherhood and submission in the 50s and 60s were considered to be ideal images of woman. Today, on top of this ideal, the female not only has to be a good mother and wife, she must also have gained some qualifications, have a good job or career, and be relatively independent. Somehow she has to combine this with caring for a home, children and a husband. Not only must

she be beautiful she must also be capable of holding an intelligent conversation.

Judith Butler has written, "Gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original". It is something performed, artificial, a "phantasmic ideal of heterosexual identity" (Butler, 1990, p.164). Barbie's hyper-femininity, femininity invented by patriarchy, could be seen as a tool used for playing men at their own game.

Chapter Two

“As babies move toward their psychological birth as separate persons, they learn that people fall into two categories, male and female. By the age of one, children can point to male and female figures as either male or female.”

(R.J. Stroller, *Sex & Gender*, 1968, p. 22)

Families actively play a role in gender socialisation by the ways in which they organise the environment for the child. Boys and girls are dressed differently, receive different toys and have differently styled bedrooms. Well before children are making out their Santa letters, parents are actively shaping their tastes and gender ideas.

In 1990 a group of researchers, Pomerleau, Bolduc, Malcuit and Cossette, (Hetherington, 1993, p.359 - 367), carefully recorded the kinds of toys, etc., that could be found in the bedrooms of boys and girls between the ages of one month and six years. It was found that the boy's rooms were filled with soldiers, machine guns, electric cars, lego and sports equipment. The girl's rooms on the other hand were packed with Barbie and Sindy dolls, play cosmetics, prams, cots, buggies and floral decorations. The boy's toys were very action orientated while the girl's toys were much more self and family focussed. The study led them to believe that there are definitely preconceived notions concerning gender in the home. When another group of researchers watched baby girls and boys in a shopping mall, they found the girls in pink ruffles and the boys in blue and occasionally red and not a bow or ribbon in sight (Shakin, Shakin & Sternglanz, 1985). “Sex typed clothing serves very well to announce the child's sex and thereby ensures sex appropriate treatment even from strangers”, (Fagot & Leinbach, 1987, p.93).

Gendering or sex role socialisation starts at birth. Fathers seem to be more extreme in their emphasising of their sons

size, strength and coordination verses the fragility and beauty of their daughters (Stein & Karraker 1989). Stein and Karraker found that adults play in more masculine ways with a baby they think is a boy and in gentle and more nurturing way if they think it is a girl. According to Caldera (Caldera, 1989, p.70 - 76), by the time the child is just eighteen months old, parents are very much involved with toys culturally appropriate to the child's sex.

So where does this leave the young girl and her Barbie? Barbie is there as a mentor, a source of guidance, a manual on femininity through which the girl will learn all there is to know about being a *woman*. As it is a baby doll and not the Barbie doll the child receives first, the young girl will have already learned a great deal about her role as a mother.

This moulding or manipulation of the girl by her mother through Barbie - perceptions and images of femininity - may be a repetition of what she, the mother, encountered as a young girl and therefore she brings to her daughter what she learned about femininity as a girl and woman. "The daughter is for the mother at once her double and another person...she saddles her child with her own destiny; a way of proudly laying claim to her own femininity and also a way of revenging herself for it" (De Beauvoir, 1967, p.207). Thus "part of the so called maternal response may well be the anticipated pleasure females feel in duplicating as mothers the pleasures they received during childhood experiences of dolls" (R Hartley p.87), or in this case Barbie.

This special relationship with the doll has been well researched in its potential as a selling technique, according to Kline & Pentecost. They realised that, "they were not so much promoting a toy's value as a particular imaginative relationship with the toy" (Kline & Pentecost, 1990, p.242). This notion was successfully demonstrated in the early attempts at Barbie advertising. The marketing plan was to use television to provide the '*Teenaged model*' back ground story for the doll which dealt with both the imaginary possibilities of the doll, dressing it, fixing the hair etc., and gave more specific social scenarios which were linked to the fantasies associated with her such as dating and romance. Barbie's success convinced product designers and marketers how effective this fantasy context was and how important it was to mothers and daughters alike. Thus they provided highly personalised fantasies about the product, sealing the bond between the child and the doll.

In girls we see the importance of the father's approval of the mother as a feminine model and father's encouragement towards the young girl to participate in feminine activities (Hertherington, 1993, p. 87). It is interesting to note that it is the father's opinion on femininity and not so much the mother's that Hetherington feels has a greater effect on the girl. Certainly this would be the case on a much broader scale in that most images of ideal femininity in the media are created by men for men.

“Men survey women before treating them” John Berger wrote in *Ways of Seeing*. “Consequently how a woman appears to a man can determine how she will be treated. To acquire some control over the process, women must contain it and interiorize it” (Berger, 1972, p.154). To take this a step further a girl must learn to be able to act and watch herself act, to become “the observer and the observed”. She must as Berger says turn herself into “an object of vision”. Helen Gurley Brown’s book *Sex And The Single Girl* taught women how to turn themselves into such an object. It was a guide to help women manipulate men by manipulating how they appear to men, playing them at their own game (Lord, 1994, p. 52). In a way, Barbie functions in this way too. It could be suggested that the relationship of the observed self to the observing self is much like that of a Barbie doll to its owner. “When a girl projects herself onto the doll, she learns to split herself in two. She learns to manipulate an image of herself outside of herself,” (Lord, 1993, p.53). Even though Brown and Berger are coming from opposite ends their arguments do agree on the point that what the girl learns is like a survival kit.

Feminist research is committed to the view that schools do have a role in constructing, defining and reinforcing gender roles and gender stereotypes. They are critical of the role the school plays in the gender socialisation and of the ways girls are disadvantaged by the modern education system. Lynda Measor and Patricia Sikes state in *Gender and Schools* that “the feminist argument is that the gender

differentiation processes result in different educational experiences for girls and boys, which seem to give rise to contrasting educational achievements between the sexes and in the end to prepare each sex to occupy quite different roles and styles in life” (Measor & Sikes, 1992, p.2).

“Schools seem to resemble natural process; what happens in them appears to have the sanction of natural law and can no more be questioned or resisted than the law of gravity”(Greene, 1985, p.156). Some teachers confounded by the possibility of questioning this *naturalness*, try to re-establish the familiar, justifying differential treatment by using the weak but continuously accepted argument of *biological difference*. The continuing availability of this argument and similar ones only go to indicate the tightness of patriarchy within the educational system.

The *girls* and *boys* etched into the doors in some old schools may have faded over the years into disuse but only slightly more subtle forms of segregation have been put in their place. Today class lists, registers and record cards are separated into girls and boys (Best, 1977, p.188), lavatories, changing rooms and sometimes cloakrooms and play yards are divided. Such arrangements are so common that they have become almost invisible. School rules, too, can be seen to reinforce sex roles. What sort of affects do rules such as: boys can't use the cloakroom, girls can't wear trousers or only girls can stay inside when it rains, have? In order to analyse the stereotyping that exists here I will distinguish the following areas: teacher's treatment and segregation of the

Segregation

pupils by gendering, educational literature and its gender stereotypes .

Even in the early pre-school years, boys and girls are responded to differently by their teachers. Although boys are encouraged to engage in quiet activities rather than aggression and rough play, they receive more criticism from teachers and peers for cross gender behaviours such as dress up and doll play (Fagot, 1977, p.121). Girls, it seems, are less likely to receive criticism from teachers for engaging in cross sex play, (this I have noted through a series of interviews with a number of children and their parents at a nearby primary school (St Patricks Primary School, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14, January 16th, 1996)). Fagot found that teachers often react to boys and girls in gender-stereotypic ways. In a study he conducted in the eighties he found that teachers respond to girl's social initiatives, such as talking and gesturing, more than to those same displays in boys. In contrast, teachers responded positively to boy's assertive behaviour more than girl's pushing and shoving. Not surprisingly, this differential teacher attention and treatment has an impact. Nine months later there were clear sex differences with girls talking to the teacher more, and boys exhibiting a higher level of assertiveness.

It must be noted that through masculinity, femininity, the opposite, is defined. The environment in schools can be said to be feminised, i.e. it encourages feminine ideals. Young girls would view school as consistent with their own gender-role identity. Boys then learn to accept that the

acceptance of feminine ideals is normal. As girls proceed through the education system, (e.g. Lecht and Dweck (1983)), their level of achievement decreases. The kind of passive and dependent behaviours that teachers accept and encourage in girls, eventually, is damaging to their academic success as well as stereotyping their attitudes on gender.

It seems that teachers do have a different opinion of girls and boys and in turn divide their attention between the two unequally which in turn may contribute to the poor academic performance of girls in later academic life and the change in attention to matters of physical appearance.

While one of the things that feminists have argued for over the years is equal opportunities and choice within the curriculum (*Equal Opportunities Committee, 1987*). However, research done by the likes of Pat Mayes, has drawn attention to the fact that some schools have and still do offer a sex-segregated curriculum. The Irish *Sex Discrimination Act (1975)* created some guidelines concerning this inequality in the curriculum but many girls and boys are still in the process of studying different subjects at school.

In the early primary school years not much of a difference can be seen in the curriculum except when it comes to subjects like crafts where girls are encouraged to take sewing or knitting and boys to take metal or wood work. However as the child progresses through second level, segregation becomes apparent. It is clear from studies such

as that by Lobban (1975, p. 27, 202-10) that school textbooks contain strongly sex typed materials. Since then other research has been carried out in this field but little changes seem to have taken place over the years. Lobban found that these texts showed women and men doing very different jobs, and leading very different lives. There were more males in the stories than females (71 males and 35 females). Most of the females were involved in some sort of domestic occupation, roles like looking after baby and husband. The boys were almost always dominant with much more choices of activities, toys and pets. Grown women in the books did not always have jobs, they stayed at home and spending a considerable amount of their time manicuring themselves and worrying over their physical appearance.

