UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I LIBRARY

MY BODY/ MY PLAYGROUND:

SEEKING SUBJECTIVITY BEYOND THE OBJECTIFICATION OF

ADVERTISING

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

AMERICAN STUDIES

DECEMBER 2002

By Kamuela A. Young

Dissertation Committee:
David Stannard, Chairperson
Kathy Ferguson
Michael J. Shapiro
William Chapman
Floyd Matson

INTRODUCTION:	
for the reader	
from the writer	
to the Book	
CHAPTER 1	
AMERICAN IDEOLOGY	
the theory	22
CHAPTER 2	42
CHANGING AMERICA	43
the ad man	60
<u>CHAPTER 3</u>	
CONSUMPTION A WAY OF LIFE	
the groundwork	84
the new collective knowledge	87
created market dependence	90
CHAPTER 4	
ADVERTISING: THE SIREN OF CONSUMPTION	
<u>1920 -1930's</u>	109
<u> 1940's - 1950's</u>	114
<u>1960's</u>	
<u> 1970's - 1980's</u>	
<u>1990's</u>	132
<u>CHAPTER 5</u>	140
EYES WIDE SHUT	143
choice constructed	145
running with eyes wide shut	155
<u>it works so well</u>	
PRICE OF THE TICKET	
<u>CHAPTER 6</u>	
TURNING TOWARDS THE BODY	
<u>theory</u>	180
<u>the body</u>	
the marked body	
THE BODY, THE VEHICLE	
<u>play</u>	
<u>bodies of youth</u>	
<u>CHAPTER 7</u>	
My Body My Playground	
marking the body: a practice	
subject whole?	
NOTES	248

For Puna and Pila Who changed my life simply by being a part of it. I'm telling you stories, trust me.
Jeanette Winterson,
The Passion

Woke up with a feeling of emptiness again. Something is off. I'm not sure what it is; but it feels worse today. A general dis-ease has made a home in me. I feel like something is missing or lost. The power of this emptiness is intensified by its invisibility. The haunting sits with me, heavy, lighter at times, but always present. I feel its hunger. I need something to feed it — for some odd reason I think a new shampoo might help.

In these hauntings I am not alone; they are, I have discovered, very American. I imagine it to function like a cancer, slightly eating away at me. My students and friends echo this same sort of emptiness. It is a real problem for many of us in the middle-class. In the years that I have been wrestling with this emptiness and listening to the stories of how others I have met are dealing with theirs, I have begun to see a connection between this dis-ease and advertising. It is this connection that has led me to the works of Berman,

Bocock, Ewen, Lears, and Slater. With their help I argue that advertising has altered our thinking and conditioned us to remain in a state of starvation for foods that do not actually nourish us. The following work sets out to explore this further while also seeking a few would-be answers.

We all know advertising works; that it has the power to shift our sense of desire and to create and feed our insecurity. For most middle-class Americans proof of this can be found by simply looking in our closets or around our homes. We all own products we do not need, that we found ridiculous and yet later they evolved into items we somehow *had* to have. Advertising, the siren of consumption has a voice comforting and sweet enough to lure us towards the rocks while simultaneously assuring us that the transformation it promises is *really* the transformation we desire.

Advertising constructs our desires, offers us products to fill those constructions, and then nags us with still greater desires. Its tack is to always remind us that we are flawed, by constantly reminding us that we lack what can make us whole. It pushes us to note the emptiness of desire unfulfilled and to then fill the perceived void with products. The illusions that assure the sale empower the consumer, but only for a moment¹. The victory fades in the face of the next advertising assault, which highlights how horribly behind, and, as a result, how disempowered we *really* are. The illusion has altered who we are, and in the process we have been seduced still further by it.

Advertising is on everything from billboards to children's clothing².

The following sets out to understand how it is that so simple a concept -- the

need to sell product – has so successfully altered our perception of the world and, ultimately, ourselves, and how that perception might be possible to shift.

I would like to thank the following people for walking this path with me, without their help and support this adventure's end would not have been possible. Thanks to my parents Jan and Mason Young, to my Tutu, Jean Jenkins, my brothers Puna and Pila, and to Terry Galpin, Fred Klemmer and Linda Leyden Ph.D. for their endless love, support and belief in my ability. Thanks to Jack Burke N.D. and Don Hallock, without whom I might not have understood the connections between the body and mind so fully. A deep thanks to Dean Chadwin, who edited this text and endured my dyslexia and my attachment to commas. Thanks to my committee, David Stannard (Chair), Kathy Ferguson, Michael Shapiro, Floyd Matson and Bill Chapman for their time and guidance, and all the people who allowed me to ask them questions about their bodies and in return gave me stories about their lives. And finally, to the people who continued to make me laugh and encourage my creativity, all the while helping me to remember that there would be life after the Ph.D. Thank you Cyn Derosier, Kennan Ferguson Ph.D., James Benouis, Lani and Ira Burnett.

Every one of my writings has been furnished to me by a thousand different persons, a thousand different things.

Goethe,

in Reinventing Medicine

When I began this paper, I imagined that I would pass through this journey quickly, that the process work was done, and just the typing remained. I could not have been more wrong. The process work had only just begun, and the typing proved to be the task by which the process displayed itself. I tell you of this journey because it has been reflected in the ways I have looked at the body, theory, and middle-class American culture as a whole.

I discovered my voice changed somewhere in chapter five. No longer was it rational and critical; it was now rich with anger and sarcasm. I wanted to write: Of course Americans can't locate themselves(s); of course, eighteen-year-olds have to burn their identity into their skin; of course, we did all of this to ourselves. I hated the life I had created where every conversation seemed to be research³. I hated that I had just handed over nine years of my life to academia and had only 250 pages to show for it. I got sick, my body went

crooked, and my mind clouded with the static of things left for another day.

Most horrifying, I was starting to become numb to what I had at one time been so interested in.

This process had written itself into me. Like the scooter burn on my ankle, this project is etched into my skin, and deeper. It is etched into my very sense of self(s). In one of my seemingly endless moaning sessions with my mom, I told her that my voice had changed and that I was considering going back to training waitresses how to greet new tables. I listened as she explained my work to me through me. The process I was going through was just like the one I had been writing about; being lost in it shifted the ways I could locate myself in relationship to it, and, fittingly enough, my body had been the vehicle for this transformation.

Of course, my voice was different now. I was different now. I have been written on. I had been fighting its markings and fighting what I told myself was the map. How naïve I was to believe I would be unmarked by this process; the irony was that the desire to be changed, to be branded by this choice, was why I began this adventure in first place. And here I was fighting, somehow expecting to be exempt from the kinds of transformations I was writing about.

This text deals with a similar struggle, the struggle to fight the markings of mainstream consumptive American culture. It is grounded in an understanding of advertising as shackle. But it is rooted in transition: about how consumptive culture offers us boxes and how we seat ourselves into them.

These events mark us, often moving us to places we might not have moved ourselves. In this text I am looking at one of the engines that push us, willingly or not, into the spaces in which we then find ourselves trapped. In the end I am seeking to understand these engines well enough to disable their code and in doing so let in a bit of fresh air and hopefully garner a new perspective on my own power in this struggle.

I began this quest rather uneventfully, in conversation after a class on hegemony with one of my students. A bright woman named Maile who had, by all mainstream American standards, nothing to feel angst over, she is beautiful, young, intelligent, white and from the upper middle-class, and yet she struggled with a sense of being both watched and controlled by the market place. Her struggle had pushed her to find relief from the expectations of perfection she understood capitalist society to hold over her. She located this relief in a small tattoo and navel ring. She understood these marks to mark her out of the race for perfection and in the process as releasing her from some of consumption's grasp.

What I found interesting was these marks that empowered her to disable consumption's message were not visible to others in her everyday display of herself; one was tucked beneath a shirt line (a navel ring) and the other hidden by a sandal strap (a tattoo wrapped around her toe). These small moments of imperfection marked her out of one struggle without marking her out of mainstream culture. She found a way to settle the dis-ease within her

without having to trade in the privileges of the middle-class. I had to know if there were more like her hiding in plain sight.

This text attempts to explore this further; it is about the ways we have been written upon and the ways we in turn are writing ourselves(s). As I said, through this process I have been rewritten. The people I look at in this text are making attempts to rewrite themselves by marking into their bodies with ink and steel. I don't know if the freedom they seek is at the end of the journey for more than a brief time. What I do know is that for those I spoke to the ink and steel of tattoos and body piercing matter in the moment, and can ripple out in profound ways. For many, these marks bring them, if only briefly, a feeling of being home within themselves. I believe something vital is in that coming home. I know locating the self(s) is necessary to thrive in a consumptive society. This project explores one avenue in that search for home.

... if you draw your own map, it is from your own point of view.
G Deleuze and F. Guattari
A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia

Consumer culture is probably less a field (which evokes a steady tilling of a well-marked patch of productive land) and more a spaghetti junction of intersecting disciplines, methodologies, politics. The enduring issue that underlies all of them is the nature of 'the social'. Where productive work has been carried out it has been on the assumption that the study of consumer culture is not simply the study of texts and textually, of individual choice and consciousness, of wants and desires, but rather the study of such things in the context of social relations, structures, institutions, systems. It is the study of the social conditions under which personal and social wants and the organization of social resources define each other.

Don Slater
Consumer Culture and Modernity

If you had a tattoo what would it be? Where would you put it?

(One of a series of questions posed to a patient by a holistic healer in an effort to understand her illness.)

Jack Burke N.D., L.Ac.

If every action produces a reaction, then it does not seem odd that the first generations to consider themselves hip to the techniques of advertising should bear the resulting angst on their body. As children, the simulacra of their lives was constructed and mediated for them. All in all they fared well,

but the battles are written into them. Many of these self-proclaimed hipsters spent their adolescence in shopping malls; gazing into their reflections in shop windows, learning to piece together an identity from those offered for sale.

The scars left by these battles are not the kind we expect; not the marks left from broken bones or stitched together skin, instead these scars slash across their understands of their identities and keloid, leaving large, nearly tactile, ridges on their sense of self(s). These scars are made visible in their insecurity and in the multitude of self-perfecting projects these kids practice in an attempt to claim agency. The battle these generations face is in locating a subjectivity that comes in agency from among the myriad of simulacrum offered to them. For many the field of this battle is on the body. Some of their victories are visible as tattoos and piercings. Some have found peace in the battle, some have found themselves in the process, still others remain in the simulacrum. I shine the light of interest on the ideology animating middleclass American consumption, its history in practice and theory (one hundred years of Advertising), and on one group's (middle-class generation X and Y) ways of defending themselves from the dominant discourse. Like most cultural battles, this one is not soon over.

The body of this text will look at middle-class Americans, and especially those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight, who are bombarded with images focused on inadequacies which are designed to foster consumption. Perfection is presented as the desired and achievable state.

Without reaching for perfection, consumption culture assures us, there can be

no love and no happiness. Advertising has historically sold middle-class

America the promise of perfection (and in turn a loving and happy life)

through products while continuing to reconstitute the importance of perfection

by reminding us that we are locked in the other's gaze. I believe that bodyplay

offers some of those who employ it the opportunity to step out of mainstream

culture's demanding pursuit of perfection and into a space where self
acceptance and celebration can occur, thus, presenting a location from which

agency and subjectivity can grow.

Bodyplay resonates differently from other youth culture body projects. Perhaps it is because these markings are truly etched into and under the skin, making the project all the more personal. Maybe it has to do with the ways the markings both reflect their subjects and become part of them, resonating the permanence of this act on the body and the self(s). For most, a tattoo or piercing serves as a reaffirmation of one's identity, as a remembrance of self(s), rather than as the basis of an ideology. Bodyplay (as described to me by those I interviewed) is not intended to shock or even adversely affect others. Instead, it functions to transform on an individual level, in that these kids are not setting out to change the culture radically, nor do they desire to be separated from it; their struggle is then to locate a place for themselves within society. With this as their objective they can find normalized and acceptable spaces within American capitalistic culture without having to exchange parts of their subjectivity for it.

To the extent that those who participate in bodyplay have not stepped out of mainstream culture, they are not readily dismissed from it. These kids have deterritorialized⁴ fringe culture's icons, tattoos and piercings, and have made it possible for subjects bearing these images to occupy new locations within mainstream American culture. It is critical to note that bodyplay is not an 'in your face' project. (Most who participate in it are not recognizable on the street.) Tattoos and piercing are normally tucked under clothes, leaving exposure in the hands of the bearer to negotiate. This makes possible the dance of insider/outsider: a marked body whose marks are not public mediates his/her own body's read by choosing to display or not. Bodyplay is not meant to mark out its participants, as has been the intention of earlier youth body projects, but rather it is intended to open the doors to subjectivity within the mainstream For this to work, the subject's marked body must not be totally readable by outsiders. I believe this is a key aspect of bodyplay that allows it to have the resonance it does. Bodyplay is a personal project for which the political rings loud.

These kids are altering the terrain of the American mainstream by tinkering with the location of its cultural center. Fifteen years ago, most tattooed or pierced bodies were relegated to the fringe of society⁵. Margo Demello in, *Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Tattooing Community*, argues that tattoos have always read as the metaphor of difference for westerners ⁶. This difference transitioned in the 1960's to marginality

through a media-fostered association between tattoos and deviant groups (61-70).

Today, as a result of bodyplay, a tattoo or a piercing is recognized primarily as a middle-class marker for a specific age group. Demello argues that the popularization⁷ of tattoos, and to this I would add body piercing⁸, within the middle-class is the result of a change in the function and meaning of tattoos as a means to express identity (136-7). The middle-class has created their own understanding of tattooing by borrowing from current social movements, (such as self-help, New Age, feminist spirituality, ecology and the men's movement) and, with these movements as backdrop, tattooing has effectively been transitioned into a middle-class body project⁹. The narratives that accompany middle-class body marking serve to create a new cultural tradition of tattooing that legitimizes and naturalizes the project within its new class. All of which further serves to remove tattooing from its working class soil while firmly replanting it in the middle-class.

This dynamic in play, there will be specific groups I will not be looking at because of their relationship to the mainstream. I will not be addressing Biker sub-culture or prison sub-culture and their relationship to tattoos and/or body piercing, because historically, both bikers and convicted criminals have had a relationship to body marking that is desirous of the margin. Biker body marking is an 'in your face' project, their placement and design is structured to incite confrontation. (More often then not the tattoos themselves read as a challenge to the mainstream: FTW¹⁰, Born to Lose, Live to Ride, Ride to Live,

(on women) Property of (male Biker's name), and symbols like skulls and knives, couple this with their placement, which is most often located in a public area of the body and body marking in these communities can certainly be read as a frontal attack on the mainstream.) Demello reminds us these are not private expressions as much as they are "public commentary" writ large on the body (67-68). Prison sub-culture body marking works in a similar fashion; markings are designed to mark out the bearer from the mainstream. They mark one as having served time. In both these subcultures there is an interesting component in that body marking in this style (as a visual indicator of outsiderness) also marks one as an insider for the sub-culture. A rather important aspect in both these sub-cultures as their group marginality also comes with a real need to be recognized as an insider by the group¹¹.

I will also not be looking at the military and its members relationship to tattooing. There is a long history of relationship between tattoo culture and the military¹² however, much of it is held together with the threads of group allegiances (branch of the military) and patriotism. There is little border crossing being done here and where a crossing can be found, as with the Biker/criminal sub-culture, it is a crossing into or out of group identification rather than into subjectivity. (I would like to note here that I believe these groups I am not including employ bodyplay to many of the same ends as those whom I am looking at; as an effort to mark themselves as changed, however, I am interested in change that seeks agency rather than recognition.)

There is one more sub-group I am not looking at in this text, those who mark their genitalia¹³. (This is more prevalent as a piercing.) I am choosing not to include this sub-group, even though many of them fall into my scope (in terms of age and placement visibility), because I am not skilled enough to negotiate the terrain of American sexuality that is inherently attached. I met many people in my interview process who shared with me that they had marked their genitalia, they had narratives to share in relation to these, but often there was a thread of something more in their tellings. (Perhaps because this form of bodyplay seems more complicated to narrate.) America is a sexually repressed and therefore obsessed culture; these acts of bodyplay are tied to our cultural relationship to and with sex. In the narratives I heard there was much I could not identity or comfortably pursue¹⁴. The aspects of dis-ease I felt here interested me, both because it came as a hard edge for me and because in mainstream culture it is not acceptable to pull one's pants down or one's shirt up for a stranger. After much struggle with where these narratives and their correlative displays were situated I made the choice to exclude genitalia markings from my study.

In that bodyplay is a project taken on by the middle-class within mainstream culture, we see the changing of assumptions about both the young and the marked; no longer is a marked body the sign of being marked out (in terms of class or opportunity). The wearers of bodyplay have shifted the meaning of a cultural signifier as a result of their location within mainstream American culture.

This change opens a fissure on the coding of the mainstream thus altering the ways that consumption can shape our identity. Bodyplay marks a body in a very individualized fashion. The marks are specific to the body on which they ride; there is no way to totally commodify¹⁵ them. Nevertheless, attempts to exploit the trend are available, one can buy temporary tattoos, with representations of brand logos and famous paintings, as well as body-piercing clip-on rings at nearly every drugstore. Bodyplay is not about the image on the skin so much as it is about choosing a specific and personal image that fits *in* your skin and with one's sense of self(s)¹⁶. Bodyplay is the subject writing into the body in order to find voice, which can allow for a transformation of the body from object to vehicle in a move towards subjectivity.

The following work will discuss how this subjectivity can be achieved and lead to a sense of self(s) in a culture so disciplined by consumption. I begin with a history of consumption's hold on middle-class America in an effort to demonstrate both the subtle and binding grip it has on the middle-class constructions of identity and subjectivity. In the later sections of the text we will again return to the subject, subjectivity and the body and the way these can function together to construct a self(s) that is able to function within so consumptive a society as the American middle-class.

Outline:

The first chapter addresses the leap in ideology required for advertising, and ultimately consumption culture, to function, by focusing on what advertising shapes in the American mind around consumption. Chapter one

looks at how advertising disciplines the American public into a consumptive understanding and reorders the interaction of society and the individual. Chapter two looks at the methods used to keep this discipline in play, as well as the shift in strategy that furthered the internalization of the consumption discipline. Chapter three tightens the link between the notions of discipline and consumption, by showing that our conditioning to consume, regardless of actual need or desire, has affected the ways we think about and respond to ourselves. Chapter four offers a more detailed look at the methods advertising has used to achieve this end. Chapter five returns to theory by looking at the cost this conditioning has waged on our subjectivity. And finally, chapters six and seven return us to the body in theory and practice. Chapter six focuses on how bodies are marked and how these marks serve to construct the subject, while chapter seven looks at the current youth culture's body project in an attempt to understand how these bodies are disabling the body of code consumption culture feeds us.

Ads: ... The product matters less as the audience participation increases. ... The continuous pressure is to create more and more in the image of the audience motives and desires. ... The need is to make the ad include the audience experience. The product and the public response become a single complex pattern. ... the steady trend in advertising is to manifest the product as an integral part of the large social purpose and process. ... Ads are not meant for conscious consumption. They are intended as subliminal pills for the subconscious in order to exercise an hypnotic spell, ... It is true, of course, that ads use the most basic and tested human experience of a community in grotesque ways. ... it offers a life that is for everybody or nobody.

Marshall McLuhan
Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, 201-7

American Ideology

In order for advertising to sell products effectively, the average

American mind had to change, to be reprogrammed, from a perception of selfreliance to one of product dependence. This required a leap in ideology. Prior
to Modernity¹⁷, most Americans defined themselves in self-sufficient terms,
understanding themselves as a rough and rugged people who made good with
what was around them. A majority of this sense of self came from what one

could and did do in the new world. Removed from Europe geographically an ideological transition of dependence followed. A majority of Americans began to internalize some form of independence as part of their understanding and performance of self. This creation of self as independent and self-sufficient became rooted in the newly emerging concept of America.

For consumption ¹⁸ to function at peak levels in America, the perception of the self as independent and self-sufficient had to be altered to include mass-produced products. Industrialists believed Americans had to be (re)educated to learn to privilege consumption over sufficiency. To this end industrialists juxtapose American consumption against pre-modern and European understandings and practices of consumption, and they then linked these budding American practices to epic notions of progress and growth. Manufacturers, capitalists and entrepreneurs, the industrialists of the era, set out to do this by readjusting the ways Americans saw themselves in relation to Modernity and then codified these changes as American. The result of these efforts changed the frame in which consumption was presented, and in doing so shifted the ways it could be understood within an American context.

For this type of re-framing to occur, a new version of the American commerce stage had to be erected. It had to light American perceptions surrounding consumption, and transform consumption into an expected norm.

Such a transition required a broader and more fluid understanding of what it meant to consume – of what consumption meant in terms of the individual, the community and the nation. This understanding had to include an intertwining

of products and progress and a still deeper acceptance of Modernity as a desired way of life. *Progress* and *new* had to now equal *Better/Bigger/Stronger* in the American mind. The re-staging of the ideology of the American consumer opened the door to a new definition of and cultural location for consumption, and in the process normalized a market driven identity.

This re-framed perspective was to become the lynchpin in the construction of American consumption culture. The stage, newly designed and lit, altered how Americans saw themselves and their consumption patterns.

The following sections will look at the methodology used initially and continually to maintain this altered perception.

the theory

The setting on any stage creates the tone for the whole of the performance. Aristotle, in *On Poetics*, refers to this as spectacle, one of the six necessary elements in Tragedy. I begin with Aristotle's use of spectacle because tragedy is designed to move us into a new state of understanding. It is designed to bring us to catharsis:

the imagination of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; ... with

incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. (Aristotle 684).

The creation of a cathartic event was necessary in the reconstruction of American ideology. The stage, in its constant presences, is the silent and often pivotal performer. Through lighting, design and stability, both in its physical structure and its visual permanence, it serves to lull the audience into a relaxed state of knowing. In this stage there is structure, a frame on which the performance has been built, and this constructed world is 'shared' with those around them¹⁹. Thus, allowing the audience to relax into a state of familiarity and safety. As this stage increasingly becomes solid the catharsis becomes possible.

I believe the setting constructed by consumer culture functions in the same way that stage settings work in tragedy. The very real structure of Bentham's Panopticon is an example of the power of the silent performer to alter perception and thinking. In Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, he uses the Panopticon, Bentham's architectural figure, as a physical base in order to create an understanding of how the individual is trained to discipline him/herself in a space of external power:

We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building, at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open into the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a school boy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out

precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible (200).

The Panopticon reverses the functions of the dungeon. In Bentham's model, the captive is moved from the dark into the light, thus allowing for greater observation. The theory is that a prisoner in open and constant view becomes trapped in by his/her own visibility. There is no hiding in the dark, no certainty of observational lapses, and thus no space, either literally or figuratively, from which to escape the watcher. The prisoner of the Panopticon is, according to Foucault, "... seen, but does not see; he is the object of information, never the subject in communication" (200).

The Panopticon structure is designed to do more than just create a physical space where the prisoner is under constant observation; it is designed to discipline the prisoner into self-observation and thus produce desired behavior. Foucault saw the major effect of Bentham's Panopticon as creating a state of constant and permanent visibility. For Foucault this is a state that "assures the automatic functioning of power". If done well, the panoptic structure²⁰ can function as the container in which to condition responses of permanent observation even when the act of observation is discontinuous (201)²¹.

Through the Panopticon, the dyad between seeing/being seen is dismantled. By removing the observer from view and thus rendering the

observed as "totally seen, without ever seeing," the Panopticon becomes a powerful tool of discipline (202). It is especially effective in that it both automates and de-individualizes power by playing with the expectation of visibility. This expectation of observation, Foucault suggests, is the key to the "homogeneous effects of power" the Panopticon can produce (202)²².

Foucault argues the power of the Panopticon lies not in the actual watching but in the expectation of watching. This is this kind of power Foucault addresses in *Discipline and Punish*. Here he reminds us that absolute power and control derive not simply from the overt force found in violence and/or constraint, but instead from the self-imposed discipline often found in those held in constant states of observation. Foucault reminds us:

... he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relationship in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects; it is a perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation and which is always decided in advance (203).

I have dedicated this time to discussing Foucault's understanding of Bentham's Panopticon because I think the disciplined response many middle-class Americans have towards consumption mirrors the way prisoners operate within the Panopticon. This disciplined response is the desired setting for increased American consumption. Much of American consumption culture functions like the Panopticon on the conscience of middle-class America. Consumption culture disciplines middle-class America to monitor its own

behavior by teaching them to watch others and to accept to be watched by others in return. Advertisements serve as a primary tool in this disciplining. In that ads borrow from the world of the middle-class their disciplining voice is located in the familiar of the everyday. By casting players as everyday versions of ourselves (be them lesser or more perfect versions), ads serve constantly to reinstate the disciplining message. That message is that perfection is necessary for acceptance/love and that this perfection can only be understood and embodied through the consumption of acceptable goods. I believe the form cultural conformity takes places Americans in the same state that Foucault saw the prisoners in the Panopticon: "totally seen, without ever seeing" (202).

I realize it borders on the Un-American to use words like oppression and prisoner when discussing consumption. What I am looking to do is create dissonance in an area we so often gloss over. It is an accepted belief that oppression can be so institutionalized as to oppress without walls. We need go no further than the mortar that continues to maintain the walls of racism and sexism to know that most overbearing forms of oppression *do* exist outside the walls of prisons and *without* the watchful eyes of uniformed guards²³.

American citizens, full of their perceived freedoms, are thus no different from Rousseau's understanding of the human condition: "men everywhere are born free and everywhere are in chains."

How then is it possible that ways of understanding and actions that most of us would stand in opposition to are so powerful that they can quietly hold us prisoner for so long? Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann argue in their text, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise In The Sociology of Knowledge*, that the answer is simple; we allow it.

Not only do we allow it; we actively maintain it²⁴. Human reality, according to Berger and Luckmann, is a socially constructed reality (189). It is from this assumption the two build an understanding of how we operate in society as Americans. The logic of their argument goes as follows: if human reality is constructed, so too must be all of its structures, institutions, beliefs, explanations and sanctions. This explains the continuing dialectic between individuals and the society, one reflecting the other in an on-going and dynamic fashion: neither solely leading the other, but both feeding off the patterning of the other to keep the constructed illusions in play.

Balancing these illusions is necessary to maintain the relationship between the self(s) and the outside social context. John Searle, in his text, *The Construction of Social Reality*, asserts that the one shapes the other, and goes still further to state that the self can not be understood outside of the social context that shapes it. He argues that man's self-production is always and of necessity a social enterprise. As Searle understands social construction, it is a part of our humanness to construct our lives. Social construction allows us to more accurately anticipate what those we interact with will do. What we learn, we take as truth; what we take as truth, we reconstruct into our identity and perception of others. As I understand Searle, it is only by playing roles that the

individual participates in the social world. Thus, by internalizing these roles, the world becomes subjectively real.

I would argue that consumption is in fact a form of institutionalized oppression. This is not because it is innately wrong to buy goods, but rather because how we are disciplined to understand the location of these goods in our lives has created a space of oppression. Consumption culture is not some large foreboding structure; as is the Panopticon, it is an edifice where a majority of us are always on stage. It is a system very much like the one Berger, Luckmann, and Searle discuss: a system we all continually maintain, a system of our own construction, a system we collectively instate as 'real'.

As with the Panopticon, American consumption culture separates the individual from the collective. It does so by continually reifying the notion of individualism as an American ideal. By elevating the notion of individualism²⁵ in the American mind, consumption culture is able to separate each actor into single units. The Panopticon's design, "... like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized ..." -- separates individual prisoners out in order to maintain isolation (Foucault 200).

Consumption culture's use of the notion of individualism achieves this same end. Instead of walls of separation, we have celebrated separation from the crowd and ridicule for imposter behavior. All of which is constantly monitored by the unseen of culture; the reminder of these watching eyes is written in every ad. Through this form of separation and observation comes

isolation, and that isolation produces a reduced sense of security within the cultural norms.

It is this reduced sense of security that enables the discipline that consumption culture requires. Beyond the bars of consumption culture, individualism is not isolating; it is simply one method of understanding the self(s) in relationship to the collective. Within consumption culture, individualism becomes a cage, much like the cells of the Panopticon, separating one from the other, rendering distinguish between the real and the imagined muddied.

We can see further similarities between the Panopticon and consumption culture when we look at how visibility is intertwined with the distorted version of individualism. For Foucault, the state of being watched by unseen eyes creates a sense of anxiety for the one who is "seen, but does not see". The power in such a duality achieves exactly what Bentham set out to construct with the Panopticon: a state in which the prisoner is never sure when she is actually being watched and must therefore assume she is always being watched. The power of such a system is incredible in that the expectation of observation is what functions to maintain the disciplined state. The Panopticon's design assures this, in that it "...induce[s] in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. [The Panopticon's] surveillance is permanent in this effect, even if it is discontinuous in its action ..." (Foucault 201).

This same use of visibility can be found in the power dynamic of consumer culture, which holds many American consumers in a state of permanent visibility. Just as the prisoners of the Panopticon know they are being watched, so too do we; we know because we are told so. Advertisements repeatedly remind us that we are never free from the watchers. Even when we escape temporarily into perceived unobservable spaces, we know we must go back into a more social space where we cannot be sure of the judgment that lies behind the eyes watching us. Even in these moments of seeming escape we have not fully escaped the watcher, because the watcher is in us. For the American middle-class the watcher is relentless, it lives deep in our minds replaying our actions and thoughts through scenarios of judgment and punishment. The unseen observers are there behind the words and the images, in the voices swirling in our heads that beckon us to imagine ourselves in some idealized version of reality and then remind us that our image is constructed by external things.

When disciplined in this manner we begin to imagine ourselves in the pictures that advertisers have constructed for us. We, like the prisoners of the Panoptic, lose the ability to discern real from illusion. As a result, we are rendered blind save what we are told is our reality. In this space where what we understand to be real shifts at the manipulator's whim, we have learned to be insecure. We have learned to see ourselves as we are told others see us. We have learned to understand ourselves as products of someone else's vision.

Thus, we live our lives for the viewing other, both the external other and the other we have internalized.

Foucault understands this dynamic in terms of power and discourse. He argues that institutions wield their power through a process of definition and exclusion: bodies of power define what it is possible to say and, in doing so, they also define what it is possible to understand. In his text, *Michel Foucault*, Barry Smart understands Foucault's aim as to discover "how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth ... the establishment of domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent" (59). When this inflection of power is applied to the act of 'seeing' oneself, an entire discourse opens up that creates an understanding of limited space. This is not a new concept. The oppressed, in an effort to both protect themselves and make sense of the world they operate in, have accepted the eyes of the oppressor as their own and have become products of someone else's vision, rendering them prisoners to themselves²⁶.

Consumption culture seeks to push on our natural construction of self(s), one that in part builds from the other's gaze, and then distorts it into a construction that enables an understanding of self(s) as a product of another's vision. Thus, transforming the other's gaze from input into mandate. In that we are familiar with the gaze of the other as useful to our construction of self(s) we, to varying degrees, allow consumption's voice to shape our constructions. Once we submit to the belief consumption posits – that we can not be trusted to see ourselves clearly, and its corollary, that we must depend

on the other's eyes to guide us, we have become ready to be products of someone else's vision.

When we desire to be in the illusions consumption presents – as one of the people in an ad, or as we look in the mirror with the new expectation of these images — we question our prior constructions of ourselves. In order to find ourselves in the picture, we must set aside who we are in the everyday in exchange for who we *might* become in the illusion. In a world where the everyday and the illusion are not confused, this is purely an exercise of the imagination. However, in the world of the middle-class American consumer, where illusion is treated as if it were the reality, this imagined vision necessitates embracing, if only for a moment, the other's eyes. Each time we imagine ourselves remade, we lessen the ability to free ourselves from that imagined place — from those watching eyes. As a result, we learn to internalize the message that who we are in the now is flawed and that these imperfections will render us socially undesirable.

The process of giving over one's eyes is nearly painless. We simply do what we are told. We imagine ourselves in the illusion and then we look in the mirror. John Berger argues this principle well with reference to women in western culture, in his text *Ways of Seeing*. Here he details the power of the mirror to construct a way of seeing oneself: "the real function of the mirror ... was to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight." (51). Once the consumer is able to see herself as nothing but a sight — an image reflecting back at her in the mirror — it becomes very easy to see only

the image, separate from and empty of its subject. Once a subject is consumed by its own image, it is no longer able to express its own agency.

Ads since the 1920's have frequently employed the discourse of power by turning consumers' attention reflectively in on themselves. These consumers began to define themselves in terms of the ways consumption culture taught them to see themselves. The Lynds' study *Middletown* used an ad for the Leisure Hour electric washer as an example of the ways in which advertising was setting out to make the reader/consumer "emotionally uneasy, to bludgeon him with the fact that *decent* people don't live the way he does" [italics mine] (82). The copy:

points an accusing finger at the stenographer as she reads her motion picture magazine and makes her acutely conscious of her unpolished finger nails ... and sends the housewife peering anxiously into the mirror to see if her wrinkles look like those that make Mrs. X in the advertisement "old at thirty-five" because she did not have a Leisure Hour electric washer.

For a more current version of this same effort to blind the reader, one only has to turn to an ad for beauty products. A quick turn of the pages of *People* locates an ad for *Biore*. The copy reads as follows: "Wash your face. Press it against a mirror. You'll see why you should use *Biore* cleanser." Beneath the ad copy are two windows both housing the same woman. In the first window, she is unexceptional; we are expected to believe that the image we are seeing her through is the film left on the mirror after she has washed her face with a product other than *Biore*. The model's complexion looks dull; she looks away from the camera; her head is tilted in a demure fashion. The

caption reads, "Leading facial cleanser leaves dirt, oil and residue." In the second window, we see a clear image of the same woman. This time, she is in sharp focus; skin radiant with a touch of pink, she faces the camera squarely, smiling. The caption reads, "Biore facial cleanser leaves no dirt, no oil, no residue." (June 3, 1996 p. 92).

The woman in the ad is happy because she is able to see herself *clearly*. In both ads, we are told beauty is a product created by other products – better washers, better cleansers. This construct brings the premise of Naomi Wolf's text *Beauty Myth* to life. Beauty in its culturally constructed form "is always actually prescribing behavior and not appearance." (14).

American current advertising strategies have not strayed too far from the model used in the twenties. This ad, like so many, pushes the readers -primarily middle-class women and girls²⁷ -- to their mirrors to look at themselves. Once in front of the mirror, the illusionary voice of consumption culture (advertising) is allowed to set in and its prescribed behaviors are entertained. Berger suggests this push toward the mirror is one to connive in treating the self as a sight (51). In the authoritative voice of the omniscient mirror, much like the fairly tale Sleeping Beauty, this method of advertising commands Americans to look at themselves through *the* critical eyes of others. As we look at our own faces, we hear the insecurities nurtured by a thousand ads telling us what is acceptable. We hear the list of expectations the watcher has for us. Ads have pulled middle-class Americans to the mirror where they see with eyes so critical that they no longer see themselves, instead they see a

personal version of what the advertiser wants them to see: the *imperfections* of being human. And it is these eyes, this way of seeing and knowing the self(s), that they carry with them away from the mirror and into a daily practice.

Our eyes are no longer our own. Advertising reminds the American middle-class that they do not know how to see themselves by telling us over and over again what is wrong with our performance. As a result we internalize the eyes of the other, and like the prisoners of the Panopticon, feel these eyes on us as we practice life. When most of us look in the mirror, it is in part with these eyes we see, and not our own.

Advertisements serve to discipline. They remind us that we are watched and judged daily. Ads use appearance to prescribe behavior. We allow these ever present eyes to determine our value based not on what we have accomplished, but instead on how we have constructed our image. Thus, image becomes one of our most important accomplishments. As a result, middle-class Americans have been re-framed: appearance, in part, now constructs identity. We are constantly being told our things speak us. When you intertwine these forces, consumer culture's message is clear: better things = better people.

Consumption culture affects everyone in America to varying degrees.

In that advertisements remind us that we are constantly watched and that our things construct our identity for the observing other, they also leave few exempt from the expectation of either watcher or watched. Ads play out in the places we live our lives: markets, streets, and theatres. In this staging of

products, we become a part of the production simply because the scenes are so familiar. Through this construction of the stage, our public lives are transformed into a version of the Panopticon, and we are all understood to play a role in the cycle.

What energizes this oppressive cycle for the middle-class is that we know they are watching because we are watching them. The power of such a system lies in the anxiety it creates. Just as in the Panopticon, consumer culture is always watching and in this process the anxiety builds: "the more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed." (Foucault 201, 202). As with the Panopticon, consumption culture works to the degree that it does because we all participate in the watching; either internal or external our eyes are focused on behavior. The discipline of consumer culture ensures that we function as both prisoner and guard; always on alert for violations. Ads play to our insecurities and reify the belief that everyone is watching. To watch: is the lesson we are taught by the ads that bombard us. This mandate is reinforced ever time we see a dandruff ad (or any other product designed to mask the unclean human body) that uses the familiar as its backdrop and then employs the everyday person as the assessing observer.

The true power of the Panopticon is in its design, which transfers observation and thus the enforcement of discipline onto the inmate, rendering the inmate her own guard. This same behavior can be found in middle-class

consumer culture. We begin to practice a self-imposed discipline that is in keeping with the desired behavior of consumption. We not only watch others and ourselves for transgressions, but we also internalize the behavior expected of us. As a result, we no longer need to be told what to do; we have learned to tell ourselves. We have, in much the same way as the prisoners of the Panopticon²⁸, become our own prison guards. In our understood visibility we assume the responsibility for the constraints of power upon us. In this middle-class consumers become the welders of the very power exercised over them.

The result of a Panoptic state is insecurity. This drives the prisoner into self-monitored and self-imposed disciplined behavior. Consumer culture uses the same state of uncertainty, only instead of relying on the certainty of the possibility of random violence²⁹, it relies on the uneasiness caused by an everchanging *American-ness*. What it is to be American is temporary, disposable, and, therefore, so are we. Consumer culture plays on our needs to be liked, desired and accepted. It has taken hold of our fear of isolation and agitated it into a state of panic.

While the Panopticon takes the captive and consumer culture takes the middle-class American consumer to the same disciplined state, they do so by divergent routes with significant differences. Both utilize a level of violence in their construction of a disciplined body, however, the understanding and interpretation of that level of violence is perceived differently because of the manner in which the violence is executed. The Panopticon creates a self-imposed disciplined state through fear and the expectation of physical

violence. A prisoner who behaves outside the expected is punished with violence that is perceivable on a physical level. This can manifest itself in a change of surroundings to create even greater discomfort on a psychological level or the inflicting of greater physical pain or the threat of an increased level of pain. In a captive state, this level of quantifiable violence is often random. Both the quantifiable 30 state and the randomness in which it is executed help to discipline the prisoner into a constant state of acceptable behavior. The use of punishment as a first line of action creates a place of overt power. The prisoner knows she is captive because she can identify her fear and its source.

In a Panoptic state, the first line of violent action is punishment, and the second is reward. The captive is trained with quantifiable violence for behavior outside the acceptable and then reinforced with the reward of no violence for desired behavior. This pairing is essential in creating a space where the power dynamic is recognizable. The captive never questions the nature of the captivity because they are constantly made aware of their state by the nature of the discipline. They know why they are insecure, and they know that if they do not discipline themselves they will be further punished. Thus, self-discipline is an effort to avoid pain³¹.

Consumer culture works towards discipline in reverse. It is perhaps more violent because consumer culture consciously attempts to radically shift the thinking of the group. Consumer culture rewards expected behavior as its first line of action by using the American desire for acceptance as reward. It promises that if we behave in an accepted way and construct the *right* image

I say -- loved) by the *right* others³². The power of using reward first is that the consumer is <u>unable</u> to identify her state as a violent one. With this distorted vision, the consumer is unable to identify the oppressor with the feeling of oppression. And, in that no oppressor can be located, the oppressed may even thank their oppressor for helping them to gain the very rewards that maintain their further oppression³³. Consumer culture recreates the disciplined behavior of the Panoptic so intensely it renders its prisoners *desirous* of the very thing that oppresses them.

Just as in the Panoptic, consumer culture links punishment with reward. The use of punishment as a second line of action reinforces the use of reward as a first line of action. Stuart Ewen cites the result of the use of such a tactic in his text, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture, where he argues this point with the help of Floyd Henry Allport's understanding of advertising of the 1920's. The two argue that the growing social perception was that the right product could assure one social safety³⁴.

In the consumer culture model, the punishment is the withholding of the reward. Punishment therefore takes on the form of cultural rejection or, even worse, indifference. And, in the words of Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray: "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about" (Wilde 6). The power of such an ordered pairing lies in its invisibility. When reward is used as the first line of action, the oppressed is often confused into perceiving the state as one of choice rather than one of violence. Consumer culture creates this perception. The middle-class American consumer does not look for the oppressor; instead she pursues the line of discipline she has been seduced into through a system of rewards. This means she consumes the *right* products in an effort to be accepted by the *right* people, all the while wholeheartedly believing she has *chosen* to do so. This creates a state where she fears not the punishment of rejection, but the *loss* of the reward of acceptance. While this may at first seem like the same state reworded, I believe it is in fact driven by a very different set of fears, which thus generate a very different set of reactions.

The fear of rejection is quantifiable as a threat of something even worse, the possibility that rejection becomes full-scale isolation. The fear of losing a reward is the fear of losing something that is in fact a luxury rather than a *necessity*. When we understand our angst as one of denied rewards (rather than one of punishment), we can easily turn the responsibility in on ourselves. By doing this, we reflectively mirror the behavior consumer culture needs in order to keep us both oppressed and coming back. In not recognizing our state as a violent one and in failing to identify the location of our angst, we are participating in our own disciplining. By acting in this manner, we not only function as our own oppressors, but we also thank the system that creates and maintains our oppression.

This oppression is necessary in order for consumer culture to operate at its fullest strength. We have to feel -- to grow comfortable in -- the insecurity that is created by such a state of watching. This insecurity is the backdrop necessary for the altering of our perception. It is what makes possible the perpetual preference for the illusion.

In 1825, Noah Webster proclaimed, "America's glory begins at dawn". His words typified the belief many carried with them into America: all was new in the New World and all could be reborn there. This belief, that life and history was beginning a new, was deeply embedded in the American myth. R.W.B. Lewis, in his text *The American Adam*, describes this new world and new ideology as one:

... starting up again under fresh initiative, in a divinely granted second chance for the human race, after the first chance had been so disastrously fumbled in the darkened Old World. ... America, it was said insistently from the 1820's onward, was not the end-product of a long historical process ... it was something entirely new³⁵ (5).

Entirely new was what an American future promised. The groundwork needed for modernity was present in America long before its often-used marker, industrialism. Separation from collective history helped to drive the ideology that made possible the American myth and the form modernity took in the United States. Americans wanted to understand themselves as 'entirely new' and industrialists were all too happy to nurture these desires with consumption.

There is a certain kind of power in separating from the past in an effort to move forward. For what would become the American, this power lay in the possibility of what the future offered. It promised open-ended possibility. All one needed to do to embrace this possibility was release (at times outright reject) the past and its ties to a collective understanding of the self. The results of this release/rejection in the late 1800's resonate in the binds some middle-class Americans feel today with consumption. The following chapter will address the historical makings of a culture of consumption, and how early links between consumption, modernity and patriotism laid the path for an understanding of consumption that had the power to alter middle-class American traditions and practices ³⁶.

Changing America

Progress became increasingly linked to modernity in the 1870's. The Civil War had just ended, the steam engine's uses had been expanded to improve industry, steel could be refined at record speeds, and railroads were stretching across the country. On the wheels of progress, America was transforming into an industrial nation.

Modernity unraveled previous American ideology by placing into question much of what was understood about the individual and the society. The promises of comfort and safety offered by Modernity came at the cost of long-held American understandings of the self. For many their understandings of their own consumerism, and reflexively their roles as citizens, were dramatically altered in this unraveling. With the ushering in of this new industrial age came an increased push on the part of business to create a social order that would elevate consumption to a place of relief for the average working American. Stuart Ewen, in his text Captain of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture argues that this manipulation of a responsive social context took the form of a social order, one he argues would serve to "feed and adhere to the demands of the productive process and at the same time absorb, neutralize and contain the transitional impulses of a working class emerging from the unrequited drudgery of nineteenth-century industrialization" (51-2).