Curriculum

The significance of these findings is that young girls and boys are spending a considerable amount of time with their readers and absorb these gender stereotypes subconsciously. These notions are given to the child as the 'norm' in society, even after so much work in the area of equality in the classroom has occurred. Conventional attitudes and cutting school costs have no doubt conspired to prevent more gender neutral texts from becoming part of the curriculum.

While leaving the protection of the home and entering the public sphere of the school, the young girl begins to encounter other gender stereotype tutors in the form of the media. This leads me onto a broader area of textual analysis in the form of popular literature, magazines.

CHAPTER THREE

**“The masquerade is
.....what women do.....in
order to participate in
men’s desire, but at the
cost of giving up theirs”**

(Luce Irigaray, “The Sex
Which Is Not One”, p.131)

Magazines offer their readers particular definitions and understandings of what it is to be female or male. Girl’s and women’s magazines, focus primarily on what constitutes femininity, on a “women’s world” : the domestic, the family or the intimate and sexual or personal. Each magazine deals with a select group of topics experienced by females, rarely of a political nature unless it has to do with caring for the under privileged as it has always been seen to be the role of the female to look after others and presented to them as if they were a female’s only interest and also as if they were interests shared by all females (Barthes, 1993, p.78).

In this chapter I intend to discuss the part magazines plays in contributing to ideals of femininity, which are reflected in Barbie. When Barbie first came on the scene she had no great media attention whirling around her, questioning her morals or what she portrayed. Instead she was just another doll for little girls to play with. Parents saw her as a way for their daughters to practice being proper little women, a way of learning all the laws of femininity through play. What was wrong with that? No one questioned her unrealistic measurements or lack of family or, until recently that is, discussed how her glamorous appearance may have helped to disguise the insecurities and self-dissatisfaction she could induce.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1880 the *Ladies' Home Journal*, the first magazine for women only, made its debut. It featured a blend of gendered material and advertising which other magazine editors quickly saw as a means to an expanding, profitable audience. This was the beginning of the gender-commerce mix we have come to take for granted today. By commerce I mean profit making from the exploitation of gender stereotypes. As women and men in our consumer culture, "we are defined largely by what we eat wear and use,..we are what we buy...Thus gender is commercialised" (Moore, 1994, p. 2).

Women have traditionally been thought of as being responsible for the use of domestic products and mass produced commodities such as cosmetics since the dawning of the consumer boom. Since it was in the interest of the manufacturers of these products to sell as much as possible, this form of advertising was targeted primarily at women. The *Ladies' Home Journal*, even though it was quite forward in its thinking with regards to equality for the modern woman, still subscribed in large part to the domestic ideology of the day. A woman's role was defined by tasks in the home which included cooking cleaning and caring for the children and her husband.

In April 1884 the *Ladies' Home Journal* reported on a boarding school in Philadelphia, where it felt the girls were not receiving the proper education for life as a mother and home maker. Grades for cooking and cleaning were low while pastimes such as dancing and embroidery scored

highly. However, in the early 1900s the Journal began to openly discuss some negative aspects of women's domestic work, such as physical exhaustion, boredom and lack of leisure time outside the home. As technology improved so did standards of living. The availability of new and improved machinery and ingredients for food for example meant a wider variety of recipes but also demanded more preparation time and hence more work for the housewife.

Readers wrote in suggesting a return to the simpler way of life to adapt to or possibly reject this rise in standards. This however was out of the question as far as Louise Knapp, the editor, and her fellow writers were concerned. This simple way of life, living with just enough to survive was in stark contrast to the lifestyle the Journal was promoting. Instead Knapp and her staff suggested that "a woman has a right to expect and demand if need be, the purchasing of labour saving contrivance for lightening her domestic work (Moore, 1993, p.365)

To be more exact, in order for a woman to cope with this rise in living standards she must liberate herself, she must become an "accomplished consumer". Knapp genuinely thought the growth of women as top consumers to be liberating for them and a definite route to expanding their opportunities.

"Consuming, they believed would lighten the domestic load and would give women increased autonomy and authority in their lives" (Moore, 1994, p. 48) .

By becoming the key consumers they were taking greater control of their lives through making consumer choices. But it was still the men who continued to be the bread winners, providing for their families and it is this fact that rendered the expansion of women's consuming habits as a relatively harmless change in culture at that time. It in no way provoked or put at risk the traditional male hierarchy or the germinating capitalist society. Instead this large increase in consumption obviously helped to boost the market. It also helped to cover up huge gender inequalities in the system such as unpaid work for women and few openings in the area of careers or jobs (Moore, 1994).

And so today we have the stereotyped female *monster consumer* began. She has learned over the years to associate consuming even the most useless of commodities with femininity. Constantly changing fashions and make-up trends seen in magazines, on television, on film stars and supermodels etc. means she must continuously revamp herself using these new products in order to try and come close to the latest feminine ideal. As one writer has noted, "sex (femininity) for the 'Cosmo' girl is attainment of desirability, not through the quality of her existence as a woman, but through collecting the symbols of sex: perfume, clothes, figure, atmosphere" (Moore, in Theobald (ed.), 1967, p.86).

The images of affluence, sophistication, beauty and success found in the likes of girl's and women's magazines offer

females a utopian vision of themselves that ultimately leads to the market place.

Roland Barthes has noted that the rhetoric of fashion offers females an ideal identity by implying, “ if you want to be this, you must dress like this” (Barthes, p.249). Fashion models today, weigh twenty-three per cent less than they did a generation ago in order to create a divide between them and the average girl/woman (Wolf, 1990, p.184). These representations of female stereotypes are in my opinion at the heart of maintaining female subordination. A gap has appeared between the reader’s social and economic reality and life style projected by the culture of consumerism. This illustrates vividly Simone de Beauvoir’s famous observation that, “one is not born a woman but rather becomes a woman” (de Beauvoir, 1960, p.9).

McRobbie uses semiology, the analysis of verbal and visual signs, to examine the ‘connotive codes’ present in *Jackie* magazine. ‘*Connotation*’ here refers to implied or associative meanings of signs whereas ‘*denotation*’ refers to their literal meaning. For example, in *Jackie*’s picture stories (a place where ideologies may be expressed through a more subtle form than advertising) blonde girls not only have blonde hair but they are also nearly always quiet and timid, never causing trouble or chasing boys. Blondes therefore connote goodness. McRobbie distinguishes four codes of connotation in *Jackie*: the code of romance; personal and domestic life, pop music and lastly, the area I

have chosen to focus my analysis, the code of beauty, cosmetics and fashion. *19*, a contemporary magazine targeted at the teenage audience and a good example of this genre can be looked at as a system of messages, a signifying system and a bearer of a certain ideology, an ideology which deals with the construction of femininity.

While McRobbie's method of analysis gives way to some contradictions, her level of theoretical expertise allows for an interpretation of *Jackie*. Later research conducted on this femininity as constructed through girl's and women's magazines has illuminated other layers of interpretation of *Jackie* which are not in total agreement with this 'hegemony', (Frazer, 1987, p. 147). However the use of semiology, as a means of exploring girl's magazines, will provide me with examples needed to illustrate the success of this hegemonic structure on the female body.

19 is a basic preliminary text preceding the likes of *Vogue* and *Elle*. It is first and foremost a collection of symbols. Packaged in a fun, relaxed design they are easily digested. So what are the main symbols of *19* that go into this blending of the stereotyped image? First there are the bold statements on the front cover enticing the reader to go further. The light tone that is familiar and friendly, like an older sister offering some affectionate advice. This allows the magazine to look natural, to seem to be a normality in a girl's life. It hides the fact that it is above all a commodity, something else to be consumed, in this way alone it places restraints on a girl in that she must

consume it in order to conform.

The casual fun mood that runs from cover to cover from the choice of colours to the type used to the haphazard yet constantly similar layout of the articles, suggests leisure and above all a feeling of pleasure and familiarity. Fashion and beauty features take up a lot more of the content than they did in the likes of *Jackie* where they were built into the idea of romance and carrying out these beautifying rituals in order to get the attention of a boy. The emphasis is now on personal improvement and feeling good about oneself. These beauty features and cosmetic advertisements both anchor femininity and unsettle it at the same time. If there is always a better look to achieve then there is always an element of dissatisfaction in the existing look so what better way to capture and maintain an audience than lulling it into a sense of uncertainty then offering a solution.

Parallels can be drawn between *19* and Barbie, or rather Barbie's methods of teaching as in the *Barbie Magazine*. Like *19* the *Barbie Magazine's* disciplinary power is achieved through its advertising of this unsettling beautification process.

Williamson (*Decoding Advertisements*, 1978, p.70) has argued that such means of promotion separate and appropriate parts of us, our bodies, and then invite us to buy them back in a transformed state. Majer O'Sickey looks at this notion in terms of Michel Foucault's analysis of

“disciplinary power” (*Discipline and Punishment*). By “disciplinary power” he means “ a policy of coercion’s that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour.....through a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it up and re-arranges it”(O’Sickey, p.25). O’Sickey calls these “coercions that act upon the body” the tactics cosmetic industries use to sell their products. We have to look at images or sites where the female body is made “docile”; fashion magazines, beauty salons, etc.