For a portion of the American population an industrialized society offered little to praise. For these people a shift from a society based in Protestant morality to one based in industrialism was simply too abrupt. In No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920, Jackson Lears directs our attentions to the pervading sense of antimodernism among the bourgeoisie in the late 1880s. This anti-modernism took the form of a desire for a return to a life most had only experienced through nostalgia³⁷. Anti-modernist romantics yearned for a life of refined

craftsmanship, physical vigor and clarity of religious devolution; these were the very aspects of society industrialism was rapidly pulling away from.

Interestingly, the anti-modernism of the day did not exclude an enthusiasm for material progress. This tug-of-war between the past and the future was for many a quest for intense experience in a period when cultural and industrial transition rendered the world a rather 'unreal' place.

The effects such a tug-of-war had on American culture were profound. By embracing the pre-modern symbols as alternatives to the perceived instability of modernity, anti-modernists distorted and then fixed these nostalgic symbols into modernity. Thus, as Lears reminds us, these symbols, became "instruments for promoting intense experience, rather then paths to salvation" (xiii). What were once authentic experiences resulting from life's labors (furniture making, farming and preaching) were recoded and reduced to efforts in the act of experience itself. In elevating the 'authentic' experience into a means unto itself the real so many anti-modernist sought became, in many ways, the unreal reality of modernity. This distortion, is one of the pivotal points on which American cultural morals shift from a focus on salvation and self denial to an emphases on this world self fulfillment. It is in this distortion of reality that anti-modernists further enabled the ideological shifts necessary for consumption to ground deeply into American culture,

The bourgeoisie's clinging to nostalgia highlights their reluctance to enter fully into modernity. Anti-modernists were attempting to reform society by fixing a real set of moral codes into our growing understanding of

modernity. Unfortunately, their efforts fell short of their desired end³⁸, and what was once framed as a moral quest easily fell into a comodifiable secular one. The bourgeoisie's efforts to fix a set of moral imperatives into modernity failed not because they were misguided, but because they worked all too well with the culture of consumption: consumption culture could elevate a secular pursuit in such a way as to situate morality into it. The shortfall of this attempt by the bourgeoisie is crucial, in that it suggests the cultural hegemony we participate in was not solely the conscience act of industrialists and the dominate class, but was also bought on by the "half-conscience hopes and aspirations" of the bourgeoisie (Lear, xv).

While the bourgeoisie were attempting to steer American consumption in the direction of morality, business and industry were attempting to redirect America's relationship with production in an effort to assure it would become an industrial society. Their desire was fixed on assuring that production virtues, such as work efficiency, special work ability, industry, thrift, and sobriety, would become inseparable from American virtues. Paul Nystrom, an early American economists, wrote retrospectively on the era in his text *Economic Principles of Consumption*³⁹; here he addressed the effects of industrialism on society, suggesting that when the characteristics of a true industrial society, one which focuses on the ideals of production rather than of consumption, rule the society itself will have become industrialized (5). Thus, by late the 1880's business leaders were predominantly concerned with the basics of production, believing the ideals would follow.

With the refinement of mass production came the real need for expanding markets to support the ever-increasing levels of production.

America was about to step away from a self-determined ideology and step into what critic Jacques Ellul saw as a "technical management of physical and social worlds" (Ewen 53).

By 1920 many Americans found themselves tangled in a crisis of overproduction. America, as a nation, was caught up in the growing dis-ease among the working classes who were beginning to question the basis of capitalist wealth. To which Bernard Baruch, in 1927, issued a warning directed at production: "while we have learned to create wealth ... we have not learned to keep that wealth from choking us". The industrialist desire to mate social order with the codes of industrialization has deep roots among businessmen and politicians. As early as 1824, John Adams spoke on the importance of melding the two, suggesting that "[m]anufacturers cannot live, much less thrive without honor, fidelity, punctuality, and private faith, a sacred respect for property, and the moral obligations of promises and contracts." Thus, much of America's industrial development is punctuated by attempts to channel thought and behavior into patterns that fit the prescribed dimensions of industrial life. (John Adams quoted by Herbert Gutman, in his essay: "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919", 532.)

Industrialist believed for the "new order" to occur, America and

Americans had to be transformed. Their desired transformation began in part

with the American migration westward and into urban centers that took place in the half-century following 1870. This fifty-year migration altered economic growth in what would be later understood as distinctly American ways. James Norris in his text, Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920, reminds us the two almost disparate population movements occurred simultaneously, making American economic growth unlike most of the other industrialized European countries where modern economic development took place only after settlement had been established (4-5). The great migration fixed economic prosperity as part of the common understanding of progress in America.

The United States' rapid population growth (on average, each decade saw a population increase of 10 million) combined with an increase in education levels made the nation ripe for an industrializing economy. Between 1870 and 1920, literacy among Americans increased from 80 percent to 94 percent. The most dramatic gains were found in the newly freed Black community, which moved from an 80 percent illiteracy rate to an 80 percent literacy rate. As the population transitioned from farm to city, so too did income; "per capita income in the United States ... continued its antebellum secular rise⁴⁰. ... A booming economy with an expanding population and a rising real per capita income was enough to encourage merchants and manufacturers to expand their production and stocks with the expectation of increased demand." (Norris 9-12, 47). Per capita income in the United States increased by about 50 per cent and real per capita income by approximately

100 per cent⁴¹. This marked the first time working class families enjoyed at least some discretionary income. The combination of a mobile and expanding population (trains and the westward movement), an educated body (increased literacy), and a new source of income (production and factory wages) readied most Americans for the modern age, which meant most were also ready to be consumers.

While this same portion of Americans were being readied to be consumers on an ideological level, the everyday markers of consumption were much slower to make the transition. The appearance and general presentation of advertisements in local newspapers had changed very little in the years prior to 1865. Marketing primarily focused on small-town advertising created by local merchants. These ads were intended simply to provide information about variety of selection, low prices, and the quality and freshness of the merchants' large stock of goods. The nature of small town advertising was about to change dramatically, and in doing so it would also change the nature of America's consumption patterns⁴².

National manufactures, in need of a market to sell their mass produced goods, began engaging small town newspapers beyond their advertisement sections by urging local editors to 'pump' the qualities of the products. Often this meant greasing the wheels of opinion with free product in exchange for favorable commentary. If the process was done well, a local consumer could find new stock of canned goods and fruit advertised in the same paper the local editor (who had obviously received free samples) was lamenting the fact that

canned goods were not generally accepted in his small town. This was the case in Lacon, Illinois in 1865, where the local editor praised canned goods and predicted that they represented the future (Norris 13). In small towns all over America consumers began to see their editorial content used to influence increased consumption. Often, like with the canned goods in Lacon, the goods were no longer locally produced. With this simple tactic consumption patterns were being shifted from a local market to a national one.

As more general information on what was available was presented to consumers, the general desire for goods was heightened. Advertising of the period began promoting neighboring small-town merchants and even stores in relatively distant large cities, which, with the help of the railroads, effectively enlarged the market for goods and services. In an effort to ride this wave of desire, manufactures joined advertising dollars with local storekeepers in an effort to create brand name recognition. This specific focusing of ad dollars was perhaps the most significant discernible trend during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For the first time, consumer demand bound merchants to specific stock, shifting the power relationship between the retailer and the manufacturer. Atherton suggests this alignment locked merchants to manufacturers and wholesalers who then influenced selection of goods, prices, and even methods of salesmanship in retail stores (Main Street 222). As a result of brand recognition local merchants were integrated into the national marketplace.

Perhaps the best example of this transition is the soap wars that occurred during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The 1890 census indicated that while the number of soap makers had declined in the previous ten years, the number of people employed in the industry had nearly doubled and so had their wages. Soap production had been on the increase since the years after the Civil War⁴³, by 1890 soap manufacturing had honed soap quality while bring costs down. However, in America soap was seen as a product to be *produced and consumed* in the home, as a result soap manufactures and their advertisers set out to change the inherent barrier of this very American cultural practice.

Advertising played a fundamental role in the transition and creation of a national demand for soap. New technologies required new national marketing strategies. Soap needed an American market base. Susan Strasser, in her text Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market, reminds us that in 1890 the average person still had to be told they needed mass produced products and that task required convincing ads (3-29). To this end ads played on conventional American religious notions of perfect health while tapping into deep-seated desires to be accepted. Where soap ads were concerned, the links between soap and purity, cleanliness and perfection were certainly aimed at a subconscious connection between soap and divinity. Andrew Wernick in his text Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression reminds us, when it came to converting the masses there were few cultural values outside the bounds of advertising.

Jackson Lears, in Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America, reminds us of advertising's history of boundary crossing as he reminds us that patent medicines were sold by mingling spiritual and physical health into a consumable product. In soap ads we can see the roots of patent medicine Lear's is referring to. The notion that perfection, of both the spirit and the body, were obtainable only through cleanliness, and that cleanliness was obtainable only through the use of specific brand name soap, is embedded in every ad soap manufactures produced. By 1897 the co-mingling of sprit and body had become so knotted that Calvinist Reverend Henry Ward Beecher could give the following testimonial for Pear's soap and not seem the least bit scandalous: "If cleanliness is next to Godliness, then surely SOAP is a means of GRACE" (Lears137-147).

Along with the use of 'Godliness', soap ads also played on the average American's desire to be accepted into a higher social class. A desire constructed by production and fueled by consumption. Richard and Claudia Bushman in their article, "The Early History of Cleanliness in America" draw attention to the 'cleanliness movement' which began in the 1850's. The two suggest that in the expanding world of middle-class respectability, "people cleansed themselves to be assured of simple dignity and respect" (1231). The 'cleanliness movement' was a situation heaven-sent for soap manufacturers and the ad men who needed to sell their product. Soap had been advertised in the United States since the early 1700's. The copy had changed very little in

these 150 years; it promoted the 'value' of the product in terms of its reasonable price and quality.

In 1896 Ivory Soap became the first soap maker to employ a new style of marketing that focused on brand mane recognizably. Not only did they increase their advertising dollars, but they also began a campaign with a constant and straightforward theme that would carry the Ivory name into the twenty-first century. All Ivory Soap ads incorporated the brand name and the two slogans: "99 and 44/100 per cent pure" and "it floats". This created name recognition, a connection to quality (purity) and a visual tag that could be easily exchanged for the brand name when purchasing. (All one had to do was ask for the soap that floats – Ivory was the only one.) Other soap manufacturers followed suit with their own ads that promoted everything from safety (against germs) to curative qualities for problems like dry skin and the signs of aging.

Soap manufacturers and their advertisers had to change an American mindset. They did this in two steps. First, they flooded the market with advertisements⁴⁵, thus, increasing the recognition of manufactured soap. This created a change in the cultural consciousness. Manufactured soap, as a result of the flood of advertisements, was steadily taking on a presence in average American lives. Even if Americans did not have the *actual* soap in their homes, they knew what it was and the differences between at least two of the leading brands. Artemus Ward, the ad man who ran the soap campaign for Sapolio, firmly believed that people bought familiar products and conducted

his campaign to create visibility and familiarity for the Sapolio brand (Norris 66). Manufactured soap became familiar and, as such, acceptable. This visibility, along with the status markers that were linked to cleanliness, made manufactured soap a perceived indicator of both class and morality. If cleanliness was understood as a precursor to morality, respect and dignity, then store-bought soap, which was increasingly being understood as better than homemade soap as a result of ads, represented one necessary element to that desired acceptance.

The second stage in selling soap involved product differentiation. In order to create brand name recognition in a field of such overwhelming similarity, soap manufacturers went to war with each other. Their war (as brand wars do) set out to devalue the competition. In a market concerned with issues of health and safety, competitors claimed that their rivals' products were somehow dangerous and implored customers "not to settle for anything less". In some instances, customers were asked to send names of merchants who did not carry their "safer" products to soap manufacturers. A small reward (usually the manufacturer's own product) was offered in exchange. Ads often included warnings stating that competitors' products were not safe because they were not pure and/or did not kill deadly germs. This not only increased brand name recognition, it also created a cloud of distrust and fear in many homes that was beneficial to soap makers. If a competitor's products were potentially dangerous, then certainly the safety of the product one could make at home was thrown into question. The average American woman understood

that she *needed* store-bought soap to be considered a good caregiver. For this woman, making her own soap was taking her family's life in her hands — literally.

While the soap wars were in full swing the American national market saw an expansion of two major institution's efforts to sell to the nation. The mail-order house⁴⁶ served the expanding rural population, and department stores and chain stores served the ever-growing urban centers. Within a matter of years these forces altered the nature of modern consumption. Chain stores meant folks no longer haggle over price, as Susan Strasser reminds us, "no one bargained with Marshall Field or Sears". The one-price system large stores established enabled the hiring of larger sales forces made-up of less experienced (and less costly) workers⁴⁷ which, made possible departmentalization on the part of the institution. This transformed mass merchandising into an easily followed system allowing for better accountability and increased profits.

These new markets depended on advertising to attract customers. By 1873 most mail-order houses had established their own periodicals⁴⁸ to work as advertising vehicles (Norris 15). These illustrated catalogues became important cultural documents which served to connect a pioneer community to the distant and sophisticated urban world. These catalogues promised sturdy goods at affordable prices and were able to create a new form of quality absent of the unnecessary "aesthetic"

By the end of the 1870's quality would again include the aesthetic, and this shift could be read in the new elegance of ad copy. This new focus on aesthetics rather than quality and durability was designed to appeal to the urban middle-class women. Following the lead of national merchandisers who had successfully established brand name recognition, department stores placed ads in newspapers and popular magazines that circulated to a much wider audience than simply the immediate community. As department stores grew in size and number, so too did the ads. Combine this barrage of promotion with the increasing mobility provided by railroads, and rural Americans had a reason and the ability to come into the city.

What these Americans found in the city, specifically in the windows of the department stores, shifted the way advertising was to function in the United States in the twentieth century. Business moguls envisioned the department store window as a teaching aid by which Americans would grow to learn consumption⁵⁰. This in mind, the look of department store windows shifted from the traditional cramming in of as much unrelated merchandise as possible to an effort to show quantity of goods, to one of presenting smaller related items in a pleasing and even artistic way. For many who made the trek to the city window shopping became a part of the journey. Susan Benson, in her text, Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940, suggests that these windows served as a diversion in the other wise busy city. Allowing folks to parade up and down the streets, examining the goods displayed and often stopping to discuss the

merchandise and the quality of the displays with friends. Thus, these windows created a space that legitimized loitering by virtue of its relationship to consumption (18).

These large and luxurious department stores cultivated a consumer culture in the United States. "The attractively trimmed windows and the beautifully appointed interiors exerted a powerful persuasion on the urban middle-class -- to shop, to buy, to consume" thus, assuring that most small towns quickly had at least pale imitations of Macy's or Marshall Field's (Norris 18). The department store window changed the function of advertising more than anything prior because dressed windows created a desire that was designed to be culturally shared.

With the introduction of the stylized store window, passers by could be introduced to products in a controlled environment that created a seemingly complete image of style and culture. Through windows consumers could actually see products in conjunction with each other; products working together to create a codified social status that one could easily follow. Once the sidewalk shopper was instructed in the cultural relevance of certain products, their importance was reflexively reiterated by the viewing audience. Store windows were designed to be looked at -- and they were -- by thousands. As a result, the products in these windows began to take on cultural status.

This new consumer environment is much like the panopticon. The controlled manner in which products are displayed for viewing has a layered effect. Not only did it condition viewers, in mass, to consume certain objects

in connection with others, but it also created a space where consumers were watched by both themselves and by others reacting to these products. The public window displays, presented as centers of attraction, were understood by the majority of city-seekers to represent the most modern and most desired of products for the time. Therefore, one's reaction to these products could be understood as one's reaction to consumption. This shift from private consumption to public consumption located the consumer in a state of constant surveillance similar to that found in the panopticon.

Middle-class consumers did not buy goods simply because they were of good quality⁵¹ anymore; instead goods were purchased because of what they could add to the owner on a cultural level. Norris supports this argument well by explaining that window shopping created a select and shared desire while asking very little of the passer by: "[w]indow-shopping was free, and if a farm woman could not afford the item she saw in Macy's window ..., perhaps she could find a less expensive imitation in the Sears, Roebuck catalogue." (18). Consumption for middle-class American was rapidly becoming about style and status.

The American department store window created a desired state that was attainable increasingly for most. Store windows taught consumers what to buy in order to achieve their desired status, and the department stores supplied the goods. The power of the window display for both the department store owner and the product manufacturer was that the products immediately desired were all well within reach; they were all just beyond the windows. The department

store was, for many shoppers, unlike anything they had ever seen and unlike anything their local shopkeeper could provide. The end result was a greater choice afforded to buyers, which in turn fueled an increasing desire for goods.

The intense advertising campaigns of the large department stores of the period were, like the brand name marketing of a decade before, aimed at increasing sales for the individual firm. By 1900, the transition of consumer interest from essential to luxury items was in motion. As the decade went on, new kinds of products were entering the market and being heavily advertised. Readers could now order a vast number of items ranging from: "wines, liquor, bonbons, bicycles, and lawn tennis and croquet sets" and all with the same ease they had grown accustom to. Luxury items, while still few in number, began to alter the copy style of advertising by shifting the focus towards an emphasis on flair, status, fashion, design, elegance, and convenience (Norris 33-34).

Soon after this aesthetic transformation product manufacturers pushed on advertising agents do more than merely place the ads with local and national media. As late as 1872, most ad agencies were still taking little responsibility for writing the copy or planning the media campaign. All that was required of the advertisers during this period was an acquaintance with the local periodicals of the region and some sense of the going advertising rates. A good advertiser of the time, suggests Stephen Fox in his text, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and its Creators*, was one who had the rare gift for haggling (14). Before the turn of the century the role advertisers would play in the consumption rush would change dramatically.

But what does an advertising man do? He induces human beings to want things they don't want. Now, I will be obliged if you will tell me by what links of logic anybody can be convinced that your activity—the creation of want where want does not exit—is a useful one... Doesn't it seem, rather, the worst sort of mischief, deserving to be starved into extinction?

Michael Wilde's oration Herman Wouk's Aurora Dawn: Or the True Story of Andrew Reale, (110)

Ad men would become the essential element of changes in the advertising industry. George Rowell, an advertising agent in the 1980's remarked, "[a]dvertisers should write their own advertisements. The man who cannot do this is not fit to advertise." This general change in professional understanding can perhaps be most clearly seen in advertising's trade journal *Printers Ink*; who declared that "[g]enerally neither the merchants nor the solicitor is able to make a good advertisement". In 1880, John Powers, the first man to make a living creating advertising in the United States, was hired. Daniel Pope, in his text, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, suggests that from this point on advertising was irrevocably changed. Powers transformed the industry to such a point that nothing of meaning; no copy, design, or even concept, would be left in the hands of manufacturer or promoter. It was all now in the hands of the ad man (133-34,138).

One of the early players in advertising, Walter Dill Scott, of
Northwestern University, argued in the early 1900's that 'man is a creature that
rarely reasons at all' as evidence as to why advertising should appeal to our
emotions rather then to our sense of reason. Scott's understanding would
dominate the profession of advertising for the next forty years. James P.
Woods' Magazines in the United States: their Social and Economic Effect
reminds us, what advertising agents too often forgot was Scott's insistence that
emotional appeals and attention getters were not enough. For Scott good
advertising must be intimately connected to the product; the ad should arouse
in the reader the same sensation as the product advertised (Norris 44).

National magazines with wide circulation advertising made advertised products and companies household names. The ads which were able to convinced local consumers to purchase products manufactured by distant producers, introduced new companies and new products, thus expanding markets, and allowed manufacturers to take advantage of economies of scale. National magazine advertising would help to draw middle-class Americas to consume. By the beginning of the twentieth century the media and the technology were in place and the process of transforming American values from those traditionally equated with a rural, agrarian, production-oriented society to those linked with an urban, industrial, consumption-oriented society was in full swing.

Advertisers knew if used correctly, ads could sell anything. Building on the patent medicine style of integrating a Protestant ethos into a material

version of the world, ad men tagged social acceptance and vitality to most products (Lears 138-158). By the turn of the century, this basic method was incorporated into what would be referred to as the John Powers style of advertising. This style featured detailed descriptions of each product, its uses, and its peculiar advantages. It proved unusually successful with products not easily differentiated in the average consumers' minds. It was this ability to create difference where often none was to be found that heated the soap wars. It was this same style that moved advertising in a direction that 1880's morality could not have imagined possible.

One of the most valuable elements that ad men skimmed from the soap wars was the insecurity they were able to stir commanded. The soap wars schooled middle-class women to look at their homes and their cleaning habits with a socially critical eye. No inch of the house was left without an accompanying cleaning product. It mattered little that a majority of the now product-specific jobs had been done only twenty years earlier with two single cleaning tools: homemade soap and water. Middle-class women in the 1900's were increasingly disciplined to believe that specific jobs required specific cleaning products. This training served farther-reaching desires for advertisers as a whole. Women were now learning to look at their homes as places that confirmed their morality and status. By 1900 They had learned to assess themselves and each other by the standard of cleanliness soap-makers (via their ad men) told them was acceptable. Advertisers had created a market of people

who knew how to look at themselves with the eyes of consumers (Lears, Norris, Ewen).

Advertisers for the rapidly growing beauty industry (who recognized the stirrings soap manufacturers had tapped into) began to use cleanliness and the (unachievable) state of perfection as a tool to sell their products. In the two decades before the turn of the century, a 'cult' of personal hygiene and appearance developed⁵² as a result of the teaming of beauty and acceptability to cleanliness advertising developed (62). Referring to this as the "commodity self", Stuart Ewen, suggested that "each portion of the body was to be perceived critically, as a potential bauble in a successful assemblage" (47). Ads for deodorants, tooth products, hand grooming products, shampoos, creams, and other toilet articles swept the market. An industry had been created out of thin air, and the ad men responsible for this amazing development were beginning to recognize their power to get the average middle-class American to work for them.

By 1900, beauty had become the pivot point in the ongoing soap wars. Advertisers had always employed beauty as an appeal in their ads, but they had not used it as the primary focus. The soap wars had been fought using the Powers' advertising style and had escalated to a point where creating product difference was growing more and more difficult. Woodbury's Facial Soap, who did not want to lose what foothold they had in the market, shifted their ad dollars away from what had been their traditional curative stance and towards one emphasizing beauty. The sexual undercurrent was clear: "Woodbury's --

for the skin you love to touch". The full-page color ad ran in the *Ladies Home Journal* and featured a handsome couple. The ad promised beautiful skin *and* romance. Until this point, ads had been directed at beauty as natural and innocent. Ivory Soap had been using an appeal to innocents for years by running ads drawing the comparison between the beauty of a fresh peach and a newly-washed face. Not until Woodbury's campaign had an ad incorporated the suggestive idea of skin so beautiful that it called to be touched and that *that* touch might even trigger romance.

To a shocked industry's surprise, the emotional and sexual appeal worked. The assurance of romance was more deceptive than the old curative promises but it sold soap. In the next decade Woodbury would spend over \$4 million dollars on ads that linked their product to romance through beauty. During this same time, Woodbury's sales increased sixfold. The Woodbury ad campaign changed the nature of advertising. While the themes remained varied, the general pattern of successful advertising shifted from product orientation (purity, utility, price, practicality) to one of consumer orientation. Ads now linked products intimately with the individual and claimed to offer desirable states such as beauty and status to the user (58-60).

By 1920, the advertising campaigns of the soap manufacturers had succeeded; cleanliness, beauty, and sexual attraction were now linked together in the chain of reasons to buy hygiene products. A mother could now rely on the advertising industry to help her educate her daughter in the art of self-beautification through consumption. Full-page color ads ran in ladies

magazines like Ladies Home Journal, which pictured a mother and her maid fondly watching a little girl admire herself in a hand-held mirror with the copy below reading 'rightly trained, the unconscious vanity of a little miss becomes the ingrained personal daintiness which is priceless to a woman'. The caption, Norris suggests, gave stern warning to mothers to teach their daughters the importance of using Ivory Soap:

'teach her that it is the frequent, regular use of Ivory Soap which gives her the lustrous hair, the clean smooth skin, and the spotless garments which she so innocently admires (ad found in *Ladies Home Journal* September 1920).

As the soap wars illustrate, ad men, and the advertising they created, did more than just change the way ads reached the average America, they also changed the way ads were read by a culture, and as a result, they changed the reasons average Americans bought products. In an effort to further consumption in a culture that still clung to its sense of self-sufficiency, ad men courted generational divorce. They attacked shared generational knowledge and embraced an understanding of progress that was only accessible through new and modern consumables.

Advertising's key markets were to be middle-class women and immigrants. Advertisers targeted these markets because they believed they represented the future of consumption. As the soap wars had illustrated, women did most of the purchasing in a middle-class household and had been disciplined to understand themselves in reflection to it. Immigrants, on the other hand, were a new audience looking to be lead. They were searching for

acceptance in a new world, and in that, were willing to follow the breadcrumbs advertising offered them. Advertisements easily stirred up the anxieties common in both groups and then offered an on going list of specific products as the only rational solution.

Ads directed at middle-class women primarily played off pre-conceived notions of female desire -- daintiness, beauty, romance, grace, security and husbands. Prior to modernity, these desires were expected to be filled in the practices of the Protestant notions of thrift and moderation. Advertisements played against Protestant notions while offering up consumption as a means to these same ends. Ewen reminds us that the dainty woman had always been characterized as physically split from the marketplace and herself, and that this in fact was proof of her quality as a woman, as it was testimony to her compliance with the Protestant ethics of the time. Consumption culture sought to transform this by suggesting that in modern society thrift could no longer cohabitate with daintiness, and in fact, threatened to prevent it. The accumulation of various products, each with a separate means of objectifying the body, was, in modern society, equivalent to success (46-7).

While middle-class women were hit hard with this modernized understanding of consumption, European immigrants were hit harder. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, mythic America promised so much to the immigrant, freedom, an end to hunger, the real possibility of a future and the greatest promise an opportunity to be an accepted American. This promise

came with only one (visible) hitch for most immigrants: leave your past and your old ways of being and doing behind.

Many of these immigrants brought with them a real willingness for rebirth. They endured name changes, learned new languages and tolerated ignorance and hardship. Advertisers, through the immigrant press, capitalized on this desire to be reborn as American. According to John Higham's, Send These to me: Immigrants in Urban America, immigrant-Americans "had become a nation of newspaper readers because what they shared was not a common past but rather the immediate events of the present: the 'news'" (26).

By 1900, a steady transition was beginning within the newspaper industry. Monopolies were forming ⁵³, and advertising men were growing familiar with the success and power derived from the ability to blanket a market. This translated into incredible commercial pressure on the immigrant press. While it might seem that the diversity of the immigrant communities and their individual newspapers would have protected them from the monopolistic development of a national press, it did just the opposite. Immigrant press' were hit with what Ewen refers to as "the most naked forms of commercial control ... exercised" (63). The readers of these new papers were page by page bombarded with consumption rhetoric.

This commercial control came by way of the American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers, an advertising agency that catered specifically to the immigrant papers. Headed by a German immigrant named Louis N. Hammerling, the Association was set into motion by a consortium of

corporations: Standard Oil, Consolidated Gas, American Tobacco Company and members of the Republican National Committee. The purpose of the Association was to serve the interests of the consortium in the immigrant press. Their interest was to make immigrants desirable *Americans*. Hammerling carried this out in strong-arm fashion. He provided ads⁵⁴, both political and consumer in nature, for the non-English newspapers, and, in exchange for his advertisers' financial support, he demanded unlimited control over the newspapers' political and economic positioning. In his 1922 text *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, Robert Park, explains the extent of Hammerling's control saying he could "give advertising or he could take it away. He could promise the struggling little publisher that he would either make him or break him" (277).

This situation was more toxic for immigrant readers than it was for the publishers. The Association was dedicated to corporate development and the 'Americanization' of immigrants. Therefore, the advertising that made its way into the Foreign Language Newspapers was designed to link American products with the performance of patriotism. These small dependant newspapers, without meaning to, served the Association well. They eroded away at the cultural distinctions immigrants brought with them by tainting these behaviors with the dirt of the old world, and in exchange for their now useless ways immigrants were offer a commodity driven identity that would assure their acceptance in America as well as the survival of the American

point of view; consumption (Ewen 64). National advertising was to become the great "Americanizer",55

The Association believed preserving their understanding of the American point of view was crucial in combating heritages and behaviors that were so different from those held in mythic America's. Immigrant cultural differences had the potential to interfere with the now burgeoning social machinery of consumption. The ends advertisers went to in these publications saw long-term effects on immigrant-American intellectual and cultural development in the twentieth century. Advertising manipulated patriotic understanding and turned people away from the traditional life-styles they had been living (Ewen 65).

Women like Mrs. Christine Frederick, home economist in the twenties, proudly supported the glory of this blind march by declaring in periodicals of the period that "consumption is the name given to the new doctrine: and it is admitted today to be the greatest idea that America has to give to the world; the idea that workmen and masses be looked upon not simply as workers and producers, but as *consumers* ... Pay them more, sell them more, prosper more is the equation" (*Selling Mrs. Consume* 319-320).

Mrs. Frederick believed Americans⁵⁶ should unquestionably trust the market and its ability to monitor itself. She encouraged the denouncing of 'consumer clubs' (clubs designed to test products on their claims) and a urged for a renewed reliance on the consumer testing and judgments rendered by newspapers and magazines. It did not seem relevant to her cause that many of

these newspapers and magazine carried ads for the same products they 'tested' and that they might have a vested interest in touting the products they advertised. Mrs. Frederick saw non-consumer testing, as was to be found in the 'clubs' she was so critical of, as outside the spirit of the American 'new leisure' society. Mrs. Frederick was one of the many middle-class women of the period who helped encouraged the nation to fall into the deep sleep of consumption.

Corporate America, even with the help of home economists, was not the sole force pushing traditional cultural practices of thrift and self-sufficiency out the door of American culture. Government was growing to be a wonderfully helpful big brother. Industrialization was powering the United States into the new age; it made possible jobs, filled factories, and raised standards of living across the country, but most importantly, it fueled capitalism. In 1926, Calvin Coolidge recognized this as well as the importance of increasing its pace. Like the industrialists of the time, he knew industrialization depended on consumers. In an address to the American Association of Advertising Agencies, Coolidge implored advertisers to compel the American people to put time and energy into what he called "'their education' to production" (Ewen 36).

Coolidge wanted to replicate the effectiveness of the machinery he saw on the assembly line in the machinery of advertising. According to Loren Baritz, in his text Servants of Power: A History of the Use of Social Science in American Industry, he wanted consumers to be mass-produced as swiftly and

cheaply as Ford had mass-produced the automobile. To do this, advertising agencies had to "develop universal notions of what makes people respond, going beyond the 'horse sense' that had characterized the earlier industry" (27). Americans now had to buy, not simply to satisfy their own basic desires, but instead to satisfy the real, historic needs of the capitalist machinery (Ewen 35-6).

Reflexively, the images that had been constructed to unify and shape immigrants begun to create a definition of what it meant to be an *American*. And, increasingly being an American meant consuming. This concept was pulled out as advertisers began to incorporate middle-class American fundamental understandings of self with consumption values. America was shifting. Which opened the door to the possibility that if what one had always known, believed, and done was now no longer relevant (or worse was now incorrect), was it necessary to question the very concepts many of these beliefs had been built on. Advertisers exploited these moments of uncertainty as opportunities to center themselves as the truth makers in the market⁵⁷.

Industrial capitalism, by way of advertising, was in the process of attempting to transform middle-class Americans from discerning buyers into gullible consumers. This evolution in advertising was significant more for what it excluded from its concept of the world than for what it defined as accepted reality. James Rorty makes a nice point of how this was done in Our Masters Voice: Advertising: "Always tell the truth. Tell a lot of the truth. Tell

a lot more of the truth than anybody expects you to tell. Never tell the whole truth." (176).

In "The End of Reason" Max Horkheimer (1941) explains that the world of facts, as touted by industrialist of the time played a role in turning people away from their own needs and abilities to speculate on solutions to these needs. In evaluating the facts of the day, Horkheimer speculates that men needed factual knowledge, what he refers to as "the automaton ability to react correctly", rather then the "quiet consideration of diverse possibilities which presupposes the freedom and leisure of choice." (Ewen 70). This merging of fact and truth resulted in an end to reason as it was once understood, and the creation of a dependence on the market for not only products, but also for an understanding of the new realities of modernity.

Truth and social control were increasingly becoming interconnected.

In the world of the business, *truth* was not the result of values or ethics that existed beyond business; truth it was instead the product of their business. In an effort to cultivate public trust and further their own construction of truth, the advertising industry pushed for a truth in advertising legislation. This legislation was an attempt on the part of the advertising industry's public relations campaign to legitimize the industry, rather than a move by citizens to clean it up (Ewen 71). This revised understanding of truth, which was now sanctioned by government, gave Americans, who trusted their government and understood its mission as protective of them, a reason further relax into consumerism.

The corporate monopolization of culture waged a battle with what, up until the 1850's, were referred to as 'traditional' American values.

Industrialists, ad men and government had fought that battle and they had won.

The fruits of their victory bore the thoroughly disciplined consumer.

Consumption is a culturally constructed event, as such it is a "socially constructed, historically changing process" (Bocock 45). A Marxist argument would say it is born of alienation and its components, objectification and estrangement. Jackson Lears would widen this definition to suggest that consumption culture's breath emanates from the netting of culture and capitalism. All of which according to Marx rendered us less than human and living in a world that alienates us from ourselves(s).

Industrialization, urban migration, and the myth of progress have repeatedly distanced us from a version of ourselves(s). If we look to advertisements of the last hundred years, we will see that middle-class Americans have been promised a reprieve from alienation through (proper) consumption. Products repeatedly promise to return to us something we don't recall having lost ... our sense of self(s). This chapter will discuss middle-class alienation and how consumption promises to quench the thirst it produces even as consumption acts as a diuretic on the body of our culture. Ironically, just like Coca-Cola

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour ... the fact that labour is external to the worker, i.e. it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. ... His labour is therefore not voluntary but coerced; it is *forced labour*. ... Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. ... workers in industrial capitalism produce goods which do not belong to them, with tools and machinery which do not belong to them either.

Karl Marx

Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, 72-3
(as quoted by Robert Bocock Consumption, 46)

For Marx, the worker who is disenfranchised from his work is also disenfranchised from the very product he is producing⁵⁸. The distance created between what one does and what one thinks about that process and how it then defines that individual's ability can be seen in the above Marx's quotation. *Objectification*, which happens when workers are forced to purchase goods they themselves or others like them have produced, and *estrangement*, which occurs when workers are removed from one another and their productivity save for moments of competition and control in the workplace, are also present here.

Marx's understands of the effects of labor's constraint on us differ dramatically from a pre-modern state where labor patterns and productivity

formed the basis for a person's identity. Roles in the workplace dominated most people's lives and functioned as the core to their sense of identity, enabling them to construct a solid social identity and a coherent grounded sense of self. This grounding of identity within community made possible the construction of citizens who understood themselves as connected to both, and therefore relatively free of the forms of alienation Marx describes as having stripped us of our sense of human-ness (Bocock 1993, Erikson 1968, Ewen 1976, Giddens 1991).

Jackson Lears agrees with Marx, in that we are alienated from ourselves because of the disconnect between our labor and our sense of self. Alienation for Lears, however, also creates a form of the unreal. He understands consumption culture to breathe and therefore casts his net a bit wider then Marx to include the American cultural desire for spectacle. Lears suggests that we are no longer connected to ourselves (the result of alienation) and thus we can no longer experience our lives as meaningful, and therefore they, and in turn we, fall into a state of surreal living. It is this separation that renders our lives inauthentic, leaving us to make a life in the spectacle or illusions of life rather then from the actual living of it.

In this disconnected state we pursue anything that appears to offer us solid aspects of life. We have been disciplined, by over one hundred years of advertising, to understand the illusions handed to us by consumption culture as meaningful, and in their accepted meaning they become more desirable then the reality of the lives we actually live. Advertising is nothing but constructed

illusion over-laid on familiar images of the lives we lead. Most middle-class Americans chase experiences that lay outside of their daily lives, consuming on the promise of a renewed life, on the promise of ads that offer a life more full of the illusive real. They consumed with the hope of somehow entering into that illusionary life if only for a moment. Mainstream America romanticizes the recent past, constructing it as solid and fulfilling, which only serves to reflexively reinstate our current life as truly surreal (Lears 1981,1983,1994).

Consumption culture has stripped us of ourselves. Both Marx and Lears recognize the web of hegemony that keeps consumption in motion. The two differ in where they believe the matrix for consumption lays. Marx believes it is in production. While Lears reads the hegemonic state we live in as the result of an unconscious collaboration on the parts of changing culture, technology, and the push into modernity and capitalism. Both perspectives undoubtedly plant us firmly in hegemonic soil.

We do regularly experience a sense of alienation. We are, in a Marx sense, therefore, less than human. In a postmodern state, like America, there is a distance between the producer of goods and the power of these goods on an economic, cultural, and physiological level. It is this very state that has readied us for consumption. Most workers do not own the tools with which they produce. Thus, they do not own the products of their labor. As a result, they are made to purchase goods. They are forced to be consumers.

Our productivity no longer binds us to communities; instead we depend on roles outside of work to do this. In a postmodern state, these roles have become intrinsically linked to consumption. We are defined by and identified with our homes, our acts of leisure, our means of entertainment and our appearance. In his essay, "The Body in Consumer Culture", Mike Featherstone asserts that consumption embodies the move into Postmodernity in that it implies a move away from productive work roles as being central to people's lives: to their sense of identity, to who they are. In replace of these work roles, we have taken on roles derived from the multitude of leisure pursuits Americans are guaranteed, and therefore our identities, our understandings of self(s), can be reduced to the commodity level⁵⁹ -- all for sale. Bocock argues that this is not a "fact of nature, but a social and historical construction of the capitalist epoch of world history." (47). Therefore, consumption becomes a part of our alienation because it cuts us off from the production process.

Postmodernity incorporated a shift from capitalism, an economic system, to consumption, a cultural act⁶⁰. This shifting of attention away from work and the value it placed on the individual, as well as one's worth to the community, has helped to transform consumption into the cultural marker it now is⁶¹. In his text, *Consumption*, Robert Bocock suggests that capitalism has in fact been changed by consumption. According to his read the amount and the variety of commodities sold and consumed are now so great that it is possible to say that since Marx died⁶², capitalism has undergone a "qualitative"

change". Bocock's argument suggests that now there is a new and distinct form of capitalism in the world, one based primarily on the ever-increasing production of new commodities for consumption (35). Deleuze and Guattari, in *Anti-Oedipus*, argue that this is one of the defining characteristics of capitalist society; increasingly enhanced productivity for the sake of production.⁶³

Most middle-class Americans work to consume because the act of consumption has become what defines us⁶⁴. In his *Selected Writings*, Jean Baudrillard suggests that goods that we see advertised in our daily lives function as goals and/or rewards for work. Even if we do not actually buy these advertised products, they still function as the symbols for the idea of purchasing. The idea of the purchase itself motivates work. This reflects how we have transferred our identity construction from one of work to one of consumption (29-56). Where we once created our sense of social identity from rather stable ground -- work and productivity that was visible to actor and community -- we now create it from a base that is designed to be unstable. This displacement leaves us with an incoherent sense of who we are and how we wish others to perceive us. As a result of this chase for the spectacle, we find ourselves in a continuous cycle of alienation and insecurity.

Don Slater, in his text Consumer Culture and Modernity, supports

Baudrillard's position. By arguing that consumer culture in the modern world,
implies "core social practices and cultural values, ideas, aspirations and
identities are defined and oriented in relation to consumption rather than to

other social dimensions such as work or citizenship, religious cosmology or military role." (24). Slater argues further that our culture has become one of consumption, in that the dominant values of our society are both shaped and organized around and through consumption practices (25).

The idea of a culture structured around consumption may seem like a contradiction because the term culture has often been defined as the social preservation of authentic values that cannot be negotiated by money and/or market exchange. However, commodity production, as Slater reminds us, requires the "sale of ever-increasing quantities of ever-changing goods"; as a result the market society is perpetually "haunted by the possibility that needs might be either satisfied or underfinanced" (28-29). Commodity culture changes the frame in which we can understand middle-class American culture. These Americans must allow their practices to be malleable because everything in conjunction with consumption is forcibly made fluid. Production requires change; the new American myth includes commodity culture, therefore modern America culture must include the possibility of constant change. It seems near impossible to imagine in an ideology of such disposability that much could remain fixed save for the inconsistent grounding of consumption culture.

From this state of personal and cultural alienation and insecurity, middle-class Americans are made easy fodder for the illusionary life advertising offers. Advertisements call us to internalize the possibility of change by using a certain product or service. In that advertisements have the

power to diffuse information about commodities, (by promising us that we will become better people, or simply better looking people, through their use) they can also persuade us of the importance of commodities in our lives.

Bocock argues that consumption "affects the ways in which people build up, and maintain, a sense of who they are, of who they wish to be" (emphasis mine) (x). It is clear consumption in middle-class America has become entwined with the processes surrounding the development of identity. Here we can see why Ronald Berman suggests, in his text, Advertising and Social Change, that ads themselves can alter the ways we think about the role advertising plays in social change (16). As a result of this consumption becomes an important social, psychological and cultural process, as well as an economic one. Bocock goes on to say that once people have been influenced by "the social and cultural practices associated with the ideology of modern consumerism, then even if they cannot afford to buy the goods portrayed in the films, in the press and on television, they can and do desire them" (3). Thus, a way of thinking about the self(s) and a way of practicing it is created, in part, through the embrace of the illusions consumption culture offers.

Baudrillard argues that consumption is based on increasing desires rather than simply on need (10-56). While this does not hold true for all cultures, in Western capitalism, consumption is linked with desire. Desire is created through the use of signs and symbols in the marketing of products to consumers, and in this world (one Baudrillard refers to as 'general hysteria') it becomes impossible to determine the specific objectivity of needs. For

Baudrillard the flight from one signifier to another marks the surface reality of desire, which, as he reads it, is insatiable. Desire, which according to Baudrillard can never be satisfied, signifies itself in successions of objects and needs. This continual exchange between the two is only possible because objects are no longer tied to a function or to a defined need because they now, thanks to consumption culture, serve as fluid and unconscious fields of signification. In consumption culture desires, needs and wants⁶⁵ are collapsed into objects that are perceived to have the ability to satisfy.

Perhaps those hit hardest by this process are women. Beauty products exploit the desire quotient by playing a women's economics against her self-esteem. *Preference*, a hair-coloring product, offers the most obvious attacks. These ads depict a beautiful woman, often an actor who plays a character of great wealth and power in film or on television, says, "It's more expensive, but I'm worth it". The desire for the product is increased by linking the product to how one inwardly and outwardly *performs* self-worth. These ads sell their product on the premise that a product's cost is directly related to the perceived worth (self and social) of its consumer. Thus, we, as consumers, are left with the sense this it is more *costly* (to the constructed self(s)) not to consume. (This notion is often tagged with the threat of being perceived as un-American for even wanting to escape.)

The transformation of the American people from workers to consumers was guided by industrialists and government officials who saw their success as linked to producers becoming consumers. What was needed was to locate the

newly transitioned worker within the geography of market dependence. An effective way to do this was to create desire and then lure Americans into seeing themselves as both unable and unwilling to escape this same desire.

Raymond Williams's historical etymology of the word "consumer" suggests that the alteration of the word's meaning reflect the changes in how we live in relationship to consumption. In its original usage (rooted in French) to consume was an act of pillage. It meant to "take up completely, devour, waste, spend." In almost all its early English uses, Williams reminds us, consume had an "unfavorable sense; it meant to destroy, to use up, to waste, to exhaust." (68-70). Stuart Ewen also makes note of this definition change in Channels of Desire, pre-1900's; 'consumption' was the common word used for tuberculosis, in reminder Ewen is noting that using up anything to such an extent is contrary to survival.

The negative connotation of consumption remained dominant in the English language throughout the sixteenth century. As a world market economy grew, and primarily as a result of the new media of exchange, the understanding of 'using up' and the notions it evoked increasingly became linked with prosperity. As exchange transitioned out of the ancient sense of natural propriety, the term *consumer* began to take on a neutral, and finally self-congratulatory meaning. We see the results of this all around us; people in the United States unselfconsciously refer to themselves as *consumers*.

By the turn of the century, the structure and meaning of 'need' had been reorganized. Americans moved away from many of their old patterns and embraced the pleasures of the new industrial world. In 1892 Simon Patten, whom Ewen refers to as "one of the most important and outspoken apostles of industrial consumerism", argued that a break with the past was required in order to make the leap from "scarcity" to "abundance". Industrialization offered most Americans some sort of abundance; the catch was we had little choice in the form that new bounty would take. Patten envisioned the logic of consumption in much the same way Williams's etymology had re-defined it. It would elevate waste and spending to a social good that would be driven by a continual sense of dissatisfaction. This new standard of living would be determined, not so much by what one had to enjoy, but by the rapidness with which one tired of the pleasure it could bring. Thus, to have a high standard of living increasingly was understood as enjoying a pleasure intensely and quickly tiring of it (Ewen 47-8).

the groundwork

Consumer culture is ... a story of struggles for the soul of everyday life ...

Don Slater

Consumer Culture and Modernity (4)

As the collective definition of consumption changed, so too did the attitudes and behaviors of Americans. As advertising matured into mid-1900,

so too did its effectiveness, making it a force capable of moving goods and changing lives. The voice most loudly redefining middle-class American lives was that of advertising. Early advertisers had the power to change the general perception of goods, as well as the power to change the American perception of desire. Steven Fox, in his text *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and its Creators*, looks at this power and suggests that ads and their general historical context reinforced each other forming a cause and effect loop. Advertising, according to Fox, has always been "both mirror and mindbender" to American culture (64).

Early on consumption was intertwined with the hegemonic 66 wheel. Advertisers, using what was understood as the 'general philosophy of advertising', sold their product by making the slightest cultural twist in their product's direction and then waiting until that slight twist, sold under the name of the modern, and therefore linked to progress, became the accepted norm. In this twisting advertisers were attempting to alter product value and importance for the consumer by making their goods culturally desirable, in the process they shifted cultural norms. As a result of these actions ad men were perceived as manipulators, and in the end, regardless if they set out to be or not, they truly were. In 1913, Jane Adams, a critic of the moral fiber of advertising, remarked to an advertising group, "I doubt if you gentlemen realize how much you can do to shape the tastes of the people of this country" (Fox 67).

Advertisers used the mirrors they constructed to reflect Americans back to themselves. It worked, not because the average middle-class American was

easily persuaded, though some were, it worked because we each construct our sense of self(s) from an interaction with the outside other. Advertising offered itself up as that other, and it did so as the voice of America. For a culture desperate to construct itself, this voice, seemed for many an acceptable one. As time passed, many middle-class Americans began to depend on the mirror advertisers constructed in order to locate a reflection from which to construct an identity.

As advertising took on greater cultural and economic importance, the number of ads appearing in any given magazine increased. Samuel Hopkins Adams, a regular writer for *Collier's* in the 1900's and a critic of advertising, set out to alert Americans to this danger. In one of his articles, he proclaimed that there "is no hour of waking life in which we are not besought, incited or commanded to buy something of somebody", and, in another, he warned that "[a]dvertising has a thousand principles, one purpose, and no morals" (Fox 66).

As far as Boston department store mogul Edward Filene was concerned, it was the critics of advertising that America should focus their worries on. Filene was a headstrong advocate of a national push to re-tool the American mind. In his 1931 text *Successful Living in the Machine Age*, Filene argued that "the time has come, when all our educational institutions ... must concentrate on the great social task of teaching the masses not what to think but *how to think* and thus to find how to behave like human beings in the machine age" (157, emphasis mine). Filene wanted to send Americas back to

school to learn how to think like consumers⁶⁷. He wanted the mirror advertisers held up to be the one Americans were conditioned to turn and respond to.

Ronald Berman, author of *Advertising and Social Change*, believes

Filene was too pessimistic about advertising's persuasive powers. He suggests
that Filene did not see the power advertising had to socialize individuals.

Advertising worked in many of the same ways as education, providing
individuals with ideas, images and examples of cultural expectations (32).

Berman, who understands the ways advertising taps into our deep desires to
observe ourselves (in an effort to construct an identity), and the ways it has
been netted into the hegemony of America, knows that while it is possible to
slip through the net of education, it is *impossible* to avoid the grasp of mass
culture. Advertising, even as early as 1910, was already doing what Filene
was demanding the government assure; it was creating a 'national culture'
every waking hour of every day.

the new collective knowledge

Firmly within the grasp of mass culture, the new national culture of consumption stripped many Americans of the previous century's cultural grounding. Notions of common knowledge and acceptable behavior transitioned so as to grow in the new soil of modernity. Many Americans

turned to the one voice that had offered itself as the American way proceed safely into the future: the voice of consumption. And, all it asked was that those who followed see themselves with eyes constructed by consumer culture. Once the American vision was refocused, advertisers began instructing modern Americans' on their limitations, needs, and, ultimately their desires.

In 1941 Max Horkeimer⁶⁸ described how the new national culture, now reliant on consumer education and product *facts*⁶⁹ played a role in turning people away from their own perceived needs and abilities and towards an external solution of those needs. Advertising's selective version of truth "was being formulated in order to bring about a widespread social dependency on the wares of mass production" (*Captains* 70 & 77). This led to a devaluing of common knowledge that translated into even greater consumer dependence.

Berman argues, with a slightly heavy hand, that corporations were in many ways responsible for American dependence on goods. While I believe the created dependence served industry and advertisers well, I do not believe it was a situation totally of their own creation. I tend to lean in the direction that Lears suggest, consumption culture is the result of a sort of unconscious collaboration between changing culture, technology, the push into modernity, and capitalism.

We were not only seduced by commodities but were also, Pavlovianlike, conditioned to believe that there were no other greater rewards in life and no other sources for those rewards. As corporations become identified with what they produced, they increasingly took on all the psychic authority once solely associated with God, family, or nature (31).

While the extent of corporate power lay in its ability to shift our thinking, the legitimate support for that power was situated in its legal standing. The standing of corporations changed in 1886 as a result of a dispute over railroad routing. In Santa Clara v. Southern Pacific Railroads, the Supreme Court ruled that a private corporation was a "natural person" under the U.S. Constitution and was therefore entitled to protection under the Bill of Rights. Kalle Lasan, in his text Culture Jam, points out that corporations retained their ability to shift our thoughts and command our attention while being protected under the law⁷⁰. In this ruling, Americans lost much of their voice (and ultimately a good deal of their critical thought) to the louder, and legally armored, roar of billboards, print ads, radio spots, town criers laden with fliers.

In modern America, the *new individual* and the *modern family* required new practices. For many Americans, modernization came in the form of media dependence. Increasingly middle-class Americans found themselves in situations where the knowledge they had learned in the home and family no longer applied. The American migration was distancing individuals from their families and generational exchanges of information. This shifting left many questioning the value of their cultural practices. The uncertainty, at times profound, shook the base of many Americans' understandings of self. Daily papers and radio programs were flooded with advice on child rearing, 'proper'

grooming, manners and moral judgments. Young people in the early 1900's increasingly stopped turning to their families and communities for advice, as this advice, and those dispensing it, had been rendered valueless by modernity and progress. The growing energy of this process lay in repetition; images and slogans continually told Americans that life was better if it was *new* and *improved*. The repetition of this belief, coupled with the reality of a changing geography, left many believing that only fragments of their past remained valuable. As a result, many Americans who were already moving towards the waiting arms of consumption were lulled into a kind of sleep by the siren-like voices of advertising.

created market dependence

Advertising's selective version of Truth was being formulated in order to bring about a widespread social dependency on the wares of mass production.

Stuart Ewen Captains Of Conscience (77).

As America's dependence on manufactured identity markers grew, middle-class Americans were reflexively called to look at *products* as mirrors for themselves. Advertising instructed middle-class Americans that they needed products to be happy and accepted. Stuart Ewen argues that these attempts to alter idioms of communication and 'stimulate' behavior were tied

to a widespread agenda designed to shape a culture which responded to, as well as communicated through, advertising. Robert Updegraff, who in the 1920's magazine Advertising and Selling, speculated on the direction advertising would take in the life of the public in the next quarter-century suggested, in some rather sweeping terms, that the world, now schooled in the value of advertising as a commercial expression, would turn to it to articulate itself in broad social ways. Updegraff believed that by 1950 Americans would have "learned to express their ideas, their motives, their experiences, their hopes and ambitions as human beings, and their desires and aspirations as groups, by means of ... advertising" (Captains 74).

As chapter four will show, by the 1950's, Americans had indeed learned to understand themselves through relationships with their consumables.

By 1925, the market economy was well on its way to solidifying

American life around consumption. Increasingly consumption was focusing
on using up the old, while seeking and anticipating the new. Advertising was
just beginning to tap into the wellsprings of need and desire and was
increasingly wrapping commodities in what Ewen refers to as the "aesthetic of
seduction" (*Channels* 48). The end result was the distortion of American's
notion of need.

Ewen uses Freud's argument that pre-civilized humanity was propelled by insatiable drives for immediate, inconsequential gratification to explain how fully middle-class Americans were being seduced by the aesthetic of commodity. Here Ewen suggests that consumer culture appealed to these repressed drives with abandon, promising an esthetic delight that had the power to permeate everything from floor wax to toothpaste. For Ewen this is the undifferentiated universal promise of the marketplace: "Utopia is spectacle! Pain is only a reminder to those who have not yet bought the right product" (49).

For Don Slater the issue is less simplistic. In his text, Consumer

Culture and Modernity, he presents an interpretation of need that incorporates
our present cultural understanding of both basic (such as food, shelter, clothing
and even love) and arbitrary (wants, desires, whims) needs. This dual
understanding of need obscures its fundamental social nature, thus, needs are
not social in the simple sense that they are social influences or pressures or
even the process of socialization through which society moulds the individual
instead, they are profound ways of making social statements.

Slater explains that when one says, 'I need something', they are making at least two profoundly social statements. First, they are saying I need this thing in order to live a certain kind of life, have a certain kind of relationship with others (to have this kind of family), be a certain kind of person, carry out certain actions or achieve certain aims. And second, to say I need something is to make a claim on social resources, to, in fact, claim an entitlement. Thus, for Slater needs "are statements which question whether material and symbolic resources, labour, power are being allocated by contemporary social processes and institutions in such a way as to sustain the kinds of lives that people want to live" (3).

These needs are by their very nature bound to assumptions about how people would, could, or should live in society. This becomes a key point when we think about the ability corporations have, via advertising, to shift our understandings about how people would, could, or should live in society. Once middle-class Americans gave over their individualized understanding of need (in terms of its most basic elements), they became pawns to consumption.

This drive to satisfy our needs is, for most, insatiable rendering most unable to distinguish actual needs from constructed desires. It is here we see the fruits of the 1920's consumption ideology. Middle-class Americans were taught to recognize wants as needs through the fiction of constructed consumption. In this fiction basic needs were confused with socially constructed desires. This confusion locates the understanding of need, and its fulfillment, firmly in the world of consumption. In this world desire and need are collapsed leaving consuming Americans unable to fully distinguish the two, but certain as to where to go to momentarily quell the accompanying hunger these fictions brings on.

This hunger is further intensified by the inequitable ways a market economy creates and then fills need. It is vital to recall that this fiction was not intended to read as the conspiracy plot it seems to construct. Strasser reminds us corporations did not set out to create needs; they set out to construct spaces in which their products might become needed. Corporations set out to sell and, in the process of making people into consumers they changed ideas, habits, technology, demographic trends, and many other facets of culture, few of

which were controlled even by the most powerful of marketers (17). The importance of pausing to note the intentions of producers is to remember this only reads like a conspiracy novel because the fiction worked so very well to produce a consumption culture.

Consumption culture can never fully meet consumer needs on a tangible level because its survival is linked to production. And, production is designed to enhance demand by limiting supply. Tied to the opportunity to consume is both the ideology and the reality of scarcity. Every consumer has been educated to know the opportunity to purchase is limited by either time or production constraint. Thus, our desires are intensified. To further whet our hunger consumers are assured that each desire is *dire* to our social welfare. J. Ron Stanfield suggests this creates a "false need for ... commodity [that] may pacify for the moment, but it can not satisfy. The need will return again and again" (68). What makes this particularly damaging is that these desires — confused to be read as *true* need — are in constant motion. Each new desire is understood as being *as necessary* as the last.

Consumption, capitalism's voice, has been whispering in the ear of middle-class Americans for so long now we have grown to believe – to know – that our lives are incomplete, unsatisfied, perhaps even unlivable, without new consumables. Lasch, in his text *Culture of Narcissism*, ties this sense of incompleteness to the ways we are sold products. Advertising's original function was to market products; now "it serves to market feelings, sensations and styles of life." Ads no longer suggest that a product works, instead they

suggest that consumption will "cure the problems of age, sex, or loneliness" (71). Middle-class Americans have so internalized this notion we find ourselves expecting that consumables (new, bigger, brighter) will (re-)create us, will (finally) complete us, will (at last) give our life meaning. In this process the middle-class are literally looking to consumer culture to direct their needs; consumer culture's response is to remind us we always need.

To always need and to be reminded of this daily, is to lose a portion of the private American culture offers. Our insecurities – the most private of vulnerabilities – are created and than held up to us, and the world, via magazine pages and television screens. We have compromised our intimate spaces to consumption's gaze. For many of us the images we take in linger reshaping the ways we can see ourselves, they alter our behaviors, and modify our relationship to the world. Slater argues that consumer culture has knotted the "intimate world inextricably to the public," leaving us with the invalidating of the private (4). So entwined with the market were we had little chance for escape without scars.

All objects of consumption are meaningful and therefore subject to cultural reproduction. Even the most private act of consumption animates the social system of signs through the process of cultural reproduction.

Consumption is *never* the simple reproduction of our physical existence; it is also the reproduction of culturally specific, meaningful ways of life (Slater 4-5).

If consumption is the daily reflexive process of creating identity and ethics, then middle-class Americans are faced with the question: what kind of actors (subjects) are we? How do we set out to understand ourselves in relation to the everyday world of consumption, in the gaps between moral and social value, over issues of our own privacy and external power? Baudrillard suggests that consumption is *always* dependent on social arrangements.

Objects of consumption are *always* culturally meaningful; and, therefore, are able to be used to reproduce social identities. Our possessions speak for us in ways we both control and are controlled by. So, the question then becomes who are we if so much of who we are is constructed though acts of consumption?

If, as Slater suggests, "consumer culture is about continuous self-creation through the accessibility of things which are themselves presented as new, modish, faddish or fashionable, always improved and improving," then our things really do speak us to the world (10). This becomes problematic not because our goods *cannot* function as reflection for us, but because the very notion of consumer culture is built on the constantly *new*. In this construction, there is no "resting place" to ground the self(s) in relation to consumables. Without these moments of recovery, the consumer, and their constructed identity, is in constant flux.

What sense of self(s) that may have existed in the first round of consumption has now long been exchanged for the satisfaction gained by simply 'keeping up'. It is small wonder middle-class Americans scramble to

own the newest products. We are desperate to be grounded in *something*, and consumables are the most tangible and visible things we are offered. They are always there, always promising to bring us what we seek at what seems to be so small a price. (I will address this price more clearly in chapter five.)

It was possible for consumption to take the foreground in American culture because of the dis-ease modernity caused. The middle-class was primed for what modernization required on both an emotional level and a market level. As looked at in chapter one, Americans had established an emotional distance to their past that accompanied their geographic one.

America was increasingly comfortable with its dynamic culture. These early understandings allowed many to shift with the demands of Modernity.

Americans recreated themselves once (in coming to America), and had been pleased with the outcome, this round, however, fueled by the industrial revolution, found its grounding in very different territory. The transition of the 1900's stripped many Americans of their prior understanding of themselves in relation to society. In a world directed by the fiction of consumption and its resulting flux there remained little of cultural value for the middle-class

American to adhere to with any certainty.

In Captains of Consciousness, Stuart Ewen presents a very thorough study of the ways modernization shook Americans from their moorings⁷². Individuals could no longer depend on skills honed over a lifetime. With the rise of the factory, independent artisans were displaced from the market. This radical displacement produced anxiety. What had once been understood as

useful was now rendered meaningless. Americans dutifully listened to radio and read news articles discussing the changing world in an attempt to avoid being left behind. Their fears were real. Proof was everywhere. Younger people, without skills, were hired over those with skills and experience because they were *perceived* to be able to learn and/or move faster. What once took years to achieve could now be done in a matter of months; becoming skilled in the factory required no real talent or mastery⁷³. The newly skilled had good jobs and not only survived in the modern world, but surrounded themselves with all it had to offer.

This flux was further complicated by wage labor. The alienation the wage laborer felt doubled over into the ways he *could* practice his life and perceive of himself. The exchange of labor for wage bound people to consumption. The cycle was now in full motion.

Prior to modernization, there had been an apprentice-craftsman system. Comprised of both "productive activity and the social relations of commerce", this system allowed a relationship between craftsmen and purchasers that defined the work: goods were made for and sold to *individuals* (Ewen 55-6). In an industrialized state, one of mass production and distribution, the human relationship is largely removed from the work routine. In the study *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*, Robert and Helen Lynd⁷⁴ sketch out how the world of people and the world of things had been cleaved from each other through the industrial process. This process left people who traditionally understood themselves in relationship to their work and its

usefulness to the larger community with little grounding in themselves or their place in the community.

Industrialists and advertisers alike saw the severing of society's dependence upon traditional forms of labor as beneficial, and they worked together to create consumers. The desire to manufacture customers was made real through changes to the general philosophy of advertising. In 1920, the advertising journal of the period, *Printer's Ink*, captured the direction industries were gearing towards: "modern machinery ... made it not only possible but imperative that the masses should live lives of comfort and leisure; that the future of business lay in its ability to manufacture customers as well as products" (Captains, Ewen 53). Walter Pitkin, a professor of marketing at Columbia School of Journalism that same year, spoke on "goods advertising, even sophisticated 'national' market goods advertising, as merely an initial step 'in a direction towards which we must go a long way further'". As Ewen explains the situation, not even industrial advertising (an attempt through public relations to boost the whole of a specific market) met the demands of "... mass industrial society. What was necessary, rather, was a broad scaled strategy aimed at selling the way of life determined by a profitseeking mass-productive machinery" (emphasis mine Captains 53-54). To this, Pitkin rallied for an entire industrial value system, calling his colleagues to "go beyond institutional advertising to some new kind of philosophy of life advertising" (Rorty 392). The new philosophy took the form of the basic

transformation that had increasingly characterized the world of work -a response to *things* rather than *people*.

By the early twentieth century, mass production and mass consumption had dramatically altered the social landscape of American life. The feeling of many Americans was that the Jeffersonian ideal of a country of self-producing men was rapidly giving way to industrial displacement. Edward Devine, a social worker and editor of *Survey* magazine, captured the general dis-ease this created in 1907:

... home has ceased to be the glowing center of production from which radiates all desirable goods and has become a pool towards which products made in other places flow – a place of consumption, not of production (*Channels* 36).

Devine and others were witnessing the results of historical redefinition.

By 1900, the home had ceased production, and the factory had taken its place as the center of production. Modern people now purchased what they once produced for themselves. This represented a fundamental rearrangement in the way people apprehended their material world. Production and consumption were now distinct.

It seems no coincidence to Steven Fox that the height of advertising should coincide with the "cluster of political and social reforms" know as the progressive era" (64). Clearly, what was good for business was also good for government. In a 1926 address to the American Association of Advertising Agencies, Calvin Coolidge focused on the pressing needs of the advertising

industry, calling for "investments of great capital, the occupation of large areas of floor space, [and] the employment of an enormous number of people" (Ewen, *Captains* 32). Comparisons between the production line and advertising were steadily increasing expectations surrounding advertising⁷⁵

Ford's production line had insured the efficient creation of large quantities of consumer goods; ad men in this same period spoke of their product as 'business insurance'. Their work assured the profitable and efficient distribution of production line goods. Advertising was offering itself as a means of efficiently creating consumers and as a way of "homogeneously controlling the consumption of a product" (*Captains* 33).

Loren Baritz, in his text *Servants of Power*, suggests that Coolidge and the government had a hand, and an interest, in the creation of consumers.

Coolidge made several comparisons between the production line accomplishments and his expectations for the advertising industry. Coolidge knew Ford's assembly line had utilized 'expensive single-purpose machinery' to produce automobiles at an inexpensive rate. He believed the costly machinery of advertising could and should do the same thing: produce consumers inexpensively. Coolidge believed in the power of advertising so intensely he would preach:

...to create consumers efficiently the advertising industry had to develop universal notions of what makes people respond, going beyond the 'horse sense' psychology that had characterized the earlier industry (27).

By the 1920's, businessmen had become increasingly aware of the political and social roles consumption, and the advertising that drove it, played. Leverett S. Lyon, in his 1920 addition to the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, called for instruction in industrial aesthetics to fight *against* traditional patterns of culture. He called for "training in arts and taste in a generous consumption of goods". Saying that advertising is the "greatest force at work against the traditional economy of an age-long poverty as well as that of our own pioneer period". For Lyon advertising was the strongest force working against the Puritanism that remained in consumption. He believes advertising could infuse art into the things of life, and felt certain that it would if handled correctly (Ewen *Captains* 57).

Advertising in the 1920's was recognized as the force behind the future of capitalism because advertisers could manufacture consumers. Consumerism had emerged not as a smooth progression from earlier and less developed patterns of consumption, but rather as an "aggressive device of corporate survival" (*Captains* 54). Consumer culture required the destruction of a stable traditional social order. Industrial and capitalist relations were best served by undermining, as Slater suggests, the social values that construct social solidarity thus rendering people's social identities in flux, and, as a result, a matter for obsessive concern (6).

Lears would find fault with the force and singleness with which Slater and Ewen blame manufacturers of industry for the development of consumption culture (1983, 1994). I tend to agree with Lears on this point, Americans were

not herded into consumption by industry's blinding light, instead, Americans followed the trail of modern toys industry laid at its feet. This trail, rich with shine and promise, appeared to offer a route towards a future more in keeping with our changing moral and cultural state. I believe we went willingly, eyes wide, seeing very little of where we were headed.

With the stability of the culture rattled by change, Americans turned to the only 'teacher' they could find to facilitate retooling: consumption. Here many Americans found a form of stability. Consumption promised to make us modern (by its own definition), we only had to release our critical thought surrounding it. This *seemed* practical at the onset because traditional understandings of consumption could not grant us entry into Modernity. We had had to retool our industry; it was a simple progression to retool our thinking as well.

In this retooling, we gave over much of our critical eye and perhaps more of our *desire* to think critically around consumption. The deeper middle-class Americans fell into this sleep, the further consumption extended itself out. Many were lulled into an acceptance of consumption's superiority over their own collective knowledge. We had grown to no longer fully trusted ourselves to do common things without the benefit of consumptive practices. Women in droves purchased magazines and books promising to teach them how to properly appear and *correctly* bear and raise children. Uncertain men purchased guides to learn proper social performance in business and dating. Few in the middle-class lay outside the gaze of consumption. We, the

watched, did what any watched body does; we performed. Most willingly learned to accept rather than question; most willingly learned to release their desire to see consumption in a critical frame.

Consumer culture exists in a world no longer governed by tradition but rather by flux, and a world produced through rational organization and scientific know-how, ...[thus] the figure of the consumer and the experience of consumerism is both exemplary of the new world and integral to its making.

Don Slater
Consumer Culture and Modernity (9)

Consumption, fueled by advertising, had changed the way Americans saw themselves in the early decades of the 1900's. By the end of 1920, advertising had a foothold in the everyday lives and the psyches of a majority of Americans. As the decades pasted the sophistication with which our desires were created and manipulated intensified. We were becoming a nation consumed with consumption. Once converted, it seemed there was little hope of return.

During the 1920's ... advertising grew to the dimensions of a major industry.

Stuart Ewen
Captains of Consciousness (32-33)

The 1920's was probably the first era in which modernity was widely held to be a state that has already been reached by the population in general, a state we are in or nearly in, rather than one towards which an avant-garde points: in the consuming activities of the middle-class the ultra modern future was already readable, already beginning to happen.

Don Slater

Consumer Culture and Modernity (13)

American life had changed dramatically by the end of 1919. The first national experience with world war shook American society eliminating what little certainty had existed. Advertising quickly moved in to fill the void. An ad man in 1919 asked, "Are we going to rest upon the record of advertising as a factor of war, or are we going to develop it still further, to apply it to the many fields in which it can serve in reconstruction and the days of peace?" (Fox 78). Coming into its stride after the selling of war to Americans⁷⁶, advertising stood ready to change life's most intimate details.

War had assured America would be an industrialized nation.

Advertising was going to assure it stayed that way. Mass production required a mass consumer base; advertisers knew this required their creation.

Ad men built up uniformity, and ad direction focused on 'standardized' materials, creating status markers and ensuring higher ticket prices. Brand names were coined in an effort to make room in the vernacular, and education around class markers took off⁷⁷. Consumers were now encouraged to imitate the habits of the rich. Ads stressed that the wealthy knew how to spot marks of quality and endurance. Thus defining imitation as a double bonus: it suggested first, the consumer knew a 'secret' and, second, the consumer would be rewarded with excellence in the end. It did not matter if one could recognize the difference or not; these ads built on the constructed belief that the wealthy simply knew more, especially on matters involving consumption.

Other lasting shifts came out of the teaching of Universities in the early 1900's. Stanley Resor, head of one of the leading ad firms, J. Walter Thompson agency (JWT) was fascinated by the teachings of sociologist W. Sumner. Sumner argued human beings were:

... not favored individuals created by a benevolent deity for some special purpose, but rather faceless parts of a moiling mass bumping its way forward through the impersonal process of evolution. They were governed not by reason but by the heedless, irrational drives of *hunger*, vanity, fear, and sexuality. Folkways, the mores of society, developed at the slow and steady pace of a glacier, oblivious to the deflecting efforts of governments or reform movements." (italics mine Fox 83).

Sumner's viewpoint suggested an irrational individual groping in the darkness of the masses. To this understanding, Resor added his interest in Henry Thomas Buckle's ⁷⁸ 1857 publication, *History of Civilization in England*. Buckle's work reinforced the lectures of Sumner, stressing the need to study whole populations over individuals and the needs of these whole

populations in terms of resources distribution. Steven Fox finds the voices of both Sumner and Buckle in a good deal of the ads produced by JWT. These ads were geared towards the masses, with an emphasis on irrational drives and an unyielding faith in statistics to describe and predict human behavior. To this mix, Resor added behaviorist John B. Watson, who assured his advertising colleagues that "to make your consumers react it is only necessary to confront him with either fundamental or conditional stimuli". By 1920 the direction of advertising had switched to incorporate stimulus-response (83-5).

John B. Watson joined JWT in 1920, this hire marked the most conspicuous merging of psychology with advertising of the time. Jackson Leers sees the introduction of Watson as an indicator of the seriousness with which advertisers were taking the therapeutic ethos. (A point *Printer's Ink* (in 1890s) was stressing the benefits of thirty years earlier.) Advertising began to utilize the notions (commonly held within psychological communities) that "the psyche was a dynamic organism interacting in constant process with its environment". For advertisers this meant human minds could be manipulated, and Lears suggests, the most potent manipulation in the arsenal was a therapeutic one. To this end, ads "promise that the product would contribute to the buyer's physical, psychic or social well-being" in *this* world. The threat that one's well-being and quality of life could be undermined if he/she failed to buy was an underlying yet ever present possibility (*Culture of Consumption*, 17-30).

America was in the midst of a post-war economic boon. In the years after the war, the total annual volume of advertising doubled, from \$1.5 billion in 1918 to just under \$3 billion in 1920⁷⁹. The 1920's were the first decade to proclaim a generalized ideology of affluence. The new tools in the American home best illustrated the mechanization of everyday life: washing machines, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, telephones.

With these advances consumer culture took on a mature form⁸⁰. The modern "norm" emerged founding a base line for the ways consumer goods were to be produced, sold and assimilated into everyday life. As a result, Americans became consumers, and consumers were no longer seen as "classes or genders who consume, but rather as consumers who happen to be organized into classes and genders" (Slater 13 -14). In the 1920's, mass culture set out to consume the individual.

1920 -1930's beauty ads

By the 1920's, everyday consumption was socially normalized, and middle-class Americans embraced (still tighter) the perception of themselves as consumers. Advertisers shifted their attentions to the reasons one consumed. By the end of World War I, advertisers had added a powerfully

persuasive devise to their arsenal: social acceptance. The first step was to center their attentions on the body as a place of *unquestionable* embarrassment. Carefully constructed fears about social stigma were central in creating demand for cosmetics and toilet articles. Beauty ads of the period focused on fears of loneliness and undesirability. According to Ewen, it was no longer acceptable for American women to meet the world with a clean gown and a well-scrubbed face. Social acceptability now depended upon attention to every detail (*Captains* 47).

Utilizing their growing power, advertisers created new social ills.

Claude Hopkins, one of the earliest ad men, (while with the Lord and Thomas advertising agency) while reading on dental hygiene discovered plaque. He decided to emphasize Pepsodent's ability to remove cloudy film from the teeth of customers. The ads, which depicted attractive people who using the toothpaste, made millions for Pepsodent and its shareholders. The power of this campaign was furthered by the suggestion that people with filmy teeth were less desirable in social circles (Fox 55-6).

This same type of concept was carried further in the campaign for Listerine. Listerine (invented as a surgical antiseptic for throat infections) had not sold well. In 1922, the ad agency of Williams and Cunnyngham was hired to search for a new sales angle. As Fox tells the tale, ideas and uses for the product were tossed about. Someone suggested bad breath. All agreed it was a good idea, but "you can't refer to it in polite company." Stumped for a good and usable idea, the team had a chemist check if Listerine had any effect on

bad breath. The chemist report declared that Listerine was good for halitosis. No one had heard of the word so it was adopted as a "sober, medical-sounding way of referring to the unmentionable." (97-8). The admen who transformed Listerine into what Roland Marchand, Advertising the American Dream:

Making Way For Modernity, 1920-1940, refers to as the "marvel of the advertising world", did so by inducing the public to discover a new need. This was a reversal of the usual focus on product use conversion (18).

The ad team returned to the office and wrote a series of ads designed to create bad breath fears. "Even your best friend won't tell you," warned one ad. Soon this 'whisper copy' was running in eighty magazines and over three hundred newspapers. The Listerine campaign added catch phrases and an air of anxiety to everyday conversations. The headline 'Often a Bridesmaid But Never a Bride" ran with different copy and illustrations for the next three decades. After just five years of halitosis warnings, Listerine was making a net profit of over \$4 million. Fear advertising clearly worked and by 1926 Printers Ink was saying Feasley (one of the copywriters on the campaign) had "amplified the morning habits of our nicer citizenry – by making the morning mouthwash as important as the morning shower or the morning shave."81 A new era of advertising was being heralded in and a new mantra was coined by the J. Walter Thompson company: "... we must sell life" (Marchand 20). And, the life they, and every other ad agency, were selling was a standard middleclass one, rich with social strife and the fear of losing ones place.

The climate of fear had been established, and consumers were now easy targets for ad men and the myriad of body-related products they flooding into the market (Fox, Lears, Strasser). The spectacular results of campaigns like Listerine and later Kotex inspired a host of imitators. By the late 1920's advertisers found ways to "empathize with the anxieties of consumers who sought to keep pace with the tempo of modern life and to overcome its impersonal judgments" (Marchand 22). It was becoming increasingly clear that products themselves could only sell so much, and that advertisers had to do the rest.

Arthur Kunder of the Erwin, Wasey & Jefferson agency heard about a ringworm fungus that was appearing on American feet at an alarming rate. He hired a lab to find a product on the market to combat this affliction. His answer was Absorbine Jr., a liniment for sore muscles and insect bites. Kunder renamed the ailment "athlete's foot" and pitched the campaign to the Absorbine company. They bought it, as did millions of consumers. The ad read: "His heart quickened at the soft fragrance of her cheeks ... but her shoes hid a sorry case of athlete's foot" (Fox 98). Social acceptability depended on attention to every detail (even those that were hidden from view). Ad men, keenly aware of how to create middle-class insecurity, no longer were waiting for companies to bring them their products; they were now activity seeking them.

Middle-class American fears were not reserved for halitosis, plaque and athletes foot. Ad agencies knew they had a working model, and they kept

working it. "B.O.", the term given to the smell of body odor, was ever-present in the whisper campaigns. Mum deodorant paved the way with its campaign (written by the John O. Powers agency):

When you're getting ready for the dance, the theatre, or an evening in other crowded and close places, and you want to make sure that perspiration and its inevitable odor will not steal away your sweet cleanliness and dainty charm -- 'mum' is the word (Fox 98).

The market doubled when fears created around B.O. lead to the invention of deodorant soaps as a 'cure' for such an unmentionable state.

The problems with the body did not end here. The 'laundress problem' even found its way into 'polite company'. During World War I, a company in Wisconsin produced "cellucotton" bandages made from wood fiber to replace cotton bandages in hospitals. Nurses in France began using these bandages as sanitary pads. Wartime shortages produced a disposable and tidy alternative to the homemade washable pads women had always used. The cellucotton firm engaged the Charles F. W. Nichols agency in the delicate task of advertising Kotex. The early ads called on the consumer to think of the cleanliness and sanitation of the hospital by using a hospital room and nurses as its backdrop⁸². The campaign ran in January of 1921 with the copy:

Simplify the laundress problem ... Kotex are good enough to form a habit, cheap enough to throw away, and easy enough to dispose of ... they complete the toilet essentials of the modern woman (Fox 99).

The Kotex products marked the beginning of a trend of waste that still reigns supreme in most of middle-class American consumption. Albert Lasker spoke with satisfaction on this issue "Women are beginning to waste ... [o]nce you can afford to waste a product it's bound to be a success!" (Fox 99).

This period in advertising history saw the chronic spreading of dis-ease throughout the body. In fairness, some of these products did improve the general health of the population. Oral hygiene and nutrition improved dramatically, and in the end, Listerine did neither real harm nor real good. Jackson Lears suggests our new "quest for self-realization through consumption compensated for a loss of autonomy on the job [and] therapeutic ideals converged with advertising and mass amusement to promote new forms of cultural hegemony" (29). The body was serving a new master. Madison Avenue would now lead as the elite of the Victorian period had once done. Only this time everything was for sale.

Between the 1920's and 1930's, advertisers called new attention to the body as a thing: to fix, cover up, and feel shame over. This would begin a continuing middle-class American obsession with perfection⁸³ and cleanliness. Clean bodies, clean homes, clean bathrooms. What was left of us as a nation⁸⁴ was something that resembled white bread. All the flavor, all the grit, all the nutrients removed, just a bleached airy loaf that sticks to the roof of your mouth, a *most* unnatural thing.

1940's - 1950's the middle-class icons of acceptability Advertising projected a WASP vision of a tasteless, colorless, odorless, sweatless world. Ethnic minorities cooked with vivid spices — even garlic! — and might neglect toothpaste, mouthwash, deodorant, and regular bathing. Adverting would show these minorities how to cleanse themselves. We are, said Sinclair Lewis, "the first great nation in which all individuality, all sweetness of life, all saline and racy earthiness has with success been subordinated to the machine-ruled industrialism

Steven Fox

The Mirror Makers: a History of American Advertising and Its Creators (99)

Prosperity and the good life meant the ability to keep up with the Joneses.

Don Slater

Consumer Culture and Modernity (12)

The affluent society was a consumer society in which economic prosperity brought insatiable and morally dubious wants, a crisis in values over the work ethic, a bifurcation of desire between respectable consumption (consumption within the framework of the family, the spread of bourgeois propriety through the accumulation of domestic capital) and hedonistic, amoral, non-familial consumption.

Daniel Bell,

The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism⁸⁵

By the 1950's, mass consumption, what Bocock refers to as a 'recognizably modern sense', began to develop in all but the poorest of Americans. Most people now had sufficient income to provide for their basic needs and had a growing awareness of new products on the market, such as televisions and cars⁸⁶. This was a period of monumental change. The commodity market parroted the patterns of "conspicuous consumption" that Thorstein Veblen noted in rich capitalists and their middle-class imitators at

the turn of the century; only this time, it was "democratized" on a mass scale⁸⁷. Television carried the consumer imagery into the back corners and living rooms of American home life. The imagined *modern family* informed a suburban migration which dwarfed (five fold) the massive European migration to America. This new society distributed *culture* on a mass scale. This triumph over the locality of people's lives as a source of nutrient and information is, perhaps, the monumental achievement of twentieth-century capitalism: centralization of the social order (Ewen *Captains*, 206).

Commercial network television played an important role in the emerging economy of the 1940's and 1950's. In his text, *Time Passages:*Collective Memory and American Popular Culture, George Lipsitz looks at the meaning of early network television in an attempt to understand how Americans went about constructing themselves within and around a collective memory. This work highlights the power of 1950's television to change American perception. The television had the dual function of being a significant new object of consumption as well as an ever-expanding market medium. However, its real power lay in that it sat in the center of the living room, regularly commanding the family's attention.

Television, a luxury item, was transformed into a 'need'. In the 1940's, three million televisions were sold; in the 1950's, five million televisions were sold every *year*. Television's most important economic function came from its role as an instrument of legitimization in the transformation of values necessary to keep up with the new economy of postwar American. While ads

and programming helped Americans accept the new world of consumerism, programs also gave them examples of both how to make a break with the past and how to integrate into the future (42-44).

Television was emerging as the most important discursive medium in American culture. Lipsitz suggests the urban, ethnic, working-class comedies of the 1950's provided a means of "addressing the anxieties and contradictions emanating from the clash between the consumer present of the 1950's and the collective memory about the 1930's and 1940's". Situation comedies of the 1950's were a collective attempt by industry to construct the American middle-class consumer. Lipsitz looks closely at the CBS network comedy *The Goldbergs*⁸⁸, a situation comedy that ran throughout the 1950's. Typical of the period the show was set in and around the life of a working-class family who yeaned to be middle-class: the Goldbergs were Jewish and living in the Bronx (42).

During the course of *The Goldbergs'* television run, millions of American families made the same journey the Goldbergs did: from the city to the suburbs. Lipsitz explains:

The journey from the Bronx to Haverville, from ethnic, urban, working-class, extended family and kinship network to a detached, single-family, suburban home was a journey from the past to the present. It relied upon the language, icons, and images of the ethnic immigrant past to explain the suburban consumer present (40).

The shows high ratings shares confirm that many of these same families were watching too⁸⁹. As Lipsitz sees it, television "not only recorded migration to the suburbs, but it provided important economic stimuli and significant

ideological justifications for that move". Programs like *The Goldbergs* can give us important insight into how the emerging middle-class reasoned through the drastic changes they were going through for both themselves and the larger communities of which they were a part (40).

In 1957 The Goldbergs became Molly; the family moved out of the city and into the Long Island suburb of "Haverville". As David Marc notes in his text Comic Visions, the Goldbergs now lived in the community of "haves", where their neighbors no longer trampled through their living room or call out to them through open windows (51). Molly found its comic premise in the relative isolation and alienation of suburbia. Fears about "proper" consumption and installment credit become focal points (39-40), making Molly yet another situation comedy capable of reflecting the conditions of modern reality back to the viewer.

At a quick glance, the ethnic-urban genre would seem to go against the direct needs of advertisers and consumption. Squalor and unemployment and the problems of the unemployed may be made laughable, but they do not readily sell new refrigerators. Lipsitz suggests that programming that depicted the migration from city to suburb did in fact alter the collective memory in such a way as to encourage a transition away from 'traditional' practices and into 'modern' consumption. Post-war immigrants were holding tightly to both their past and their purse strings, comedies like *The Goldbergs* reflected this behavior. Despite the apparent contradiction, these shows "evoked the experiences of the past to lend legitimacy to the dominant ideology of the

present." And, in the process, they served important social and cultural functions: they returned profits via advertising and served as vehicles for the "ideological legitimization of a fundamental revolution in economic, social, and cultural life" (42).

Many immigrants watched these programs and many *did* see themselves. They watched people like themselves make choices that they themselves had to make, choices that prior to coming to America were not necessary nor available to them. In the seven years that *The Goldbergs* ran, millions of urban immigrants were given weekly lessons on how to 'be' in this new land⁹⁰. Those lessons often echoed the lessons of the 1920's -- consumption as a way of life.

The television transition from the urban to the suburban was more firmly located in the geography of economics than in the miles traveled out of the city. New consumer products became the focus of many programs. These products, infused as tokens of modernity suggested that family keepsakes and memorabilia were obsolete in the new world. Many shows centered around the child/parent relationship to these devalued tokens. The move to the suburbs marked a new (read: *better*) standard of living and an opportunity for upward mobility, which served to push the first generation children into a world different from their parents, a world that mocked the foreign and its archaic customs of the family (40). Situation comedies were most often centered on the comic aspects of this growing riff, but they never forgot their moral; modernity always won in the end.

Government policies involving television offered tax incentives to advertisers in these years to keep production going. These programs during and after World War II shaped the home's newest appliance into an advertising medium:

The government allowed corporations to deduct the cost of advertising from their taxable incomes during the war, despite the fact that rationing and defense production left business with few products to market. Consequently, manufacturers kept the names of their products ... [alive] ... while lowering their tax obligations on high wartime profits. Their advertising expenditures supplied radio networks and advertising agencies with the capital reserves and business infrastructure that enabled them to dominate the television industry in the postwar era (Lipsitz 45).

In the postwar years, government was concerned with keeping production going. It sanctioned the network system of television with an iron hand. Government allocated stations on a narrow VHF band, thus granting network rights to ownership and operation over stations in a prime market. To assure this dominance, government placed a freeze on the licensing of new stations between 1948-1952. According to Lipsitz, this was a "guarantee that advertising-oriented programming based on the model of radio would triumph over ... any other from [of television]. Thus, government decisions, not market forces, established the dominance of commercial television" (45).

Consumption was the reward both government and industry gleaned from their efforts to fix television in the American collective. Manufacturers needed ways to motivate customers to buy at continually increasing rates.

Television provided a means for this; its advertising delivered a continual flow of information and suggestion that centered acts of consumption at the core of

everyday life. Middle-class American culture was shifting; suburban growth was fragmenting community and motion-picture attendance was on the decline, thus, an audience was being created for television, one that was more likely to stay at home and to *receive* entertainment. This cultural shifting, suggest Lipsitz, opened the door for television to also "provided a forum for redefining American ethnic class and family identities into *consumer identities*". To accomplish this television programs increasingly began to address the psychic, moral, and political obstacles of consumption (47).

Television of the 1950's had abetted the reconstruction of the American consumer. Decades of disciplining left most middle-class Americans certain they were being watched, assessed and judged on their acceptability at every turn. It is no small wonder conformity ruled. Well disciplined to watch and be watched, we turned the watching inward. The 1950's marked the era when consumption became more than a way of life. It became a way of being, complete with internalized triggers to need more, spend more, buy more.

1960's revolution?

Advertising has two faces: One serves the powers that be; the other tries to utilize the astounding 'revolution in manners and morals' that we have undergone in the twentieth century. One thing is perhaps as bad as another, for when advertising allies itself with the sexual revolution it succeeds only in destroying social authority; when it encourages the liberation of women it only sets the sexes against each

other; when it flatters the young and glorifies youth it makes mature social expectations impossible.

Christopher Lasch
Culture of Narcissism (72)

The 1960' is remembered as a time when people did something that made a difference and thus is often looked back upon with idealizing eyes. It seems no small surprise 'revolution' happened; America had become a nation self-identified with conformity and 'the man in the gray flannel suit'.

Influenced by conformity, middle-class America consumers of the 1950's were perceived to be hyper focused on acquiring more.

The 1960's counter-consumption was an attempt to step out of the discipline resulting from all these years of training. In the 1920's, consumption offered an alternative to the oppressive industrial state. For the youth culture of the 1960's, it offered only continued conformity with their parent's ideals. During the 1960's, there was an attempt to disempower consumption by refusing to engage with it⁹¹. (Can we forget Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book?*) The result was perceived as radical. This subversion, in terms of its effect on consumption, was little more than an inversion of a power structure within a single frame⁹². The consumption revolution of the 1960's served as a mirror opposite of the same structure it desired to be severed from. It functioned similarly to the anorectic body⁹³ and its desire to be both seen and unseen. The form of reverse rejection serves to reinstate the object of desire/revolt as foremost and (still) at center.

I use the anorectic body here as an example of the ways radical dissent can be blocked when the frame is merely inverted. The radical actions of the 1960's were still hinged to the power structures present in America: politics, capitalism and hegemony. The structure of power surrounding consumption, while disturbed, was left relatively unchanged. Stepping out of mainstream culture could be read as similar to the anorectic's disappearing body. Its invisibility/descent hinges on a desire to become visible. American reaction to Sixties radicals was similar to the reaction to the anorectic: imposed force in terms of violent control by state and hospital, respectively, and then reconditioning of the deviant body. The deviant bodies of the 1960's were reconditioned into mainstream consumption through the appropriation of *their* ideology.