Since Foucault places the disciplines of the western society in a “political economy of the body” it is possible to discuss the way the body is used materially as a commodity. Women have learned through constant reminder that no matter how assertive they may be in the world, no matter how independent, successful or clever, their private submissions to control - female stereotypes - is what makes them desirable. These stereotypes of women that are used in magazines to sell their products are being repeated through the Barbie concept. Through her games, clothes, accessories and all the other merchandise she is advertising these commodities just as *19* is through visual language and narrative stereotypes. In order for this line of thought to follow through one must *not* look at it in terms of the child receiving a Barbie and from this a teenage magazine, but rather the mother giving her daughter the doll after years of magazine consumption and recognising the link between them and her own Barbie doll.

Unlike *Jackie* where femininity was carefully intertwined in the romance stories, today's girl's magazines supply femininity in large amounts through endless 'fact files', 'essentials', 'must haves for summer' and 'survival kits'. As McRobbie has noted in further studies, these stand alongside all the other "more positive qualities of the new girl's magazines; the apparent confidence, the assertiveness and so on" (p. 185). But are these new gestures on equality simply more sophisticated ways of addressing the reader as the all important consumer? Like the magazines I feel that many of Barbie's great accomplishments merely disguise a more basic function: her selling power. Her parent's interests, the interests of the many shareholders in Mattel Inc., lie in her ability to increase on last year's sales and not on her role as a reflection of the nineties woman many of us would like to believe.

Special interest magazines often encourage readers to view themselves as part of this distinct group which is connected to consumerism. Ellen McCracken has noted in *Decoding Women's Magazines* that magazines such as *Big is Beautiful* and *It's Me* address large-sized women as a section of the female race who are oppressed by their weight and who could be 'liberated' by purchasing the special products advertised in it. Highlighting this weight 'problem' in the first place addresses an issue in the woman that may not have been a problem to begin with. She quite possibly was satisfied with her body shape until the magazine informed her to the contrary. Thus the magazines specific

commercial aims shape the messages found in the magazine content. They persuade the readers to indulge in what McCracken refers to as “pseudo-individualised consumption”, consuming specialised products tailor made for you, the reader, personally. Another fine example of stereotyping in these special interest magazines is a new magazine called *Total Sport*. It calls itself “total”, but there are only three pictures of sports women in it. One is of Gabrielle Reece, a volleyball player, photographed in just a pair of knickers (fig. 11). Another is of Sally Gunnell, with a jokey caption suggesting she looks like a horse (fig. 12). You would never know from this magazine that women even played sport.

I would now like to take this a step further and adapt McRobbie’s ideas to look at what is connoted through the Barbie concept. Barbie is a sex-typed toy where femininity and consumerism, are one and the same. The use of colour for example certainly influences the feelings one receives from things, pink being the stereotyped colours associated with everything feminine dominates Barbie’s wardrobe connoting the importance of a feminine nature (clothes) in one’s character (wardrobe).

As her first and foremost career is that of a fashion model, clothes have always been the most prominent feature of this doll, to such an extent that one could consider it to be an extreme display of narcissism. Her clothes are much more important than the activity they are designed for. *Busy Gal* (fig. 13), an outfit designed for the city girl who is always

on the go denotes intelligence and efficiency. The accessories: glasses and portfolio, denote this independence thus the black rimmed glasses and a formal looking bag of some kind connote in Barbie terms career girl. It is not the actual work that is as important as the right look which connotes it.

Another outfit which relies heavily on stereotype connotations is *Slumber Party* (fig. 14, 1965). This pink satin two piece pyjama set and robe comes with Barbie rolling pins, a weighing scales registered at 110 pounds and a book on how to loose weight. Denoting the ideal formula for a girl to follow when going to a slumber party, this outfit connotes an obsessiveness with one's weight, appearance etc as part of being female. Once again the colour pink is also a signifier of femininity.

The need for constant change, for the consumption of a new outfit for every occasion connotes the idea of continued re-inventing and re-defining of oneself through physical appearance as a must. *Poodle Parade* (fig.15, 1965) for example is an outfit astensibly designed to show off Barbie's dog in the State Dog Show. The outfit came with a trophy, a certificate saying her dog won. The highly fashionable Jackie Kennedy style glasses and the hand bag with a finely embroidered dog and a gold chain attached to it connote affluence and ideal femininity. There is no book

on dog training or maintenance, no instructions as to how to prepare the dog for the competition, in fact there is no mention of the dog at all except for the certificate. Basically the outfit is what is going to win the competition thus connoting the idea of the girl's appearance as the most important thing. In contrast Ken's clothes, while still fashionable, are practical. They serve a purpose other than being purely expressions of his gender. Instead of outfits for dates, dances and shopping trips, his wardrobe consists of activity and achievement orientated connotations. Outfits such as *Dr. Ken* (fig. 16), *Army & Airforce* (fig. 17) and *Graduation* (fig. 18) connote academic and personal achievement as important aspects of the masculine gender.

Romance is denoted in ninety per cent of Barbie's outfits. It is used as a luring device, as a sales gimmick that works. Like the young woman reading the romance novel, a Barbie owner is invited to identify with the passive heroine who only finds true happiness in the attention from a male. The wedding outfit after all is the one that has re-appeared over and over again during her reign (1962, 1965, 1967 - 1995), its constant re-appearance and the level of excitement it arouses among its collectors connotes the importance of a male partner to every little girl. Outfits such as *Dazzlin Date* (fig. 19) and *Red Romance* (fig. 20) communicate the promise of romance, disguising a deeper logic, the logic of consumerism and subordination. Romance, used to sell products such as Barbie, emerges as a representation of the

feminine, which works to keep females in their socially and sexually subordinate place.

CHAPTER FOUR

**“ Motion pictures
functioned as living
display windows that
were occupied by
marvelous mannequins
and swathed in a fetish -
inducing ambiance of
music and emotion”**

(Eckert, 1978, p. 100)

In this chapter I do not intend to analyse the content of film as text but rather the viewer's response to it. From this I hope to make comparisons with how the female views Barbie, who I feel has a lot in common with the glamour stereotyped female stars of the cinema especially during the 1940s and 1950s. The question of the female viewer/spectator when sitting in a cinema takes the position of a male or if she can retain her identity as a female, or if she can in fact shift between a number of different viewing points is an important one as it raises the question; how does a woman/girl relate to idealistic images, stereotypes of herself? If this can be established a parallel can be drawn between it and her relationship to Barbie as a performer acting out certain aspects of our culture. In order to do this one must firstly accept that the moving image is only a progression from the still images found in magazines. It is sending out the same messages, using the same stereotypes but through the more subtle medium of stories, fantasy.

For almost two decades now feminists have been questioning the “peculiar power and pleasure of the cinema” (Williams, 1989, p.167). An important area in this debate has been a critique of the forms of visual pleasure given by Hollywood cinema, and of the ways in which these visual pleasures address a female spectator. Laura Mulvey's analysis - although a rather pessimistic view - of the cinema and its visual pleasures has been the beginning for much feminist film criticism since 1975. Her article gave rise to many responses, most of which disagreed with her ideas about the

place, or lack of one, of 'woman' in dominant cinema.

Mulvey's article on visual pleasure and narrative cinema (1975) offered an analysis of the heavy set structures of the "patriarchal unconscious in the pleasures of popular cinema" (Stacey, 1992, p.148). It represented an important challenge to those engaged in psychoanalytic film theory by insisting on the centrality of the meanings of masculinity and femininity to the pleasures of modern cinema.

One of the most important contributions feminist film theory has made to the larger field of feminist inquiry has been the argument that the image of woman is a 'construction'. "The image of a woman is exactly what it is only because of the society which spawns it, and in order to alter this image we have to reconstruct that society" (Gaines, 1990, p.1).

"In the masquerade the women mimics an authentic - genuine - womanliness but then authentic womanliness is such a mimicry, is the masquerade; to be a woman is to dissimulate."

(Heath, 1987, p. 46)

Barbie's career as a fashion model can be compared to the sophisticated set of codes which constitute Hollywood glamour. Film fashions in dress in the thirties, forties and fifties had become codes of ideal femininity. They were inseparably tied to the bodies of women and to the representation of an ideal female form.

Mary Ann Doane (Doane, 1982, pp.74 - 88) uses the idea of masquerade to discuss female spectatorship in her much acclaimed essay *Film and the Masquerade* She begins by focusing in on how woman's image is represented in the cinema, that is the larger than life, glamorous, consumable

stereotype, as an object for the male to look at. Doane asks the question; “ what then for the female spectator?” In what way is the female spectator in the audience to view her own “objectified and fetishised” image? Is she to view her own sex through a male voyeuristic look? Doane feels the situation is more complex than the simple formula of Mulvey. Where Mulvey used the division of male/female and active/passive, Doane suggests Metz’s theory (p. 81) that for the female spectator there is a certain “ over presence of the image-she is the image”(Doane, 1982, pp. 74-88).

Jackie Stacey however, feels that these theories by feminist critics have so far been too restricted. It is my opinion that there can be a fluidness between both feminine and masculine looks. One , not necessarily a female can adopt a male or a female gaze according to what the spectator wants or needs out of the text. One must take into account where the female spectator/consumer is coming from. She is not a concept in film theory but a real person. Barbie’s life and look reflects that of a Hollywood movie star, and we must look at the movie star concept first to understand how we have been subjected to the gender stereotype of the female.