In a disciplined state, punishment comes in all forms. The punishment rendered here was the incorporation of sixties youth culture's words and desires into mainstream capitalism. What was once the uniform of revolution could be bought (for an inflated price) by those seeking to look the role. What once was the yell of revolution now stood as the shout to consume. The punishment for stepping out of capitalism's discipline was the blurring of the lines between revolution and consumption. In a capitalistic market, everything is for sale, *even* revolution (and, two decades later, *Revolution*⁹⁴ was in fact being used to hock Nikes). What we are left with is a revolution that brings us back to the very place we were running from.

The 1960's taught Americans how to think of themselves as radical, as exceptional, and as unique. With the help of consumption culture's constructions of desire, middle-class America learned to think of themselves in terms of consumable style. And, of course, someone had to manufacture and sell this style. In the end, revolution was very good for consumption⁹⁵.

Thomas Frank, in his text *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture*, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism, argues advertisers have always used 'hip', and youth culture in general, to sell product. According to him the appropriation of youth behavior, attitude, language and style was not an attempt to manipulate a cultural movement, but, instead, fell into the directive to sell more at any and all cost. Frank's book is wonderful at returning our focus to the business of advertising which, even in the 1960's, was to sell product – the more the better. In order to do this advertisers had to keep their work dynamic, and that meant keeping up with trends and language changes. In the advertising community dynamic has always meant hip.

The irony with the 1960's version of this is that the 'hip' language advertisers employed was that of an alienated youth. Thus, to meet the 'sell more' objective advertisers had to find a way to use this voice to sell their goods. The result was what Frank calls 'anti-advertising' His argument on this centers around the transition advertising made out of the 1950's straight forward product description style (as it was simply no longer meeting the profit line), and into the creative flare that would become common in ads in the 1960's. The market needed a shake up, and it was this shaking that opened the

door for the advertising creativity of the 1960's. What made this creative transition stick, and then ultimately present in nearly every major advertising campaign coming out in the 1960's, is that it sold product (104-132). While, advertisers had few problems employing the cultural air of youth, they fell short of allowing any aspect *other* then profit margins to drive them⁹⁷. The bottom line of hip rested on the profit line.

Ad men and manufacturers, all of whom kept the profit line clearly visible, made the colonization of a resistance culture possible. Ewen, who takes a hard line on the conscious efforts of advertisers to manipulate youth culture, remarks on this phenomenon:

Appropriating the lingo and style of the New Left, the counterculture, feminism, neo-agrarianism, ethnicity, drug-vision, and other phenomena, the advertising industry, seeking markets, has generated a mass culture which reflects the spirit but not the cutting edge of ... resistance. ... [A]n increasing amount of today's adverting and product imagery speaks to the deprivations of what has been called 'abundance'. Within advertising, the social realm of resistance is reinterpreted, at times colonized, for corporate benefit. Ads mirror the widespread judgment that mass-produced goods are junky and unhealthy. Products are advertised as if they contain this anticorporate disposition ... Moods of anticorporate resistance and sentiment reappear in the ads themselves, miraculously encased within the universal terms of the market. ... On both the material and the psychological levels, advertising offers refuge from an overly managed and infiltrated social space (218-19).

The Volkswagen Beetle ad campaign, (run by DDB) is a banner example of the appropriation of the language and ideology of the youth culture ⁹⁸. The ads sold a car that was small, but big enough, on the idea that this was not your father's car. The ad series listed the Beetle's differences, differences other car corporations (read: large) would not celebrate:

Think small. ... These strange little cars with their beetle shapes ... 32 miles to the gallon (regular gas, regular driving), and aluminum aircooling rear engine that would go 70 mph all day without strain, sensible size for a family and a sensible price-tag too. Beetles multiply; so do Volkswagens (Fox 257).

Wanting and owning a Volkswagen set you apart from corporate America and ultimately your conforming parents.

No longer corollary to the products they served to sell, ads became products in their own right. In 1962, the agency of Papert, Koenig, Lois was the first to go public, making themselves (and their work) a product available on the market. In breaking with the past, advertising had become a simulacrum.

By the end of the decade, it became a worry in advertising circles that "... everyone [was] trying to be different for the sake of being different ... [y]oung people [were] coming in and mistaking the facade for the real". By talking to the 1960's youth culture directly, regardless if they were attempting to sell to its members or not, these ads altered the language of selling to middle-class America (Frank 110).

With this language leap, ads *seemingly* got honest. Avis boasted that they were second in the race, while, Volkswagen playfully told their customers there were some 'lemons' among their ranks. Americans were growing to be "exceedingly trendy-conscious, [and] exceedingly anxious to be with it". The 1960's approach to consumption, as an extension of (manufactured) individuality, prepared Americans for the consumption highs of the 1970's and 1980's (Fox 256-271).

1970's - 1980's more - more - more: conspicuous consumption

The 1980's saw one of the most powerful rediscoveries of consumerism. The consumer was the hero of the hour, not just as the provider of that buying power which would fuel economic growth ... but as the very model of the modern subject and citizen⁹⁹.

Don Slater

Consumer Culture and Modernity (10)

In the late 1960's, the advertising industry saw, for the first time, real integration of class and ethnicity on both sides of the ad page. The discovery by corporate America that minorities could be sold products just like the rest of the mainstream market and that they would buy them, coupled with the turbulent political push to balance the work force, transformed mainstream advertising. The creative years of the 1960's had widened the gap of what was understood by the advertising market as 'acceptable' to the American consumer. As a result the normalization of minorities moved forward with little resistance or even much media attention (much to the shock of less enlightened manufacturers and corporate advertising executives). The Ad agencies of the early 1970's were optimistic; the discovery of a more integrated consumer base and more creative ways to exploit them, the new marketplace seemed open to the promise of profit. Then came the recession.

The recession of the Seventies reshaped the ways advertising called Americans to consume. The era of creativity was forced to an end. The recession left little room for creative sales concepts that did not produce high agency revenue. In an effort to manage revenue lost to the recession, advertisers attempted to return to the hard-sell tactics of the 1950's.

Unfortunately for advertisers, the 1960's had unquestionably altered the advertising floor. It was now nearly impossible to recreate the (constructed) White-America of 1950's in either consumption patterns or presentation.

Advertisers were forced to return to a focus on product and (manufactured) consumer desires. In this round, the focus was on *need* as self-satisfying rather than simply status bound.

By the 1970's, middle-class American consumers were growing to understand their consumptive patterns as political extensions of themselves. Using the language and politics of the current youth culture, advertisers were able to appropriate the verve of the movement and attach it to their products. This new copy, designed to read like youth culture, was tied to the proven 1950's hard-sell style of advertising, thus creating a ground, void of the useful or 'proper', for the newest products. Consumption had found its new home in the *trendy*.

A stunning example of this can be found in the Philip Morris's *Virginia Slims* ads. These ads used the language and the political current of feminism to sell cigarettes. The ads were designed solely to appeal to women. Since the 1800's, cigarettes had been marketed to women, but the *Virginia Slims* ads ran

with a mission: to convince women they not only *should* smoke but that it was a reflection of their defiance of the male patriarchy as a whole. These ads sold women a means in which to exercise their feminism -- it sold them a symbol of their 'freedom'; 20 in a pack.

Philip Morris introduced *Virginia Slims* to the market in 1968. The original ads were a split page; one side depicting a woman circa 1800's smoking a cigarette, getting caught and then being disciplined for this less-than-feminine behavior by a man. The other side displayed a woman (very modern, very slim, and very chic), confident, relaxed, in control, and smoking a cigarette. The message: women who smoke *Virginia Slims* are powerful. In 1971, *Virginia Slims* added the tag line "You've Come A Long Way, Baby", to their ads, thus redefining the act of smoking as an act of feminist resistance (complete with protest slogan). This ad format worked so well Philip Morris used it for thirty years.

According to Slater, it was during this period that a "newer and truer" version of consumer culture -- which set its sights on target or niche marketing -- was born out of Fordist mass consumption. In this version of consumer culture, personal identity was:

... firmly and pleasurably disentangled from the worlds of both work and politics and would be carried out into a world of plural, malleable, playful consumer identities, a process ruled over by the play of image, style desire and signs (10).

Individuality had been completely appropriated by the marketplace. Now you could buy difference and carry it home in a labeled bag (or better yet have it

delivered to your door for your neighbors to see). Thirty years earlier, you could only buy conformity. Oh, we've come a long way ...

Consumption became understood as a major and real freedom for many middle-class Americans. Consumption is an "exercise of choice ... unconstrained ...", the notion beneath was that no one had the *right* to tell another what to buy or desire. 'Consumer sovereignty' becomes an extremely compelling image of freedom to which, Slater suggests, felt akin to the right to choose intimate partners (27). This understanding of consumption as an act of freedom altered the ways we were able to understand ourselves in relationship to products. Our consumables now acted as both our proxy for freedom and our ideological billboard.

The ideology of 1980's consumption foregrounds radical individualism and privatization with the power of signs and meanings (rather than needs and wants), rendering materialism neither good nor bad – but simply all there is.

Once this new state became instituted Americans became "unhinged from the core of social identities and physical want, consumerism becomes a pure play of signs". 1980's capitalism located consumer culture as simultaneously the engine of prosperity, a primary tool for managing economic and political stability, as well as the reward for embracing the system. This wedding of managerial collectivism and consumerist individualism bore the fruit of surging consumption standards. The end result — Americans 'never had it so good' (Slater 11).

The 1980's middle-class individual was understood to be dynamic and unashamed in his consumptive drives. Look at the icons of the decade: "Gekko", from the 1987 movie *Wall Street*, the Preference girl ("Don't hate me because I'm beautiful"), Preppies, Yuppies and DINKs. 103 The uniform of the decade was the logo, which marked your willingness to conform and your financial status in a single symbol 104. College students hung posters on their dorm room walls that depicted excess as accessible. Although middle-class consumption desires and patterns exploded, however, not everyone shared in this apparent boom. Mills closed, factories relocated to cheaper labor markets, and hostile takeovers focused solely on the bottom line 105. This translated into high unemployment and underemployment, towns closing and the beginning of the American homeless 'problem'. Meanwhile, the state offered us the 'trickle down' theory as a viable form of governance. The rich were getting richer, and America had become a nation full of well-disciplined selfish consumers.

Consumer sovereignty left Americans with little to build an identity from outside the walls of capitalism. According to Slater, both, "neoliberalism and postmodernism proclaimed ... the murder of critical reason by consumer sovereignty ... " (10). Critical reason lost, identity lost, we had become pawns to the market, reflexively bending to both understand and define ourselves through the parade of goods we carried home in well-marked bags. We arrived at a place where we would not have to question who we are in relationship to our things, a place that reinforced our sense of personal sovereignty by allowing us to nest securely within it 106. Never leaving these

protective walls, we entered the era of 'lifestyle branding'. Disciplined to consume, we were now *living* the ad.

1990's branded America

The Diesel concept is everything. It's the way to live, it's the way to wear, it's the way to do something.

Renzo Resso owner Diesel Jeans *Paper*

The original notion of the brand was quality, but now brand is a stylistic badge of courage.

Tibor Kalman, graphic designer

New York Times Magazine

"Variations: A Cover Story" Dec. 13, 1988, 124

We had been inviting products to tell us who we were for decades. In the 1990's, they no longer needed an invitation because they already owned the room. Raymond Williams argues in his essay "Advertising: The Magic System" that when materialism is our primary value, we turn out not to be 'sensibly materialistic' at all, but instead become unhinged from core social identities and physical wants, as consumerism becomes a pure play of signs (Problems in Materialism and Culture 185). Once we began to see our consumption in terms of a sign/symbol relationship, we entered the realm of branding. Ad agencies no longer sell companies on individual campaigns but

instead on their ability to act as "brand stewards': identifying, articulating and protecting the corporate soul". According to the *Wall Street Journal* (April 1, 1998), this new way of advertising positioned corporations to create values, personality and character for the public.

Companies that manipulate the sign/symbol relationship do so by inventing or reinventing an entire product genre¹⁰⁸. They make it an explicit goal to become the protagonists for their whole market category. As such, they function as the informed opinion on where the genre is going, how it thinks, how we think about it and, most importantly, how it serves as reflection of us. Nike¹⁰⁹ is a shining example of this. In Naomi Klein's text *No Logos: Taking Aim At The Brand Bullies*, Nike's corporate CEO Phil Knight explains the transitions Nike went through to become a branded corporation:

For years we thought of ourselves as a production-oriented company, meaning we put all our emphases on designing and manufacturing the product. But now we understand that the most important thing we do is market the product. We've come around to saying Nike is a marketing-oriented company, and the product our most important tool. (22).

In the late 1980's, Knight publicly announced Nike's mission statement: a 'sports company' whose mission is not to sell shoes but to "enhance people's lives through sports and fitness" and to keep the "magic of sports alive." Nike president Tom Clark explained that the "inspiration of sports allows us to rebirth ourselves constantly". Nike has evolved into a postmodern corporation that is not selling a product but rather a way of being that is constantly in transition (23).

According to Klein, Knight then transformed Nike itself into what he called "the worlds best sports and fitness company". His formula:

First turn a select group of athletes into Hollywood-style superstars who are associated not with their teams or even, at times their sports, but instead with certain ideas about athleticism as transcendence and perseverance – embodiments of the Graeco-Roman ideal of the perfect male form. Second, pit Nike's "pure sports" and its team of athletic superstars against the rule-obsessed established sporting world. Third, the most important, brand like mad (51).

By equating Nike with athletes and athleticism at such a primal level, Nike ceased merely to clothe the game and started to play it. Now a full-fledged protagonist, Nike owns world-class athletes and attracts passionate fans (54).

In a brilliant example of branding Nike took golf out of the exclusive country clubs and into the streets by transformed both the game and Tiger Woods, its leading man¹¹⁰. Despite sponsorship deals climbing as high as one hundred million dollars for five years, Woods was cast as Everyman¹¹¹, in part thanks to ads that pictured an inner-city kid (old golf bag, a few clubs, baggy pants) on a subway platform, waiting. That kids now wanted to be like Mike and Tiger, Nike icons, was testimony to the company's branding success.

Nike convinced Americans we could all play golf. Then they sold us the shoes, shirts, pants and balls we needed to play.

Brand vision began surfacing in all niche marketing. Advertising men started diagnosing the problem with product ads in rapid fire. Polaroid's 'problem' was that they kept thinking of themselves as a camera. But the brand vision process taught that "Polaroid is not a camera – it is a social lubricant," and IBM is selling business 'solutions,' not hardware. Swatch is

selling an "idea about time," not watches, and Diesel Jeans is not selling a product but a *style of life*. Branding changed where the product's value was located; no longer things, these products represented ways of being: fun, problem solving, and cutting edge. If a brand is not a product, it could be anything. This notion, says Klein, opened up a world of opportunity for endless expansion and seemingly endless profits. Richard Branson¹¹², king of the Virgin Group, has branded joint ventures in everything from music to bridal gowns and airlines (23-24).

The most powerful corporate protagonists are inescapable. Nike plays on our deep fears of physical inadequacy by reminding us to 'Just do it.' As if sport and fitness were simply about choice and desire. Disney leverages our feelings around family and shared happy memories in the Magic Kingdom. Apple offers us the future in an 8-inch cube, a product that will fit in, noticed but not noticeable¹¹³. Starbucks offers us the care we are too busy to give ourselves. Their constant cup of coffee in its homey atmosphere can be found on every street corner, combining the need for efficiency with the feeling of casual comfort¹¹⁴. Employing the music and dance of our memories (both imagined and lived), The Gap sells us a place where we can be physically and emotionally dynamic¹¹⁵. Khaki pants and button-down shirts equal uniform acceptability carried home in a blue bag¹¹⁶.

These protagonists lead their respective packs in seducing the consumer. It is vital to their brand survival that they do, and in order to lead, they must reinvent their genre, themselves, their product, and *even* us. When a

branded company reinvents a genre, it offers to rethink the whole field for consumers. One hundred insidious years of advertising geared at the middle-class has diminished much of our critical thought and has conditioned many of us to let them (just) do it. Nike tells us how to think about sport and ourselves in relationship to it. Apple leads us into the future by coercing us to 'think differently'. Disney shapes our notion of childhood joy. Starbucks nestles us into the commodity of comfort. The Gap lifts us into a new consciousness. Branding plays on consumption disciplining. The 1990's ushered in brand recognizable corporations who are only too willing to think for us. These corporations work to lead us by presenting themselves, in both tone and repetition, as the informed body.

Inevitably, these protagonists began to ask themselves why they needed someone else's media to project their carefully crafted image in the first place. Why should they risk their brand-identities to magazines, or worse, be subjected to the *branding* of 'advertisement' like health warnings on packs of cigarettes? As lifestyle magazines began looking more and more like catalogs for designers, designer catalogs began looking more and more like magazines 117.

Instead of inserting their advertising in a way that disrupts the narrative flow in commercial breaks, advertisers began to exploit the seductive power of narrative TV directly. This was best illustrated in January of 1998 in the use of the TV drama *Dawson's Creek*. According to Klein, the characters, who exist in a world that resembles the catalog pages of J. Crew, all wear J. Crew

clothing, and spout dialogue like "he looks like he just stepped out of a J. Crew catalog." To further blur the lines between the show and the commercial, the cast was featured on the cover of the J. Crew catalog that same month. Inside the "freestyle magalog," the young actors are pictured in rowboats and on docks, looking as if they had just stepped off the set of *Dawson's Creek* (42).

These lines between art and commerce have been blurring for years. Seinfeld gave The J. Peterman Company lots of airtime. While it was in many ways parodying the adventure fantasy catalog, it also forced viewers to think about those products weekly. More recently (and more effectively), Pottery Barn has seemingly teamed with Friends to create a happy lifestyle that you can buy at your nearest store. The show films outside store windows where the characters look in longingly, dialogue consists of characters musing on how these things will complete them, and, throughout the show, merchandise is described in catalog-like detail, complete with ordering information. In the end, all the 'Friends' are brought into the fold of the Pottery Barn life.

The line between what is for sale and what is entertainment has been blurry for years. Most of the laughs in the 1950's TV comedies happened in the kitchen in front of the shiny appliances that sponsored the show. Many of these laughs involved use or misuse of these same products. The only difference is today's branded products no longer remind you they are products for sale, instead they are presented as a way of life that just so happens to be for sale.

As these brand corporations increase their dominance over us, they pursue a paradox: to become so big, they fade into the background. Who do they look to reach the goal? MTV -- the fully branded media network. Who have, according to Klein, been from the beginning more than just a marketing machine for the products it advertises around the clock 118. MTV has instead been a twenty-four-hour advertisement for MTV itself. The original genius of which is that viewers didn't watch individual shows, they simply watched MTV (44).

Once we are members of this fully-branded world, we, as its citizens, are also for sale. Perhaps the best known of these citizens-for-sale is Michael Jordan¹¹⁹. Mike sells shoes, underwear, long distance, sports drinks, Wheaties and Big Macs. When we buy Mike, we are buying the man because the man is the brand. We buy Mike to be *like* Mike. And we wish we could sell ourselves like Mike, too.

The movie *Space Jam*, based on a series of Nike commercials featuring Jordan and Bugs Bunny, marks a historic moment in the branding of culture. What is novel, according to Klein, lies in the fact that a shoe company and an ad agency are whining that a Hollywood movie will sully the purity of their commercials. Jim Riswold, longtime Nike adman and the first to pair Jordan and Bugs Bunny in shoe ads, complained to the *Wall Street Journal* that *Space Jam* "is a merchandising bonanza first and a movie second". He goes on to say that the movie is in fact designed simply to "sell lots of product" -- as if that were somehow a bad thing. In Riswold's complaints, we see the complete

inversion of the traditional relationship between art and commerce. It is enough to make one wonder what it is these guys think they are really doing when they brand a market and take over a culture (58).

These branded products sear their way into middle-class American's everyday lives like hot metal into the skin. After the shock, they are simply there, a part of who we are. We no longer think of branded products in critical ways. We don't question their actual value or their product worth because these things are no longer relevant. All that matters is how branded we are. The bulk of middle-class America wakes up everyday to this world and walks around with its marks like branded badges for the world to see. These images, internalized become the ways many understand themselves. As such, many of us are as for sale as all the products we allow to speak for us. The inversion is complete. I can only perform myself as a reflection of the brand: always inviting me in, always reinventing itself, always offering more. For many, the brand-reflection is the only light by which to see the self(s), thus rendering us more of a product than the brands themselves are.

Commodities appear in virtually every space twentieth-century American culture affords. They have materialized in the physical landscape and branded its built environment. They have entered into our rites of passage and rendered them inseparable from the more or less predictable passages of style. They have become associated with the themes of family, sexuality, and individuality as vehicles for the fulfillment of each. ... In short, commodities have become -- in life, in film, in literature – the givens of our existence; through it is of their essence that they are not free. That is, we take their collective presence for granted, though each commodity introduces itself as precisely that which cannot be assumed, as that which we do not yet possess, as that which we must in fact acquire to remain full participants in our culture.

Jean-Christophe Agnew
"The Consuming Vision of Henry James"
The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American
History 1880-1980

Middle-class America's critical thought muscles have atrophied. The price of this atrophy is a diminishing subjectivity. This exchange keeps us complacent as it traps us in an ongoing, destructive cycle. To keep the metanarratives of our society alive, we practice a form of daily reality-maintenance¹²⁰. We continually rebuild the normalized cultural assumptions in which we live. We keep the process going. In doing so we feed the beast that feeds on us. The metanarrative of consumption¹²¹ requires this same daily maintenance. Logic and social construction assures us we suffer consumptions

reign only because to do so gives us something of value in return.

Consumption feeds us something we understand as more valuable then our subjectivity, if it did not we would not continue to make such a trade

I believe the return for our critical thinking is two-fold. It is an easily followed process, as the previous chapters have argued, the path has been laid and constructs easily accessible identities. In the last few chapters, I have argued that we are no longer required to think for ourselves concerning issues of consumption. Advertisements free us from this. They present us with our desires and then momentarily fill them. One hundred years of advertising has eased us into a space of consumption information overload, rendering most things equally as irrelevant. As a result, advertising has become its own authority, and many of us, consciously or not, have welcomed the opportunity to remove ourselves from the thinking process surrounding it.

The second return on the exchange of critical thought can be read as reward. Consumption without critical thought offers us the simulation of our subjectivity. It offers us the belief that we are exercising our own agency, making actual choices, perhaps even meaningful ones. From these choices, we build a sense of self(s) that we understand as authentic. However, what we are really doing is constructing a self(s) from the pieces consumption offers us. The reward for this feat is the safety we feel in the simulacra of our own agency. It feels safe to know that this self(s) we have constructed is easily read, easily identified, and easily understood as acceptable by others. And, towards this end, we daily tighten the binds of consumption as a means of

maintaining this simulation of our self(s). It is here, corseted by consumption, we feel the angst of the panoptic world, here the hidden pains of servitude lie ready to dig deeper into our skin. For most of us, these consumption-constructed identities are as *authentic* as those we might imagine building outsides consumption (if we could envision that such a place existed).

However, this pursuit calls the understanding of authentic into play, in building what we believe is an authentic self(s) from the pieces consumption offers us we are collapsing the illusion of ourselves(s) into the gaps consumption allows. There is little that can be understood as authentic within consumption culture because there is little that is fixed and without doubt. For many middle-class Americans it is the illusion of the authentic that they blindly chase. It offers us choices that feel actual, empowering, and capable of serving as reflections of who we are or who we desire to be.

What we lose – the price of this ticket – is an actual sense of self(s), one that does not shift with trends or abandon us when money runs out or diminish when laugh lines become crow's feet. What we lose is a means of locating ourselves(s)in meaningful and substantial ways. In the end, the price of this ticket is us. This price is etched into our culture, our bodies, and our thoughts. We set our moral compass by the rewards of consumption. Our cultural values are echoed in what we elevate to art and how we then reflect this art in our lives. We have announced to anyone who will listen that we are for sale, in parts and/or as a whole, to the highest bidder 122.

Our bodies speak for us, too. Middle-class Americans consume hundreds of billions of dollars in beauty and diet products each year in the race for an acceptable body presentation. This insatiable need for beauty products screams our hunger for some sort of peace with and within our skin. We have been taught – disciplined – not to like the person we see in the mirror each day. To resolve this, we buy face creams, cosmetics, dyes, vitamins, diet supplements, and time under the knife. The fact that we turn so fully to consumption for the peace we seek is evidence of how lost we are in the promise consumption offers 123.

For many middle-class Americans the voices in our heads echo our own simulacra. They haunt us with the insecurities born of ad slogans and brand promises. These voices, so twisted with our own, have become the enemies within. We have built authentic self(s) with weak parts, on faulty ground, steeped in illusions, and, given this unstable ground; we are in a constant struggle to maintain our foundations. There is panic; fear that the building we have constructed will fall, shattering our illusions and leaving us with nothing. And, for the most part, our fears are justified. For many, there is little that is real in our constructed self(s).

Eyes Wide Shut

We desire, we pursue, we obtain, we are satisfied; we desire something else, and begin a new pursuit.

Samuel Johnson Lebergott Pursuing Happiness 70

The people recognize themselves in their commodes; they find their soul in their automobiles, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed.

Herbert Marcuse
One Dimensional Man. 9

Eyes wide shut is the practice of sight without seeing. We do it all the time. We simply cannot afford to, and, therefore, choose not to see the man on the corner holding the cardboard sign declaring he is hungry, or the parent who pronounces their child 'stupid' in the market, or the pregnant 14-year-old girl in the drugstore, or the guy who feeds a hundred stray cats and lives in his car. We cannot see these things -- we do not have the time and/or energy -- because to see (really see) means to engage: to deal with what it evokes in and about us. Just as the cave dwellers did in Plato's Allegory Of The Cave, we often see the shadows and take these illusions to be absolute representations. When an aspect of the illusion is pulled back, calling our previous understandings into question, we often deny the new information, because to give up our illusions would leave us unsure, and in turn, distanced from the world we have constructed. Seeing, really seeing, can rattle the foundations we struggle so hard to maintain.

To remain in step with the demands of consumption, we settle for the illusions because illusions do not ask us to think critically. We do not have to endure the pain of disentanglement from constructed realities. We have been settling for the illusion for so long now many of us no longer notice.

Ironically, we, the citizens of a nation that prides itself on the power to choose, have little left to actually choose. Choice is still available (just as freedom – real freedom – is still available in America), but many of us have *chosen* its illusory shadow. The *form* of choice we are offered does not engage action. It is instead a simulation of action: it is selection. In this watered-down form, choice cannot bring any of us closer to subjectivity. Practicing choice as selection pushes us further into our own simulacra, locating us in the heart of consumptive subjectivity: living in illusion, working everyday to keep the fantasy alive. We are exactly where consumption culture needs us to be, trapped in our own insecurities and the belief that consumption will provide their cure.

choice constructed

... while consumer culture appears universal because it is depicted as a land of freedom in which everyone can be a consumer, it is also felt to be universal because everyone must be a consumer: this particular freedom is compulsory. It is by and large through commodities that everyday life, and the social relations and identities that we live within it, are sustained and reproduced.

Don Slater

Choice: n. adj. ... 1. an act or instance of choosing; ... 2. the right power or opportunity to choose; option. ... 4. an alternative.

Random House Webster's College Dictionary

Choice is something one does. The American understanding of choice and freedom are irrevocably conjoined, the evidence for this can be seen in the mythology surrounding choice. One has choice only in a free state. It is freedom in action: the ability to privilege one thing over another. The intertwining of these concepts is so complete that we can enact our own freedom only in a space where choice is available.

In consumptive society, we are inundated with choice. Compressed into mere selection, *choice* is no longer what we once imagined and mythologized it would be. This fall into selection is illustrated wonderfully in a promotional ad for music publishing giant ASCAP: "There are many alternatives but only one choice." Our "one" choice is to consume. Thomas Dumm describes the paralyses of this choice beautifully in his text *united* states:

I went down to the supermarket to buy food, and stood transfixed before the potato chips: Wise, Frito Lay, Gibble's, Cape Cod, Pringles, Eagle Brand. "Ruffles have ridges." "bet you can't eat just one." I could not choose just one. It was the end of the business day and the market was crowded. Other shoppers moved past me. I was stuck. I had too many questions. ... Time to choose. But I could not choose. I was expected home and I stood there, time passing. Bar-B-Q, Onion

and Sour Cream, Cheddar, Jalepeno, Cajun Spice, Mesquite? The taste of too many preservatives, the taste of too much salt (142-143).

As Dumm's quote makes clear, choices are transformed into *selections* that we make within an array of presented alternatives. Even when we attempt to make a choice by making no choices, (i.e. when we opt not to consume) we do so within a capitalist economy, the *sole* condition of which is consumption. To not consume is simply to reinstate the power system in its inversion. Simply, even when we consciously stop buying in a consumptive state, consumption still has an equal, if not larger, portion of our power¹²⁴. Consumption, as we know it today, is not open to choice-as-action. Instead, choice has been rendered meaningless while selection has become overwhelming (Ewen, *Channels* 194-202).

In Systems of Objects (1968) (translated 1996), Baudrillard argues why choice, as selection, is absolutely necessary for the buyer:

...only if the buyer is offered a whole range of choices can he transcend the strict necessity of his purchase and commit himself personally to something beyond it. ...we no longer even have the option of not choosing, of buying an object on the sole grounds of its utility, for no object these days is offered for sale on such a 'zero-level' basis. Our freedom to choose causes us to participate in the system willy-nilly. It follows that the choice in question is a specious one: to experience it as freedom is simply to be less sensible to the fact that it is imposed upon us. Choosing one car over another may perhaps personalize your choice, but the most important thing about the fact of choosing is that it assigns you a place in the overall economic order (141).

Baudrillard argued that because of this type of choice, one that exists only in the realm of the personal, we are left without choice that has the power to change. Baudrillard's read of John Stuart Mill is that choice reduced in this

way, to nothing more than personalization, is a service to the consumptive society. ('Personalization' is a basic ideological concept of a society which 'personalizes' objects and beliefs in order to integrate individuals more effectively. (*Systems*, 141).) Of course, the greater the number of objects available to select from, the simpler it is to divert consumer attention towards objects and away from the demands consumptive society puts on them.

Without the option to select from meaningfully different outcomes, there is no actual choice¹²⁵. All the roads in capitalism lead to one destination: consumption.

It is vital consumers understand this selection as actual choice, and, therefore, as meaningful. Capitalism assures this by creating the illusion that consumption, the exercising of choice (and dare we say *freedom*) in the marketplace, will fulfill our desires. Capitalism reflexively creates and is dependent on our sense of desire. Advertising's function in this system is to produce desire, to make us hungry for what we do not *yet* have. What better way to *assure* desire than to feed it with our fears of unacceptability.

Lacan understands our fear of unacceptability as our core sense of lack. He locates lack as occupying a vast place in our lived and imagined lives, and the search for relief from this hollowness as our primary quest. Lacan posits that lack plays itself out in our daily lives as an imagined moment of plenitude, a quest for the non-existent object, arguing that we spend the whole of our lives looking for the moment of *full* while chasing a series of illusions and promises that turn out to be nothing more than poor substitutes.

I argue the quest Lacan describes is *not* real, *not* innate, *not* born into us, as his genealogy would suggest. It is instead socially constructed out of consumption ideology and is thus *designed* to be unachievable. We cannot achieve the moment of plenitude Lacan refers to within the frame it is both constructed and presented. Capitalism, as we know it today, is structured to assure that this very moment never occurs. The quest is impossible: there is no dragon to slay because the dragon (lack) is a creation of the very weapon used to slay it (consumptive culture). What has been offered to Americans is motion designed to look like it has meaning, which is *exactly* what consumption needs to stay alive.

I believe our sense of desire is rooted in a different, but equally as deep, vein than the one Lacan suggests. In Lacan's understanding, lack governs our chase; in that it structures the understanding of our need, which in turn informs and constructs our desires. For Lacan our desires are by-products of our internalized lack. I believe, as Deleuze and Guattari do, that in a capitalist society our needs are informed by our desires. Deleuze-Guattari suggest that our desires are not based on some primordial lack; nor do they derive from needs: they are instead "socially organized anti-production that superimposes needs and lack on productive desire" (Holland, 62).

In a consumptive culture the path from desire to need reinstates the consuming process. My desires are informed/created by production, and these constructed desires are then understood as needs, which a consuming-body *must* then meet. (Needs are culturally understood to be far greater than wants

or desires.) Deleuze-Guattari use Bataille's 126 notion of depense or expenditure as support for their understanding of desire-as-lead:

No society, Bataille insists, really organizes itself around needs and the production of use-value to meet needs – as necessary as such production may be to all forms of social life. Rather, social organization is always based on the expenditure of excess, and productive activity derives its meaning and purpose from such expenditure, not the other way around (Holland, 62)

Deleuze-Guattari combine Bataille's understanding of expenditure with Marx's understanding that the forces of production are always primary, even when the relations of reproduction determine the form which production takes in a given society. These forms of production that Marx sketches out are vital to Deleuze-Guattari's understanding of schizoanalysis and they maintain their own autonomous dynamism as a locus and expression of desire but, in keeping with Bataille, they are given form and purpose by the relations of anti-production¹²⁷. And, finally into the mix Deleuze-Guattari integrate Levi-Strauss's understanding of "exchangism"; the codes and the systems of inscription that organize desire socially in the different modes of social-production (Holland, 60-63).

By combining these elements together Deleuze-Guattari are able to construct a genealogy for desire that is rooted in the "socius" (in capital for capitalism) rather then in, as Lacan would have us understand, ourselves. This is both useful and enlightening for consumptive culture. If our desires are constructed by our community's ability to produce, then in a capitalist state our desires are what maintain both the state and the ideology. Our desires than fuel our sense of need, at which point lack (in the Lacanian sense of need) drives this 'need' into a desire to consume. Holland illustrates Deleuze-Guattari position beautifully here:

Desire does not lack anything ... [For] the objective being of desire is the Real in and of itself ... Desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire: they are counterproducts within the real that desire produces. Lack is a countereffect of desire; it is deposited, distributed, vacuolized within [the] real ... [when social] organization deprives desire of its objective being (Holland 62, from Deleuze-Guattari 26-7/34-5).

Thus, production is met with consumers and capitalism is able to prosper.

Capitalism, read in this way frees desire, thus leaving it malleable to capitalist consumptive demands.

Ads play off this brilliantly; they construct 'problems' and hurry consumers towards (brightly packaged) 'corrections'. They build desire and then "lack" up to great proportions and then (so generously) offer us the solution in the form of a product. Each of these solutions promises to move us towards plenitude while creating even greater desire. Baudrillard argues that advertising actually produces "dashed hopes: unfinished actions, continual initiatives followed by continual abandonments ..." that are meant to offer the illusion of fulfillment but in fact push the consumer further into their passive role (*Objects* 177).

Manufactured 'choice' comes into play when we consider products for consumption. Our manufactured choices are as follows: (a) buy product A: receive plenitude in the form of social acceptance, or (b) do not buy product A: fester in lack and social rejection. This may seem like *choice* as action with the power to transform: purchase or not, but it is not *choice*; these are not

choices; they are constructed states: acceptance and rejection, within the illusions of consumption.

The desire to consume; the act of selecting specific products, feeds off the following premises: (a) social ills can be corrected (lack broken down into commodifiable bits), (b) *particular* products can correct said social ills (lack), and (c) corrected social ills have the power to affect social standing and thus our ability to achieve plenitude. Once we accept these premises, consumption culture offers middle-class America a good deal to imagine we have 'choice' around. For example:

- 1. We can choose to see a particular problem and be *certain* something must be done to correct it. (Referring to this as a 'choice' may be a stretch in that within a hegemonic system (one where community production structures the breathe of our desire) we do not often read the recognition of a 'social ill' as a choice. Rather we often read it as something put upon us and therefore ours to deal with.)
- 2. We can choose to understand a particular product as the correction to the problem, and we can choose one particular product over others like it that promise similar cures.
- 3. We can choose to believe that through the use of a particular product this particular problem will be solved, and that through this choice, we will (again) be made socially acceptable.

Because these 'choices' exist only within a single state, the state of consumption, they cannot be meaningful because they offer no real lines of flight from the current state. These 'choices' cannot move us towards a real subjectivity. Consuming product A or B does not shift our place in consumption; it simply keeps us in motion with it.

Baudrillard's early work (La system des objets (1968), La societe de consommation (1970)) argues that consumerism required a strong effort to keep in place. People had to learn about products, to master their use, and to

earn the money and time to consume them. (This learning period taught desire.) Baudrillard's understanding of consumption is as a "normative behavior, which signifies that one is a member of [his] society. The consumer can not avoid the obligation to consume, because it is consumption that is the primary mode of social integration and the primary ethic and activity within the consumer society" (Sarup 107). On some level most middle-class Americans feel that they must consume to be a member of their own society. Desire is a product of capitalism, to understand one self as a full member of a capitalist society consumption must become a necessary event.

Baudrillard's early work merged a Marxist critique of capitalism with studies of various forms of consumer society. Building on the work of Roland Barthes, he analyzes the ways in which we relate to, use or are dominated by the system of objects and signs that constitute our everyday lives.

Baudrillard's analysis of 'consumer society' suggests everyday life is commodified through its organization of signs into a system of signification.

He furthers expands on this in *La societe de consommation* (Consumption Society), where he argues that within consumer society there are affluent individuals who no longer surround themselves with other human beings, as they did in the past, but are now surrounded by objects¹²⁸. Baudrillard argues that the outcome of such a state is the same as that of a wolf-child who becomes a functional wolf by living among wolves. All of which would suggest that many of us become functional objects by living among and identifying with objects (Sarup 106-107).

Consumption constitutes a total homogenization and organization of everyday life, within which the consumer is taught to believe that displays of signs of affluence will bring acceptance, power and happiness. The entire system of production generates a system of needs that are rationalized, homogeneous, systematized and hierarchical. As a result, individuals are seduced into buying not a single commodity but an entire system of objects through which they define themselves socially, while simultaneously integrating into consumer society. Consumption becomes the central mode of social behavior and thus becomes a *mode of being*. Thus, it is through consumption, we construct our social identity.

Baudrillard sees the entire society as organized around consumption and displays of commodities from here individuals create identity and garner prestige. He argues that commodities are structured into a system of *sign values* ¹²⁹ governed by rules, codes and a social logic. For Baudrillard, commodities are *not* the locus of needs or the satisfaction of needs, (as classical political economy suggests) but are instead objects that confer social meaning. This theory implies that certain objects or brands are chosen over others because of their sign value (their relative prestige over other brands or types of commodities). We know the logic of Baudrillard's argument: consumer societies are constituted by hierarchies of sign values from which one's social status is determined by one's things. Thus, it is not our things themselves that bring us status and power *but rather* the way these things are interpreted by and in the larger society.

Since the late 1920s, there has been a convergence of propaganda and advertising; thus advertising today tends to be propaganda for itself and for whatever product, politician, idea or life-style it is trying to sell.

Madan Sarup

Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World (110)

The understanding of things as having meaning beyond their function, as giving *us* meaning by way of what they are collectively understood to say about us, winds the consumptive illusion still tighter. This perspective creates a world where we accept that our things do represent and construct, if only in parts, who we are. Cars¹³⁰, functional items that suggest a more public statement than beauty or hygiene products because we both know and trust a collective understanding of what they signify, are very often read as status markers. As such they offer the promise of *their* image to the consumer in a very public way. We buy cars for transportation, but we choose one car over others because we imagine ourselves to be a *certain kind*; one who drives a particular car¹³¹. Functional status items are meant to be visual displays of who we imagine ourselves to be and how we want others to imagine us. A primary aspect of why we select one product over another is because we desire the image of the products we are consuming. For many of us it is a primary

reason, if not the only reason, for our choice of items in the first place: to assume a certain image.

I can drive around in my Mazda Miata and be recognized as a certain kind of woman, gleaning all that that kind of woman is understood to be simply by owning (the assumed state of the driver) and driving this car. Beyond the purchase of the car, there is little performance for me to engage. Female Miata owners are understood to be a certain kind of woman, and are responded to as such. In the case of the Miata, I imagine myself to be, and am reflexively responded to, as a woman who is relatively free of responsibility, 'sporty', and possibly a bit wild. In that women who own a Miata are understood in such a way and are treated in ways that reflect these understandings, their subjectivity is necessarily (re)created to include the car's image. It is important to note that prior to choosing this car I had to imagine myself as the kind of woman who would own such a car, complete with the cultural understandings of who that woman would be perceived to be. The decision to purchase this particular car meant I had already internalized the image it presents to the public. I appropriated the car's image to build one for myself. I can now perform myself as a woman who is relatively free of responsibility, 'sporty', and possibly a bit wild¹³².

Hygiene and beauty products operate in a slightly different way because they do not carry with them the daily visual tags that functional status items do. These products are not readily apparent to observers thus, we cannot assume their image as our own, and these products cannot grant us meaning in the same ways that a car offers¹³³. These products are our secrets, a part of the ritual we perform every day to assure we will be acceptable in the public eye.

To display our need for them, only serves to highlight our flaws.

These products require a wholly different access to the appropriation of their images. Consumers must imagine themselves changed by the product and perform as such before the product's image can be assumed. For personal products to construct our understanding of ourselves, we must desire their image and imagine ourselves the bearer of such an image even before we use the product. Thus, it is our imagined state that transitions our performance of self(s) into specific product promises. Our choices, and our subsequent performance of these product images, are built on the ad campaign's ability to sell us an imagined self(s), which we perform rather than simply a product-image we appropriate. Beauty products require us to perform their promises before we can borrow their image.

Personal and hygiene items put the onus on the consumer to see themselves in the product or rather to see themselves as they *imagine* they will be after using the product. With no visual markers to identify the buyers must reinvent and locate the product promise for themselves if they are to employ the product's image as their own. When one buys Ivory soap, for example, they are buying the belief that their skin will be cleaner (and thus more beautiful) with its use. Ivory has been selling itself as the pure 134 alternative to all other soaps since 1897. Their tag line "98% pure" has continually been

part of the product pitch. This 'purity' has been read (via advertisements) in a number of ways, all ultimately tied to a higher quality of beauty.

However, unlike functional status items (such as cars), which work as daily visual markers of identity to both user and the world, personal hygiene products cannot supply such an easily readable sign. With few exceptions, no one except the user knows which soap is being used. To assume the soap's image we must see ourselves as cleaner and thus more attractive. When we look in the mirror 135, telling ourselves we see a difference 136, we seek out the feeling of cleanliness on our skin. In effect, we model what the ads project; we perform for *ourselves* in an effort to see the signs and rewards of the product. Once we have located the markers (with Ivory, for example, of improved cleanliness on our skin) and presented ourselves as if we are in fact bearers of this new state, (cleaner and more beautiful) the rewards for these *performances* (those of beauty and cleanliness) are then ascribed to the product used rather than to the performance appropriated.

This use of signs offers a seemingly direct way to perform the self(s). Products allow us to act as if to access the desired persona's subjectivity, to in effect, construct an identity out of things. Baudrillard argues that we rely on advertising to "tell us what it is that we consume through objects" (Objects 165). This system of signs allows the presentation of objects to grow and shift readily. In the end, the everyday products we buy are no more than avenues to what we really consume: the images we desire. In consumptive society,

products are read as signs of a persona. Because things are easily acquired, their meanings shift as rapidly as they are produced.

Which brings forward the question where or out of what does the subject really evolve from? I argue here that the subject is constructed from the palimpsest formed by consumption culture and our collective understandings of the significations of signs, and that it can only be built within the power structure it functions in, in the case of American middle-class culture that power structure is consumption¹³⁷. Subjectivity requires action with the subject as the agent of this action. In looking at the subject and subjectivity in this fashion, neither is fixed to a single location nor can the two be separated. We must read in conjunction with the each other, one continually and reflexively creating the other, within a specific context. The subject and its subjectivity are reproduced through the continual twisting together of discursive practices and power-laden regulatory practices. In the postmodern world, the subject exists in a myriad of systems and practices at once. Here we are called to remember the importance of looking to the spaces in between the intersections of larger systems that Braidotti¹³⁸ and the postcolonialists¹³⁹ call to our attention. I believe it is in these spaces we will find subjects negotiating the tenuous and shifting lines between agency and simulacra.

In reading the subject within the context/system of American capitalism, I will be attempting to read the consuming subject, one who is both created by and within consumption. The challenge is to locate agency that is

real as opposed to its simulacra. Capitalism, as both a system and an ideology, offers middle-class Americans numerous ways to give over their agency. In this process they settle for the simulated version of power and, therefore, of themselves. This makes it imperative to look in the in-between spaces when hunting for the subject.

Let's return to my relationship with my Miata. I am able to buy the subjectivity I desire by purchasing a particular car. I am now the bearer of this sign, and my daily interactions are filtered through my car's image. Even when I am not actually driving it, it shapes my understandings of who I am because I have grown to see myself as I imagine others see me, complete with the image that is derived from such ownership. I am never free from the performance of myself as Miata owner¹⁴⁰.

This brings us to the very real problem of locating subjectivity through things. Consumptive-identity construction, the process of building subjectivity from things, binds us with the image of the things we use to create our subjectivity. My car plays a role in my definition, and, as its image shifts, so too must my own 141. In 1996 142, America was overrun with roadsters. Porsche came out with the Boxster, and BMW came out with the M3. These cars came with power, everything, a much higher sticker price, and exponentially more status than my little dream car. Suddenly, the Miata went from hip to 'girl car', and I, went from cool, strong woman to simply girl. I felt the hip-ness drain from my subjectivity. I assumed my neighbors stopped peaking from behind closed drapes with judging eyes as I pulled in the driveway (no longer

wild); I heard friends began to remark on how feminine and 'girlish' my car was; the only people who were awed by my car were kids under the age of seven (no longer sporty to the driving community). In constructing my subjectivity out of things, I had been constructed by them. As my car transformed into the low-end slow roadster, I too, was transformed. I became passé.

After this shift, I was left with the 'choice' to either accept the new understanding of who I had been relegated to because my car had new meaning or get another car to represent who I imagined myself to be. I am left to chase the illusion of myself¹⁴³. To keep my understanding of myself (for both me and others) in a relatively stationary place, I must continue to consume. I must continue to own the things that function as signs of my desired life. As children, we are taught to understand our choices are representative of us.

From simple choices to grand ones, from clothes to politics¹⁴⁴, we know the moments when we make choices tell others who we are and how we both see the world and expect to be treated by it. In a society that values things to such a great degree, our choices are understood to mirror us.

Consumptive-identity constructions allow me to locate how and what to think about myself(s) by looking at things. We grow to read these illusion as tangible, as real. Consumption promises a standard that will allow us to understand ourselves and the world. This promise is fulfilled in a panoptic society because we have been conditioned to both watch and assess ourselves and others. The panoptic model offers us a vehicle for this daily judgment.

We maintain these constructs because we have a need to render them 'real'. Through this spectacle, things claim a form of ownership over us. These things we use to *mark* who we are become the *markers of who we are*. We become the identities we consume. And we, as Thomas Dumm suggests, "successfully evaded this thing called authenticity by our willingness to be known by our representations" (168). It is these consumptive-identities, refracted as they are, that we see and project out to the larger society. We willingly hold up these consumptive-identities as our own, hardly noticing the exchange of authenticity we make for them.

Even when we notice this precarious positioning between the panoptic and the consumptive, we develop a false sense of comfort in relationship to it. Mady Schutzman, in her text *The Real Thing: Performance, Hysteria, And Advertising*, taps on one of the main constructs she believes so many critics ¹⁴⁵ and consumers share about advertising and its power to affect us. She argues that consumers know ads are all hype ¹⁴⁶, and that they know the products offered are *simply* products. It is this very knowing that gives advertisements, and consumption as a whole, a stronger foothold in our consciousness. Schutzman suggests that, "recognizing that ads are superficial renditions of reality, consumers come to believe that advertising's effects on us are also superficial." She hints here that in believing we are above the fray of ads we consume with less resistance (10-11).

If we consume within arrogance (assuming we know more than others or that we understand the hype and therefore it can not affect us) we do so with

a much less critical eye, and, are thus, far more open and accepting of the images offered up to us. I am struck by how effectively consumption, and its hammer, advertising, play the hegemonic game. Ads announce their use of hype to manipulate us. They openly broadcast "image is nothing" (Sprite tag line) and then they sell it (the Sprite image) to us as 'edgy'. Advertising, in using this approach, has appropriated the very voice we ought to be using to critically discern it. When ads openly announce themselves as hype, they make it simple for us to drop our critical guard and consume as-if we are in the know.

We all know about the hype. Advertisers have generously warned us not to be fooled by it. In knowing this game is about the act of consumption and *not* the product, we feel a kind of relief. The truth is out. There is no longer a need for critical thought or assessment surrounding advertisement. Middle-class America is invited to consume with a kind of blind trust that comes with the confidence of 'knowing' the game. This is the ideal state: if we can imagine ourselves above the fray of the medium, its message can be delivered unfettered.

For a very long time, the dirty little secret of the marketplace was that advertisers made it a point to sell us image without actually telling us that was what they were selling. We had to infer the image being sold, decipher the message behind the product and construct a persona as best we could. Things have shifted as Gen Xers and teens¹⁴⁷ so gladly announce, they know how the game works and are no longer fooled by it. Products are sold boldly as image

markers. Coca-Cola has an ad suggesting that those who drink their product are as *real* as a sunrise. This leaves me wondering how mediated a sunrise has become. Has my understanding of a sunrise as 'beautiful' been constructed for me and then reconstructed by Coke to sell cola?

Soft drinks are not alone in attempting to sell us the 'real'. This kind of appropriation of language, attitude and presentation has been used effectively in a series of ads run by The Truth¹⁴⁸. These ads are aimed at twelve to seventeen year-olds. Directed at kids who are already media-savvy and highly attuned to the manipulation of marketers, the ads are ironic, sarcastic and edgy. The players are teens who speak their minds and act out their beliefs in opposition to authority, thus personifying the ideal teenage state. The goal of the campaign is to reverse persuasive tobacco marketing efforts¹⁴⁹. The Truth ads target the tobacco industry with a message all teenagers understand: adults (and power structures) lie. The ads¹⁵⁰ are geared around exposing facts, such as the number of cigarette-related deaths a year. These ads even involve the 'reality' of body bags. They catch our attention, teens and adults alike, and seem impossible to watch and not think about. In this sense, they work. The key to their success is the ways they appropriate the language and ideology of the market they speak to. These ads offer teens an imagined state: don't smoke, and you too will be cool and hip like the savvy kids in the ads.

In the last hundred years, middle-class Americans have grown to accept and been conditioned to believe that consumption is one of the few avenues to find one's self. We are not buying the things so much as what the things promise us in hushed and loud voices. We are lost to these voices. They are in our heads, and we trust them. In the end, we are rendered dependent on these voices to lead us (back) to our imagined selves(s). Advertising, so often accused of being a bulwark of capitalism, may in fact be a kind of Trojan horse. Far from preserving social inertia, as critics on the left so often suggest, they become carriers of anxiety and, therefore, produces increased motion. They locate dissatisfaction with the way we live and with who we are. Middle-class American culture is marked by an exaggerated form of self-awareness; a kind of mass narcissism. And as a result, all things are judged by the demands of the narcissistic self. Advertising recognizes these demands, and displays on every television screen a universal emotional type: self-absorbed, self-righteous, and dependent on the momentary pleasures of assertion.

Advertising has in many ways becomes the medium of alienation.

Middle-class American consumptive culture has become our panopticon, and we, little more than the captives who function within its invisible walls. The premise is the same; through proper discipline, consumers will be remade into agents via products. This is the reward in consumption – an identity. This identity offers the illusion of security and power, as well as a place and way of seeing ourselves within the collective. Unfortunately, the identity being offered by consumption is only a simulacrum. It can only be a copy of the created *unreal* of consumptive culture. Not simply because to sell the *real* (however we conceive of it) is an impossibility, but more so because the real does not serve the objective of Capitalism. If the act of consumption

gave us something *real*, then we would no longer be bound to acts of consumption. It stands to reason that if we do not consume to construct and define ourselves then capitalism, as we now know it, cannot exist. It is vital to the system that consumption *only* offer us shadows of what is perceived as solid. The exchange we make for the fractured glimpse of ourselves is to pretend these presented illusions are the real. Consumption cannot offer agency or subjectivity. We have been disciplined to accept what consumption can and does offer, and we blindly celebrate that as if it were agency.

it works so well

The fact is that Advertising does much more than persuade us to consume goods and services: It tells us who we are.

Ronald Berman Advertising and Social Change (12)

We live suspended between ourselves and our doubles, we lose the critical power of discretion in that blurring in-between space, and we fail to acknowledge the magical effects and meanings of what we consume daily. ... There is no way out of representation; we work and resist within the playground of ambivalence and sorcery.

Mady Schutzman
The Real Thing: Performance, Hysteria, And Advertising (184)

Within American middle-class culture we are taught to see without seeing. Daily we pay for our consumption with our subjectivity, and with each day we are further lost in the simulacra of ourselves. Lost evokes its converse: found¹⁵¹. The rub is that we know we are lost, and the desire to be found (i.e. accepted) drives us to consume in a frenzied state. According to Tocqueville, we are a country of people aching to be individuals but desperately in pursuit of acceptance. We feel the alone-ness of being lost; we know we do not know the route to the un-lost place. So we do what those who are lost do; we grab at anything that offers itself as a map. Consumption, and its ever-present litany of ads, offers a clear and direct route to a place where smiling people are found. And so we stand, map in hand, confident that we can find our way out of the lost place. We look to our things to locate us, hoping they will find us in the same fashion that Navstar¹⁵² programs can: found by virtue of being located. What we refused to see as we embarked on this journey is that everywhere it has led us has been restful for only moments. We are no closer to home, we have not escaped the place where we are lost; we are simply moving within it.

This route we have followed, and have taught our children to follow, offers little tangible reward. The irony is we know it is a ruse. We tell ourselves, and our children, that consumption is not the answer and then we willingly let it stand as one. When depressed, dissatisfied or just bored, many of us turn to shopping for a lift¹⁵³. Yet even as we consume, we know these things are only illusions of what we seek – only moments of relief. We see

only what we imagine; eyes wide shut. These *things* leave us without solid footing; they are part of a system that needs us to keep us needing things. We consume because we have been conditioned to do so, and we imagine that it is our choice.

Even when we cannot, or do not buy, consumption's promise is present, reminding us that consumption will make us better, render us whole. The lingering promise is what keeps us running. For over one hundred years, advertising has given us ample practice at keeping our eyes open and shut at the same time. Many of us now truly lack the skills to understand ourselves outside our goods and the constructed images they create that in turn reflectively interpret us. Eyes wide shut, we have held tightly to the map.

In holding so tightly to these illusions, we have lost a great deal. We have lost ourselves, not just to the world of things, but also to the ideology of consumption as a whole. Everything can be consumed, everything can be replaced. And so can we. Bound by the corset of our ideology, we lose our subjectivity. The price of consumption is us.

Price Of The Ticket

I'm all lost in the supermarket
I can no longer shop happily
I came in here for the special offer

A guaranteed personality
The Clash, "Lost in the Supermarket"
London Calling

The simulacrum is never what hides the truth - it is truth that hides the fact that there is none.

The simulacrum is true.

-- Ecclesiastes

Advertising is the means by which society puts itself on display and then consumes its own image.

Baudrillard System 173

Our fall into the consumptive machine, in many ways, parallels art's descent into the postmodern. Artists like Duchamp¹⁵⁴ in 1914 re-framed readymade objects to *create*¹⁵⁵ art, which opened the door for mass produced (re)productions to be accepted as art¹⁵⁶. These mass (re)produced objects displaced artistic originality and the "sacred" uniqueness of original works of art. Walter Benjamin, in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", argued that this transition in our understanding and appreciation of art marked the end of authenticity. He felt that, in the age of mechanical reproduction, we had lost the aura of uniqueness, and, thus had, begun the disintegration of the entire idea of originality (*Illuminations* 217-251). Postmodern art set out to manufacture a market through the manipulation of event (installation art) and artist charisma. The notion was to capture the aura of art and sell it *as art*. Perhaps the most notable member of

this movement was Andy Warhol¹⁵⁷ who found a way to not only create reproduction art as both piece and event, but also became in many ways a reproduction piece himself (complete with manufactured wig). Warhol's reproductions (himself included) were less about art or the artistic than they were about the ultimate commodity: celebrity. This shift reduced the aura of art (what Benjamin held as valuable) to the famous: "to that thing which changes everything without actually changing anything" (Appignanesi 18-51).

The distinctions between art and commercial art were now unequivocally blurred. Warhol argued that commercial art was real art and real art was commercial art, and, John Rockwell adds that art is what one perceives as art. The aura of art had been shifted. In this shift we began to accept, even embrace, what Benjamin had alerted us to: the death of the authentic. Benjamin believed the presence of the original was a prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. Mass (re)produced art mocks the idea of a single original. With the distinctions between the real and the copy so murky and this confusion so elevated, it is no wonder so many Americans became more comfortable with the reproduction of the real, the simulation 158, than the real itself. Baudrillard refers to simulation as: "the generation by models of a real without original or reality: a hyperreal 159". In the hyperreal, the distinction between simulation and the real continually implodes, rendering the real and the imaginary in the same continually imploding cycle. The result is that reality and simulation are experienced as without difference (Story, 162-3).

Pop art taught us that the original was extraneous to the experience of the aura of art. This opened an opportunity for reproduction to fill a place of value in our lives. One could now own Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* (in reproduction) and believe we were *experiencing*, or at the very least, believe we were experiencing something similar to, what the original could offer. Reproduction did not stop with simple mass duplication. It transformed into what Baudrillard calls the simulacra when these images were reproduced in kitchen-size prints, on tote bags and greeting cards, or altered to present an entirely transformed image that both borrowed the aura of the original while calling it into question.

Simulation altered our understanding of the original. Proof of this can be found by listening to the typical reaction of the crowd standing in a museum before a widely reproduced piece. There is shock because they have seen it bigger or smaller, or even disappointment because they don't "get" what the fuss is about. Much of this reaction is a result of believing that they have already experienced the work, and most of them have seen in another form, as a result the original, deluded by that prior experience, is less able to move them. Some viewers express the desire to own the image because they can borrow on its value to increase their own, which, of course, is what we have been taught to do with all consumables. (This reaction is often found in museum gift shops where millions of people each year clamor to own gallery reproductions in varying sizes and uses: take Gauguin's Woman With Mango home as a tote bag or the Mona Lisa as a mouse pad.)

In that we became comfortable with, even desirous of, the simulacra, (rather than outraged at the bastardization it represented) we became fodder for consumption. We privilege the copy over the real because we are comfortable with what the copy promises. In the realm of art, the copy represents acceptability and homogeneity. It is pre-approved for the masses, comes in a range of sizes and shapes and can be found in both kitsch and serious. This is the hyperreality of which Baudrillard speaks. While I am not certain I want to go where his theory's endgame leads 160, I do believe this blurring of the lines has affected how we understand ourselves.

Advertising is where I see the foundation of our simulacra. Ads have disciplined us to believe that the images they create are ours to obtain. Ads work: we see an ad, desire the constructed image in it, and set out to own that image via consumption of the advertised product. Advertising has taught us to believe, even when we *know* otherwise. The images we see in advertisements might as well be *real*, because our faith in their power to change us certainly is. The extent of our faith can be seen in our voracious consumption.

Consumption is what America does. Ads fuel this motion.

Advertisements offer a simulacrum of real life. We not only accept these simulacra in exchange for the real, but we set out to enact them in our lives. We use ads as models for our lives; we consume products in attempts to make these models our reality. The cars we select to drive, the clothes we select to buy, and the soaps and toothpaste we select are all attempts to claim an image we have seen presented for our consumption. Even the body images

we understand as beautiful are simulacra. The irony lies in our knowledge. We know the ways that we feel about things are constructed for us. Yet we continue to chase after the illusions, yelling all the while that these images we pursue are *our desire* and *can speak* for us. We chase as if these things were actual expressions of life instead of twisted versions of an imagined life that does not, and *cannot*, exist outside of advertising.

For the embrace of consumption, middle-class Americans were promised much and failed to notice that the cost of such a wholehearted embrace would be *us*. Ewen argues that the acceptable arena of human initiative is circumscribed by the act of purchasing, and that within "the logic of consumer imagery, the source of creative power is the object world, invested with the subjective power of 'personality'". With this, he argues that history itself takes the shape of the market economy. This reshaping of history leaves us with little to look back on that is not commodity. Reifing the notion that we are merely reflections of the *things* we consume. Ewen reads Simon Patten's 161 view of the 'new civilization', saying that it "really amounts to one in which the human subject has been expelled from history. Progress was to be measured by the extent to which social life, relations between people, had become what has been termed a 'mirror of production'." Ewen further suggests:

Consumerism engendered passivity and conformity within this supposedly ever-expanding realm of the *new*, which put leisure, beauty, and pleasure within reaching distance of everyone. Customary bonds of affection and interdependence, born of other circumstances, disintegrated. Most important, the old bond of humanity and nature collapsed. The new survivor was the 'wise shopper' (*Channels* 49).

Consumption promised Americans the world, while only delivering on a hollow version of it.

Perhaps the most visible example of how far we have fallen into simulacra can be found in the target group hit hardest by advertisements: teenage girls. Teenage girls chase a body type and presentation that does not exist. They are the first to tell us they know it is not real, but they want it anyway. Some are even willing to die for it 162. Open a magazine, and the women you see spread across its pages are 'beautiful': tall, slender, perfectly dressed, not a hair out of place, surrounded by friends and handsome men who are enchanted with them. These women are in a state of perpetual happiness and power 163. They are selling, directly or indirectly, a route to that perfect place.

Teen girls want to get there, if only for a moment. They want to be as powerful as they imagine the women in those pictures must be. When asked, most of them will say they want to look like a version of these women on the pages. They buy the products, wear the clothes, and some even stop eating. When asked if they believe these women are actual, a resounding "no" is their answer. They know that these images are airbrushed, that a team of people work to create the look, and that these women are, in fact, *unreal*. But they chase the image regardless. This is privileging the simulacra over the real. There are real women, with real figures, real hair, and real make-up present in all of their lives. Women who look like women do are everywhere --mothers,

aunts, doctors, and teachers-- and still they choose the *unreal* over the real.

They privilege the plastic unknown over the living intimate.

This is more than a teenage girl problem. It is a middle-class

American problem. Middle-class men and women of all ages privilege the simulacra over the real in the areas of aging and beauty all the time. As a nation, we romanticize wealth (because it gives us the power to consume) at the cost of happiness. We privilege unreal versions of pleasure, like virtual sex in cyberspace, over tactile ones. We have even gone so far as to exchange real relationships for the perfected virtual ones we engage online. We have a divorce rate of over 70% (because we believe marriage is supposed to be easy, like on television), we have a booming cosmetic industry (because we believe we should not age over 20), and we sit glued to our televisions every night (because we believe that is where the real world lives). We not only chase the unreal; we imagine it is real enough to catch. We are the simulacra of ourselves.

To be nobody-but-yourself in a world, which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else – means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can ever fight; and never to stop fighting.

e. e. cummings

At first we do not know how to ask for what we want; soon we want nothing at all. We begin to feel like pretenders in our own bodies.

Bakhtin

When everything is somehow unreal yet we, so caught up in the rhetoric of consumption, desire it, how do we find an authenticity within our self(s)? How do we locate our concept of self(s) apart from the mass of illusion and simulacra? I posit we go through the only tangible we own: we go through the body. Through the body – a solid but fluid site -- we encounter ways to release the subject from its objectified state. The following chapter will look at how some people have employed their bodies to locate a sense of subjectivity and are attempting to (re)claim pieces of their fragmented self(s) in the process.

My body is not the same from day to day. Not even from minute to minute. I look at myself in the mirror and think, 'This lump of flesh and fluid, this is where I live.' Sometimes it seems like home, sometimes it seems like a cheap motel near Pittsburgh.

Emily Jenkins
Tongue First (7)

In the late 1800's hysteria erupted in epidemic proportions across the bodies of women in both England and the United States. According to Mady Schutzman in her text *The Real Thing: Performance, Hysteria & Advertising*, this "signaled ... a sickness ravaging not only women's bodies but the social body" as well (2). With one hundred years of hindsight, most of us have come to understand female hysteria as the by-product of a society so tightly corseted it synched its women into a form of madness.

Fifty years of eating disorders ¹⁶⁴ point to the ways our cultural expectations surrounding love and beauty have starved many women into insanity. Our culture is written into our bodies, and these bodies can and do tell us who we are. What do the bodies of middle-class kids in the 1990's -- pierced and etched with signs of themselves -- tell us about current cultural body? If female hysteria reads as a reflection of the male hysteria of our culture, then the recent mapping of the body might reflect a sense of lost

identity. Could it be that these young people are reacting to a culture gone completely commodifed -- a culture where everything and everyone is a simulacra, and as such, for sale? I believe these marked bodies and their owners are trying to find their way back from a state of lost of agency in order to reclaim in part the subject/self(s).

Historian Joan Jacobs Brumberg, in her text The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls, suggests that the body has historically been used as a proxy for the self(s). As we objectified the body so too did we objectify the self. The focus of my gaze for this project has been on the demographic most viciously attacked by consumption: 1990's middle-class kids¹⁶⁵. Through institutionalized ideologies and structures, these kids have been promised the riches of American culture as an inheritance. The drone behind these promises is the constant reminder that they are painfully inadequate and *must* either hide or correct these faults in order to receive the promised reward. Unlike their peers with less socioeconomic power, these kids have their flaws revealed against a backdrop of privilege and opportunity, rendering the resulting angst all the more difficult to identity. These kids are constantly reminded that they have it easy, that the world is ready and willing to unfold to them if they simply make the effort, thus creating the assumption that they can not be in any real pain or discomfort. In a world where consumption rules, it is difficult to locate those who have been most assaulted by it.

James Baldwin said, "people who can not suffer can never grow up, can never discover who they are." American culture is (still) a place of gross inequality. Privilege and opportunity are divided up by gender, race and class. Those without are left out. However, those without, in being left out, are in powerful ways freed from the chains of consumption. One who must struggle to survive does not entertain consumption's call in the same ways. The kids that I am looking at have what their parents did not. They are students that don't have to work to support the family. They have money without the responsibility of work, and they have access to goods and opportunities their parents only imagined a generation earlier. Many of us outside this youth culture look at this group and remark that they have it all. Nevertheless, they are tattooed and pierced; their attitudes and bodies are designed to rattle middle class notions daily. We are often called to wonder, why, when they have so much is this what they choose?

The answer to this question lies in part in the ways we see these young people. Many of us see their privilege with eyes that also see the gaps between those with and without, and, thus, we do not readily see their angst. If we shift our eyes for a moment, we can see where their struggles might lay. These kids have been told by the voices of the media that they are only as good as their things. In that these kids have not suffered, and thus have not discovered who they are, they do not really know how to define themselves. Their bodies are never enough: never beautiful enough, never strong enough, never correct enough. The angst these kids feel is real. They are owned - mind and thus

body - by consumption. I believe what some of them are doing to their bodies is an attempt to locate their subjectivity and to loosen themselves enough to breathe from the binds of consumption's hold 166.

theory

Every man has a property in his own person.

John Locke

Two Treatise of Government (287)

... the body is proxy for the self.

Joan Jacobs Brumberg

The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls (128)

Held captive by consumption, tortured and mutilated by its demands on the mind and thus body, we seek freedom from this place of cultural imprisonment. We seek freedom in the only space that has remained in some fashion constant, the only space that has been ours to contort and display (in both responsibility and privilege): we seek freedom in our bodies. We turn to our bodies because they have historically been sites of marked ownership ¹⁶⁷.

John Locke in his Second Treatise of Government: argues that man owns his own body:

Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a Property in his own Person. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The Labour of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out

of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his Labour with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his Property. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, it hath by this labour something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other Men. For this Labour being the unquestionable Property of the Labourer, no Man but he can have a right to what that is once joyned to, at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others. (Locke, Second Treatise of Government, Cambridge edition, p. 287-88.)

Alan Hyde argues the complexities of reading the legal body in his text Bodies of Law. In Hyde's reading of the body in compensation rulings, we hear the echoes of Locke. Hyde explains that *legally* we own our body in differing degrees, which may be complicated by the frames placed around understanding the body as a site of legal action. In compensation rulings, however, the reading of the body as property owned by the person (to borrow Locke's term) is made simple. Hyde uses the practice of awarding monetary compensation for physical injury as proof the body had and lost. This same implication can also be read when damages are awarded for 'pain and suffering'. The law recognizes "the market exchange value of intact, attractive bodies, in a variety of contexts ... bodies in pain and suffering are less employable, attract less desirable sexual and life partners [and] may diminish social opportunities." (62-63). These states are of course beyond quantifiable, but the fact that their loss is recognized within a legal framework suggests that these aspects were owned before injury, thus making the body reflexively property of the person injured 168. The law finds the "body constructed as property and commodity, normalizing exploitation into contract and market" (79).

The legal understanding of the body as personal property folded into a cultural practice of the body as a site of ownership. Children are *owned* by their parents until age eighteen¹⁶⁹. An adult can give/sell their body into the military (and must then fulfill all requests made on it by the new contractual owner¹⁷⁰). And citizenship involves a relationship that allows a nation many forms of contractual ownership over the bodies of its citizens.¹⁷¹

We have a cultural understanding of the body that insists it is ours. Yet we live in a world in which other-ownership is marked into bodies in alarming ways. American history is littered with other-owned bodies: indentured servitude, slavery, and internment camp victims¹⁷². The divergence between the ways we think and practice ownership over our bodies' calls attention to the very understanding of property and how it can be reshaped to fit the needs and desires of those in power. To reconcile this, we go back to a very basic question: what are our bodies in relationship to our self(s)?

the body

That which is not-body is the highest, the best, the noblest, the closest to God; that which is body is the albatross, the heavy drag on self-realization.

Susan Bordo
Unbearable Weight (5)

... [an] approach to the body sees it as a site of cultural consumption, a surface to be written on, 'an externality that presents itself to others and to culture as a writing or inscriptive surface (Grosz 1989:10). ... In this

approach the body becomes significant 'only insofar as it is deemed to be by factors external to the body, be they social systems (Turner), discourse (Foucault) or shared vocabularies of body (Goffman), (Shilling 1993:99)

Steven Pile and Nigel Thrift Mapping the Subject (7)

The body has been in many ways *the object* of our obsession. It is ours to contemplate and tend, but never to fully understand. *It* is born, grows and dies and we ask the question, what of the self(s)? We ask as if they were never joined, but merely (perhaps only for a brief time) residents of a shared space. In *Unbearable Weight*, Susan Bordo suggests that the body has always been constructed as "something apart from the true self (whether conceived as soul, mind, spirit, will, creativity, or freedom) and as undermining the best efforts of that self'(5). In that the two, the body and the self(s), are split¹⁷³, many of us have left the body, as we assume it will eventually leave us (in death, in weakness, in old age), to fend for itself. Always second to the self(s), the body is the stepchild that requires attention and is rarely given love. *It* is not a part of the *I*.

Plato understood the body as the great deceiver, as the thing we could not rely on for truth. This is illustrated in the *Allegory of the Cave*, where Plato sketches our willing exchange of one 'reality' for another. Christian and Islamic religion reads the body even less generously: as our burden, the reminder of our animality. It is home to our instinct, thus needing to be tamed, and the visible cloak of our sins, thus demanding forceful control.

Contemporary culture tends to read the body as a site of terror, in that it betrays (as it ages), craves (sex, food, rest), and then dies. This terror is reflected in the constant control that each of these aspects of the body require. Without control, the bearer of the body risks rejection (a form of death in contemporary culture). In these narratives, the body is read as a *thing* and not to be trusted on its own.

Michel Foucault adds to this understanding by arguing that the body must be disciplined in order to be made docile, productive and reproductive 174. The discourse of the body is the discourse of modernity, with the body rendered both unavoidable and unsolvable. Donna Haraway reads bodies as 'maps of meaning and power'. Her work focuses on the notion of the body as a situated knowledge and the visual location of power¹⁷⁵, while Judith Butler calls our attention to bodies not as pre-given things but as the objects of an ongoing "process of materialization" through which an understanding of the body is forcibly produced (Bodies 9). The body, for Butler 176, "becomes a point of capture, where dense meanings of power are animated, where cultural codes gain their apparent coherence and where the boundaries between the same and the other are installed and naturalized" (Pile and Thrift 40-41). Butler is asking us to look at what we understand as natural. In doing so, she reminds us that bodies matter because they inscribe upon us a performance, which then becomes material and from which we further construct our understanding of the body and the self(s) 177. Susan Bordo expands on this work by asking us to notice the relationship between the body and its

materiality. Her focus on the 'direct grip' culture has over the body as a place that can reveal the struggles of our culture. Bordo believes that through the practice of our everyday lives, the "routine, habitual activities", our bodies learn powerful lessons about appropriate behavior for our race, class and gender. Arguing that culture's grip on the body is a constant, intimate fact of everyday life, and, as such, mediates our understanding of the body itself, she suggests our materiality "... impinges on us – shapes, constrains, and empowers us – both as thinkers and knowers and also as "practical" fleshly bodies" (Twilight Zone 182-5). In each of these we can see the many ways the body is written on by culture.

Terry Eagleton¹⁷⁹ is one of the few who argues that the postmodern obsession with the body is a result of a move away from the "too hard to crack" abstract questions of state, class, mode of production, and economic justice in exchange for something "more intimate and immediate, more sensuous and particular", one in which the "body was now the chief theoretical protagonist" (*The Illusions of Postmodernism*¹⁸⁰, 1-19).

I argue that body studies are necessary to answer the very questions

Eagleton says we postmodernist have abandoned. Our body is the space from which we map our self(s) into and through culture. To assume that these bodies, which carry us, which lend shape to our every experience, are not worthy of serious study suggests a willingness to both continue to read the body as a place separate from the self(s) and as one that is unimportant to the construct of the self(s). I believe understanding the body 181 can lead us to

broader questions about how we interact with our constructed world(s). Which I believe, *then* better prepares us to address the questions Eagleton feels have been abandoned.

the marked body

Brand: ... 2. a mark made by burning or otherwise, to indicate kind, grade, mark, ownership, etc. 3. a mark formerly put upon criminals with a hot iron. 4. any mark of disgrace; stigma.

Random House Webster's College Dictionary (160)

That which we own we signify with our sign. The human body, understood so often as property, has been no exception to this rule. It has been the site of numerous property disputes: slavery, internment, patriarchy, and paternity to name just a few.

Power inscribed into the body is most visually unsettling when it is etched into the captive body. For those held in slavery or imprisonment, the signs signifying power serve as reminders of their owned status. Marking ownership into the skin of property was a common practice of Americans with stock animals and southern slave owners¹⁸². Numerous American slave studies and narratives give testimony to the ends owners went to in an effort to mark their property. This included, but was not limited to, orderly beatings that scarred the body in recognizable patterns (broken teeth, lines of a whip,

missing ears, fingers, toes, hands and feet) and branding with hot irons. The signs of ownership served a dual function, that of marking property as easily recognizable for both owner and public, and the marking into the mind of the slave his own owned status (Appiah, Jordan, Tadman).

The practice of tattooing captives in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany offers similar insight into the ways power has been marked into the body. In the stripping away of identity through the etching of numbers into the skin, we can see the inscription of ownership (Nazi government ownership) cut into both the body and the sense of self of those in the camps. The following, excerpted from Alan Jacobs' unpublished fictional memoir "Conversations with Gratowski", explains the ways marking the body can transform people into other-owned property:

Everything is taken away here. Every bit of clothing and scrap of identification. Item by item, the last vestiges of the individual are stripped from this man, leaving him naked, frightened and despondent. Even hair ... No hair? It seems a small thing. It is, until it happens to you. It is another step in the calculated process of depersonalization. It makes everyone look the same. ... They take everything here, even identity, leaving only pulse

Eventually they are marched quick time into the tattoo room and are given a card with a number on it: 117221; 117222, and so on... Soon they are seated at a table where a prisoner imprints the number in their left forearms with a needle. Then, he rubs the small wounds with dye; a tattoo designed to identify their corpse rather than to just insure identification in the camp, or after escape. The few who do survive will carry it with them for life, a little memento from the Third Reich;

Years later, the few who make it out of this place will almost forget the number is in them until they do something casual like reach across a counter and feel the clerk's discomfort as she spots it.... It will be hard to answer young children's questions: "Grandpa, what's that funny looking number on your arm? Can you wash it away? Does it come off? Where did you get it? Were you borned with it? Could I

have one?" ... Some people will see it as a badge of honor. Others will see it as a mark of degradation and humiliation. ... It serves notice on any last illusions of normal personhood. He no longer has a name. He is a number, seriatim, one among only seventy thousand survivors with the blue dog bite of the Third Reich in their skin (*Idea: A Journal Of Social Issues*).

The marks of ownership were also etched into women's bodies. For centuries, women's bodies have been marked by patriarchy. Under the name of beauty and desirability, women's bodies have borne the mark of male ownership. Aristocratic Chinese women were obligated to have their feet bound into what was called the 'lotus foot', as the foot in this culture was understood to represent the "very personality of the woman herself". While this process was culturally understood to make women more voluptuous 183 (in that it pushed the blood upward in the body), the feet of a woman, the very things being marked, were considered the "exclusive property of her husband".

In fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe, tight lacing marked into the bodies of women. In the name of beauty, this process constricted the waist, crushing the breasts and ultimately deforming the internal organs, all in an attempt to alter the natural contours of the waist and abdomen. This process created an exaggerated width between the woman's hips and shoulders, which was read as the ideal female form. Tight lacing transitioned into a form of belting ¹⁸⁴ in nineteenth century Europe. Instituted on the aristocratic female body shortly after birth, belting functioned to create the now culturally *necessary* lines of the ideal female form. When the belted woman married, it was her husband's *privilege* to remove the binds on their wedding night.

In each of these examples, the woman is not considered of prized marriageability without the marking into the body (Brain, *The Decorated Body* 84-89). She is excluded from the patriarchal power structure save for the distortions made on her body. One could argue that even though she has willingly allowed these acts, she did so understanding her body as owned, in part or wholly, by the patriarchal system. Her 'choice' to mark her body was the choice to be included, however limited the inclusion, into the system of power.

Frances Marscia-Lee and Patricia Sharpe, in their collection *Tattoo*, *Torture, Mutilation, and Adornment*, ask us to look at other-marked bodies as forms of torture. In their essay "The Marked and The Un(re)marked: Tattoo and Gender in Theory and Narrative", they look at the bodies found in *Tattoo*, a film where a young woman is tattooed by her stalker in a desire to mark her as his property, and, in Hawthorne's short story "The Birthmark", in which Georgiana's husband, a man of science, sets out to remove her birthmark in order to render her 'perfect' and winds up killing her. Marscia-Lee and Sharpe use these stories to argue other-marking as torture on two levels. First, to be marked, or unmarked, by one with the intention of inscribing domination is without question understood as torture. The authors also argue that the domination reaches beyond the skin and forces a reconstructing of the self(s) out of the images being inscribed into the skin.

Mascia-Lee and Sharpe are making an important point about the ways that we understand and internalize the marks etched upon the skin. There are

countless reminders of this effect. In slave narratives, whip scars function as reminders of the daily state of fear and ownership. In concentration camps, survivors' tattoos function as reminders of the tenuousness of everyday safety and personhood. And women's writings and comments often depict the invisibility that comes with the *visible* signs of aging and fading beauty. The point Mascia-Lee and Sharpe are making is powerful; in the binding, cutting and burning into the flesh, there is also a mutilation going on beneath the skin. This argument finds further resonance when we think about the ways the body shifts our understandings of self(s) after trauma. The loss of a leg or a uterus or the onset of illness change our understandings of ourselves simply because the body has been altered.

We currently see the shadows of commercial culture written across the bodies of Americans in the increasing spread of anorexia (the starving/thin body), bodybuilding and extreme fitness (the controlled body), and plastic surgery (the mutilated body)¹⁸⁵. Middle-class Americans, so twisted in the hegemony of commercial culture, comply with the demands on the body¹⁸⁶ in an attempt to be accepted. Just like the bodies of sixteenth century European women, contemporary bodies become the spaces where power is etched.

The question becomes who then owns our bodies (and is marking into them) if it is not us. The answer is found in nearly every commercial we watch, every branded image we internalize, and every product we consume ¹⁸⁷. Bordo argues our culture has become an 'infomercial' culture, one in which "the desire to sell products and stories continually tries to pass itself off as

'helping' and 'informing'" the public. In that we have relinquished the critical thought process surrounding consumption, we have *allowed* the images created in consumption culture to become our cultural philosophy. Bordo goes on to say "fantasy-governed, pumped-up individualist rhetoric of commercial advertisements ... has become the ethics, political ideology, and existential philosophy of our time, constituting what is probably the only set of communally shared ideas we have...". Thus, consumption rhetoric provides us with the one set of standards from which to justify our behavior. We, who reflexively assess our thoughts, actions and understandings against consumption ideology, are owned by it.

Because property is valued in Western culture, it is always marked by the one who 'owns' it. The expectation of ownership as a marked-state is so normalized that we have no other way of understanding it in our culture, much less our legal system¹⁸⁸. Cars have serial numbers, cattle ranchers brand their stock, pet owners 'chip' their animals, mothers write their children's names in the necks of tee-shirts, and lovers even sometimes write each others names into their skin¹⁸⁹. We mark what we claim as our own¹⁹⁰. As children, we are conditioned into this practice of showing ownership; as adults, we understand it as *the* way to demonstrate ownership.

The lesson I remember profoundly from grammar school is the importance of my name. What was stressed, however, was not the importance of having a sign that would signify me, but rather the importance of marking what was mine with that sign. Everything I was required to bring to school on

the first day of kindergarten had to have my name on it. It had to be marked as mine or others would not read it as mine, and I might lose it. My sign headed every paper and stood in for me when I was not there. I was disciplined to understand that my work had no meaning (in terms of the larger world) if it did not have my mark on it. I learned that what I owned had to have my name on it, and, if it did not, I would have to prove that it was mine. As an instructor, I have taught the same lessons to countless students. We mark what we own or it is not really ours¹⁹¹.

As a culture, we understand our bodies to represent us. We choose clothes to 'speak' for us, we forcibly control the body into 'acceptable' shapes through diet, exercise and surgery, and, as Brumberg and Bordo argue so well, we rely on the body and its acceptance in the larger world in order to locate ourselves as acceptable. The body has been used as the proxy for the self(s) in that we force it to conform to constructed acceptable standards. It becomes the object we make ourselves into in an effort to locate ourselves. The self-objectification we now experience is a byproduct of 120 years of marketing and advertising. Middle-class America has grown to understand that to be acceptable is to purchase the 'right' list of products and use them accordingly. This is the fallout of a culture in which advertising tells us that through consumption we can find our voice, that through consumption we can become the people we want the world to see.

We have naively transformed the body into our primary proxy and, in so doing we have thoroughly objectified ourselves. Given this state, it seems 'natural' that we should use our proxy to find a way out of our objectification.

To escape consumption's grip, many of us have used the body as the canvas on which we write ourselves back into a subjectivity more in keeping with our self(s).

The Body, The Vehicle

... we use our bodies for grounding personal identity in ourselves and recognizing it in others. We use other bodies as points of reference in all sorts of roles, tasks, duties and strategies. We use our bodies for practical action. We use our bodies for the expression of moral judgments. We use the condition of our bodies for legitimating a withdrawal from the demands of everyday life. ... We use our bodies for artwork, as surfaces for decoration, and as new material for sculpture.

R. Harre, *Physical Being*, (257)

The body is the single place no one can ever leave. It is permanent, yet fragile and mercurial. Its distortions, anxieties, ecstasies, and discomforts all influence a person's interaction with the people who service it. ... The substance and products we put into our bodies also reveal our attitudes towards our corporeal selves. Beer says one thing, mai-tais another, smack something else entirely. The clothes and cosmetics we wear – lipstick, wigs, old clothes, the fake breasts of a female impersonator – can shift our perceptions of ourselves. Bodily rites reveal our hidden assumptions about ourselves and our physiques.

Emily Jenkins Tongue First (7)

... and after a while it came to me that I was writing *about* bodies because a body was writing: me. Incorporation is an act. The body writing: the writing the body. I couldn't *think* such a thing, I could only *do* it.

Our bodies move us through the day, carry our burdens as backache and our joys as laughter, and bears witness to our lives in skin, bone and muscle. When I look in the mirror each morning, I see, among other things, the first time I fell in love, the first 'adult' decision I made, the best summer of my life, a long-ago lover, defeated fears, ten years of studying, resistance, wisdom, and my freedom. Everyone else sees a moped burn scar, pierced ears, sun damage, a dimple (created in a car accident), paddling and surfing muscles, lines around the mouth, gray hairs, wrinkles, and a pierced navel.

My body tells my story to anyone who looks closely enough. The spots in my eyes give away that I grew up in the sun in the seventies¹⁹²; my feet, toes wide and slipper-tanned, reveal that it was Hawaii and that I do not work in corporate America, the skin around my belly testifies that I have not given birth, the mix of wrinkles and pimples scream that I am in my mid-thirties, and the refusal to hide them with product or procedure suggests that I imagine myself to be easy-going¹⁹³.

The way we walk, our pronunciation, the tone of our speech, and our style of dress and hair constitute a walking billboard that advertises who we are. Most of the signs we bear are signs of our lives marking us: dog bites, bike crashes, car accidents, geography¹⁹⁴, illness, education, and economics¹⁹⁵.

I agree with Judith Butler¹⁹⁶, we perform ourselves and in this performance, the images we construct are rendered tangible. It is through this process the self(s) is constructed. However, I would like to draw attention to the fact that so often we relinquish, or do not realize we even have, control over what the marks in our bodies signify. And, even more often, we write them off as 'scars', leaving them to be read as signs of victimization by an outside power.

If we can be written so easily through the body, then why can't we also write ourselves into the body? What would happen if we choose the marks and their placement? Could our scars mark our strength, our resolve? Could an imperfect body be read as powerful in a consumer culture? How would the act of choice change the resonance of what a mark can signify for both the marked subject and others? The act of marking can function as an act of (re)claiming subjectivity from the consumer culture that holds it hostage. I think it is possible to 'play' with the ways the body narrates us by creating our own stories in the form of narratives that assert our power rather than our weakness.

While bodyplay can offer such a window to a form of wholeness within society it does so from within the layered hegemonic frames of American culture. We are reminded by Raymond Williams, in his text *Marxism and Literature*, that hegemony is:

... the relations of domination and subordination in their forms as practical consciousness, as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living ... of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural

system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense. ... It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in society ... [Hegemony] ... is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture', but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance of and subordination of particular classes." (110).

While there is no lasting escape from the grasp of hegemony as we live it in American culture; there are ways to release some of its pressures. Bodyplay offers this sort of relief by opening a window on both the self(s) and an aspect of the cultural system we call our own.

Hegemony is a lived process. It is not a system or even a structure, and as such, it can never be reduced to the singular. It does not passively exist as a form of dominance, but rather, it must be "continually recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, [and] challenged by pressures not at all its own" (Williams 112). Hegemony must include the notion and practice of counter hegemony. Just as hegemonic culture shifts to meet our changing interaction with it, so too must the counter hegemonic acts that rise in reaction to these shifts. Bodyplay is a counter hegemonic act. It has offered, for some, relief from cultural binds. This relief, as all counter-hegemonic relief is, is brief. In time, especially quickly in a modern society, these acts and the release they can offer are systematically re-worked into the dominant practices of American middle-class culture. In this incorporation counter hegemonic acts lose their ability to offer relief at the level they once could. Once incorporated, they are no longer able to offer relief from the grips

of hegemony, they, instead, insures it. Any other outcome to this scenario results in a metanarrative shift and radical cultural transformation.

However, when the mainstream is forced to incorporate in the voices of the counter-hegemonic the effect is often seen as a lasting shift to the cultural center. Eve Sedwick (in much of her work) suggests that the incorporation of the margin by the center does necessarily shift where the center can live. This shifting of center necessitates relocation of 'normal', and in doing so opens the window for the new; thus changing the cultural air within. As these shifts move the cultural center, they make possible our existence within the hegemonic structure as a whole. Counter hegemonic acts force the dominant voices to be dynamic. They force change into the spaces where none was possible prior. Bodyplay does this.

I ask that we look at the 'play' in bodyplay not in the dismissive sense of the word, but in its creative sense. One plays with words while writing. There is joy in this serious process. The same kind of play-full yet serious intention can be employed to write the body into subjectivity. I believe 'bodyplay', the act of inscribing the body with a self-created narrative, can be both a joyous act and a powerful means towards claiming subjectivity. Bodyplay is writing into the body with the intent to celebrate and retain transformative life moments. It is not mutilation; an act which is done with the intent to degrade the self(s) via the body, nor is it cutting or burning into the skin; an act that is primarily understood as shameful and therefore hidden. To

choose to practice bodyplay is to understand the body as a place where *play* can be transformative, a place where this sort of *play* can lead to subjectivity.