Stacey suggests a number of possible visual pleasures of spectatorship for the female viewer:

“ the representations of women’s desire for another woman which constitutes a re-enactment of an experience common to all women in their childhood relationship with the mother; representation of the woman’s desire to identify with a female ideal; representation of the female as the bearer of the active look” (Stacey 1992,p.121)

I find this proposal particularly interesting, is it not true that all of us as females have mimicked our mothers by dressing up in their clothes, their make-up and the way they talk? Do not all of us come away from a film at some point and try to look like or act as the female protagonist did?

In the early years of Barbie's existence her creators, the Handlers, enlisted the expertise of Ernest Dichter, director of the Institute of Motivational Research in Croton-on-Hudson, New York to carry out a huge toy study which cost an amazing \$12,000 and took six months to complete. He had established through his documentation of Betty Friedan's thesis (*The Feminine Mystique*) that "being a house wife made most women miserable"(doc. in *Forever Barbie*, Lord, p.36). Instead of avoiding this topic he exploited it. Barbie came on the market after the Second World War and at the beginning of the age of mass consumerism. By the time this genre of cinema, the great era of the screen goddesses of the 1940s and 1950s arrived in the late forties women were ready to consume all that glittered in Hollywood.

The success of cinema's glamour as a commodity prompted Dichter to advise Mattel's marketing department to position her on the toy shelves as a glamorous fashion model, a super star like her Hollywood sisters. Through Barbie, Dichter showed the 'house wives' of the world a different life to their own. Barbie was a handheld piece of Hollywood , glamorous, sexy, ultra-feminine, leading a fantasy life like

the stars of the movies. At first mothers objected to her, one was quoted in Dichter's report saying:

“ I know little girls want dolls with high heels but I object to that sexy costume. I wouldn't walk around the house like that. I don't like the influence on my little girl...” (Lord, 1993, p.39)

Instead of altering her to adhere to mother's conservative tastes Dichter exploited this by offering this strategy: Convince Mom that Barbie will make a “poised little lady” out of her tomboy daughter. Promote these racy outfits as ways of teaching proper grooming and how to look attractive to the opposite sex. The report says: “ The type of arguments which can be used successfully to overcome parental objection are in the area of the doll's function in awakening in the child a concern with proper appearance” (Lord, 1993, p.43).

The way women view images of idealised femininity today is directly linked to how they view Barbie. Today, women adapt characteristics of the opposite sex - e.g. wearing traditionally thought of clothes for men - to help them to get into a *man's world*.. In cinema if the female protagonist adopts this she may challenge the conventional system of looking in which the gaze is usually masculine and become the controller of the look.

A good example of this is in the film *Desperately Seeking Susan* where there is the conventional stereotyped female as

the object but the active/dominant look is also feminine. This is so the female protagonist, in the case of the femme fatale, can masquerade the feminine by “presenting femininity in excess” (Stacey,1992, p. 84). The female spectator in the audience can distinguish this performance of what is conceptualised in a patriarchal world as femininity, thus she is better able to stand back from the image and adopt a critical view. Barbie can be viewed in this light, an exaggerated feminine ideal and accept her .

In order to understand why many women of an older generation are comfortable with these stereotypes and pass this acceptance onto the next generation, maintaining the trappings of gender stereotypes and hence Barbie, it is important to investigate just exactly what it was that they found so alluring about the stars of 1940s and 1950s cinema.

It seems that for women of the 1980s and 90s, nostalgia is clearly one of the pleasures of remembering the stars. It symbolised feminine ideals and so its loss is like an acknowledgement of the loss of youth. Men , perhaps, do not feel this loss as youthfulness and beauty are not central to their masculinity, it is their achievements and amount of power which often come with age that define their manliness.

Jackie Stacey put advertisements in common women’s magazines asking women to write to her about their feelings and memories on Hollywood films. Three hundred and fifty responded and from this she came up with three categories of pleasures found in these films for female spectators:

escapism, identification and consumerism.

In her study, Stacey found that escapism was one of the central pleasures in Hollywood cinema for the female spectator. The loss of self enabled women to escape from the stress of every day life during the war, from their feelings of sadness and worry and to imagine themselves in the magical world of Hollywood stars for a short time. The cinema offered a small bit of glamour to the female living with very little means.

Hollywood stars offered female spectators, generally, images of female ideals to dream of, things that were unattainable during a time of poverty. Not surprisingly given the centrality of physical appearance, the particular form of sexual attractiveness which was of the angel/whore variety, to definitions of femininity it was the clothes, make-up, hair styles and general appearances which were what these women remembered.

Identification can be seen as a form of recognition. The female spectator recognises a visual image or action in the female protagonist which she also sees in herself. This link with the glamour star gave the spectator a great deal of pleasure and even self confidence in knowing she resembles a movie star in some way. Stacey (1993) argues that:

“rather than being positioned mechanistically to identify or not , the female spectator is provided with a series of possible entries and identifications with the characters according to their different roles and functions within a framework of character relations” (p.281).

Identification

The Hollywood industries saw women as a key consumer. Marketed through the medium of romance, companies sold their goods, cosmetics etc., in staggering amounts to this newly established mass market. By the forties then, the links between the cinema and industries like fashion and cosmetics - femininity seen on screen commodified - were already highly developed. Indeed the cinema screen has thus been likened to a "display window...occupied by marvellous mannequin's" (Eckert, 1978, p.113) in which stars as goods are on display and are sold to spectators as desirable goods.

Stacey concludes that:

"knowledge of femininity produces intimacy between women and their ideals, despite the ultimate goal of consumption of commodities in order to make oneself attractive to men"(1993, P.289).

Forms of intense intimacy and attachment within feminine culture, separate from individual women's relations with men are central to understanding the role of consumption within female spectatorship and thus to understanding their relationship with Barbie. If we were, for example, to view Barbie's life as a Hollywood film and her as the actress, interesting similarities can be seen.

Barbie's outfits deliver gender as natural and self-evident and recedes as '*clothing*', leaving the connotation of femininity. The distinction between woman and her attire is very often hard to see. She is essentially what she wears. The sort of stereotyping helps to maintain subordination. For example in

an essay on Cindy Sherman's exhibition of film photographic stills, Judith Williamson suggests how image and female identity are fused together and how Sherman's stills demonstrate that the two can be separated.

“ Sherman's pictures force upon the viewer that ellusion of image and identity which women experience all the time. As if the sexy black dress made you be a 'femme fatale' where as 'femme fatale' is precisely an image, it needs a viwer to function at all”

(Williamson, 1983, p.102).

It could be said that the young girl faced with a Barbie doll has a number of choices of how to look at her. As gender, unlike sex, is not fixed or rigid, there is likely to be a multiplicity of looks. She can receive pleasure by objectifying Barbie through male eyes, she can read the doll as herself (surveyed) and become the other female ,the surveyor, the critic, the judge of what she thinks will please the male eye(this can be called the shopper's gaze, the most desired by manufacturers) or she can flow between the many view points available to her. The girl critically compares herself to Barbie, making comparisons with a stereotyped ideal. Her look is that of the shopper, the consumer.

Griselda Pollock (1987) equates the woman's body and selling as one in the same. The sale of clothes is different from the sale of washing up powder or cooking utensils. Looking at the clothes in a fashion show in a film or in a Barbie story found in the Barbie magazine, is inseparable from looking at the bodies of the women wearing them. This

explains the similarities between the Barbie fashion show - her life- and the film fashion shows of the classic Hollywood cinema, *Singing In The Rain* (1952), *Cover Girl* (1944) and *Easter Parade* (1949). If modeling clothes for sale is the same as modeling the body for sale (for the male viewer in the audience) then looking at clothes with the intention of buying them is similar to looking at the body with the same idea in mind. If men are visually buying women then women are buying clothes to get bought, or just get a man. Is this not after all the real purpose of Barbie?

The clothes of this era and their level of importance to their audience are equal to that of Barbie's. They are much more than functional items, they speak volumes. Barbie cannot be separated from them, she is what she wears. They have (to a certain extent) turned her, the concept of a woman, into a commodity as cinema has done for the likes of Marilyn Monroe, Mae West and Jane Russell.

Barbie is carrying layers of sexual connotation which she, the concept, cannot remove. Any attempt to peel them off would be futile; Mary Ann Doane says that the "gesture of stripping...is already the property of patriarchy" (Doane, 1982, p. 145). Her 'costumes' like the Hollywood star connotes femininity to the consumer gaze. They are exhibited in an environment of exploitation, fashion shows which are for women for men, which translate these luxuriant fantasies into hats, gloves, dresses, lingerie, shoes and coats and even directs girls/women into the shops where equivalents are ready to be purchased.

There is no true subject position for Barbie to occupy; no true understanding of what it means to be female but that to be feminine is to engage in a masquerade.

CONCLUSION

As I stated in the introduction the Barbie concept is very ambiguous. She is often treated with ridicule and her potential is very much underestimated. Barbie has been wrongly accused of being a contributor to the concept of femininity responsible for the oppression of woman today. Barbie is not the cause but merely a symptom. She acts as a mirror, reflecting these stereotyped ideals which initially were constructed by a patriarchal culture but are now being enforced by women upon *themselves*.

The last three chapters discuss parenting and education, magazines and Hollywood movies and how gender stereotypes are taught and enforced as a means to sell. The way these stereotypes are portrayed is directly reflected in Barbie. She has not as I have discussed in chapter one decided on these ideals over the years she has merely mimicked them. Barbie doesn't question femininity she just advertises it. Her code does not involve deviating from the norm. Maybe this is why she is still with us today.