Bodyplay, as a play-full state, also functions as what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a 'line-of-flight'. In that it offers a schizophrenic source of meaning¹⁹⁷ to both the marked-body and ultimately middle-class American culture. Through the self-narrative, bodyplay opens the doors of meaning to improvisation and thus allows for a shifting in codes of meaning. (For example: codes that associate the marked-body as marked out and the multitude of codes linked to the specific marks etched into the skin that shift as a result of their location under the skin)¹⁹⁸. For this shifting to have such a resonance, as understood by Eugene Holland in Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction To Schizoanalysis, it must operate within the intersection and assemblage of both lines-of-flight and the operations of subject groups 199 to create a "critical mass whose combined effect would be to lift the mortgage of the infinite debt and finally liquidate capital and the barriers it poses to freedom and enjoyment. Permanent revolution, then, is a matter of completing the process of schizophrenia" (123).

I believe bodyplay enables a process of revolution; in its ability to shift both the individual and the mainstream it offers a space for freedom and enjoyment. The combining of these two seems crucial in that it breathes new air into the hegemonic structure of capitalism without needing to crash down its walls. Bodyplay, which can be read as a schizophrenic act, is disabling

code as apposed to outright dismantling of it. Thus, it offers an opportunity for flight within rather than a flight from capitalism.

play

We are our creations, thus, rendering us not what we are, but what we make of ourselves.

Anthony Giddens
Modernity and self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern
Age

In their 1989 text *Modern Primitives: An Investigation of*Contemporary Adornments and Ritual, V. Vale and Andrea Juno examine why some people have chosen to mark their body. What they discovered was many (primarily middle-class) Americans, in reaction to a deep feeling of powerlessness to "change the world", were changing something they did have power over, their own bodies. Vale and Juno argue that the act of marking the body gives "visible bodily expression to unknown desires and latent obsessions welling up from within individuals [and] can provoke change-however inexplicable-in the external world of the social, ... [as well as] freeing up a creative part of themselves; some part of their essence" (4). The two remind us that:

a tattoo is more than a painting on skin; its meaning and reverberations cannot be comprehended without a knowledge of the history and mythology of its bearer. Thus it is a true poetic creation, and is always

more than meets the eye. As a tattoo is grounded on living skin, so its essence emotes a poignancy unique to the mortal human condition (4). Pile and Thrift build on Vale and Juno's argument by suggesting that body marking can be a celebratory signaling of a particular relationship with the body, which "invoke[s] a project of corporeal reclamation" (149-153). Thus, to mark the body is to enter into a relationship of ownership over it.

David Curry, a psychotherapist, calls our attention to the skin as a border between the body and the self(s) in his *New Formations* article, "Decorating the Body Politic". He argues the body can be a medium for playing out deep psychic desires and unlocking the creative possibilities of the self(s):

The skin is the actual membrane between what, on, one side, is inside me and, on the other side, is outside me. It is superficially me and at the same time a surface onto which I can both consciously and unconsciously project that which is more deeply me (69).

Body marking, dwelling at the interface between the private and the public, opens up the body's ability to speak the self(s). There is a notable tension between the public and the private in all body modification. While the surface of the body may be the membrane between self(s) and other, it does not always serve as our outward presentation of self(s). Body modifications are often concealed from 'public view', or at least, can be electively rendered 'private' by clothing²⁰⁰. This makes the knowledge (perhaps held *only* by the bearer) that under the business suit there is a tattoo or pieced navel "one of the most frequently-celebrated 'transgressive' pleasures offered by adornment" (Curry 151). The act of marking the body, and its power to stand for the self(s)

as a transgressive act, carries more resonance than anothers' knowledge or acknowledgement of the act. Thus, bodyplay, can be read as a primarily private act of claiming power.

Curry understands the power of tattooing as declaring "a peculiar relationship with one's own body", and that this relationship, one of marked ownership, includes a responsibility for the body. He theorizes this new form of responsibility is one of the primary tensions locked into the desire to be marked²⁰¹. Curry analogizes it to a marriage one enters into with the body via the marking²⁰². Marriage is intended to be lasting and to permanently alter a person's status. Even when it ends in divorce, the individual's social status and relationships with others are altered by the act. Thus, one is forever marked by marriage. This same permanence is found with a tattoo or piercing²⁰³. Curry suggests, a tattoo "betokens a commitment to that relationship, for better or worse" (153). These marks, in that they mark one as apart from the norms of society, carry ramifications far beyond the aesthetic. They serve as permanent signs of cultural transgression. In a consumer culture fixated on beauty through perfection, to mark the body is to mark oneself out of the cultural race for perfection permanently.

At first we do not know how to ask for what we want; soon we want nothing at all. We begin to feel like pretenders in our own bodies

Mikhail Bakhtin

New Literary History. 27 (1996): 1 (109)

Is bodyplay just like all the ways we have seen the young play with their bodies in an attempt to reconstruct themselves? Is tattooing and body piercing a modern form of the 1920's bob and rolled-down stockings or the 1960's long hair and relaxed dress? Is this simply this generation's reaction to the status quo? And, if so, is it meaningful? I believe the answer to these questions is yes; bodyplay is the personal playing out on the body in politically meaningful ways.

The 1920's saw women claim a greater freedom for themselves while signifying a new attitude toward their bodies and society. This new attitude was reflected in bobbed hair, bright lips and rolled-down stockings. These simple alterations in appearance changed the ways women thought about themselves and moved feminism into living rooms (and cars) across America. In a 1925 *The New Republic* article, "Flapper Jane", Bruce Bliven interviewed a young flapper whose discourse demonstrates the importance her outward presentation plays in her inward construction:

"In a way," says Jane, "it's just honesty. Women have come down off the pedestal lately. They are tired of this mysterious-femininecharm stuff. Maybe it goes with independence, earning your own living and voting and all that. There was always a bit of the harem in that cover-up-your-arms-and-legs business, ... "Women still want to be loved," goes on Jane, warming to her theme, "but they want it on a 50-50 basis, which includes being admired for the qualities they really possess. Dragging in this strange-allurement stuff doesn't seem sporting. It's like cheating in games, or lying." That fact is, as Jane says, that women today are shaking off the shreds and patches of their age-old servitude. "Feminism" has won a victory so nearly complete that we have even forgotten the fierce challenge which once inhered in the very word. Women have highly resolved that they are just as good as men, and intend to be treated so. They don't mean to have any more unwanted children. They don't intend to be debarred from any profession or occupation which they choose to enter. They clearly mean (even though not all of them yet realize it) that in the great game of sexual selection they shall no longer be forced to play the role, simulated or real, of helpless quarry. If they want to wear their heads shaven, as a symbol of defiance against the former fate which for three millenia forced them to dress their heavy locks according to male decrees, they will have their way ("Flapper Jane" from The New Republic (Sept. 9,1925) By Bruce Bliven).

The effects of "flapper" culture resonated throughout the next three decades. Women pursued and received more freedom, both in the workforce and in their interpersonal relationships; female sexuality saw greater acceptance, and increasingly, women found their voice. While I am in no way arguing that flapper culture alone changed women's rights in America. I am suggesting these trends that were at first read as simply youth culture and 'faddish', functioned as a reflection of the changing perceptions surrounding women at the time²⁰⁴.

Forty years later, 1960's youth culture also looked like a body project to older generations. Jeans, long hair, and loose clothing all served as the visual markers for radical cultural transformation. The presentation made a

statement that stretched beyond simple shock value and into the political.

Jeans served as a physical marker of the solidarity members of the movement shared with the impoverished and disenfranchised²⁰⁵. Long hair and loose clothing stood as the outward presentation of an inward philosophy that was in opposition to the controlled and refined 1950's. The 1960's youth culture presented a philosophy that changed the rules around race, sex, gender and politics for an entire country. In the 1960's, the personal become the political, and the outward signs could be read on the bodies of young middle-class America.

These body projects were outward presentations of inward transition. In the personal rejection of societal norms, these young people were building an understanding of who they were based on the politics of their actions. Style served as an act of defiance. Body projects, all too often dismissed as mere fads, changed individuals; these individuals then changed society. Everyday moments served as reminders of ideology. A woman could be reminded of her independence while looking in the mirror and seeing only a short boy-cut to comb or her own image in a pair of jeans and a bra-less blouse. It is at this point we are served well to remember Curry's analogy between body projects and marriage. The same daily reminders that fortified personal ideology also served as reminders of opposition to mainstream culture. The same short boy-cut that reaffirmed a 1920's girl of her budding independence also served to call her morals into question, and, in turn, her marriageability. 1960's youth culture paid a similar price. The everyday signifiers of their ideology, long

hair and loose dress, often excluded young men and women from the work force because of the assumptions they created about behavior.

My reasons for visiting these youth cultures are twofold. First, I wanted to draw attention to the history of body projects and recall that what to one generation seems 'faddish' and 'trendy' can be, for another, a transformational act. Second, I wanted to note the pitfalls of attempting to transform mainstream culture by creating a new culture. Both these youth cultures attempted to radically transform American culture by working in direct confrontation to the established morals and norms, in essence by creating their own culture on the *outside* of the bounties of mainstream American culture.

The problem with this kind of construction is the difficulty in remaining outside mainstream America over time. The unfortunate reality of both these youth cultures is that they created a world, which by design could not function within mainstream America. They offered a kind of power that functioned to construct a persona and identity for its members, but did not offer them a way of life within middle-class American culture. To mature and simultaneously maintain their relevance, they had to participate in the very practices they had argued against. The 1920's constructed a culture of play that worshipped youth and frivolity, however, as youth fades, a life of excess is hard to sustain. The 1960's constructed a world outside of consumption designed to achieve greater equality and tolerance, but those goals required the endless energy and idealism of youth. These youth cultures did not transform

America into a bastion of equality and socialism, and the oppositional stance they took meant that compromise was often read as failure.

To return to my earlier question: is bodyplay like the body projects described above, and, if so, is it meaningful? I believe it is both. Bodyplay offers to those who employ it an avenue from which to construct subjectivity through body ownership. Tattoos and piercings serve as the daily reminder of this end. Bodyplay functions, just as the body projects of 1920's and 1960's did, as visual markers for transforming subjectivity.

'This is a society [an American says] in which you are who you think you are. Nobody gives you your identity here, you have to reinvent your self every day' He is right I suspect, but I can't figure out how this is done. You just say what you are and everyone believes you?

Eva Hoffman

Lost in Transition: Life in a New Language (160)

Pile and Thrift remind us that the subject has historically been understood in the West through its interior psychology²⁰⁶. They quote from K. J. Gergen's essay "Warranting Voices and the Elaboration" in *Text Of Identity* in an effort to show both the historical basis for this perspective and how limiting this can be when mapping the subject (70):

we speak with ease and confidence of the thoughts, beliefs, memories, emotions and the like. We also possess an extended discourse through which we render accounts of the relationships among aspects of the mental world. We speak of ideas, ... as they are shaped by sense data, bent by our motives, dropped into memory, recruited for the process of planning and so on. And we describe how our emotions are fixed by our ideas, suppressed by our conscience, modified by our memories and seek expression in our dreams. ... When asked for accounts of self, participants in Western culture unfailingly agree that emotions, ideas, plans, memories and the like are all significant. Such accounts of the mind are critical to who we are, what we stand for and how we conduct ourselves in the world. (14)

The two suggest we must go beyond "the monological conception" of the subject²⁰⁷ as interior-only in order to form a "richer and more adequate

understanding of what the human self can be like." I agree that we do need to go beyond the interior in order to find a richer read for the subject, a read that might ultimately bring us to a greater sense of self(s). In this chapter we look at one of the roles the body can play in the construction of our subjectivity.

My Body My Playground

... as I map the inner regions of my mind and soul I pause, on occasion, to mark the passages and triumphs on the other side, on the canvas that is my own flesh and blood.

Silja j. A. Talvi,

"Marked For Life: Tattoos and The Redefinition of Self" Body Outlaws

If as Gergen, Pile and Thrift say 'emotions, ideas, plans, memories ...' are all significant in the construction of the subject, then we must look at the body as both actor and acted upon through this construction. Without question, body changes affect the ways that we are able to think about ourselves(s). It is on this point that I rest a good deal of my argument surrounding bodyplay and the ways it can affect the subject. Our bodies transform in a multitude of ways everyday, predictable and otherwise, and how we understand our role in this transformation greatly determines how these body changes affect our subjectivity.

When the body is changed without the consent of the subject, the effect is monumental. Accidents, illness, crime, and, for many in America, the aging process are often understood as damage to the body. This notion of 'damage' can then be internalized in such a fashion that the subject builds a subjectivity from the 'damaged' body. If a leg is lost in a car accident, then the subject is forced to learn a new method of walking. This new physicality necessarily changes her relationship with and to the world. If the post-accident body is understood as deformed, a subjectivity and performance of deformity is constructed. In this situation, the subjectivity is transformed by the injury.

A person whose body is understood as 'naturally' less than perfect, one whose body is diabetic, allergic, asthmatic, arthritic, cancerous, infected with AIDS, or otherwise 'broken' with illness, is a subject who must construct a subjectivity through the frame of a *failed* body. In many cases, this is the only alternative offered to the chronically ill. When western medicine fails to cure instantly or even find a correct diagnosis, it is often the patient who is blamed. If a doctor cannot locate a remedy for the symptoms described by the patient, she is often treated as if the pains she articulated were a product of her imagination and then told to reduce her stress. This, of course, relocates the responsibility for the illness and its cure in the hands of the sick person. In cases of chronic illness, people tend to blame themselves and/or their bodies for the illness²⁰⁸. The end result is self-hatred (e.g. "I hate my body because it is always sick") and an internalization of the body as failed²⁰⁹. This will

create a subjectivity that reads as broken and, thus, less valuable, damaged at its very core.

Victims of crime where physical violence is involved, such as abuse and rape, often see themselves as damaged by both the act of violence and their complicity in it. The resultant subjectivity relies on a feeling that somehow the 'damage' is, at least in part, the victim's fault. Battered women repeatedly go back to their abusers, believing both that they do not deserve better than a partner who hits them and that it is somehow their fault: they provoked their abusers; they should have known or did know how to behave better than they did. Rape victims also internalize the notion that they are somehow to blame; they were dressed provocatively, alone, somehow not vigilant enough, or, even worse, just getting what, deep inside, they really wanted. They too internalize the violence as 'damage'; a type of damage one ought to be ashamed of. Thus, it seems clear the subject can be transformed when the body is physically altered.

The aforementioned changes are radical affronts to the body, but what about the everyday affronts of aging, both in adolescence and middle age? Adolescence is difficult because it is the time of our most radical body changes, and it is also when our subjectivity switches most dramatically. As a culture, it is one of the few moments we recognize the body as playing a significant role in the formation of the subject. Adolescence involves years of seeing a stranger in the mirror each morning and treating subjectivity like a radio dial, as something that must be constantly tuned in order to stay current.

Most of us will remember this period of our lives as riddled with self-doubt and discomfort, a period when we knew who we were least. Without a doubt, our subjectivities showed our dis-ease. I transitioned, in adolescence, from an outgoing, somewhat confident child to an uncertain, and often, ashamed teen. I was a girl with a distorted body images, and I carried my body as such a girl would. My body, which I read as distorted and weird, became my subjectivity. I did not present myself for judgment (as I knew I would fall short) by trying out for teams or social clubs. I sold myself short in terms of who I dated and the activities I took part in, I felt lucky to just be asked out or be a part of anything. In seeking to hide my body, I constructed a subjectivity made up of invisibility and inadequacy.

American culture offers a similar subjectivity for middle-class men and women when we leave our twenties. We are so preoccupied with youth that to age is to become 'damaged'. We know this because advertisers tell us so. To age in American culture is to disappear. Perhaps the changes are slight to the gazing other, but, to the aging subject, these changes resonate profoundly into their subjectivity. Hair loss, wrinkles or graying may cause one to consider oneself old, which reads reflexively as less desirable. Reading ourselves through the body, we perform ourselves as old and less desirable. In the process, we become so.

What then happens when we choose to change our body, either in reaction to changes made to it or because we desire to be seen differently by ourselves and others? Do these changes affect our subjectivity as well? Do

they affect it in the same ways? I believe changes to the body, regardless of intent, change one's subjectivity, yet the directions these shifting subjectivities take have everything to do with the intentions behind the body changes. There is clearly a difference between the subjectivities formed in a woman who has had breast reconstruction after a mastectomy and a healthy woman who chooses to have her breast size augmented. Intention affects the frames in which we see the body and, in turn, the frames in which we construct a subjectivity. For most post-mastectomy women, reconstruction surgery offers them only fragments of their former bodies²¹⁰; the subjectivity constructed with this body is read more often as survivor than beauty icon.

To discount that the body plays a part in the construction of subjectivity would be to deny a large aspect of the subject itself. I have argued above that subjectivity is changed when the body is changed, and that subjectivity shifts are hinged on the intentionality of the changes made to the body. The intentionality behind bodyplay is to change the body in such a way as to include the subject's story in with the mix of other narratives being imposed on the body. As discussed throughout this text, the body is written on continuously without our consent and frequently without our realization.

These narratives then become aspects of our subjectivity. Bodyplay offers us the opportunity to alter our narrative by adding to it; to insert our voices into the narrative of ourselves. What this intentionality drives us towards is a mix of locating and owning the self(s). In a culture where we are offered the simulacra of agency, bodyplay can move us closer to actual agency because it

is hinged on the very real act of writing ourselves. By marking the body with this intention, functional agency can be created. In writing on our bodies, we are able to reclaim them and gradually reclaim ourselves(s). The following section will examine how this can done by looking at those who practice bodyplay.

marking the body: a practice

It's a problem of identity. Many of my American friends feel they don't have enough of it. They often feel worthless, or they don't know how they feel. ... maybe it's because everyone is always on the move and undergoing enormous changes, so they lose track of who they've been and have to keep tabs on who they are becoming all the time.

Eva Hoffman

Lost in Transition: Life in a New Language (263)

Lives do not serve as models, only stories do that. Carolyn Heilbrun Writing a Woman's Life (37)

What does it mean to write the body? How does one really accomplish this? I have been actively engaging this question for the last seven years, have interviewed over one hundred people²¹¹ and read almost anything with the word body somewhere in the title. After all this, I think the answer lies in the stories we tell about what is written into our bodies. Do we tell stories we

create or stories we are given? I firmly believe that we write the body with our intentions, the ways we engage ourselves in relationship to it and the ways we share these intentions with others. I see bodyplay as offering an avenue towards an intention that invites ownership and a convergence of the body in its personal and public frames.

The ways we write our bodies grabbed my interest when a student stayed after class to share how she subverted advertising's hold over her:

When I start to feel like I am not beautiful enough or good enough, and the things that are wrong with me are everywhere in my head, I remember I have a tattoo and I think these guys aren't talking to me, they don't even know me, they don't even know I have a tattoo or anything about who I am, and I don't have to fit into their view of what is acceptable. I remember they are not talking to me. (Maile).

This simple story of coping stuck with me. Was it just one twenty-one-year-old girl who had found the key out of advertising's house of mirrors or were there more like her?

I started to notice the bodies around me, as I unlearned not to stare and discovered there were lots of marked bodies out there. I started asking questions and, in response, receiving stories that served to create the person in front of me. What truly struck me was these stories were their own creations, and the marks on the body reflectively stood as proof of the stories being told. They were often rich with personal history, beginning with likes and dislikes and then moved in and through empowerment:

"I have always liked turtles ... I feel like turtles are my amaku'a and I wanted one with me always."

(Terry)

"I have always thought navel rings were attractive ... I felt like if I got my navel pierced it would mark my body as mine, and I would own all the pieces of it I had lost."
(Ann)

"I really like Japanese culture and art and the idea that a little character has a deeper meaning ... [My tattoos are] two Japanese characters, one meaning 'to live for the day' the other 'love'. They express [my] individuality and tell something about me for others to know in a glance."

(Gail)

"I am proud to be Colombian. ... I have a Colombian Flag on my shoulder ... [it] has a lot to do with my ethnic background." (Carlos)

"I feel drawn to the symbols of Hindu Gods. My tattoo is of *Brahman*, to me it symbolizes the goal of becoming a harmonious world [that can achieve] true enlightenment. It makes me feel beautiful."

(Amy)

"I like fun and colorful characters ... they are much like me. My latest one is over my heart -- it is the symbol for woman with a Chinese heart -- my tattoos remind me of who I am and why I am strong." (Kristy)

"I believe my dreams will come true [if] I keep them close to my heart. I had the dream catcher [inked] on my right breast, to be close to my heart – [and] my dreams."

(Claire)

Often I would end these 'sharings', which never felt like interviews, knowing more about the person I had just spoken to than about the image on their body. Their stories were entwined in the story of their marks. It was at this point I saw where the power of these marks lay; they create a history for both the body and the subject, a history that is etched into a moment by a mark that has the power to ripple into the future and the past, recreating both as it moves.

According to Demello's study on tattoos (Bodies of Inscription: A

Cultural History of the Tattooing Community), these body narratives are one of

the major shifts in the culture of tattooing. Prior to the new wave of middleclass body markers, most of the narratives surrounding tattooing where firmly
located in alcohol and youthful abandon. Current body narratives, no longer
hidden in shame, provide meanings for their particular body projects; meanings
that Demello believes form the "basis of the individual's personal
understanding of his or her tattoo". Demello suggests that body narratives, like
most narratives, have a stylistic coherence and similar motifs. My own
interviews confirm Demello's; there is a common line in these narratives.

Recurring motifs include why the wearer got the marking, how they came to
choose a certain design or placement, what the wearer saw as the meaning
behind the design or piercing, how long the individual had been thinking about
getting the marking, how the actual experience of being marked made them
feel, and what the mark means to them now.

Demello goes on to explain how these narratives differ from other narratives to function in the lives of those who employ them:

[they] are different from other types of life-story narratives in that they do not rely so heavily on memory and are much more self-reflexive. Tattoo narratives are especially constructed to re-create for both the teller and the listener not only the "facts" of the tattoo but the complex justifications for it. Furthermore, these justifications are constantly changing as the teller is exposed to other discourses that might further inform his or her narrative (152).

Where my interviews seem to differ from those of Demello's is in the seriousness that runs beneath them. I refer to this body project as *bodyplay* for good reason; a majority of those I interviewed found joy in what they had done to their bodies. Their intent was playful and joyous²¹². Their body projects

were not attempts at rewriting the self(s) entirely. They were instead, moments held permanently that offered insight into the subject for the subject. For those I interviewed, this was not a life project; it was a playful creative one. Those I spoke to do not attend tattoo or piercing conferences, they did not regularly read the genre magazines, and, with the exception of a handful, none of them had more than five tattoos and/or piercings on their bodies, and most of those I interviewed had tattoos and/or piercings that could not be seen without them inviting to show you. These marks were meaningful in their lives, but only in that they marked out aspects of who they already saw themselves as. As a result, these marks did not require public attention.

In the course of my project I interviewed a number of people who fell outside its scope. Many had marks that were both highly visible and symbolized far more then the angst that comes as a result of consumption culture. Their marks, stronger and bolder then those of my study group, were clearly signs of a different battle. My conversations with many of them confirmed this. These bodies belonged to people who were battling hegemony from its borderlands. For many of them their marks were a way to give voice to themselves; not in part, but in whole. Many of these interviews, while still similar in style and structure, centered on how their marks served to locate the individual as visible for and in society. They wanted a *public* testimony to their presence *as they saw it*, and many of them felt their marks served this end.

Most of these narratives fell into two major genre, that of ethnicity and sexuality. Of those, most were engaging in a process of coming out and into an understanding of who they were both for themselves and for society. In these interviews it was very clear their struggles were different from those of my study group. It was as if someone had widened the field of battle and then turned up the volume. The angst these young people faced was far more intense then those I was looking at, and their bodies served as reflection of this. Their piercing were often multiple and on the face and their tattoos tended to cover parts of their bodies that remained visible in their everyday lives (lower arms, down the legs, on the neck and upper chest). Their narratives were also much more extreme. They tended to incorporate the whole of their lives rather then simply a fraction of it. They intended their marks to serve as evidence of transition for both themselves and the public. There was an underlying sense in most of these narratives that the process was knowingly on going. It was obvious their marks harbored no possibility for retreat.

The narratives these people shared with me were often raw and rich with personal insight. One of the men I interviewed, a young Hawaiian man, narrated his tattoos as evidence of his struggle for a sense of masculinity and strength in a world that offered him little of either. His tattoo runs the length of the left side of his body (he told me it began under his left arm), it is a string of Polynesian images that he feels represent the disconnected parts of who he is. As he told the story of his body he also told the story of himself. He felt it was important to include the failings of his history as well as its successes.

There were strong beautiful images of strength and travel; this he told me represented where his family line had come from, and who they were. Then there were images that shattered the strong lines, almost melting into weakness, he told me those represented what had become of them. He pointed to sections inked into his skin that marked a father and uncle in jail. He explained that those parts of his history needed to be worn too. Not all of his history was beautiful, and he wanted never to forget. He said if he wore all the marks of all his past the mix would balance him and he would have nothing to be ashamed of. In the end, he said, he would have nothing left to hide.

As he talked about these lines under his skin he also talked about the sense of being lost he carried with him. He trusted these marks could help ground him in his identity as a Hawaiian man. He told me he was figuring out what that meant as he marked his body. As he researched the images and his past, he was discovering a history that gave him room for pride²¹³. Marking that history into his body made it a part of him. He explained that this way he would never forget who he was, and that no one else could again tell him who he was; now he knew. As he marked his body he was building the man he wanted to stand as, full of history, both good and bad, and visible for all, including himself.

I spoke with a young woman in Florida whose arms were covered in female comic superheroes. *Wonder Woman, Bat Girl, Isis, Storm* and many more I did not recognize. They served as the sleeves to her body. She had just turned 20, and had been out as a lesbian for about two years. She told the

narrative of her body in soft tones and willingly rolled up her sleeves to show the full range of images. She told me these were her protection from the world. They were her shell, and she borrowed on their strength as a shield. As we talked about the images on her arms she told me about being kicked out of her house, the ways her family did not understand her and how these women (on her arms) had been present in her life since childhood. The imaginary women of strength were the only elements left from her childhood that had remained loyal.

After another cup of coffee, and a few questions of her own about my project, she told me about the other set of tattoos she had, the ones people on the street could not see. On her midsection she had fairies and flowers. From what she showed me, these images danced across her body, lightly they seemed to just touch her skin. Such a contrast from the marks on her arms, which filled all the spaces of light skin with color and lines and bodies in motion. The marks on her midsection seemed to breath, making the ones on her arms seem, in comparison, steely and impenetrable: armor-like. These she said were who she really was, inside; "but everyone doesn't get to see that". It seemed vital that she ink in both sides of herself. In our conversation it became vital to tell me about each set. She told me the superheroes came first and the fairies were relatively new, a few were still a bit pink on the edges. I asked her if she had plans for more, she told me she was done with her midsection but wanted to do more fairies on her hips and thighs and maybe

some flowers on her legs. She said she had all the superheroes she needed to be "safe".

Neither of these two could hide their marks. When I asked them if they had considered that when they got them, both gave me a similar answer; it did not matter what other people thought about them anymore, these marks were for themselves. But the truth is these marks call attention to who they are marking themselves as, a strong Hawaiian man and a lesbian woman. They choose to be visible as these identities, and for each of them, their visibility comes with consequences. This was the case with a number of the people I spoke to, who, like the two cases here, fell out of my primary scope. Their desire to be visible, for both themselves and a judging public, came with consequences. Twenty years ago if a man wore an earring in one ear, (understood by most of America as a sign of homosexuality) there were consequences to this act of visibility. Yet the consequences, as brutal as they were, out weighed the everyday reality of living a less then fully visible life. I found a number of people who felt this same way about their lives. These men and women were not playing with their bodies in an effort to locate themselves(s), they were putting their bodies on the line in an effort to be seen as they saw themselves(s).

Those within my study know they have something to lose in acts of counter hegemony. To (re)locate as subjects comes with risk, both in the present and the future; it is *understood* that "too many tattoos is a sign of less class status" and that "politicians don't have *visible* tattoos" 214. Those who

fell outside my scope carry no such risk because they have nothing so tenuous to lose, as these things were never assumed to be available to them. These bodies are already visibly written on by the bolder ink of American racism and prejudice. In that they are already so far from the hegemonic center these bodies can afford bolder acts of resistance. In fact, they must, if they are to be heard by the center.

While these narratives fall outside my scope they serve to demonstrate that the borderlands are employing the same processes, to a greater end, to locate themselves within the frames of American culture. I believe these marginalized individuals must use more extreme action to both shake the hegemonic restraints they suffer under and to locate themselves in the process. Their marked bodies serve as testimony to just this.

In American culture the struggle of those who occupy the borderlands are far greater then of those who exist within the relative safety of its center. The fact that the 'center' is employing the expressions of those on the border confirms that they too are feeling the hegemonic structures closing in on them. That this sense calls for a form of physical resistance so similar in practice to those living in the borderlands speaks to the depth of young middle-class America's angst. I believe the fact that we see these marks on the bodies of those who are most privileged by the hegemonic structures of American culture is meaningful.

I was looking for people who were playing with the idea of constructing themselves through the body rather than people who relied on the

body as their vehicle of construction. I use the term play here not to be dismissive, but rather like those who tease out the ways these marks play on their bodies. Demello's interview pool was very different; she sought out only those who saw themselves as within the tattoo community. (She defined this as readers of the industry magazines and those who attended tattoo conferences.) From the interviews she uses and her text in general, it is clear most of her subjects were marked in very visible ways. Without doubt, her group was far more seriously involved with their body projects as a lifestyle than mine. Even with these differences, I find that our subjects were saying some very similar things about what these marks did to transform them.

Demello reminds us that the context in which one receives a tattoo is often as important as the tattoo itself "because it ... forms the individual's first, and most lasting, impression about his or her tattoo. People ... do not acquire tattoos in a vacuum." (138). With reference to bodyplay, I agree fully with Demello. The context surrounding bodyplay does matter because all the events that will later be part of the narrative work to create the history and future resonance of the mark. I again go back to Curry's analogy about bodyplay as a marriage. Just like the wedding has the power to shape both the history and future of the relationship, so does the context of bodyplay have the power to shape its history and future.

In all of the body narratives²¹⁵ I heard, there was an inclusion of the context of the making of the mark. They read similarly to the two below:

"I got my tattoo the first time I went Amsterdam."

(Deb)

"I got my piercing when I moved from Kona to Oahu, I don't think going home is going to be the same now, I don't think I am the same now."
(Shane)

The power of this lays in the introduction of geography as a part of the narrative of the body. One aspect of the mark signifies the location of its birth; both Amsterdam and Oahu are part of the narratives. Amsterdam and Oahu have *become* part of the body because the wearers reads their mark as a sign for Amsterdam and Oahu, respectively. One can see here, the reflexive process bodyplay has to mark *in* to the body in layers. Each time the story is told, it serves as both personal and public pronouncement of who the body and the self(s) it represents is; she or he is one who travels, one who has moved away from home.

In the narratives, I often heard the desire to mark accomplishment and/or survival into the body:

"I got my tattoo after I graduated from high school.²¹⁶" (Claire)

"I am going to get my tongue pierced when I turned 21, [the next day] it just seems a good way to mark my adulthood."
(Jon)

"My mom printed up 'no tattoo' signs and put them up all over the house the night before I was going to get [my tattoo, she put them] in the fridge, on the toilet seat, on my steering wheel ... everywhere. It was my body and choice so I thought her signs were kind of funny." (Sarah)

"I got my navel pierced after a long battle with cancer, I really felt it would change the energy in my body, you know, sort of turn it around, from sick to healthy."

(Robin)

"I got the God *Lono* on my stomach after being involved in a three-year lawsuit, it was a long and ugly case and it took a lot out of me. *Lono* represents peace and abundance, and it reminds me that I now finally get peace."

(Terry)

In each of these narratives, the intention is clear, to mark motion as empowerment: from child to adult, from sick to healthy, from war to peace. These bodies, marked with intention, become a reference point of triumph; adulthood, health and peace, are written into them. As such, they are also written into these subjects' subjectivities.

one. They choose to mark their bodies in places where they hold full control over the viewing: primarily on the torso, the upper arm, under the hairline, in the mouth, and on the ankle or foot. I believe this serves as evidence that these are personal acts, rather then public displays, or as bodyplay is so often reduced to, youthful rebellion. These marks serve the bodies who bear them privately. Those I interviewed gave a great deal of consideration to where they would have their marks made. They took into account placement, size and color, and for many these considerations were equally as relevant as design:

"My tattoo is on the inside of my right ankle, because in my future career as a lawyer/politician I don't want it to be so extravagant and noticeable."
(Sarah)

"I decided to have the *honu* and *Lono* put on my tummy because it is out of my client's sight. I had the artist [who did them] angle each of them so they can eventually form a ring around my navel. I think that [with others I plan to get] will make a beautiful circle of my life." (Terry)

"I wanted my sun to be large enough to fit on my lower back, so I had the guy draw it a few times before we got it right. Now I love the way it looks."
(Sam)

"I had it [the Chinese symbol for good luck] put on my back because I wanted luck to follow me always."
(Cynthia)

There is something to be read in that so much consideration is taken with the placement of these marks. I believe it speaks to what bodyplay can offer. So many aspects of our lives are up for public viewing and scrutiny. Daily our performance of self(s) is reshaped so as to better gel with the shifting social constructions around us. We know we are being watched and judged; this affects our performance because we desire social acceptance and approval. Complicate this by including the ways this performance is sold to us by consumption culture, and we have a clearer sense of how difficult maintaining a sense of self(s) can be in American culture. The fact that these marks are hidden from judging eyes speaks to the need those who employ bodyplay must have for a sense of something that speaks themselves to themselves. These are private marks, and designed to be so. They are not held up in the light of society; thus, they are not primarily attempts to locate the self(s) within society. They are not marks that seek acceptance or even acknowledgment by anyone other then the body baring them. Thus, removed from public scrutiny, these marks can only have power for those wearing them. The fact that there are narratives of growth attached to them makes the marks of bodyplay personal acts towards subjectivity.

I asked everyone I interviewed if they regret their choice to mark their body with the sign or in the place they had. No one told me they no longer liked what was under their skin. When pushed to imagine a time when they might possibly dislike these images, say when they have children or become grandparents, many assured me that these marks were sites of pride and strength. That they were aspects of their personality that they could not imagine being ashamed to show someone they loved and cared for. When pushed on the permanency of their marks most told me they had thought about the longevity of them and that was why they choose to tattoo²¹⁷. Permanency was vital to the process.

It struck me as interesting that in a world where nothing lasts forever and the 'consume'-able-ness of goods is built into the our understandings of consumption itself, that permanency should matter in this way. The horror echoed in so many older minds is that these things do last forever, that they do mark one for life. Those I spoke to want forever. They want to wear these marks as signs of themselves. Their narratives build a history, which is then embedded into the body, unforgettable and forever. It seems they are seeking to be located in something lasting -- in something of their own construction. In my conversations it became increasingly clear that these young people did not see their marks as capable of speaking for the whole of who they were.

Instead, they spoke to parts that made up the whole. These marks spoke to aspects that help locate a sense of identity without locking one into it. As I

listened to these stories I felt like I was getting bits of a puzzle that would eventually make the whole.

I find the issue of where on the body these marks live interesting. Many who engage in bodyplay consider the reactions of others along with the ways they want the mark to resonate for themselves. Most of the people I spoke to had marks not readily seen. When I asked why they had chosen to place their tattoo on a hip, instead of a forearm, or pierce a navel, instead of an eyebrow, I heard a mix of "certain marks call to be on certain parts of the body" along with a resounding desire not to be judged or excluded based on a choice they made for themselves. Ruth, a young woman in San Francisco, told me there was a 'time and a place when they [tattoos and piercings] aren't appropriate; the CEO of IBM shouldn't have an eyebrow ring". I heard Ruth's consideration echoed in nearly all of my interviews. These young people understand the world they live in. They understand compromise is necessary in a capitalist world, especially if, as many of them did, you imagine yourself someday at its head. It is important to note that instead of following the hegemonic code, and, thus, assuring themselves a 'safe' future, they opted to locate their markings in places that enabled both space for themselves and for societal requirements. Others I spoke with voiced similar kinds of reasoning:

"My mark is on my left shoulder. I placed it there because it can be covered easily when I am working or doing business. ... You have to think about what its like in the business world."

(Carlos)

"Both [my tattoos] are on my back. ... I love the first one I got, but sometimes I really regret the place the second one is [in] because it is hard to hide at family functions."

(Gail)

"My tattoo is on my lower back, the one thing my mom asked ... was 'Don't let it show on your wedding day'. This piece means so much to me, I am so happy I will have it forever."

(Amy)

As can be seen above, these young people know they live in a panoptic world. They know they are being judged on what they look like. DeMello reminds us in America there is a historical understanding of tattoos that is laden with class signifiers that mark one out as undesirable in many ways (44-70). Most of those I spoke with understood this history. Many were living it at home with their parents. They understood that judgment of this sort, complete with its closing doors, is the price one pays for acts of counter-hegemony. In placing their marks outside of regular sight these young people are attempting to keep their counter hegemonic acts personal. The thought given to placement argues that this is not a public process. Rather, it is a personal struggle.

For many the marks themselves are intensely personal. One woman I interviewed told me she never tells people what her tattoo means because it is too personal²¹⁸. Another, who opted for a piercing instead of a tattoo, told me she could not think of a single place on her body that she could ink her very personal design. For this woman, her own body was even too public a space. She opted for a piercing because she felt this gave less of her away publicly while it still served as personal testimony to her growth. I believe this desire to 'play' with the in-between spaces of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic

performance speaks to the intensely personal objectives being sought by these young people.

Unlike those I mentioned earlier who fell outside my focus, the bodies I am looking at are not the primary voice for the subjectivity of their owners. They are instead, the space where a few of the multitude of voices that make up the subject live and breathe. These bodies quietly carry their owner's subjectivity beneath a shirt or sock line. Hidden marks serve as testimony to be read by the individual. They are not for public consumption. In this, they allow the subject to continue to evolve and to continue to grow into their subjectivity.

As with a wedding, the guest list for an act of bodyplay is an aspect of its context as well. In a majority of the body narratives I heard, who was present for the event or who was told soon thereafter was a part the information the subjects shared. This is powerful in that it speaks to the intention to create a subjectivity that fits into their lives:

"I asked my best friend to go with me to get the *Lono* tattoo because I felt she had been with me through the whole thing, and I wanted her there with me for the celebration too."

(Terry)

"I asked a friend from high school to go with me, she's like family, and I was getting a part of my childhood on me [the *Olomana* mountains and the word *Ohana*], it was just right. Then later I had a group of really close friends over for beers and I sort of 'unveiled' it to them, they were all a part of my *Ohana*."

(Ian)

"I told my mom the night before I was going to do it, I didn't want her to freak. I wanted her to know it was a good thing, not me ruining my body. She wanted me to come over as soon as it was done and show her. When she saw [it, all] she said was it looked like it hurt, but she

wasn't freaked, I think she understood [it] was about wanting to own parts of myself that I [had] lost."
(Ann)

I heard a countless "best friend went with me", a "few husband/wife and girlfriend/boyfriend went to lend support", and dozens of "I talked to my best friend before/after I got the marking" stories. It struck me, as I heard these same kinds of stories over and over again, that it was very much like asking someone to stand up with you in a wedding. In the same ways that asking a friend to stand as best man or maid of honor locates both them and the betrothed in ones life, so too does asking a friend to stand as witness to acts of bodyplay. Both call on those who are already located within the subject's life to witness an act of transformation. And, both presume that the witness will honor the self-chosen metamorphose and remain in the life of the transformed.

Sharing is a vital part of bodyplay. Narrating, giving voice to, these self-chosen marks confirms their full inscription in both the body and the subjectivity. The thrust of Demello's text calls attention to tattoo stories and their power to transform. I have argued in the course of this paper that how we read the marks made on the body facilitate the ways they resonate into our subjectivities. The narratives we tell create meaning for us as subjects. For those who practice bodyplay, the meanings they give their marks have the power to write them into new versions of themselves. Calvin Schrag reminds us of the power narrative has to reflexively create a subject in his text *The Self After Postmodernity*:

The story of the self is a developing story, a story subject to a creative advance, wherein the past is never simply a series of nows that have lapsed into nonbeing, but a text, an inscription of events and experiences, that stands open to new interpretations and new perspectives of meaning. Correspondingly, the future is not a series of nows that has not yet come into being. The future of narrative time is the self as possibility, as the power to be able to provide new readings of the script that has already been inscribed and to mark out new inscriptions of a script in the making (37).

The stories we tell of ourselves shape both our past and our future; when we tell them, they reflexively reshape us. The narratives of bodyplay work in the same fashion. The wearer tells her body story, and that story then becomes an aspect of her subjectivity. Terry, the woman who got a tattoo to mark the end of a legal battle, said the mark represented peace and abundance, which was what she wanted in her life. Here we see her intention, as well as the meaning the mark is infused with, resonating in the narrative. She chose this mark because it was a sign of what she wanted to *create* in her future. The mark is an effort to write her desires into her body. In the narrating of her mark, she is creating what the mark represents; she tells her life as if it will be full of peace and abundance.

Demello confirms this power in her 1991 essay, "Anchors, Hearts and Eagles: From the Literal to the Symbolic in American Tattooing" (*Literacies: Writing Systems and Literate Practices*). Here she argues that tattoos are fundamentally a means of expressing one's identity on both a personal and collective front. She sees tattooing as inscribing a person's relationship with themselves, others and society in a manner that is visible to both the wearer and others. Except when worn in private, tattoos are meant to be read by

others. They are, according to Demello, not merely private expressions of the need to 'write oneself(s)', but also expressions of the need for others to read [them in] a certain way (107).

According to Schrag, narratives *need* to be told by someone to someone; otherwise they are not actual narratives. We share our stories in an effort to be seen in the light of them. This is perhaps one of the most powerful aspects of bodyplay; it offers a way to construct a public version of our story for ourselves that reads as we wish to be read when we wish to be read. The private/public space in bodyplay is at the discretion of the subject (rather than open to the public as say a bob in the 1920s or long hair in the mid-1960s was) to conceal or expose, as such, it is in their power to narrate their body rather then having it read without their voice involved in the process.

As previously discussed, the ability to write ourselves(s) into our own lives has the power to change our subjectivity. With each mark we make into our body, we are writing ourselves, and the meanings that each of these marks carry resonate into both bodyplay narratives and the subjectivity they create. Deb, the woman who got her tattoo the first time she went to Amsterdam, had a zipper-head placed on a long scar line of stitches on her forearm, the remnants of being hit by a taxi as she was crossing the street. She re-marked a mark made into her; through this act, she now owns the story of its birth. The zipper-head makes laughable, even playful, what most would consider a painful experience. In that one notices the tattoo before the scar itself, she has renegotiated the scar as funny. No one asks her about the scar; they ask her

about the tattoo. Thus, she has full control of the narrative, and she can tell it (as she did to me) as an almost funny situation. Her narrative involves her creation rather than the story of a cab accident. In this reframing, the ugly is made laughable and, in the process, inviting.

In American culture, scars on women are considered distasteful, and they often mark the women wearing them as unapproachable. I believe that this reaction goes beyond our obsession with perfection as beautiful; it also triggers our uneasiness with pain, an uneasiness made greater when on the body of a woman. By re-marking her visible experience with pain as funny, Deb is freed from a myriad of ways she could be locked into the painful experience. In that she is asked about the tattoo, and not the scar, and that she is asked because it is funny rather than ugly, she is not bound to the story of her disfigurement; she is instead free to tell the empowering story of how she came to get a tattoo. Embedded in this story are the fragments of the story of being hit by the cab.

Silja J. A. Talvi in her essay "Marked for Life: Tattoos and the Redefinition of Self", *Body Outlaws*, details the ways her tattoos mark her. She describes her tattoos as nothing spectacular to look at, but important in what they say about her and to her: these tattoos "would serve as a visual reminder of my belief that I was going to make it through a difficult and painful time." Talvi explains that getting these tattoos enabled her to consciously take small steps away from her emotional suffering and towards something "radically new and self-defining". Her tattoos marked her

transitions and homecoming to a subject she had constructed. She addresses the personal nature of this new self(s) in the ways she talks about her tattoos visibility. Unlike Deb, who re-marked her scar because she could not hide it nor would she feel shamed by it, Talvi marked her body in concealable places. However, their power to mark her as changed persists: "For the most part they remain concealed under clothing, where I can often feel their energy radiation over my body" (211-215). Talvi's body and subjectivity are transformed because she marked her body. Many of those I interviewed echoed these same feelings, their marks also had the power to rewrite the subject both into and for the body.

Emily Jenkins, in her essay, "The Tattoo", Tongue First: Adventures in Physical Culture, re-writes herself as beautiful with a tattoo. Through her bodyplay narrative, we can read how the story of her tattoo and its beauty becomes the story of her own beauty:

... I feel proud of it [the tattoo], because I am no longer the canvas. Its beauty has become mine, and the boy with the tribal arms is admiring a part of my body. The only part I chose. ... Ten years ago I imagined a tattoo would give me proof of my experience, that it would bring out some latent toughness in my fragile soul. ... But it's also given me a left arm that I think is totally, permanently gorgeous. I have an unqualified pride in one part of my body. The beauty of the nineteenth century literature I have loved ... is part of me. ... The old books I love, the history, the art, the poetry, all are under my skin. Is my body reflecting my mind? Or is my mind changed by the change in my body? Both I think. I am beginning to understand what ThEnigma²¹⁹ meant: "This is only the back of the puzzle," he said spreading his blue arms wide. "The art's on the inside." I roll up my sleeves in pride and pleasure. (89-90)

Jenkins articulates what so many of my subjects did, in saying that to have a tattoo places one outside the social norms because the "invisible rules about

beautification have already been broken". Thus, we, as Jenkins has done, are free to recreate and then become beauty in the ways we see beauty, rather than in the ways it is superimposed on us by consumption culture.

In each of the interviews I did, the meanings given to the sign on the body resonated into the subjectivity of the narrator. Robin, the woman recovering from cancer who has her naval pierced, wrote herself out of illness and into health. She explained that the piercing signified, for her, a move into health. Shane, the young man from Kona who got his tongue pierced, spoke the meaning of his mark in terms of his relationship to his father, who told him he could not come home unless he took it out. For him, his mark represented his ownership over his body, he wanted the piercing, and it was his body so why should his dad care.

Here we see the meaning of the mark is inseparable from how the mark transforms his body from his father's to his. Ian, marked with the *Olomana* Mountains, imbues his bodyplay with his childhood history; the mountains signifying his youth reflectively reattach him to his sense of home, place and family. Ian, who no longer lives in Hawaii, now carries home and family with him always because he has codified his tattoo to do this²²⁰. Ann, who pierced her navel in an attempt to reclaim lost bits of herself, invests her piercing with a sense of found wholeness and says it reminds her every day that her whole body is hers.

In each of the above narratives the lines between what the image represents, its actual meaning, and how that representation is played into the

body is blurred. I think this is one of the results of bodyplay. When one takes an image into one's body, it is difficult to know where the meanings will resonate. I believe this testifies to the extent the subject is transformed by acts of bodyplay.

In bodyplay narratives, we hear the weaving of intention and context with meaning, constructing a tapestry of the subject. Rich with color and depth, this subjectivity is worn with the pride of an artist who has the power to create. As such, it is not quickly forgotten or normalized. Schrag argues that, "Narrative in the strongest sense of the term is a form and dynamics of the self as life-experiencing subject" (42). The narratives of bodyplay seem to testify to this and then carry the subject one step further through its permanence on the body. Bodyplay denotes stories we do not want to forget; stories that we *cannot* forget because their cues are marked into our skin. They continuously serve to remind us of our struggles, our successes, and, finally, our history. These narratives are written into us as marks of our growth into ourselves(s).

I believe we can look to Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subject for an understanding of what sort of subject is possible through the use of bodyplay. For Braidotti, the nomadic subject is one who has "relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity", and in the process has opened themselves up for an identity that is made from "transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes" without becoming altogether devoid of unity. This sort of subjectivity allows for performative images that weave together different levels of experience that reflect autobiographical aspects and a conceptual preference

for a postmetaphysical vision of subjectivity (7-24). This mythic subject offers what I believe bodyplay can, a means in which to join and carry the varying aspects of ourselves along with us without these aspects fixing us. The body, combined with the narrative that accompanies bodyplay, holds these marks in a constantly dynamic space. Both are always transitioning with the subject. This is a captivating aspect of bodyplay; it has the ability to set a moment into our lives and to mark this moment as meaningful, without imprisoning us into it and without the moment losing its resonance.

In this process, these marks register as reference points to our subjectivity, as moments when the subject's motion seemed to pause in recognition and reflection. One can be changed by the practice of bodyplay, even as the marks continue to change, without having to give up the prior moments of meaningful change. In that my body is dynamic, then the marks on it must be dynamic as well. It is this dynamism that allows for forward movement into subjectivity in a more unified fashion. Bodyplay makes possible what the nomadic subject offers: the ability to carry my essential belongings with me wherever I go, allowing me to recreate a home base anywhere.

Nomadic subjects work within a blurring of boundaries and do not settle into "socially coded modes of thought and behavior" (7); thus, they are free to occupy the in-between spaces of our culture. It is here, I again see a shared space between bodyplay and the nomadic subject; both allow for and depend on the in-between spaces. As argued earlier, bodyplay is a project that

evokes transition within mainstream culture, rather than from outside it. The in-between spaces the nomadic subject occupies are the gaps between boundaries, the gaps accessible only to one who is both in and out of the mainstream. Bodyplay offers those who employ it the ability to be both within and outside of consumption culture. It offers a temporary freeing (or at least a pause) from the dogmatic thinking of consumption, in the same ways that Braidotti's nomadic subject is capable of freeing her thinking from the hold of phallocentric dogmatism so as to engender alternate forms of agency.

In that these marks stand as permanent testimony to who we have been, they offer what consumption culture feverishly works to deny, to integrate our specific personal histories with our dynamic self(s). These marks testify to a life in motion. Once on the body, they become a part of its history and signify a form of ownership over the body; they remind us that we have a history, that we own ourselves(s). In a world where we have been rendered mere objects for sale (lacking any relevant history to defend us from the smothering embrace of consumption), to have a reference point that offers us grounding as we create our own agency is powerful. Maile, who understands her tattoo as releasing her from consumption's hold, uses the narrative of her bodyplay to engender for herself an alternate form of agency. *She* has a tattoo. *She* is not who consumption is talking to. Living in these gaps as she does, the agency she creates allows her to see consumption's power to affect her without giving it the room to, in fact, wholly infect her.

Oscar Wilde once said, 'Those who see any difference between soul and body have neither' ... Body and soul are one, but it's more like the slippery union of oil and vinegar than any ultimate fusion. Certain experiences ... made me feel I could pour the vinegar off the top and into a different jar. Others shook the ingredients so hard it felt like they couldn't possibly separate.

Emily Jenkins
Tongue First (7-8)

Bodyplay is about finding a way to mix the body and soul. bell hooks, in "On Recovery", *Talking Back*, reminds us it is "crucial that we not ignore the self nor the longing people have to transform the self, that we make the conditions for wholeness such that they are mirrored both in our own beings and in social and political reality" (32). Bodyplay can offer us such a space. It is geared towards locating a subjectivity that has both the power to unify us and to grow with us. It offers access to a kind of subjectivity that takes into account the continual process that makes up the building of a subject. Marking moments into our bodies is a way of keeping account of them. This act has the potential to move us closer to a more tangible sense of wholeness.

Bodyplay is a counter-hegemonic act; it has shifted where the cultural center lies in terms of body ownership and practice within American culture.

Bodyplay moved tattooed and pierced bodies closer to 'normal', and, thus, into

the realm of acceptable behavior. For those I spoke to during the course of my research the cultural center shifted radically. Their sense of self-ownership, their sense of subjectivity resulting from this new understanding of self(s), and their voice in both this discovery and on their bodies have shifted their understandings of their own power and place within mainstream American culture.

The present effects of this on those I spoke with ripple out into the ways they both see and engage the layers of hegemony that surround them.

Some feel degrees freer from consumption culture and its power to locate them within culture. Still others have found a sense of safety in themselves through the process.

The effects bodyplay has had on middle-class America are visible in everyday ways. No longer is a marked-body marked out. In the last six years American culture as a whole has shifted in its relationship to the marked body. No longer an oddity, the marked body is now one of the standards for hip and cool. (And as Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, so clearly spelled out for us – hip and cool sell.) Super-models, super-stars, and super-sports figures have marked bodies²²¹, and their marked bodies increase their celebrity and thus their consume-ability. Beyond our cultural embrace of the super-marked-body there is a normalcy that has fallen over the average marked body. We see this everywhere; Hallmark produces and sells a greeting card that offers congratulates on new body piercings²²², and Daily and Weekly newspapers carry multiple large advertisements for tattoo and piercing parlors along side

ads for house wares, tires and clothing. I think we can safely say the act of bodyplay no longer shocks us as a culture.

I have noticed other, still subtler, signs of the center shifting in coffee houses, restaurants, bookstores and on university campuses. I have overheard conversations between parents and their teens where the discussion of bodyplay is a real discussion rather than an out right "no"²²³. I have had waiters, even in the most up scale of restaurants, with visible piercing²²⁴ serve me meals and the shelves of bookstores²²⁵ now regularly stock tattoo and piercing industry magazines as well as novels centered around bodyplay and even a few books on health and the marked body. Across the country university health centers²²⁶ carry nationally distributed pamphlets on the health risks and general care of new tattoos and piercing. And, in strip malls across the county, wedged between popular local and national restaurants, beauty shops and dress stores are 'respectable' tattoo and piercing shops.

These shops, with their street front windows and bright lights, have been worked into the background of our daily lives. These storefronts and their floors are clean, the signage is large, colorful and in keeping with the tone of their surroundings. The drawings that fill the window space are not shocking or even distinctly male²²⁷, instead they are often beautiful in their simplicity and cross cultural design. They invite us to peek in without requiring us to think of ourselves as venturing beyond the mainstream. The center has shifted to include bodyplay. We are no longer shocked when we see a tattooed body;

this sight now so familiar our comments fall to choice or placement of design rather then on the fact that it is permanently under the skin.

The lasting effects of this briefly open window on those I spoke to will be more difficult to gauge. Will the feelings they shared with me remain with them as long as their marks remain on their bodies? While this was their intention, as seen in the importance of placement and permanency, only time can truly answer. At the very least, we do know their bodies will serve as constant reminders to what their present offers them. Even as the window on this act of counter hegemony shrinks, diminishing its ability to allow in new senses of self-empowerment and ownership, their marks, their narratives and they themselves remain. I feel the fact that the three, mark, narrative and subject, are so linked offers promise for at least the remembrance of change. And, remembrance offers those changed a better hold on where their transformation moved them.

As for American culture at large, it too has shifted. American culture has been moved so as to allow the marks of bodyplay to give voice to the bodies who bare them. No longer are these marks written off as simply class markers or moments of shame (drunken nights or youthful whims). These marks, and the subjects baring them, are now taken with more seriousness, and, thus, treated with less judgment. The assumptions surrounding them have shifted and some of these assumptions have even faded into the shadows of 'how we use to think'.

This shift goes beyond the aesthetic read as it opens lines of possibility for our bodies to speak us. In that our bodies can now be understood as able to give us voice, we no longer have to remain locked within the culturally imposed markers we are assigned. This is a powerful shift for many in the middle-class. For those who are lost in the dominant voices of our culture and can not imagine a body outside the constructed images of consumption culture, this change opens possibilities for their own self-writing. If nothing else, bodyplay, and the cultural shifts it has enabled, serve as proof that one can write aspects of the self(s) and that these aspects will be read by the dominant culture.

The lasting results on our culture as a whole are more challenging to imagine. We must factor in that bodyplay has already become incorporated into the dominant voice of our culture in the forms of 'cool' and 'hip'. In this, bodyplay has in many ways become commodifiable. Bodyplay is now a saleable item thus diminishing its potential to bring voice to the subject in the ways that it has previously. Consumption culture teaches us that the lasting results of bodyplay will become watered down by time, the incorporating shift of center and the myriad of bodies that are now being marked in an effort to be read as 'cool'. However, I believe that one can assume the longevity of the marks on individual bodies and subjects will keep at least a portion of the present possibilities in conversation.

This in mind, I rest my hopes for bodyplay's lasting effects on the individuals who found their voice and then their subjectivity through their

bodies. These individuals each hold the key to bodyplay's lasting potential, in that they each hold the keys to their own subjectivity. Knowing they constructed aspects of themselves, knowing they had an amount of control over the way middle-class culture would read them is empowering. This is the tone that continues to resonate over time. The fact that these individuals marked their bodies for themselves and that many were successful in locating aspects of their self(s) through the process, suggests to me that it will be much more difficult for the dominant hegemonic voices to drown them out completely.

I am not denying that these aspects are complicated by the ways in which we as subjects internalize and then project on to our bodies the desires and constraints of our culture. Our imprisonment is so internalized that it is difficult to know if the *marks* on our body are reflections of our subjectivity or conformity; at times they may represent both. The call of consumption culture never stops trying to absorb our acts of rebellion. What is today an expression of subjectivity may tomorrow be an act of conformity. Dennis Rodman is a public example of subject transformed, by his own hand, into object²²⁸.

In the course of this project, I have seen bodyplay as a process transition from efforts in self-discovery and, at times, recovery, to increasingly, an aspect of fashion. While I still believe marking the body within bodyplay has the power to transform when that is the intention behind it, I am reminded how quickly our culture can appropriate those few ways we have discovered to locate ourselves. The commodification of a form of bodyplay is everywhere.

One can buy temporary tattoos in most drug stores. They can be found in

packs of gum and at high-end museum stores. A few years ago, even Barbie, commercial culture's favorite girl, got a tattoo.

While the *look* of bodyplay has been hungrily gobbled up into the mainstream of American consumption, what those who actually get their marks etched into their skin find in themselves has not been. I have had conversations with kids who got their body marks in the last year, some as young as sixteen. While they might begin by saying that they thought these marks looked "cool", they too have a narrative to tell. For these kids, as for those I interviewed over the years, this experience matters in term of how they see and feel about themselves. Their narratives are full of desires of the self(s): the multitude of who they see themselves as, how they want these aspects to be read by others and how they want to be reminded to read themselves. These acts of bodyplay change them, and in that process open new avenues for the self(s) to travel.

What is certain to remain in the end is that bodyplay codes the body with self-ownership. I am reminded that we cannot mark what we do not in some way believe we can own. Marking the body in these ways, with intention and playfulness, seems to direct an understanding of the body and the self(s) as unified; owned and in keeping with the ever transitioning subject. In a culture ruled by advertising, this marking offers a relief of sorts. Whether this relief can be transformed into a lasting jetty against the tides of consumption culture or if it is simply a temporary reprieve is not possible to know for certain at this time. I am certain, however, that this process does

move those who participate in it in ways that they had not been moved before. It calls on them to ask questions of themselves and then to create and tell their own story of who they want to be. It seems to me that this alone is a step towards wholeness worth taking.

All of this said, I ask, if you had a tattoo what would it be? You have an answer and a reason why, don't you?

Introductions

¹ Powerful because with the new product in hand, I am now rendered better than those who do not have the product, and certainly on the road to better then I was prior.

² A look at the latest blockbuster movie will confirm that we do in fact pay for the right to be bombarded with advertisement. Was the latest James Bond film a movie or a very long ad for BMW?

³ I knew I had created it, after all I was still a po-mo girl. I joined a canoe club and talked to people about their body markings, I went to the gym and made notes, and I even started opening conversations in clubs and bars with my interview questions (that one was fun for a while, but then I had to listen to their stories) I had sucked the joy out of the process for myself.

⁴ Deterritorialization, as used by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their text Anti-Oedipus, refers to a situation where a cultural practice is borrowed from its original context and then recoded with a new meaning. In this process, the cultural form is freed of its original significance and reinvested with a new meaning while keeping its basic external form.

⁵ While I am certain a number of well-respected people had tattoos on their bodies fifteen years ago, these marks were often protected as secret aspects of the subject. They represent visits to the dark and seedy side of town and of the bearers subjectivity. They were no doubt powerful indicators of who these individuals really believed themselves to be (perhaps tougher or wilder than others knew). However, they could not be talked about without giving away the secret.
⁶ Even in their 'Golden Age' (between the two World Wars), tattoos occupied the space in the margin, relegated primarily to the working class and servicemen. This marginal space is made even more apparent when we look at the role women played; 'nice girls don't get tattoos', nice girls being: attractive, middle-class and heterosexual. Some tattooists even went so far as to refuse a woman located in the above group unless accompanied by her husband, marriage license in hand. By the end of World War II, tattoos had truly fallen to the margin, and even servicemen were being counseled to avoid them (Demello 61-66).

⁷ As proof to this popularity I offer up the newest of the Hallmark greeting card line: Fresh Ink: (<u>www.hallmark.com</u>) which carries a card that offers congratulations "on your newly pierced part!" (The front cover of the card offers the giver the following options to choose from: eyebrow, ear, other ear, nose, lip, tongue, belly button, other), the card sells where ever Fresh Ink can be found for \$2.25.

⁸ Piercing finds its history on the fringes, as well. Only 50 years ago, Americans were reading women with pierced ears as marginal, belonging to the minority and working classes. Men with pierced ears were either sailors or gay (and excluded therefore from mainstream American culture). As for the current body-piercing project, it too comes from the margin with origins in the S & M community where it still holds a powerful place.

Demello goes on to suggest that the use of non-western "authentic" designs by the middle-class creates a distance between the wearer from their white American middle-class standing while simultaneously confirming and rejecting it. "Authentic" tattoos are understood to be authentic to non-western cultures. Borrowed from Pacific cultures, these tattoo designs are read as 'better' by the middle-class; the 'authenticity' confirms this understanding for a community that is in constant search for the real. The irony here is twofold. Most of these Pacific cultures no longer practice tattooing in their own communities, and the designs being called authentic are at best inspired by or conglomerations of tattoos found in the Pacific. Thus, the 'authentic' tattoo is truly an American construction, and it is one of the worst kinds, in that through this process we reconstruct a history, one that fits our needs alone, for all these

people.) Middle-class standing "is confirmed because to wear tribal or Japanese tattoos is to mark one as middle-class, educated, and artistically sophisticated; yet is rejected, because for many the non-Western tattoo is a way to rebel against middle-class values". She goes on to suggest that, but for this complete overhaul of the visual imagery of tattooing, it would have remained a working class body project (90-91).

10 "Fuck the World" (Demello 68)

¹¹ For more on the modern tattoo community, including these sub-cultures and their historical background, see Demello's text.

¹² See Demello for this rich history.

¹³ This includes nipple piercing for both men and women as in American culture nipples are sexualized, and the following genitalia piercings. For women: The Horizontal Clitoris hood piercing: is most popular for its attractive look. (It's downfall is that unless the piercing is placed exactly correct and your anatomy is perfectly suitable for this piercing, it does not provide much stimulation to the clitoris. If the piercing is done correctly, when pressure is applied it will provide some stimulation to the clitoris.) Labia: inner labia piercings are simpler and less painful than the outer labia piercing, the inner labia piercing is very popular for its aesthetic value as well as the physical stimulation. (Labia piercings are simple and quick-healing, which makes multiple piercings along the inner labia very popular as well, Historical, labia piercings were used by men to prevent wives and slaves from having sexual intercourse with other men. In this case both outer labias would be pierced with a lock holding them together. Other cultures have used the piercings for decorative purposes only.) The Triangle piercing: the jewelry is actually inserted just below the clitoris hood behind the clitoris itself. (When the front of the clitoris is being stimulated, the back is being stimulated as well.) The Fourchette: jewelry is placed over the perineum from the bottom of the vaginal opening. (This is a less popular piercing among the general population of women. As the layer of skin is very thin and can be easily damaged or torn with natural movement if the jewelry is caught on anything. It can also cause pain during intercourse, as it will pull the piercing inside the vaginal canal.) The Christina: is a vertical piercing through the V-shaped junction at the top of the outer labia it comes out slightly above in the pubic area. (This is not a very popular piercing, due to its lengthy healing time and high rejection rate. Natural body movements can also cause the jewelry to twist and bind, which can make it very uncomfortable and just not practical.) The Isabella and The Prince Albertina piercings are new and experimental; both are still in question as to the safety of the procedure. And, for men: The Prince Albert: a piercing through the skin between the urethra and the base of the corona on the under side. (Which is said to have been used by Prince Albert of the UK during the Victorian period to keep his member under control when wearing tight pants, however, there is no documentation to support this.) The Ampallang: a piercing that runs horizontally through the head of the Penis. (This piercing has been found in Borneo, New Guinea and parts of the Philippines. It is not one of the common piercings as it is often considered too extreme. The actual piercing takes many seconds to perform as the tissue inside the penis head is quite tough and fibrous. As it is a long tough piercing the straightness of this piercing is often not perfect. When it is performed quite slowly, to increase accuracy, the experience can be quite painful and they can take a long time to heal. Placement of this piercing is extremely important. Bleeding to death, a real concern with this piercing, would not be fun. It must also be decided if the piercing is to go through or above the urethra.) And the Apadravya: a piercing that runs vertical through the head of the Penis. (This piercing mentioned in the Hindu book "The Karma Sutra" and is done through the healed Prince Albert Piercing but continues up and through the top of the penis approximately 1cm from the edge of the Glans and towards the tip of the penis. The Apadravya, like the Ampallang, is not one of the common piercings as it is often considered too extreme, the actual piercing is performed quite slowly to ensure accuracy, the experience can be quite painful and they can take a long time to heal.)

¹⁴ Keeping mind that while much of bodyplay is about the narrative, more often then not showing of marks is included in the process. I admit to my own discomfort here. I was not comfortable getting a closer look at these particular acts of bodyplay.

¹⁵ In the sense that art in the modern age became 'commodifed art': an image mass-produced in exactly the same way. Margo Demello disagrees with me here; she argues that the younger generation's trendy and expensive tattoos are the "ultimate consumer item". However, she does not really explain how these aspects accomplish such an end, especially in a culture where the increasingly custom designs and placement play such a large role in the aesthetic of each individual piece (189).

¹⁶ In Kathy Ferguson's *The Man Question* she uses the concept of mobile subjectivities as a "... too much in-process to claim closer and too interdependent to claim fixed boundaries" (161), my use of self(s) corresponds to this notion of the subject.

Chapter one: American Ideology

¹⁷ I am employing the term Modernity in the way Giddens does in *Modernity and Self-Identity*: "Modernity can be understood as roughly equivalent to the 'industrialized world', so long as industrialism is not its only institutional dimension ... a second dimension is capitalism, where the term means a system of commodity production involving both competitive product markets and the commodification of labour power. Each of these can be distinguished analytically from the institutions of surveillance, the basis of the massive increase in organizational power associated with the emergence of modern social life. Surveillance refers to the supervisory control of subject populations, whether this control takes the form 'visible' supervision in Foucault's sense, or the use of information to coordinate social activities. ..." (15).

¹⁸ I use Robert Bocock's definition here: "Consumption, in late twentieth-century western forms of capitalism, may be seen, ... as a social and cultural process involving cultural signs

¹⁹ There is a power in knowing that the world we are viewing, and in many ways become collapsed into, (as is the case with drama because of its power to pull one in) is shared. In a theater, the "darkness isolates us from all except those who sit adjacent to us. Yet we instantly respond when others in the audience laugh, when they gasp, when they shift restlessly. We recognize in those moments that we are a part of a larger community drawn together ..." (Jacobus 4). And, in these moments of shared experience, we find a sense of safety in the moment of experienced "collective knowing".

and symbols, not simply as an economic utilitarian process" (3).

²⁰ Bentham made the duality of visibility and invisibility possible through structural design. In his design, the central observation tower was to be shaded with venetian blinds on the windows. The inside partitions would be constructed to intersect at right angles, thus making possible movement from one quarter to the next without being seen. To maintain invisibility, there would be no doors, but zig-zags would function as openings, thus creating no change in light or shadow when the doors were opened or passed through. All of this was to insure that those being observed would never be able to discern the presence or identity of the guardian (Discipline and Punish 201).

²¹ Foucault goes on to explain that the power of the Panopticon lays in the "architectural"

²¹ Foucault goes on to explain that the power of the Panopticon lays in the "architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. To achieve this, it is at once too little and too much that the prisoner should be constantly observed by an inspector: too little, for what matters is that he knows himself to be observed; too much, because he has no need in fact of being so. ... Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so (201).

²² Power has its principle not so much in a person as a certain concerted distribution of bodies. surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up. The ceremonies, the rituals, the marks by which the sovereign's surplus power was manifested are useless. There is a machinery that assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference. Consequently, it does not matter who exercises power. Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine. [By this same token] ... it does not matter what motive animates him. ... The more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed. The Panopticon is a marvelous machine, which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of

power (202).

23 I am wary of the newest crop of watching guards in America, the truckers made-eyes-on-America newly minted in the summer of 2002 by the Office of Home Land Security.

²⁴ In this example, I am by no means setting up the argument that the oppressive walls of consumption are as imprisoning, or as demoralizing, as the oppression of racism and sexism. I am instead making the point that oppression can and does function most powerfully outside the visible barriers of walls and the watchful eyes.

²⁵ Webster's Dictionary defines individualism as, "... 2. The principle or habit of independent thought or action. 3. The pursuit of individual rather than common or collective interests; egoism." (664).

Extensive study has been done on this 'turning inward' of the oppressors' vision and can be found in a number of fields of study including post-colonial studies, film studies, race and

gender studies and queer theory.

27 Advertisements are designed with the end desire to sell; women in American have been hit the hardest by this desire because historically our place has been to appear (Berger). This place in society makes the need to appear (acceptably) a space of insecurity. The beauty industry is an over \$700 billion dollar a year industry primarily directed at creating and then solving (momentarily) the insecurities. While women are the prime targets of most of these advertisements, men have recently been pushed towards the mirror with greater force. Ads for products promoting hair growth or removal function in the same ways that ads for anti-aging products do for women. While a number of my examples may be taken from women-centered ads, I do not in any way believe men are exempt from this oppressive state.

28 "... he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relationship in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight." (Foucault 203).

29 As is the case within the Panopticon, we must remember it is a structure designed to

violently hold its objects captive.

My use of the term quantifiable here (in reference to the violence innate to the captive states) is purposeful. In a captive state, violence is perceivable, measurable. Quantifiable violence is thus identifiable violence. The power of being able to identify violence is that the oppressed act in response to their oppression. This action is not available to those who cannot see the violence being done to them as violence.

31 In behaviorism, this would be referred to as a form of aversive "conditioning" or negative reinforcement.

32 While I know my use of right in this form is vague, I believe it is also the most accurate way to look at what is expected of and promised to the American consumer. The 'right' product is in fact the product of the moment; the 'right' kinds of people are the people of the moment those who have constructed out of the 'right' products the 'right' image for themselves. All of which is in constant motion and subject to constant change. The notion of 'right' is coupled with the idea of 'proper', and it must therefore be defined as subjective.

³³ The best examples of this thanking the oppressor syndrome can be found in the consumer response to the diet and beauty industries.

³⁴ Which was one in which people ameliorated the negative condition of social objectification through consumption – material objectification. The negative condition was portrayed as social failure derived from public scrutiny. The positive goal emanated from one's *modern* decision to armor her/himself against such scrutiny with the accumulated "benefits" of industrial production. Social responsibility and social self-preservation were being correlated to an allegedly existential decision that one made to present a mass-produced public face (36). ³⁵ Edward Everett's thoughts at the time on the National health were clear and simple: "separation from Europe – separation from its history and its habits" (Lewis 5).

Chapter Two: Changing America

- ³⁶ This chapter will help shed some light on the possible reasons why in the aftermath of a national crisis, the terroristic attacks on New York and Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001, President Bush would call citizens to consume more as their personal effort in the War on Terrorism.
- ³⁷ This romanticized state is one few in the upper and middle-class would ever have actually experienced. And, its 'return' would have found few of them working a farm or preaching a pious life. These were privileged people who had the time and wherewith all to imagine a life of labor rather then actually live one.
- ³⁸ These efforts failed not because they were misguided, but because they worked all too well with the culture of consumption which could elevate a secular pursuit in such a way as to situate morality into it.
- ³⁹ Economic Principles of Consumption was published in 1929.
- ⁴⁰ Norris goes on to support this point by looking to the American response to change, "... much of the public outcry against the rising cost of living in the period immediately prior to America's entry into World War I was conditioned by the experience of over two generations with a rising standard of living" (10-11)
- ⁴¹ Per capita income is found by dividing a country's total disposable personal income by its population, and real per-capita income is found by adjusting per-capita income for inflation. Changes in real per-capita income over time indicate trends in a country's material standard of living. Real per-capita income will usually rise when economic growth rates exceed population growth rates. Thus, countries with rapid population growth rates must have an even more rapid rate of growth in real income in order to maintain material living standards. (South-Western EconData: www.swcollege.com/bef/econ)
- ⁴² Norris' read of Lewis Atherton's text, *Main Street on the Middle Border*, Bloomington: Indiana, 1954.
- ⁴³ By 1890 the United States had been one of the largest exporters of soap.
- ⁴⁴ Pun lifted from Norris (51).
- ⁴⁵ In 1892, *Ladies Home Journal* announced it would no longer accept medical advertising. This was a good indicator of the dramatic increase in the number and size of ads being placed, as journals could now afford to choose their own markets. Journals were increasingly choosing to cater to the soap and beauty industries. Ads for soaps of all kinds quickly filled in where the medical industry ads had been removed. The timing of the home market push and the selective weeding process journals began engaging in created a welcome climate for soap manufacturers.
- ⁴⁶ Mail order existed prior to the Civil War in the form of ads in agricultural periodicals. The appeal of mail-order shopping lay primarily with the rural customer who was isolated from the larger urban market.

⁴⁸ These catalogues also functioned as a link to the city in that they kept subscribers linked via consumption to the ever-changing modern world.

⁴⁹ Boris Emmett and John Jeuck, Catalogues and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company (112).

⁵⁰ Experts, excluding Norris, estimate that by 1900, only newspapers and magazine advertising outdistanced window display as a means to promote department store buying. The growth in window dressing as an occupation illustrates well the rapid acceptance of this form of advertising in the United States. By 1900, over 1,500 persons made their living as full-time window decorators. (18)

⁵¹ According to Emmett and Jeuck, quality was a concept with "... connotation peculiar to rural residents. Quality meant serviceability and value; a piece of merchandise had to be good enough to perform the functions the catalogue said it would perform, and the price had to be low enough for them to afford it." (112).

⁵² In these years, Americans had learned well the fears of social stigma and loss of acceptance that surrounded the hygiene market.

ownership. Ten years later, 58% of American cities had a printing press that varied in both perspective and ownership. Ten years later, 58% of American cities were controlled by a growing information monopoly. By 1930, over 80% of American cities were in one way engaged in a press monopoly. According to Ewen, this monopoly acted as a major vehicle for the growth of advertising in the period, pushing it from a \$200 million industry to a \$2.6 billion industry (62).

(62). ⁵⁴ Printers Ink in 1914 noted that "foreign advertising is now about 20% of all the advertising in newspapers, and is constantly increasing" (Ewen 65).

⁵⁵ Park described the Association's program for political consolidation as follows: "National advertising is the great Americanizer. American ideals and institutions, laws, order and prosperity, have not yet been sold to all of our immigrants. American products and standards of living have not yet been brought by the foreign born in America ...If Americans want to combine business and patriotism, they should advertise products, industry and American institutions in the Foreign Language press" (448).

⁵⁶ Of those who saw consumption as the glory of American, of whom Mrs. Frederick was certainly one, the general belief was that 'America' ought to be a homogenous nation, all sharing the same middle-class values and desires. Consumption offered those who envisioned this sort of America real hope in that it created a structure one could easily tap into and receive instruction from on a daily basis.

⁵⁷ Ewen explains this reconstruction of truth as follows: The evolution of the goods and values of mass production to the realm of a *truth* was a primary task among those who sought to educate the masses to the logic of consumerism. Walter Pitkin's desire to create through advertising, a *philosophy of life* as well as Edward Filene's attempt to characterize the consumer market as the world of *facts* are but representative examples of the process which Jung termed the transvaluation of the "word" into a system of "credulity." This attempt to turn a modern marketplace precept into a "universal validity" (Jung) was, especially in the face of traditional cultural attitudes and patterns of consumption, central to the stability and survival of modern industrial capitalism (69).

Chapter Three: Consumption - A Way Of Life

⁵⁸ Marx looked at labor in absolute terms. I do not agree completely because we all experience even in the best of work situations moments of objectification and estrangement. All work has

⁴⁷ These workers did not have to skilled in the understanding of profit margins or even sales tactics. They simply sold products as they were marked and marketed by corporation heads they might never meet.

moments that remind one that it is in fact labor. Perhaps, the (modern) American understanding surrounding play has created this rigidity; i.e., work is not play.

⁵⁹ Marx defined commodities as products that were designed for sale and profit on the market as opposed to products that were manufactured for immediate use and consumption.

- ⁶⁰ It is here we begin to see what Lears means by the network of culture and capitalism.
 ⁶¹ Stuart Ewen, who argues that our consumption culture was constructed by the captains of industry, reminds us in his text *Captains of Consciousness*, that "as early as 1910, the Pittsburgh Survey, had underwritten the concept of capitalism as more than a system of production; it was in fact a social system in which the family, community, and the means or lack of means for recreation and pleasure were undergoing a severe crisis" (15-16).
 ⁶² Marx, Karl: 1818-83.
- ⁶³ This could contribute to the general enrichment of human life-activity but does not because the capitalist power-structure appropriates production privately and/or ascetically to increase production for its own sake (Holland 58-60).
- Most middle-class Americans no longer perceive work in terms of survival even though it is in fact the process that enables their survival. In the psychological severing of the two, work and survival, middle-class Americans have been given the *luxury* of understanding earned income as a means to a consumptive ends rather then as a means towards survival. Proof of this can be seen in the number of Americans who, as a result of credit, live far beyond their means. (It is important to note here that a majority of the average American's debt is accrued as a result of desired goods rather than necessary ones.)
- ⁶⁵ According to William Leach in his text Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture, Hoover pushed for this collapsing of terms along with the notion that every American had the right, as a citizen, to consume: "To Hoover's mind, as to the minds of increasing numbers of Americans, rights, desires, and needs were equitant" (373).
- ⁶⁶ Hegemony can be defined as a consensual system of perceiving and understanding the world, arrived at not through coercion but by winning voluntary agreement that this way of being is a *sensible*, even *natural*, way of perceiving reality. Hegemonic ideologies are naturalized by the society to appear as 'common sense'.
- ⁶⁷ How far are we really from this reality when we allow/invite commercial companies into public schools under the guise of 'enhancing education'? (See *No Logos* pages 87-106 for more detail on this.)
- 68 "The End of Reason", 1941
- These facts were constructed by the industry itself rather then by those outside of it.
 The power of the corporation today is amazingly visible: simply look at Microsoft's ability
- to look into us, back at us and render us dependent. I am reminded that the power of corporations was also this intense at the height of the advertising boom. In 1925 The Great Gatsby was published and quickly labeled as the voice that spoke for the period. Throughout the work there is reference to the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg -- "blue and gigantic". These eyes stand watching over the borough of Queens in billboard form: watching, judging, and above all, selling constantly. They haunt the text in the same ways consumption haunted the 1920's. When I think of the power of corporations to stand both above and among us as citizens, I too am haunted by these eyes.
- ⁷¹ I am borrowing this term from Kathy Ferguson's *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory*, Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1993.
- ⁷² A majority of Ewen's evidence in this text is drawn from sources like *Printer's Ink*, which represent advertising from within and to the industry itself.
 ⁷³ As I write this, I am very aware that I could be talking about the transition we are currently
- As I write this, I am very aware that I could be talking about the transition we are currently experiencing in the world. The current job market is looking for a specific kind of worker. Quick glances through any major cities' classified section will show businesses are requiring skills that are owned by the young. If you spent hours looking into your computer screen as a child, you are who the job market is looking for. One does not need to be well-read or good with people; that might actually distract you. The key is the level at which one is comfortable

with the technology of life. It is this 'skill' that is being privileged in the modern world; be it 1900 or 2000.

⁷⁴ For more information on the Lynds and their study see Richard Wightman Fox's essay "Epitaph for Middletown in *The Culture of Consumption*.

75 "... line management tended to the process of goods production, social management (advertisers) hoped to make the cultural milieu of capitalism as efficient as line management had production. Their task was couched in terms of a secular religion for which the advertisers sought adherents. Calvin Coolidge, applauding this new clericism, noted that 'advertising ministers to the spiritual side of trade" (Ewen, Captains 32-33).

Chapter Four: Advertising: The Sirens of Consumption

⁷⁶ Wartime ads came in many forms: the national selling of the war effort as honorable, the selling sacrifice (rationing and calls for American donations) in place of desire, and the selling of Woodrow Wilson as the voice of peace. Advertising had by 1920 had become a part of the American consciousness.

⁷⁷ In the early 1900's, the leaders in branded advertising were the husband and wife team of Stanley and Helen Resor. Helen wrote a good deal of the copy that persuaded women to consume above their means as a way to better serve their husband and family. Stanley had the gift of coining words. He translated this gift into ad campaigns for products like Crisco, Yuban, and Cutex. The two went on to run and then own the J. Walter Thompson agency (JWT).

⁷⁸ It did not matter to Resor that by 1900 Buckle's work had been largely dismissed in Academia.

⁷⁹ According to Fox, advertising prospered most in times of peace. After the armistice of 1918 manufacturers increased their ad budgets anticipating the return of a consumer economy. The increases were not just an attempt to regain customers lost during the war; they were also a justifiable business expense. Companies needed to spend their extra income quickly in order to avoid being taxed on excess profit. Advertising served both needs. As a result, businessmen invested lavishly in advertising: "full pages in newspapers, double pages in magazines, with more illustrations and wider borders to fill the space. In only two years the total annual volume of advertising doubled, from \$1.5 billion worth in 1918 to just under \$3 billion in 1920" (77).

so Slater suggests that while the 1920's appear to be the first consumerist decade, "on closer inspection they seem merely the harvesting of a much longer revolution, commonly periodized as 1880-1930's. This era sees the emergence of a mass production system of manufacture increasingly dedicated to producing consumer goods (rather than the heavy capital goods, such as steel, machinery and chemicals, which dominate much of the later nineteenth century)." If we *imagine* that consumer culture is born here, it is because we see the ripening of several interlocking developments such as: "mass manufacture; the geographical and special spreading of the market; [and] the rationalization of the form and organization of production ..." (13).

The 'morning shave' was also an invention of this same kind of marketing campaign: done by Gillette Safety Razor Company in 1910 (Strasser 97-100).

⁸² The first ad depicted a nurse caring for two men in hospital, with the men facing the reader and two other men visible in the background. This ad was pulled before publication because it was decided "men should not be featured in so intimate a discussion of feminine hygiene" (Fox 99). The new ad showed a soldier in a wheelchair with his back to the reader attended by three women. If the male gaze was recognized in this 1920's ad and was seen as potentially damaging to sales of Kotex

products, then it is safe to assume the male gaze was understood in its many facets and was employed when profitable.

Perfection, an American obsession, is tragically flawed in its very objective. No one ever achieves perfection; we merely come close for moments that fade all too quickly – a relative place at best. The tragedy lies in the fact that we are told by product advertisers that perfection is in fact achievable; some are told (women and increasingly young men) it is the *only* objective that will give real worth. There is no perfect in American culture because we are granted no still places. Every aspect of our culture is in motion *always*. Product manufacturers and advertisers know this; they rely on this to keep the capitalist wheels rolling. We don't buy products because they can make us average; we buy them because they promise to give us what we do not already have — perfection. Perfection is the promise that keeps us hungry for the next thing that may enable us a moment of the fantasy. It is never real.

84 Fox argues that this new obsession with cleanliness rolled over into the political arena. In the decade that followed 1920, we saw three Republicans in the White House, drastic congressional quotas on immigration, the sensibility of the *Saturday Evening Post* and the founding of *Readers Digest* and such political/radical reactions as the Red Scare, the Sacco-Vanzetti case and a rampant KKK (101).

85 Found in Slater (12).

⁸⁶ The older age groups, those over retirement age, were not a part of this new level of consumption. These people either did not have the income because they were in fact retired or they did not have the socialization necessary. Simply, they did not respond to advertisements and the new social pressures to become conspicuous consumers (*Consumption* 22).

87 In the 1950's, democratization did not apply to black Americans. There was no mainstream advertising directed at blacks until well after the civil rights movement of the late 1950's and early 1960's. According to Ewen, blacks were not included in the world of consumption (Captions 212). It was understood in the advertising industry that blacks simply did not have the income to consume like the rest of America (read white America), which only serves as a reflection of how deeply seated was our racism. Interesting, lack of funds was not the true factor here, though it was the factor pointed to most often. The actual reason blacks were not targeted for consumption is they were not considered American in the fullest sense of the word by either the ad agencies or the product manufacturers. The Irish, who were targeted by consumption, were regularly taught by the capitalist marketplace that they could become Americans through proper inroads. (The Irish were at one point considered of lower class and status than blacks in America.) Black Americans were given no such lessons; instead they were used as background to a white world and the lesson in that was most clear.

88 Other programs that were airing in this same time period and functioned in this same vain included: Mama, Amos 'n' Andy, the Honeymooners, Hey, Jeannie, Life with Lugi, and Life with Rilev.

⁸⁹ High ratings in the early years of television were in the upper 30% range. Today, the market is so flooded that a 12% share can make for a 'hit' program.

⁹⁰ Marshall McCluhan's text *Understanding Media*, differentiates between hot and cool mediums. According to McCluhan, television has the highest potential to teach us because it is a cool medium where we can only receive information, often lessons we did not even know were being presented to us.

The 1960's represent a time when the cultural markers of the 1950's were shed in exchange for the promise of its opposite – freedom. It took the form of radical reactions to most cultural structures: family values exchanged for living situations formed on foundations of romantic and idealistic love and sexual possibility; moral acceptability exchanged for an unbinding of the body in terms of clothing, health practices and drugs; government omnipresence and unquestioned trust exchanged for open speculation and protest.

⁹² I find it important to note that I do not think this tremulous time in our history was insignificant to the changing face of American culture; it was in fact very significant in the

ways we now imagine ourselves *able* to react to the confines of our culture and consumption. I will return to the significance of this imagined state latter.

⁹³ The Anorectic in her desire to be free of the external controls of culture and the body disciplines her body towards invisibility. But that invisibility is still hinged on the dominant culture she is withdrawing from. Her cause has no power if her invisibility is not recognized by the larger structure she is removing herself from. This becomes far more complex when we take into consideration American standards of beauty and the omnipresent cult of thinness. (I would argue this is why so many young girls are stricken so ill from this disease; what they are seeking is a sense of control and power over themselves and their surroundings that is simply not attainable by these means.)

⁹⁴ From the Beatles' White Album 1968.

⁹⁵ According to Stephen Fox 's *Mirror Makers*, revolution was in fact very good for capitalism. In the 1950's and 1960's ad firms grew rapidly. Mergers created worldwide agencies that billed over \$773 million annually, while creative up-starts raided the markets to the tune of \$100 million (218).

⁹⁶ Thomas suggests anti-advertising began in 1959 when Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB) launched their first Volkswagen ad.

⁹⁷ Proof of which comes clear in the mid-1970's when ads again returned to the conservative straight forward sell that was highly profitable in the 1950's.

⁹⁸ Volkswagen has not veered far from this course of advertising; they are still looking for 'drivers' in their 1998-2000 run of ads.

⁹⁹ Though this was central too, and encouraged through phenomenal credit expansion, deficit financing and income tax reductions.

¹⁰⁰ Virginia Slims carried the tag line 'You've Come A Long Way, Baby' for 19 years. In 2000, it was changed to read 'It's A Woman Thing'. By appropriating the language of Y2K youth (the Y generation) and the street, Philip Morris is able to keep their sales up in the sea of cigarette brands aimed at niche markets.

This consumption miracle tied an "image of unhinged superficiality to the most profound, deep structural values and promises of modernity; personal freedom, economic progress, civic dynamism and political democracy.... consumer culture was seen in terms of the freedoms of the market and therefore as the guarantor of both economic progress and individual freedom" (Slater 11).

for ever more tenuous accounts of how a world both so systemically stable and individually satisfying could be deemed *unsuccessful* by either intellectuals or ... revolutionary agents" (11).

agents" (11).