Product advertisers supply on demand. Sex sells. Parents would also be prime candidates to take the blame as they are the first major influences in the young girl's and boy's lives. They are the ones who buy the dolls and action figures. But is this not simply a case of passing on exactly what they learned as children?

Aspiring to certain ideals is a human characteristic. After all, if there was nothing to aspire to, no goals set or targets

to achieve whatever the level, our very existence would be rather questionable.

However it is when people lose sight of their sexual difference and see feminine stereotypes as a necessity, affecting the person so much that they become dysfunctional then it becomes a problem. It is necessary not just to educate our children but re-educate ourselves in what it means to be female. A change of such an enormous scale cannot happen overnight, but thankfully it has begun. The very fact that concepts such as the Barbie doll are being questioned shows a significant advancement.

A new form of feminism is needed. One that no longer blames but that seeks to find solutions. One that will allow women to move forward and achieve their full potential.

Figure 1

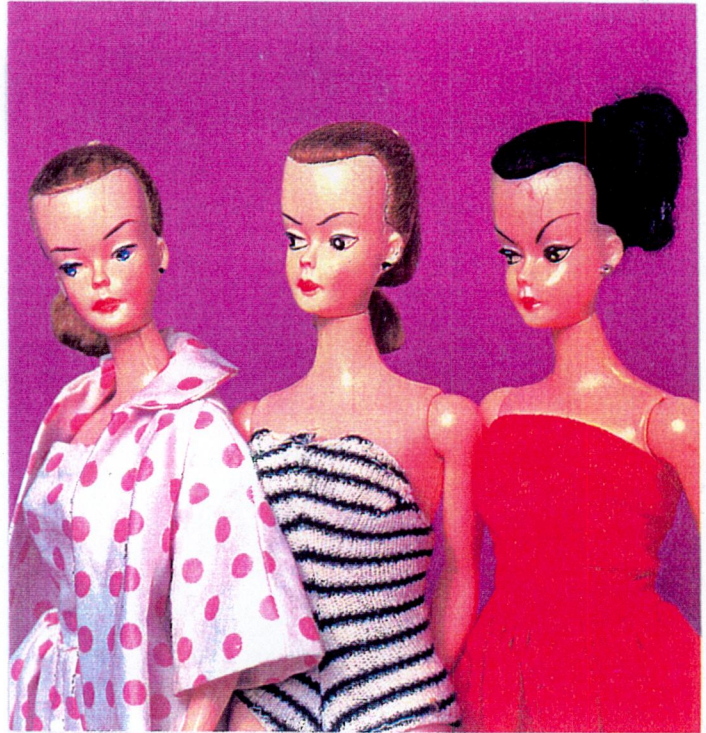


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

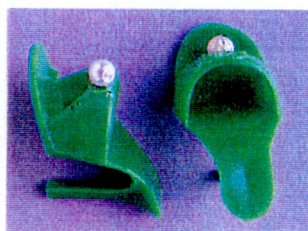


Figure 7

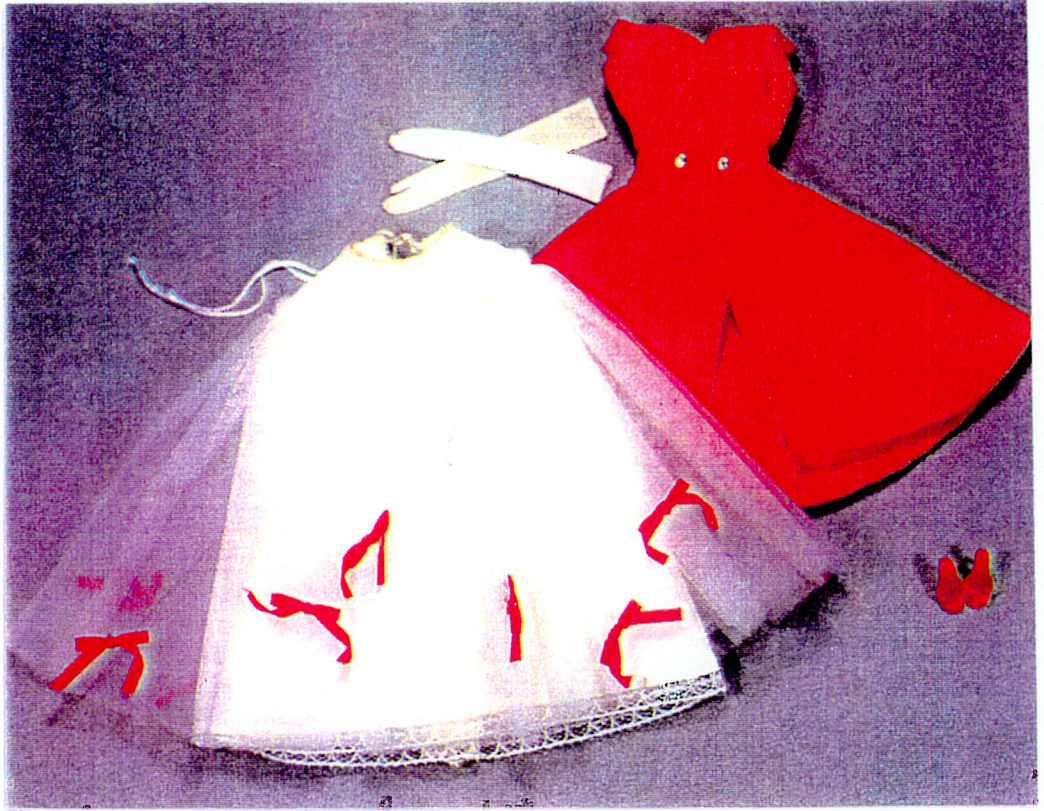


Figure 8

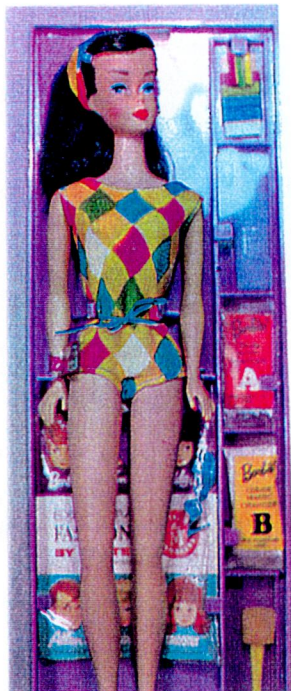
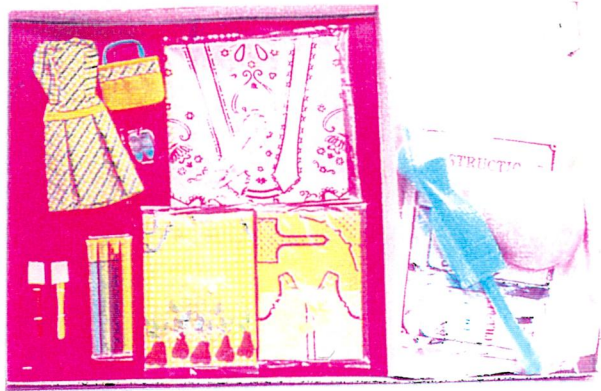


Figure 9

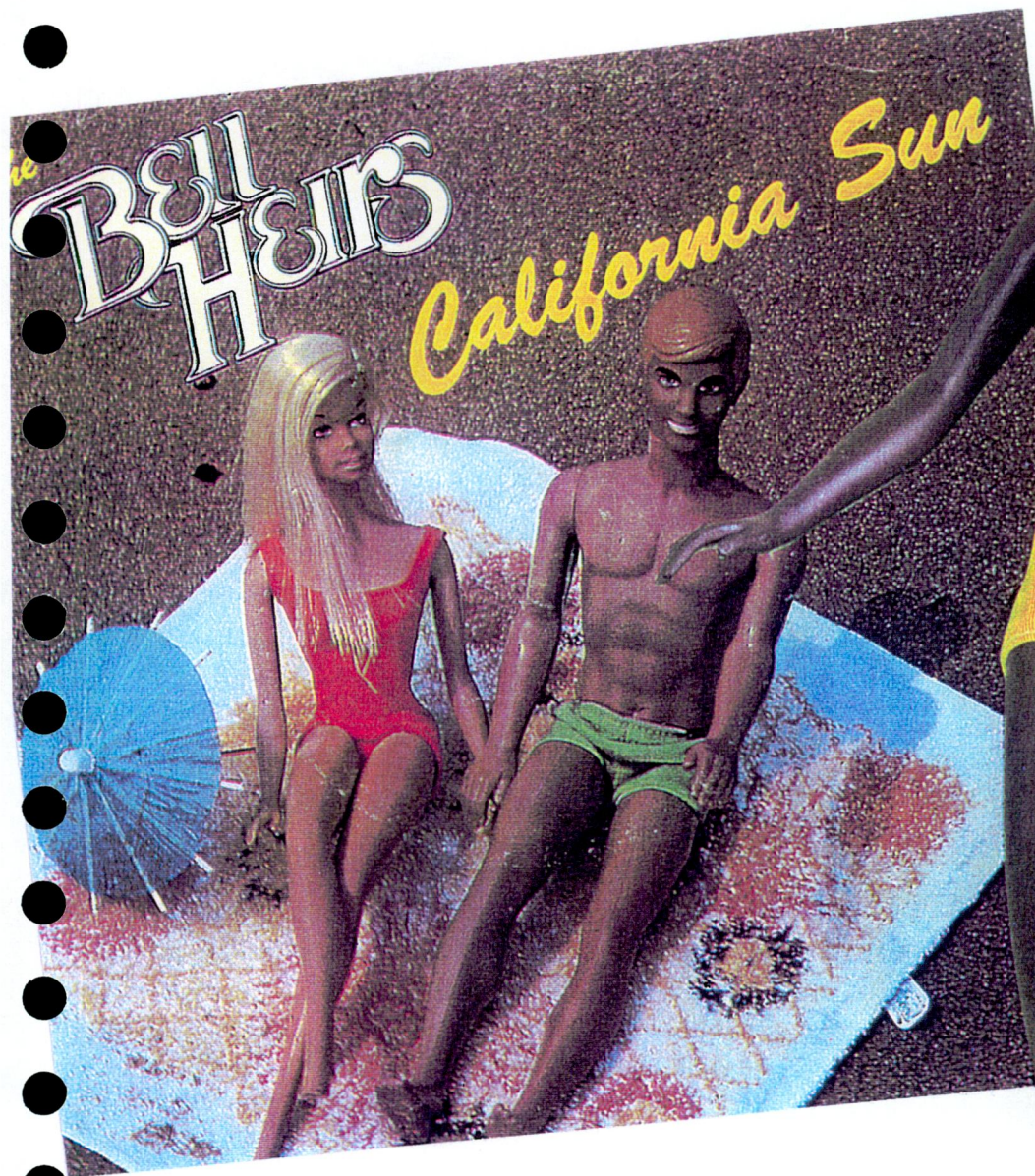


Figure 10

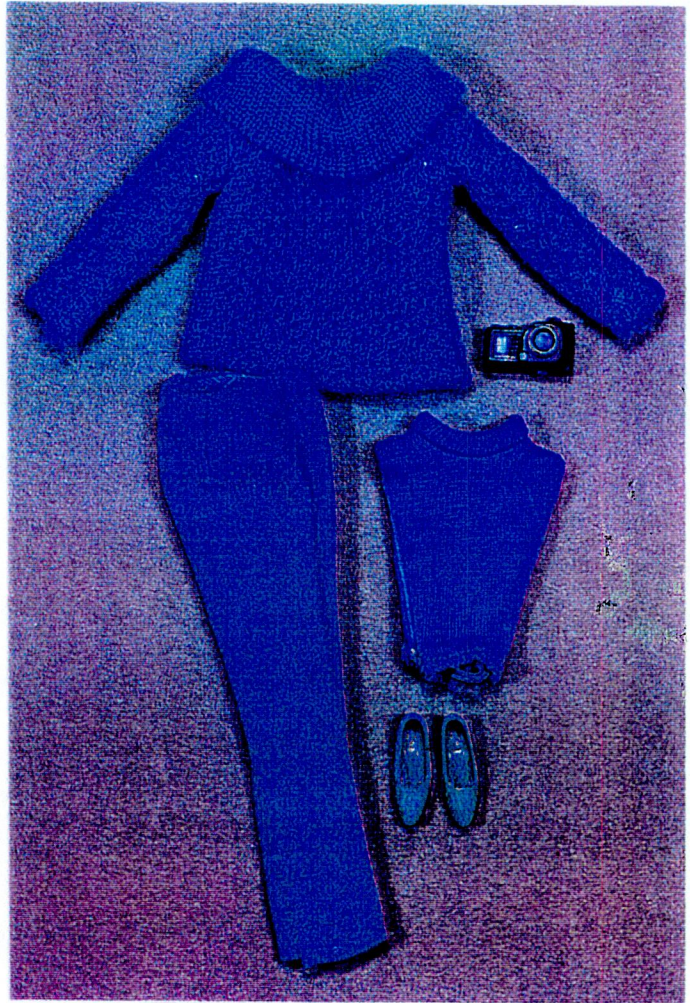


Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

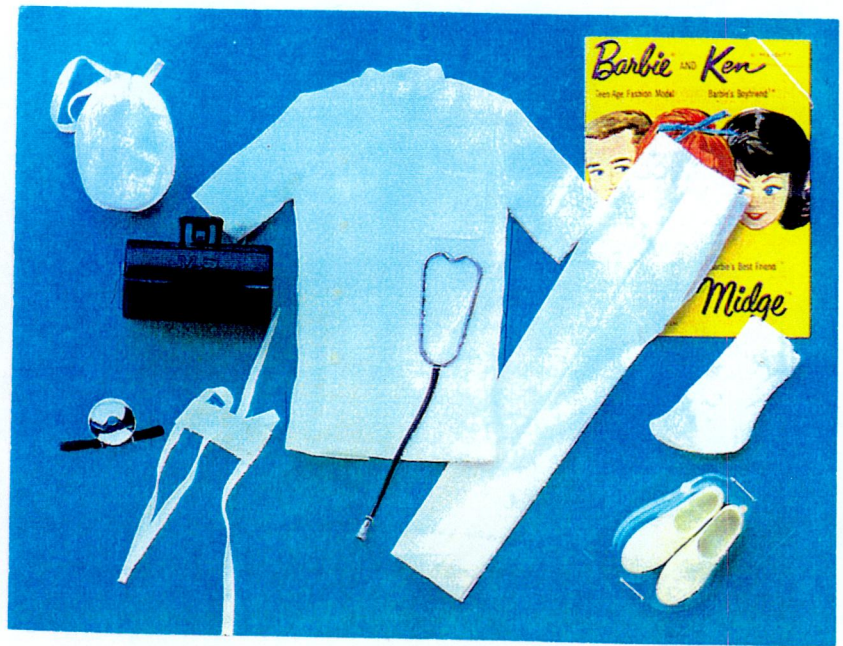


Figure 17

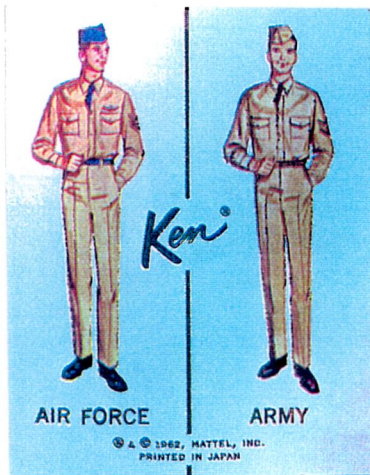


Figure 18

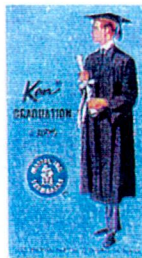


Figure 19



Figure 20



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arnot, M . *State Education Policy and girl's educational experiences.* In V. Beechy and E. Whitelegg (eds), *Women in Britain Today*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1986.

Barthes, Roland, *Myths Today, The Fashion System,* New York, Hill & Wang, 1993.

de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex,* London, David Campbell, 1993.

Bellour, Raymond & Bandy, Mary Lea, *Jean-Luc Godard, Son & Image,* New York, Abrams, 1992.

Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing,* London, Penguin, 1972.

Best, D.J., *Development of sex trait stereotypes among young children in the United States, England and Ireland,* Child Development ,1977.

Betterton, Rosemary (ed.), *Looking On: Images of Femininity In The Visual Arts & Media,* London, Pandora, 1987.

Bonner, F., Goodman, L., Allen, R., Janes, L., King, C., *Imagining Women, Cultural Representations & Gender,* UK., Polity Press, 1992.

Bordo, Susan, *The Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture & The Body*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1993.

Boy, Billy, *Barbie, Her Life And Times*, London, Columbus Press, 1986.

Brown, Helen Gurley, *Sex & The Single Girl*, New York, Bernard Associates, 1962.

Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism & The Subversion of Identity*, New York, Routledge, 1990.

Cairns, J. & Inglis, B., *A Content Analysis of Ten Popular History Text Books For Primary Schools With Particular Emphasis On The Role Of Women*: Education Review, 1989.

Caldera, Y.M, & Huston, A.C., & O'Brien, M. Social interactions & play Patterns of parents & toddlers with feminine, masculine & neutral toys, *Child Development*, vol. 60, pp. 70 - 76, 1989.

Campling, Jo, (ed.), *Women's Worlds, Ideology, Femininity & The Woomam's Magazine*, England, MacMillan, 1991.

Clarricotes, K., *The Importance Of Being Earnest: Schooling For Women's Work*, Routledge, London, 1980.

Cowie, Helen, *Understanding Children Development*, New York, Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Cunningham, Kamy, *Barbie Doll Culture & The American Waistland*, *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 16, Spring, 1993.

Damon W., *The Social World of the Child* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1987.

Damon - Moore, Helen, *Gender, Advertising & Mass Circulation Magazines*, New Heaven, Yale University Press, 1991.

Damon - Moore, Helen, *Magazines for the millions*, State Uni. NY, Press Albany, 1994.

Doane, Mary Ann, *Film & Masquerade, Theorising The Female Spectator*, *Screen*, Vol. 23, nos. 3-4 (September-October), 1982, pp. 74-88.

Doane, Mary Ann, *The Desire To Desire, The Woman's Films of The 1940s*, Indiana University Press, 1987.

Dweck, C. S. & Elliott, E. S., Achievement Motivation. In P. H. Mussen (ed.), *Handbook Of Child Psychology*, vol. 4, New York, Wiley, 1983

Eames, Sarah Sink, *Barbie Fashion, Vol. 1, 1959-1967*, Collector Books, Kentucky, USA, 1990.

Eckert, *The Carole Lombard In Macy's Window*, in, Haskell, *From Rape To Reverence*, University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Ehreneich, Barbara, Hess, E., & Jacobs, G., *Re-Making Love: The Feminization of Sex* New York, Harper Perennial, 1994.