103 Preppie: prep school chic (wealth and class reflective of dress); Yuppie: young urban professional; DINK: double income, no kids.

professional; DINK: double income, no kids.

104 Until the early 1970's, logos on clothes were hidden from view on the inside of the collar. Small designer emblems did appear on the outside of shirts in the first half of the century, but were reserved for sportswear of the rich. In the late 1970's, the icons of the rich made their way to the street on the fronts of shirts worn by conservative parents and preppy kids. These logos served the same social function as keeping the price tags on; everyone knew what the wearer had paid for style. By the mid-1980's, the logo was transformed from an "ostentatious affectation to an active fashion accessory". The logo itself grew in size to meet its new importance, exploding from a "three-quarter-inch emblem into a chest-sized marquee. This process of logo inflation is still processing, and none is more bloated than Tommy Hilfiger, who has managed to pioneer a clothing style that transforms its faithful ... into walking, talking, life-sized Tommy dolls ..." (28).

105 Add to this list the endless run of junk bonds and Reaganomics.

¹⁰⁶ Faith Popcorn coined this period "cocooning" and then she designed and sold a chair to go with it.

107 According to the Association of National Advertisers, this translated into good news for the advertising industry, which saw spending increases in 1994 of 8.6% over 1993 and in 1997 of 18% (Klein 23).

108 It is online that the purest brands are being built: liberated from the real-world burdens of stores and product manufacturing, these brands are free to soar, less as the dissemination of

goods or services than as collective hallucinations" (Klein 22).

109 Nike began in the 1960's with running shoes and made it big in the 1970's with designer jogging shoes. However, when jogging lost its luster in the mid-1980's (and Reebok had already cornered the market on trendy aerobic shoes) Nike was left with products only a fading Yuppie could love. Rather than simply shift into another kind of sneaker, Knight decided that running shoes would become peripheral via a reincarnated Nike.

110 Not since Ben Hogan in the 1950's has there been a golf icon with even a fraction of Tiger's range appeal. From working class roots, Hogan gained sponsorship and rose to celebrity status. He was the first American 'Everyman' in the golf world. Tiger offers what Hogan could not, a dream of success (and profit) to kids of color, thus making him an incredibly marketable icon.

Tiger is defined as multi-ethnic; one wonders if this is post-modernism at work or simply Nike's marketing arm stretching to engulf all of us.

112 Branson acknowledges his debt to the Japanese concept of keiretsus (a network of linked corporations) in building his name around reputation rather than product.

Apple has been supplying us with computers that fit into our homes without transforming them into offices for the last few decades. The newest editions offered us colored computers named after fruit and CPUs that fit on a shelf next to the novels.

114 Starbucks creates a sort of nook feeling with its comfy chairs, earth tones and indirect lighting. And the smells of coffee are everywhere. You could always take the smell of Starbucks home in a bag of coffee beans, but now you can take the store itself home by buying Starbucks music and furnishings.

115 The Gap was able to subsume art into its branding campaign. In April of 1998, The Gap launched its Khakis campaign. They used counterculture figures, James Dean and Jack Kerouac, to sell their pants and that same year they also launch the Khakis Swing ads.

116 The power of this acceptability is doubled when we see Gap stores on every other corner. Combine this with Gap clothing adorning, and, at times, defining the icons of acceptability: (movie and TV stars: the most memorable example of which is Sharon Stone who wore Gap to the Oscars and told everyone).

¹¹⁷ Abercrombie & Fitch, J. Crew, Harry Rosen and Diesel have all shifted to a format where the 'players' interact in some kind of plot line or another (Klein 41).

No matter if those products are skin cleansers or the albums it moves with its music videos 119 His agent coined the term superbrand to describe him.

Chapter Five: Eyes Wide Shut

120 Kay Mussell, in her essay "The Social Construction of Reality and American Studies: Notes towards Consensus", explains that all social reality is precarious at best, a mere construction to stem the waves of chaos that surround us. Reality maintenance is what we do to 'obscure the precariousness" of our state; it is the reinstating of those things we 'know' as a culture in the everyday.

121 I think at this point we can understand consumption to be a metanarrative. Lyotard defines a metanarrative as a universal story, which organizes and justifies everyday practices. Metanarratives operate through inclusion and exclusion as homogenizing forces, marshalling heterogeneity into ordered realms, silencing and excluding other discourses and other voices in the name of universal principles and general goals.

122 The most visible examples of this in the new millennium are television shows in which Americans will sell parts or all of themselves for a million dollars, eight-year-old girls who dress like Brittany Spears in her new video "Not So Innocent" because they believe this is how girls perform, and the huge number of CD's (8.1 million in 2000) rap 'artists' like Eminem sell no matter who his hate is directed towards.

All of which reminds me of the questions I had as a kid about Sleeping Beauty's evil witch. Why did the witch have such an overwhelming need to be the 'fairest in the land'? And, why, when the mirror gave her answers she did not want to hear didn't she just break it, and release

herself from the battle that consumed her?

124 This power dynamic is the same as I have discussed in earlier chapters. Within this frame. an attempt at a power inversion fails because it simply reinstates the very focal point one is attempting to subvert. It is again the story of the anorectic who, in starving herself to regain control over her body, is in fact giving up any real power over it. In the advertising world, the journal Adbusters attempts to serve this function. It focuses on how ads affect our thinking. However, the journal itself costs \$5.95 an issue (and can be found in most large bookstores). The text of the journal reads very much like a 'magalog' full of its own branded image and ads

This 'choice' is now so sexually charged (ads invite us to smell, taste, handle, and devour products) that the mechanics of buying, choosing and spending have become completely eroticized. (Baudrillard 172)

126 Holland suggests Bataille's insights were so important that had he not existed Schizoanalysis would have had to invent them.

127 Anti-production as used by Deleuze-Guattari is to be understood as a distinct mode of guiltformation; what psychoanalysis is able to show in this connection is that the nuclear family imposes a modern form of guilt that is neither truly political nor economical in nature. Schizoanalysis concludes that the problems of contemporary society are not amenable to the kinds of solutions Marx and Nietzsche offer; by ending exploitation and alienation through socio-economic or politico-cultural change, alone. Both the libido and the "crushing of desire" by the nuclear family need to be taken into account as reciprocally corrective (rather as summative or complementary) (Holland 13).

128 This dynamic was played out in the film Blade Runner; a powerful and wealth man lives in isolation save for the non-living things he makes.

129 Sign values are socially constructed status markers that are appropriated and displayed in consumption.

130 The list of other functional items that can be read as status markers seems endless and includes homes, clothes, food and an education.

131 This understanding of ourselves is then transferred on to the car, which we then reflexively borrow on each time we are seen in or with our car. Thus, we are both presenting ourselves as and are understood to be a certain kind of person as a result of the particular car we drive.

132 There is something wild (in the untamed sense) about the image of a woman driving in a roadster, top down, hair blowing in the wind, passing others on the freeway. This is the image Mazda sells to women who buy the Miata. This is the image a woman must have of herself before she will choose such a car. She must imagine that she is this woman, or that she can be this woman, and that owning a Miata will move her into the lived performance of this imagined space.

133 With the exception of all those ads for Herbal Essence products, which depict the consumer/user washing in public as if it was a public erotic act, (perhaps because such a performance, bathing, is an erotic act) personal products do not give us queues to use them in public spaces.

134 Therefore both cleaner and more closely tied to the divine.

¹³⁵The mirror offers the unique opportunity to observe. Lacan argues the mirror offers us an opportunity to see difference. This difference is the key to our understandings of ourselves and the other. Consumption has played off the ways we interpret the images we see in the mirror.

It has trained us to look to the mirror to see ourselves 'as if' through others eyes. The power of this conditions us to expect the gaze of the other on us.

136 These types of ads almost always include the queue to look in the mirror.

137 The subject and its subjectivity are both created within and as a result of systems i.e.: Universities create students, and prisons create prisoners.

138 Braidotti's work on the subject here reads much like Kathy Ferguson's The Man Question, which was published in 1993 (Braidotti published in 1994). Her work offers us a definition that suggests a 'figuration' of subject and subjectivity; one that she feels "evokes or expresses ways out of the phallocentric vision". She begins (as do many other feminists) with a redefinition of the bodily roots of subjectivity. Arguing that embodiment goes "hand in hand with a radical rejection of essentialism," (the body, or the embodiment, of the subject is to be understood as neither biological nor a sociological category but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociologic ... (Nomadic Subjects, 4)). Braidotti works with the nomadic subject, defining it as existing on the axes of "differentiation such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and others intersect and interact with each other in the constitution of subjectivity." Which she says could also be "described as postmodern/industrial/colonial, depending on one's locations". For Braidotti, 'nomad' speaks to the simultaneous occurrence of many of these locations at once. The nomadism Braidotti employs is the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior. The nomadic subject is multiple in both self-perception and external engagement with the world. As Braidotti explains, "not all nomads are world travelers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat. It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling" (1-5). Braidotti suggests that we must rethink the foundations of subjectivity through a vision of the subject as an interface of will with desire:

It amounts to saying that what sustains the entire process of becoming-subject, is the will to know, the desire to say, the desire to speak, to think, and to represent. In the beginning there is only the *desire to*, which is also the manifestation of a latent knowledge about desire. Desire is that which, being the a priori condition for thinking is in excess of the thinking process itself (120).

139 Post-colonialists like Bhabha, Spivak share with feminists this same impulse to find new places for the subject to speak from. The articulations of postcolonial subjectivities are attempts to produce positive identities from which to speak which are neither faintly penciled in nor permanently etched in stone. It is the search for a 'partial identification' that can function as a source of personal and political agency. This new hybrid postcolonial subject is found in 'in-between' domains of difference like race, class and gender, and insures that the process of working through transition is never-ending.

140 The film Anywhere But Here offers a wonderful example of how a status symbol functions

The film Anywhere But Here offers a wonderful example of how a status symbol functions as a marker for self-understanding. The main character is a woman from a small town who has dreamed of great adventure and wealth in the big city. She understands herself to be a woman who needs a bigger pool than the one she was born into, and moves, with her teenage daughter in tow, to Beverly Hills. She cannot afford this life nor is she truly ready for it, but she does know that she needs the markers of it before she can actually live it. The marker she invests in is a gold Mercedes. This car is the key to her dream. It does not matter that she lives in a string of unfurnished apartments, the fact that she has this car changes how she sees herself in the world and how she believes the world sees her.

¹⁴¹ Constructed images must shift in American consumptive society because consumption is *dependent* on the constant shifting of status symbols. All these symbols are always in motion, always recreating meaning and reconstructing identity for their bearers.

¹⁴² Since then most major auto manufactures have put out a roadster.

¹⁴³The average American buys a new car every three years. As we know that cars have a much longer life span than this, it seems certain they are chasing an illusion with consumption.

144 I remember learning a version of this lesson at a very young age. Sitting with my father at age six, I was instructed in the importance of keeping my school clothes clean. His issue of the moment was that girls who wear dirty and tattered clothes are understood in a limited scope. He explained that if I did not keep my school clothes decent, (we had little extra money and the fact that I had both play clothes and school clothes ought to have been telling of how he wanted both of us to be perceived) people, other people I did not know, would exclude me from things I might want to do. I do not recall the whole conversation, but I do remember understanding that the way I looked and dressed would directly affect the ways people treated me. And while my father made it very clear this was my choice to make, he also told me that it would be foolish not to make the choice that bettered my chances in life.

¹⁴⁵ She suggests that many critics writing in the last three decades, including Marcus, Ewen, Orvell, Gaffman, and Schudson, understand themselves to be somewhat immune to the effects of consumerism and mass technology by virtue of the critical distance academia prides itself on. Schutzman believes, and I agree strongly, that one cannot study their way into an advertising-immune state (10-11).

¹⁴⁶ Certainly the late 1990's ads for soft drinks like Pepsi and Sprite would support her argument. She goes so far as to suggest that advertisers may even welcome (and profit from) our apparent awareness of their spin.

¹⁴⁷ The members of these demographics are targeted because of their deep pockets and fluid decision-making.

The Truth is actually the front name and advertising campaign funded by Big Tobacco. The tobacco companies are footing the bill as a provision of the 25-year, \$246 billion 1998 Master Settlement with 46 states. The settlement included the formation of The American Legacy Foundation (ALF), which oversees a five-year, \$1.5 billion budget pegged for public education regarding tobacco's adverse effects. The goal of the campaign is to reverse persuasive tobacco marketing efforts. Carla Bauman, a spokesperson for ALF and The Truth confirms that ALF will spend about \$185 million on The Truth this year.

The challenge for advertisers is to change public attitude about a product without actually selling a product to carry the new and improved attitude. *Ironminds*, "The Truth behind 'The Truth'", Stuart Wade, September 26, 2000.

¹⁵⁰ To see these ads and enter into the second stage of the campaign, you can go to www.thetruth.com.

151 Thomas Dumm speaks of this duality in *united states* pages 152-169.

152 In 1991, the American space program launched satellites that were used in conjunction with hand-held receivers on the earth's surface. This system could enable the user to know within a meter or two (sometimes within an inch or two) precisely where they were on the earth. The Navstar Global Positioning System was first heard about during Desert Storm and is now, among other things, being used to guide Americans to their destination. Most cars now can come equipped with this device (Dumm 152).

153 'Consumption-therapy', i.e., the exchange of confusion, depression and loneliness for the solid all-promising product.

¹⁵⁴ Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) was the first to realize that any 'ready-made' non-art object could be displayed as 'art' outside of its original context, use and meaning. His best known examples of this period, 'Bottlerack' (1914) and 'Urinal' (1917), were mass-(re)produced objects displayed as 'art'.

155 In this shift the very understanding of the word create is opened up. It is shifted from: to make from or out of nothing; in other words to be a new and original, to one that allows transformation or reordering to be understood as new and therefore original. A shift of this sort changed the understanding of original as well.

156 Reproduction had always been a part of art-as-study but until the modern age reproduction itself had never been considered anything more then forgery and certainly never neared the status of 'art'.

¹⁵⁷ Andy Warhol (1930-1987) transformed reproduction into art by transferring photo images to silk-screen. He depicted Marilyn Monroe after her suicide and Jackie Kennedy after JFK's assassination. Warhol turned aesthetics into antiaesthetics.

list destroyed. Examples of this can be found in music, film and most production art: there is no real sense of the original because the 'original' does not really exist, at best there is a master, but that is not even a true original in that it has been altered and recompiled in so many ways. I think this can also apply to the art of writing because of the use of computers. We no longer have the 'original' unedited version of anything. We cut and paste as we go. We move large pieces of the work with little effort, constantly reconfiguring the piece as we go. An 'original' seems hard to locate even in a completed piece.

159 Baudrillard argues Hyperrealism is the characteristic mode of Postmodernity.

¹⁶⁰ Baudrillard argues that we are in a time where we can no longer determine meaning, nor should we even desire to try.

¹⁶¹ Simon Patten wrote *The Consumption of Wealth* in 1892. He was considered one of the most important and outspoken apostles of industrial consumerism. He argued that the leap from 'scarcity' to 'abundance' demanded a break from the past. (Ewen , *Channels* 47-50). ¹⁶² Evidence can be found the ever mounting number of eating related disorders diagnosed each year as well as the growing number of books published on teen self-esteem and the lack thereof.

¹⁶³ Females, ages thirteen to forty-five, i.e., the child-bearing years, are taught in capitalist culture that their power lays in their ability to appear. John Berger argues this beautifully in Ways of Seeing.

Chapter Six: Turning Towards the Body

¹⁶⁴ Studies in the last five years have indicated that these eating disorders now start as early as age 7 or 8. For an excellent read on this and other diseases affecting young girls in America, see Mary Pipher's Reviving Ophelia and Joan Jacobs Brumberg's The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls.

165 Most of the ads are directed at this group, and they have been the receivers of a running stream of inadequacies correctable only through consumption. I see the kids coming of age in the 1990's as a mix of 'Generation Xer' and the 'Y Generation' (who have often been referred to as slackers and Y2Kers). In that body projects and generation periods do not cleanly fit into a decade, I am using the 1990's as a loose time frame, which includes kids from both of the above, named 'generations' and those lost in the gaps between the two periods. Some of those I interviewed will fall neatly into the 'X' or 'Y' groupings, but for the most part they are just kids who came of age (entered their 20s) in the culture of the 1990's.

¹⁶⁶ During the course of my study, I found many spaces where the body was used to speak the self(s). Those that drew my attention most were: native peoples and their use of the body to speak the self as un-owned, and the ways those in/owned by the military have used their bodies, as limited as that use can be, as a space to mark both their choice to be owned and the lost individualism that results from it.

167 The body, as a subject of legal analysis, did not appear until the early nineteenth century. In these early years, the body represents an individuated, human spirit that is the person inside it: a person who controls the body but is not identical to it. In the twentieth century, the body continues to be constructed in legal discourse, but now "coexists with other bodies that are represented in abstraction from their relations with others". Thus, leaving this modern body open to be legal understood as property, container, commodity and 'interest' (Hyde, 9).

¹⁶⁸ While we may be able to understand the body as ours to own, and, therefore, to do with as we please (to make or not make contracts for the exchange of labor etc.), it is only our property in this regard when read as a whole body. We can sell certain pre-approved parts of our body,

(blood, sperm, ova) but we cannot sell all of the parts of our body, including our spleen, liver, heart, kidney, and cornea (Hyde, 65-74).

¹⁶⁹ A child wanting to own him/herself (mind and body) before age eighteen must file for emancipation in a court of law. To be eligible for such a filing, the minor must fall into one or more of the following groupings: legally married prior to eighteen, out of parental home, employed and fully self-supporting, enrolled in the military.

¹⁷⁰ Those who are in the military are owned by the government. They sign over their service and *bodies* to their employer. By binding contract as subject to title 15 of military law, they cannot misuse their bodies which includes but is not limited to the following: injury outside work, body modification and even sunburn.

pay taxes. Beyond this our citizenship obligates us to behave in certain ways or suffer state-enforced punishment. These obligations extend beyond behaviors and into the body for males who are by law required to register for the draft at age eighteen or face fines of up to \$250,000 and up to three years in jail. Foucault, in the essay "Governmentalality", argues that the state of government is now defined by the mass of the population rather than by justice or administrative concerns. This sets the stage for citizens being owned by their governments. (see: Power: Essential works of Foucault 195-1984 Volume 3, 201-222)

¹⁷² This type of ownership extends to include married and/or pregnant women whose bodies are often understood as property owned by men, and into corporate ownership over the actions of 'owned/contracted' bodies in the case of professional athletes most of whom are bound by contract to abstain from certain activities, thus limiting their bodily freedoms. This same situation applies to actors under contract, in that their images are owned, by binding contract, they must abstain from certain kinds of work.

¹⁷³ Even as I write this, I fall into the duality of our languaging of it in explaining it.

¹⁷⁴ He reads the body through analyses of institutions such as the hospital, the mental asylum, the prison and the factory, structures he sees attempting to harness and exploit the body as raw material destine to be socialized into purposeful productivity. Foucault's understanding of the body builds out from Marx's argument that class is affected by the experiences and definitions of the body and that the body is "an instrument of power". He also sees the cultivation of the body as essential to the establishment of one's social role. He argues that the contemporary body is a paradox. It is both the empirical notion of the 'body at work', (the sum of its organic and therefore detachable parts) which is historically linked to the classical discourse on clinical anatomy, yet it remains the foundation of subjectivity, a libidinal surface that is the site of the construction of identity. For Foucault, the discourse of the body is the discourse of modernity, with the body rendered both unavoidable and unsolvable.

175 She reminds us that the body is not a biologically given field inscribed with sociosymbolic codes; rather it stands for the radical materiality of the subject. She draws our attention to the construction and manipulation of knowable bodies in our present social system and invites us to think about what 'new' bodies are being constructed. By asking what counts as human in a post-human world, she pushes the lines between technology and the body. She presents the cyborg as an epistemological model that breaks down the dualistic barriers between the body and its technological supports. By calling us to rethink the world, she is also asking us to begin to change the ways in which we produce knowledge. By asking us to imagine our future as cyborgs, she is asking us to create an affinity with, rather than attempt a mastery of, our new world

¹⁷⁶ Butler suggests that the subject is instituted via the inscription of meaning and power upon the never merely physical body. By troubling "sex" as she does, as one of the norms in accordance with which the body materializes, she draws our attention to the repetitive, performative condition of cultural viability.

¹⁷⁷ I would like to thank Tom Hawley for his help with Judith Butler. Without his help, I might still be wandering through *Bodies that Matter* in an attempt to locate Judith Butler's 'body'. Hawley, Thomas M. (2001) "Practices of Materialization: Bodies, Politics, and the

Search for American Soldiers Missing in Action in Vietnam." Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa.

¹⁷⁸ In that she has a need to "get down and dirty with the body" on the levels of its practices, her work looks at what we eat, or don't eat, the lengths we will go to keep ourselves young, and the practices we engage in under the heading of 'normal'. She is careful not to get lost in the reading of the body as "texts" without paying attention to the concrete contexts – social, political, cultural, practical – in which they are embedded.

Eagleton argument is built on the belief that postmodernism is the "result of a steady disintegration, a gradual failure of nerve" of the political left.

¹⁸⁰ Eagleton is worth considering here because there are times when all of us who spend time looking at the body-in-theory feel as if we have lost sight of the issues that weigh heavily on our everyday lives. However, the issues Eagleton accuses postmodernists of abandoning (questions of state, class, mode of production, economic justice) have not simply been exchanged for more 'intimate and sensuous' studies of the body; instead our focus on these issues has shifted to include the body (as intimate and sensuous as it is) in these institutionalized issues. The study of the body requires the body; (something it seems Eagleton is uncomfortable with) it requires that we engage with our work, if only because we are also bodies.

¹⁸¹ Study of the body is so much more than navel gazing; it is an attempt to explore these critical questions from a new vantage point, and thus produce meaningful change.

¹⁸² Slave owners often considered slaves no better than any other beast of burden and treated them in similar fashion.

¹⁸³ In this practice, the foot is tightly bound beginning at the age of six or seven and on through into adulthood. The lotus foot was used in the love-making process as an erotic fetish. While most common women did not have their feet bound, it was considered very necessary for prostitutes and concubines.

prostitutes and concubines.

184 Belting worked very much like tight lacing, in that it was a process by which the body was cinched in to create a desired shape. The real difference is belting cinched just the waist, while

tight lacing contorted the whole upper body.

¹⁸⁵ See Bordo (1993,1997), Pipher and Brumberg for more in-depth studies on how these and more specific signs are written into the body by commercial culture. Each explores many of the issues girls, and increasingly boys, are facing to understand themselves as acceptable within American culture.

¹⁸⁶ Bordo reminds us that the more a cultural practice is engaged in, "the more 'normal' it seems" and thus the less likely we are to be evaluative or critical in its direction. Which suggests that even the most bizarre cultural practice can become part of the taken-for-granted environment of our lives, as unremarkable, as invisible, as water is to a goldfish in a bowl (*Twilight* 16).

(Twilight 16).

187 For those who feel removing one's self from this grouping is a simple task, I ask you to consider the images you harbor around your own body. These images are constructs of our culture, and we live in a culture consumed by consumption.

¹⁸⁸ America was built on the cultural clash of ownership. Land ownership being the most painful and destructive. Evidence of this is clear when looking at the clashes between American/Western thought and native peoples. The former can only understand ownership as a marked-state, the later sees marked-ownership as a foreign concept; the result is lost land and culture for those who can not conceive of marking that which is shared as their own. But that is an entirely different paper.

¹⁸⁹ Take the very public example of the celebrity relationship: Tommy Lee and Pamela Anderson Lee who had each others names tattooed on like wedding rings, and Johnny Depp who had "Winona Forever" tattooed on his arm when he was involved with Rider and, most public of all Angelina Jolie and Billy Bob Thornton who had each others names writ large on each others bodies. (As a side note in the fall of each of these relationships the marked body is left as evidence of the relationship, evidence that does not simply go way when the publicity

shifts. These marks are forever, an aspect no doubt (at least in the moment of their marking) the wearer desired from the relationship. However, what these marked bodies are left with is a mark that no longer is in keeping with their reality. This seems to be a common pitfall for the marked body; the re-inscription of self(s) on to the body to readjust to the current reality: Anderson changed from "Tommy" to "Mommy" and Lee colored his marking in, Depp had his changed to "Wino forever", and the Jolie-Thornton relationship, on the brink of divorce in Aug. 2002 will be especially interesting to watch as their markings and their relationship were so public, which of them will be first to give back the blood and transform the ink. I am struck by how palimpsestic this re-inking is. The new marks must fill the spaces of the old, must rework the color and the shape in the same location with new meaning. The old, now merely hidden, is not gone, it bleeds through in memory and remains beneath the new narratives, silently shaping them.

¹⁹⁰ In a culture that prides itself on always being in transition, we also perform ownership in temporally marked ways. We wear the signs of ownership as the everyday. Wedding rings (primarily worn by women even in 2002) signify an ownership between partners and serve as a sign of the promise of fidelity. Clothing with corporate labels signifies an ownership for the company over the wearer, in that they serve as a sign to the self and others that the wearer identifies with the corporate images and expects to be responded to as such.

¹⁹¹ I have always wondered about the importance of this marking process. The importance we place on marking our ownership *into* something must come as a result of the power struggle ownership represents. We live in a culture that pronounces that possession is 9/10th of the law, which makes me keenly aware of how much we grab from each other. The reason I had to have my name on everything was the assumption that thieves were everywhere, even in kindergarten.

¹⁹² Before sunglasses were for non-celebrities.

193 Once in a class discussion on how much our bodies give away about us, a student asked if he could 'read' me. To my shock and embarrassment, he did a very accurate job, even down to the 'kind' of man I was attracted to. He explained each of his assessments based on what he saw by looking at how I performed myself in presentation and in class. He even knew which town I grew up in by the way I pronounced certain words and my choice not to use pidgin. It was a powerful example of how much our bodies tell others about us.

194 Geography plays a large role in our appearance and our health. Certain places create a greater likelihood of specific illness, while others (like Hawaii) are better for overall health.
195 Economics are written all over the body: everything from corrective surgeries for

Test because written all over the body: everything from corrective surgeries for deformities like clubfoot and harelips to orthodontic work. Economics even drives health issues; asthma is not often found in the upper-middle-class because when these children get a cough they are rushed to medical care. For those who do not have medical coverage or the means to pay doctors, a cough is treated with varying degrees of home-care, which leave these children more vulnerable to asthma as their lungs grow.

¹⁹⁶ Judith Butler argues for a subject that is constructed from within the matrix of culture and that has a flexibility and mobility as dynamically located as the culture itself. For Butler the subject is both linked to and created by the culture it resides within. Defined by its abject state, it functions as a part of the grammar of the whole. And, that it is this fluidity that gives it its power. This feminist notion of subjectivity is also political in that it intercedes in the power/knowledge nexus of order to reconstitute the subject in explicitly relational terms. For Butler, the question of subject/subjectivity dominance is mute in that both rely on and create the other.

¹⁹⁷ "The term 'schizophrenia' comes from Lacan's linguistic-existentialist version of psychoanalysis, where it designates a purely metonymic form of desire untrammeled by the metaphoric associations of equivalence and meaning imposed on desire by social and/or linguistic codes operating in the name of the father. These codes in effect rivet desire onto socially sanctioned objects. ... Deleuze-Guattari retain only the semiosis of Lacanian

schizophrenia, its definition as a spontaneous or unpredictable form of desire freed from social coding." Eugene Holland, "From Schizophrenia to Social Control" (65-66).

van Gogh's Sunflowers have one set of social codes when hung on a wall (be it in a museum in the original or in reproduction in a home) and yet another set of codes when under the skin of a twenty-something's body. The context of each of these spaces shifts the coded meaning the image carries and thus our socialized response to it.

From Holland: "whether they be artist, scientist, activists, or whatever..." to this grouping I

would add students and youth cultures.

²⁰⁰ Markings on the face are obvious exceptions to this, which explains the reluctance of many tattooists to do non-cosmetic facial tattooing. However, because piercing is considered less permanent (even though once a body is pierced, it is forever changed for both the subject within the body and body itself - the hole created by the piercing never fully closed leaving a small puncture scar) facial piercing creates less anxiety amongst piercing professionals. (Perhaps piercing professionals are simply more comfortable with the 'in your face' projection marking the face creates, and as a result, have fewer industry ethics to contend with.)

²⁰¹ In my interviews, the tension occurs with the first bodyplay only. It is in these moments before the ink or piercing needle touches the skin that the reality of the permanence sets in. If one moves past this, past the fear of how the body/person will be read from this point on, the fears of permanence dissipate. Thus, in thinking about the 'next' tattoo, this issue becomes a

non-issue in that the body has already been marked.

²⁰² Curry suggests that both practices permanently alter the individual and their relationship

with society.

²⁰³ Curry argues that piercings carry less permanence than tattoos because the jewelry used to hold the hole open is removable. I disagree with him here; piercings leave a permanent mark both on and in the body even after the jewelry has been removed. I would even suggest they carry a very different kind of permanence in that they enter the body. When piercings heal around the jewelry, they create internal scar tissue (albeit small) that remains in place even after the metal is removed, thus effectively holding the place of the piercing permanently. ²⁰⁴ For an opposite interpretation see Kim Chernin's The Tyranny of Thinness.

²⁰⁵ According to Todd Gitlin's The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage, jeans were picked up in the early 1960's by SNCC organizers in the south who were powerfully affected by

impoverished Blacks they met and worked with (163).

Chapter Seven: My Body, My Playground

²⁰⁶ Pile and Thrift Mapping the Subject: Geographies Of Cultural Transformation argue this

perspective on the subject is ethnocentric.

207 Pile and Thrift speak beautifully about the difficulty in locating one way of defining the subject in their text Mapping the Subject: In asking this question they have found remarkably little agreement among scholars, save that "the subject is a primary element of being and that the Cartesian notion of the subject as a unitary being made up of disparate parts, mind and body, which is universal, neutral and gender-free, is in error". The two understand the subject and subjectivity as closer to being conceived of as rooted in the spatial home of the body, and therefore situated, in the different discourses/persona that are united and orchestrated to a greater or lesser extent by narrative that is registered through a whole series of senses. What is clear is that, in recent work, what counts as subject and subjectivity is being extended. Most particularly, subjectivity is increasingly encompassing 'the object world', (as evidenced by actor-network theory, or the work of Haraway (1991) and Strathern (1992)). Allowing for a new 'anthropological matrix' in which the object world has its place, and in which old ideas of the subject and agency are replaced by 'variable geometry entities' that translate between and across categories rather than purify within them (Pile and Thrift 11).

²⁰⁸ This happens in both the split body/mind duality and in the holistic unified body/mind.

²⁰⁹ This was the approach taken with chronic fatigue patients for many years before the illness was 'discovered' to be an actual illness. It is now thought that chronic fatigue may be a virus, much like the flu, that depletes the body's immune system.

²¹⁰ Doctors before 1970 thought women who wanted implants after a mastectomy were vain and ego driven. They tended to discourage the operation, and insurance companies did not offer coverage for the procedure. Doctors now encourage women to have implants, and most major insurance companies will cover the costs. The current thought is that a 'natural' body is easier to live with than one marked by cancer so profoundly. However, the reality is implants are not natural, and a post-cancer patient recognizes the difference in her body (*The New Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1992) see Breast Cancer).

²¹¹ In my interviews, I tried not to direct the stories I was being told in any particular direction. I told people I was writing a book on body piercing and tattoos and that I was interested in their stories. Getting people to talk about their bodies was far easier then I imagined it would be; it seems everyone has a story about their bodies if you show a willingness to listen. I spent two years in the Hawaii canoe paddling community and saw lots of marked bodies; as soon as the nature of my project was widely known, people with stories to tell often came looking for me. I listened to a lot of stories in these years, but included only people who fit my study group in this project. I also interviewed many of my students at the University of Hawaii, I choose to look at University students both for their age and because most of those who attend University are moving towards indoctrination into middle-class values. I also traveled to the east coast to interview people in the hopes of balancing my study. Hawaii is so isolated that I wanted to make sure my conclusions resonated across the Pacific. I was very fortunate to have access to a University community in Tampa, Florida where I did several interviews. I also spent several weeks in New York City talking to people I met through friends. I believe each person I interviewed knew I was middle-class and educated. In the course of each interview, I disclosed that I had a navel ring and no tattoos. Often this engaged me in a conversion around my choice; I tried when I could to save my story for after they presented their own.

Among all the people I spoke to for this project, only one said he did it because his friends were all doing it. He was also the only one who wished he had not done it. Interestingly, he had not even attempted to have it changed or removed. It was a mark on his body that told a story, not his story, which he makes a point of in his telling, but someone else's mark, like a dog bite that scarred, that he just had learned to live with. (While I assume many more were also victims of peer pressure they did not narrate their marks in this way; thus their marks are

rendered narrations of self(s) rather then of others.)

²¹³ Interestingly, he chose only to focus on his Hawaiian ties. He told me, after I asked, that he had other ethnic ties. There were no signs of this past written into his body. He was reconstructing subjectivity to include only the Hawaiian.

²¹⁴ These are sentiments I heard echoed time and again by my study group. They all seem to really believe they could grow up to be President of the United States or at least senate minority whip someday. And, to that end, they do not want to mark their bodies out of the running.

²¹⁵ I have chosen the following sets of narratives to illustrate my point. Most of my interviews read in similar ways as those I have included here. Of the 150 interviews I conducted that fell into my study (the excluded stories were fighting a larger battle than my study group) most read in strikingly similar ways. They all included place, objective and transformation. I have chosen to include those interviews in their own words that best demonstrate these narratives. Where I do not directly quote my study group I am speaking in overview of the 150 voices who shared with me their stories.

²¹⁶ A good number of those I interviewed first marked their bodies just out of high school. Their narratives spoke of this as a marking of their transition from high school (an assumed state of childhood) into adulthood. For many it was a way to mark their independence. While this is a very nice fit for my project, I do not think we can completely over look that eighteen is the legal age one can get a tattoo or piercing without parental consent. This is also a time

when most of those I interviewed knew they would be leaving home (and parental rule) for college. Both, the legal age and the pseudo independence of school, are acceptable cultural points of transition. I believe many of these kids choose this time to mark their bodies for just this reason.

²¹⁷ In these instances I found the perceived difference between tattoos and piercings. Tattoos, for those I spoke to who had them, were forever. For this same group, piercings hold the possibility of return to normalcy. I heard over and over again, "you can take a piercing out". Which was often followed by 'if you are serious you get a tattoo'. Those who were pierced echoed a similar understanding, only a bit more generously. For them the choice to pierce was about the moment. They understood that these marks were in fact forever; a piercing hole never really closes, thus it never really goes away. But, they also understood that they were not looking to be marked with a sign that was so fixed. In these conversations it was clear those who pierced did so knowing the process would offer them growth and would in fact mark them permanently.

²¹⁸ This woman told me she often makes up stories when pushed to give an answer. I asked her if she chose a standard story each time, she told she did not, and that often she could not

remember what she told people from one meeting to the next.

²¹⁹ ThEnigma is a man who is in the process of getting the whole of his body tattooed as blue puzzle pieces. He is interviewed and featured often in tattoo magazines and has been featured in a number of more mainstream publications as well. I imagine much of his mainstream value is in the shock of seeing a man remade into a blue puzzle; as a media-friendly bonus, he also has a split tongue which is often stuck out and wiggling. ThEnigma falls outside of my study for obvious reasons, but is still a rather interesting character.

²²⁰ A number of the men I spoke to marked their body with this same intention; to keep home with them always. Interestingly, I did not speak to one woman who shared this same

sentiment.

²²¹ Cher and Denis Rodman can no longer shock us in this particular manner.

²²² Part of the Fresh Ink line: (www.hallmark.com) the card that offers congratulations "on your newly pierced part!" (The front cover of the card offers the giver the following options to choose from: eyebrow, ear, other ear, nose, lip, tongue, belly button, other), the card sells wherever Fresh Ink can be found for \$2.25.

²²³ In one instance I listened for an hour as a father talked to his daughter about the lasting effect of a tattoo, not in an effort to discourage her from having one, but in an effort to encourage her to choose one that really meant something to her. In this instance the father looked to be white and middle-class and in his early 40s, was not visibly marked himself and was dressed rather conservatively

²²⁴ All male, their piercings were in their ears (some high on the loop and others in the 'normal' lower spot) and one who had his tongue pierced. I mention this because only 10 years ago most up scale restaurants would not allow men to wear an earring while working.

225 See the local Borders Books or Barnes and Noble.

²²⁶ The University of Hawaii health center distributes the following: "Getting What You Want From Body Art" and Taking Care Of Body Piercing" both were produced by ETR Associates out of Santa Cruz, CA.

²²⁷ In every tattoo shop there is still a good deal of American flash (images that are mass produced on the skin of Americans from drawings that have been in circulation since the 1940s these often are of full figured women in sexy poses, swords in varying size and usage and seafaring images; all very masculine in tone) and a number of sexual explicit and violent images available for inking, however, in most shops now these are tucked away neatly in a corner or on a back wall blocked from the view of the door or window.

²²⁸ See Dennis Rodman's book, Bad As I Want To Be (1996) for more detail on his progression and then recall his MTV show (or the multitude of guest appearances he made) for his objectification. Rodman is a good example of the ways consumption culture can invite one to believe they have subjectivity and then snap it away just as quickly.

- Appiah, Anthony., ed. Early African-American Classics, New York: Bantam, 1990.
- Appignanesi, Richard and Chris Garratt, *Introducing Postmodernism*, New York: Totem Books, 1995.
- Atherton, Lewis. Main Street on the Middle Border, Bloomington: Indiana University P., 1984.
- Baritz, Loren. Servants of Power: A History of the Use of Social Science in American Industry, Westport: Greenwood P., 1960.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The System of Objects*. trans. James Benedict. London: Verso, 1996.
- ---, Selected Writings, Ed. Mark Poster, Stanford: Stanford U. P., 1988.
- ---, The Consumer Society: Myths And Structures, London, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998.
- ---, Simulacra and Simulation, trans. Sheila Glaser. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan P., 1994.
- Benson, Susan, Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940, Urbana: U. of Illinois P., 1986.
- .Berger, John. Ways of Seeing. London: Penguin Books, 1977.

- Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann. The Social Construction of Reality: A

 Treatise In The Sociology of Knowledge, Garden City: Doubleday

 1966.
- Berman, Ronald. Advertising and Social Change, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981.
- Bocock, Robert. Consumption. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Bordo, Susan. Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body, Berkeley: U. of California P., 1993.
- ---. Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.,

 Berkeley: U. of California P., 1997.
- Braidotti, Rosi. Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory. New York: Columbia U.P., 1994.
- Brain, Robert. The Decorated Body, New York: Harper & Row, 1979.
- Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. *The Body Project: an Intimate History of American Girls*, New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
- Bushman, Richard and Claudia Bushman. *Journal of American History* 74, 1988.
- Butler, Judith. Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex". New York: Routlegde, 1993.
- ---, The Psychic Life Of Power: Theories In Subjection, Stanford: Stanford U.
 P., 1997.
- de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. trans. Steven Rendall.

 Berkeley: U. of California P., 1984.

- Curry, David. "Decorating the Body Politic", New Formations, vol. 19, 69-82, London: Methuen, 1993.
- Drucker, Peter. Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines To Our Changing Society,
 New York, Harper & Row, 1969.
- Emmett, Boris and John Jeuck. Catalogues and Counters: A History of Sears,
 Roebuck and Company, Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1950.
- Ewen, Stuart. All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary

 Culture. New York: Basic, 1990.
- ---, Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American

 Consciousness. Minneapolis: U. Minnesota P., 1982.
- ---, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and Social Roots of the Consumer

 Culture. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.
- Featherstone, M. "The Body in Consumer Culture", *The Body. Social Process and Cultural Theory*. London: Sage, 1991.
- Filene, Edward. Successful Living in the Machine Age, New York: 1931.
- Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Vintage books, 1995.
- ---, Power: Essential Works of Foucault, Ed. James Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: New York P., 1994.
- Fox, Steven. The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and its Creators. New York: William Marrow and Company, 1984.

- Fox, Wightman and T. J. Jackson Lears, Ed. *The Culture of Consumption:*Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980, New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.
- Frank, Thomas. The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism, Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1997.
- Frith, Simon and Howard Horn. Art into Pop, London: Methuen, 1987.
- Galbraith, John Kenneth. New Industrial State, 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.
- Giddens, Anthony. Modernity and Self-Identiy: Self and Society in the Late

 Modern Age. Stanford: Stanford U. P., 1991.
- Gutman, Herbert. "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919", American Historical Review, 78, No. 3 1973.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs." Feminism/Postmordernism. ed.

 Linda Nicholson, New York: Routlegde, 1990.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn. Writing a Woman's Life, New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.
- Holland, Eugene. Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction To Schizoanalysis, London: Routledge, 1999.
- Hoffman, Abbie. Steal This Book, New York: Grove Press, 1971.
- Hyde, Alan. Bodies of Law, New Jersey: Princeton U. P., 1997.
- Interesting memoirs and documents relating to America Slavery and the Glorious Struggle Now Making For Complete Emancipation,

 Mnemosyne: Miami, 1969 (originally published in 1846).

- Jacobs, Alan. "Conversations with Gratowski, Processing: chapter 8", *Idea: A Journal Of Social Issues*, ideajournal.com. (2001)
- Jacobus, Lee A. The Bedford Introduction to Drama, New York: St. Martin's P., 1989.
- Jenkins, Emily. *Tongue First: Adventures in Physical Culture*, New York: Owl Book, 1998.
- Jordan, Winthrop. The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States, London: Oxford U. P., 1974.
- Lasch, Christopher. Culture of Narcissism: American life in an age of diminishing expectations, New York: Warner Books, 1979.
- Lears, Jackson, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920, New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.
- --- Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America, New York: Basic Books, 1994.
- Leiss, William. The Limits to Satisfaction, an essay on the problem of needs and commodities, Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto P., 1976.
- Lewis, R.W.B. The American Adam: Innocence Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century, Chicago: U of Chicago P., 1955.
- Lipsitz, George. Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular

 Culture, Minneapolis: U. of Minnesoda P., 1991.
- Locke, John. Second Treatise of Government, ed. Thomas P. Peardon, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational P., 1952.
- Lyon, Leverett S. Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 1, 1922.

- Mairs, Nancy. Voice Lessons: On Becoming a (Women) Writer. Boston:

 Beacon P., 1994.
- Marchand, Roland. Advertising the American Dream: Making Way For Modernity, 1920-1940, Berkeley: U. of California P., 1985.
- Marcuse, Herbert. One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of

 Advanced Industrial Society. Boston: Beacon P., 1968.
- Marx, Carl. Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One, trans.

 Ben Fowkes, New York: Vintage Books, 1977.
- Mascia-Lees, Frances, and Patricia Sharpe, ed. *Tattoo, Torture, Mutilation,*and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body In Culture and Text.

 New York: State U. New York P., 1992.
- McCluhan, Marshall, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- Norris, James, Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920, New York: Greenwood P. 1990.
- Nystrom, Paul, *Economic Principles of Consumption*, New York: Ronald P. Company, 1929.
- Park, Robert, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922.
- Pipher, Mary. Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls, New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.
- Pope, Daniel. *The Making of Modern Advertsting*, New York: Basic Books, 1983.

- Printers' Ink: A Journal for Advertisers, Fifty Years: 1880-1938. New York: 1938.
- Sarup, Madan. ed. Tasneem Raja. *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World*. Athens: U. Georgia P., 1996.
- Schutzman, Mady. The Real Thing: Performance, Hysteria & Advertising,
 London: Hanover, 1999.
- Searle, John. *The Construction of Social Reality*, New York: Free Press, 1995.
- Slater, Don. Consumer Culture and Modernity Oxford: Polity Press, 1997.
- Stanfield, Ron. Economic Thought and Social Change Carbondale: Southern Illinois U. P., 1979.
- Strasser, Susan. Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market, New York: Pantheon Books, 1989.
- Story, John. ed. What is Cultural Studies: A Reader. London: Arnold, 1996.
- Strummer J. and M. Jones. "Lost in the Supermarket", recorded by The Clash, London Calling, New York: CBS Epic Records, 1979.
- Tadman, Michael. Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South, Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1989.
- The Social Contact: Essays by Locke, Hume and Rousseau. introduction by Ernest Barker. Westport: Green P. 1980.
- Trachtenberg, Peter. Seven Tattoos: a Memoir in the Flesh, New York:

 Penguin Books, 1997.