Ewen, Stuart, *Captions Of Consciousness: Advertising & The Social Roots Of The Consumer Culture*, New York, McGraw- Hill, 1976.

Fagot, B.I., *Beyond the reinforcement principle: another step toward understanding sex role development*, Development Psychology, 1985.

Fagot & Leinbach, Socialisation of sex roles within the family. In D.B. Carter (ed.) *Current Conceptions Of Sex Roles & Sex Typing : Theory & Research*, New York, Praeger, 1987,

Feuer, Jane, *The Hollywood Musical*, second edition, MacMillan, London, 1993.

Foucault, Michel, *The Archeology of Knowledge & The Discourse On Language*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith, Pantheon, New York, 1972.

Fraser, Kennedy, *The Fashionable Mind: Reflections On Fashion*, New York, Alfred A. Knaf, 1987.

Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1963.

Gaines, Jane & Herzog, Charlotte, ed. *Fabrications, Costume And The Female Body*, Routledge, London, 1990.

Gammon, Lorraine, & Marchant, M. (eds.), *The Female Gaze*, London, Women's Press, 1988

Goffman, Erving, *Gendered Advertisements*, London, MacMillan, 1979

Haskell, Molly, *From Reverence To Rape, The Treatment Of Women In The Movies*, second edition, University of Chicago Press, USA, 1987.

Hertherington, Mavis & Parke, Ross, *Child Psychology A Contemporary View Point*, USA, McGraw-Hill, 1993.

Hoffman, Frank, W., *Fashion & Merchandising Fads*, New York, Haworth Press, 1994.

Jacobs, Laura, *Barbie In Fashion*, New York, Abbeville, Press, 1994.

Kaplan, Cora, (eds.), *Formations of Fantasy*, New York, Routledge, 1986.

Kaplan, Louise, *Female Perversions: The Temptations of Emma Bovary*, New York, Anchor Books, 1992.

Kelly & Whyte, *The Missing Half*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

Kline & Pentecost, *The Characterisation of Play: Marketing Children's Toys, Play & Culture*, Vol. No. 3 1990.

Knapp, Louise Kohlberg, L., *A cognitive-development analysis of children's sex-role concepts and attitudes*, in Macoby, E. (ed) *The Development of Sexual Differences*, California, Stanford University Press, 1966.

Kuhn, Annette, *Women's Pictures: Feminism & Cinema*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.

Loban, Glynis, *Sexism In Children's Books*, Writers & Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976

Lord, M.J., *Forever Barbie, The Unauthorized Biography of a Real Doll*, William Morrow, New York, 1994.

Lummins, M. & Stevenson, H.W., Gender differences in beliefs & differences: A cross-cultural study, *Development Psychology*, vol. 24, pp. 254 - 263, 1990,

Mayes, Pat, *Gender, Sociology in Focus*, Series, Longman London, 1984.

McCracken, Ellen, *Decoding Women's Advertisements, From Mademoiselle To Ms.*, USA, MacMillan, 1993.

McGrath, Kathleen, *Images of Women In Fiction*, Bowling Green Univerity Popular Press, 1992.

Mc Nay, Lois, *Foucault & Feminism*, UK., Polity Press, 1992.

McRobbie, Angela, *Feminisim and Youth Culture: Jackie & Just Seventeen, Girl's Comics & Magazines In The 1980s*, London, MacMillan, 1991.

Measor, Lynda & Sikes, Patricia, *Gender and Schools*, Cassell, NY 1992.

Modleski, Tania, (ed.) *StudiesIn Entertainment: Critical Approachers To mass Culture*, Indianapolis, Indiana Press, 1986.

Moore, Allan, *The Cosmo Girl: A Playboy Inversion: Dialogue on Women*, ed. Robert Theobald, 1989.

Moore, Suzanne, *The Female Gaze, Heres Looking At You Kid!*, Women's Press, 1988.

Moss, H. A., *Sex, Age & State As Determinents Of The Mother-Infant Reaction*, 1970,

Mulvey, Laura, *Feminisim & Film Theory: Visual Pleasure & Narrative Cinema*, Routledge, 1975,

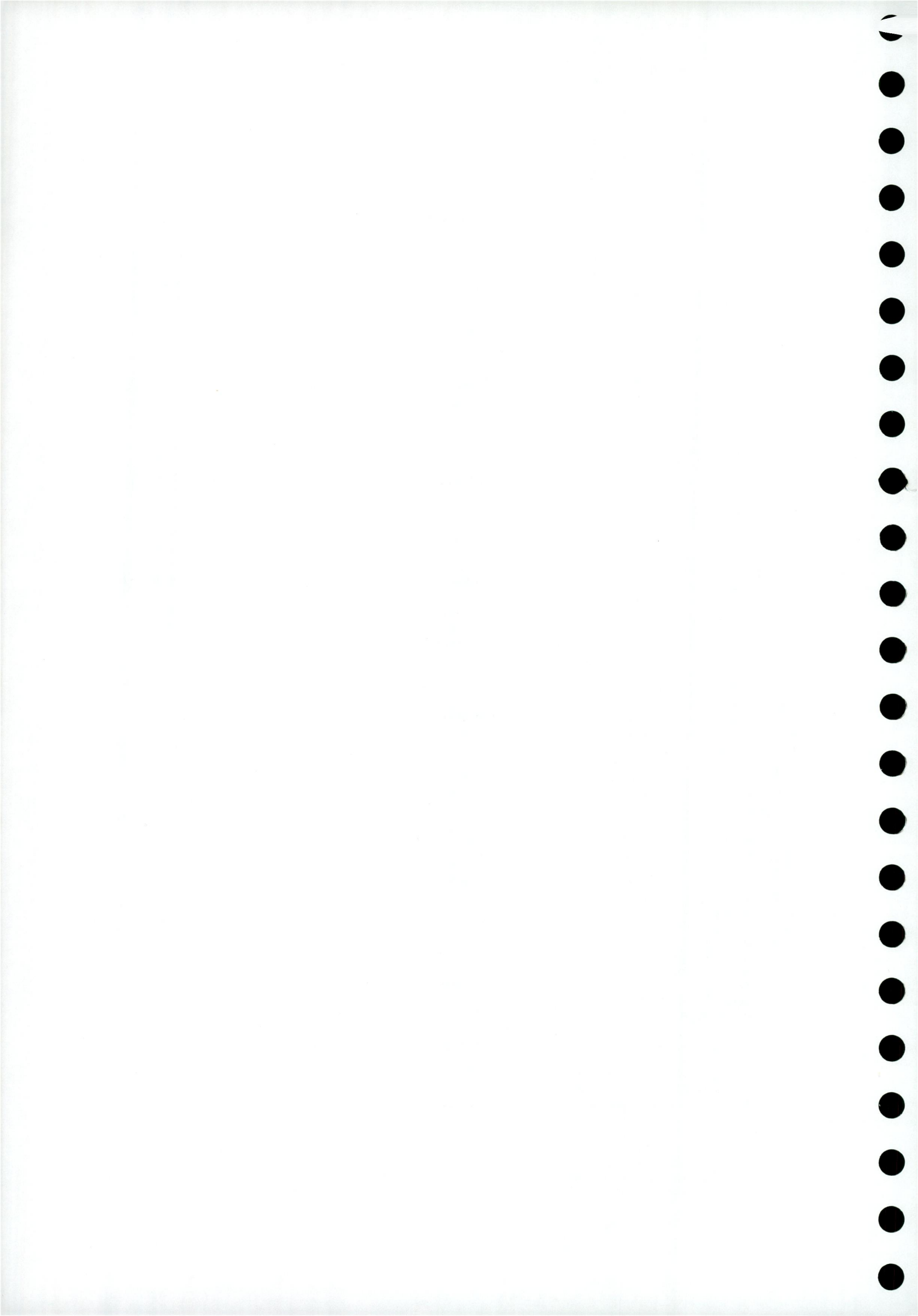
Mulvey, Laura, *A Phantasmogoria Of The Female Body, The Work Of Cindy Sherman*, *New Left Review*, Vol. 188 (Jul-Aug), 1991.

Murphy, Christina, (ed.), *School Principal, Only Men Need Apply*, *The Irish Times*, Tuesday, December 5, 1995.

Murphy, Louise, *The Widening World Of Childhood*, 1962,

Orbach, Susie & Eichenbaum, Louise, *Understanding Women*, Penguin Books, London, 1983.

O' Sickey, Ingeborg Majer, *Dicipline & Punishment, Barbie Magazine & The Aesthetic Commodification Of Girl's Bodies*, London, Routledge, 1991.



Pollock, Griselda & Parker, R. (eds.), *Framing Feminism: Art & The Women's Movement 1970 - 1985: Whats Wrong With Images Of Women?*, London, Pandora, 1987

Pomerleau, Bolduc, Malcuit & Cossette, Pink or blue.: Environmental gender stereotypes in the first two years of life, *Sex Roles*, vol. 22, pp. 359 - 367, 1990.

Radway, Janice, *Reading Romance: Women, Patriarchy & Popular Literature*, London, North Carolina Press, 1984.

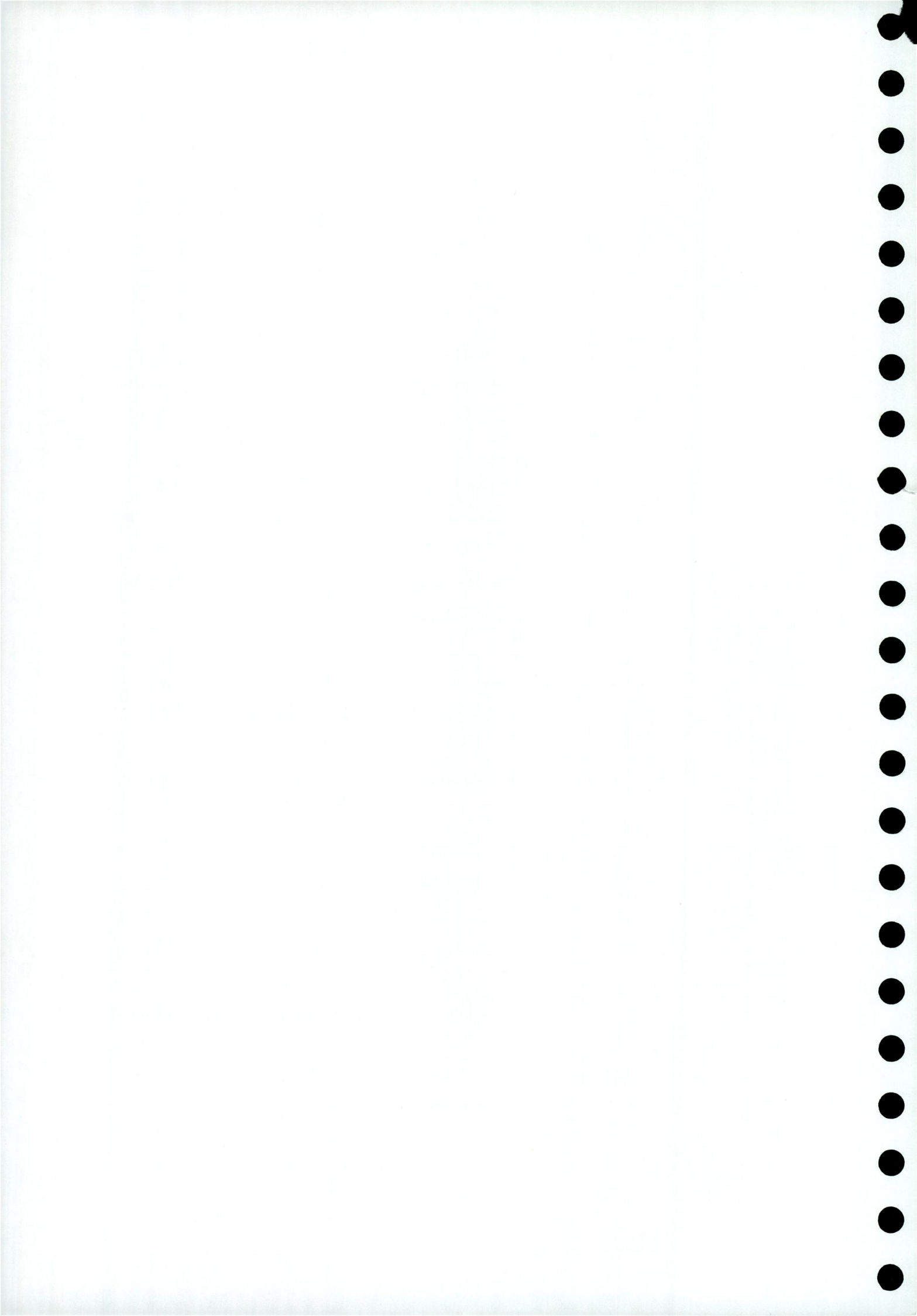
Rana, Margo, *Barbie Exclusives*, Collector Books, Kentucky, 1995.

Rivière, Joan, *Womanliness As A Masquerade* in Kaplan's *Formations Of Fantasy*, New York, Routledge, 1986,

Rowbotham, Sheila, *Hidden From History*, Pluto Press, 1973

Ruble D. N., Sex Role Development. In M.H. Bornstein & M.E. Lamb (eds.), *Development Psychology: An Advanced Textbook*, 2nd edition, New Jersey, Hillsdale, 1988,

Shakin, Shakin & Sternglanz, *Infant Clothing: Sex labeling for strangers*, *Sex Roles*, vol. 12, pp. 955 - 963, 1985



Sharpe, Sue, *Just Like A Girl: How Girls Learn To Be Women: From The Seventies To The Ninties*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1994.

Short, G. and Carrington, B. *Discourse on Gender: the perceptions of children aged between six and eleven*, In C. Skelton (ed.), *What Ever Happens To Little Women?* Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989.

Skeggs, Beverly, *Feminist Cultural Theory*, Manchester, University Press, 1995.

Skelton, Christine, (ed.) *Whatever Happens to Little Women?*, Open University Press, USA, 1989.

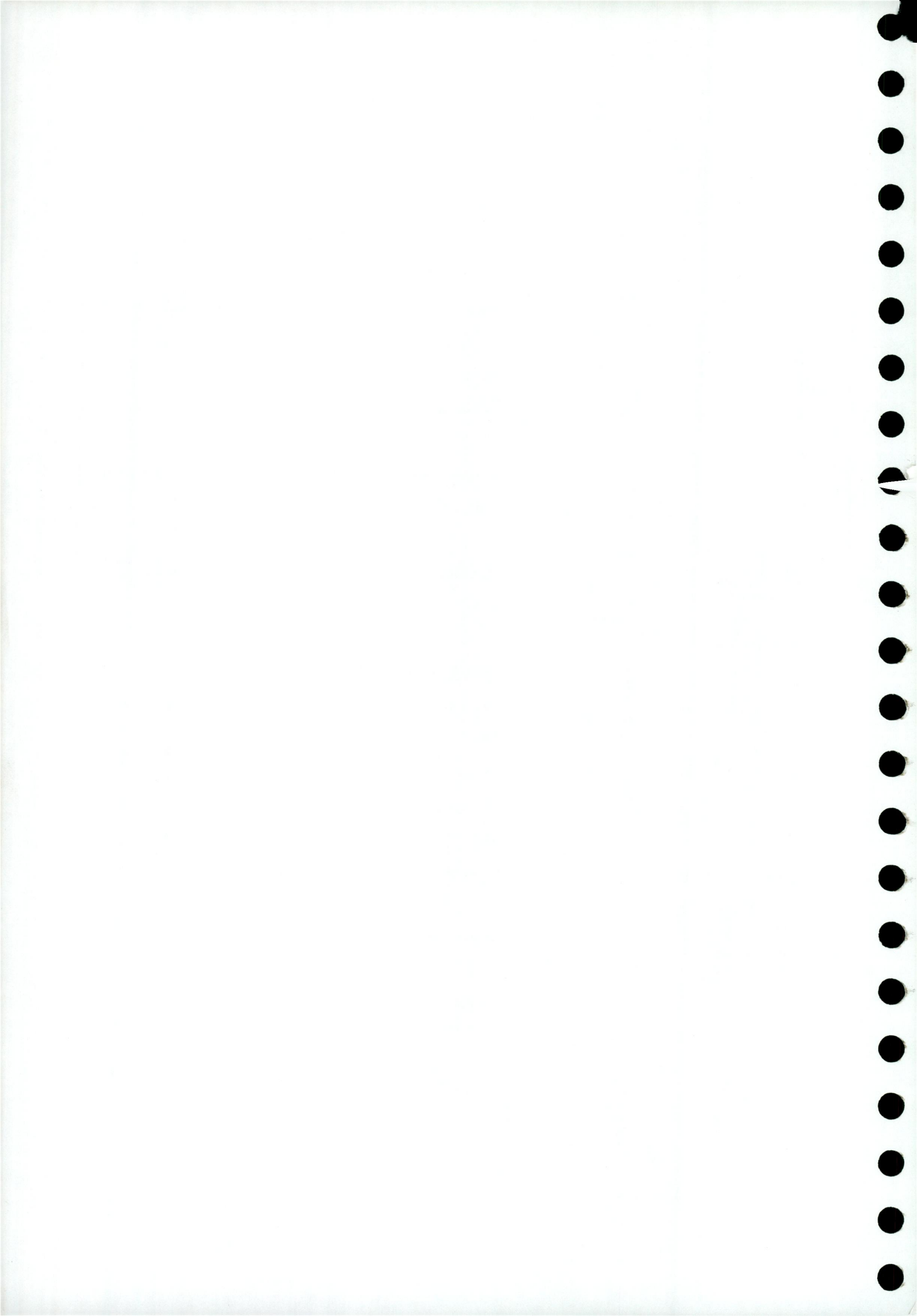
Slabey, R.G. & Frey, K.S., *Development of gender constancy and selective attention to same sex models: Child Development*, 1975.

Stacey, Jackie, *Desperatly Seeking Difference; The Lost Audience; Methodology, Cinema History & Feminist Film Criticism*, London, Routledge, 1992.

Stacey, Jackie, *Star Gazing*, London, Routledge, 1993.

Stroller, R.J., *Sex & Gender*, London, Abram, 1968,

Von Boehn, M. *Gendered Images*, Routledge, London,



1988.

Weldon, Fay, *The Meaning Of Beauty*, Cosmopolitan, June, 1995.

Williamson, Judith, *Images Of Women, Consuming Passions, The Dynamics of Popular Culture*, London, Marion Boyars, 1986.

Williamson, Judith, *Decoding Advertisements*, London, Marion Boyars, 1978,

Winship, Janice, *Inside Women's Magazines*, London & New York, Pandora, 1987.

Wolf, Naomi, *The Beauty Myth, Images Of Beauty As Used Against Women*, London, Vintage, 1990.

