

Gendered Bodies-Politicised Bodies

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*I'm a man / I'm a goddess
I'm a man / I'm a hooker
I'm a man / I'm a blue movie
I'm a man / I'm a slut
I'm a man / I'm a geisha
I'm a man / I'm a babe
I'm a man / I'm a dream divine*

(Berlin duet, 1982)



Producing Meanings in Society and Culture

tripartite influence

Parents – Peers - Media

Binary Oppositions/Codes

Binary Codes produce meaning

Black:White

Young:Old

Good:Bad

Male:Female

Binary Oppositions/Codes

This is an analytic category from **structuralism** - it is used to show how meanings can be generated out of two term systems. There are 3 basic propositions

1. *meaning is generated by opposition*
2. *Ambiguities are produced by binary logic and are an offence to it.*
3. *Binary oppositions are structurally related to one another.*

Binary Oppositions/Codes

1. meaning is generated by opposition

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Remember *meaning is generated by opposition* is a tenet of Saussurian linguistics - where signs or words mean what they do only in opposition to others - their precise characteristic is in being what the others are not.

The *binary* opposition is the most extreme form of significant difference possible. In a binary system there are only two signs or words.

a. So in the opposition LAND:SEA the terms are mutually exclusive, and yet they form a complete system. (the earth's surface)

b. Similarly, the opposition CHILD:ADULT is a binary system. The terms are mutually exclusive but taken together they include everyone on earth. Everyone can be understood as either child or adult. Of course everyone can be understood by means of other binaries as well.

c. For example in the binary US:THEM - everyone is either in or not in 'our nation'.

Binary Oppositions/Codes

Such binaries are a feature of **culture** not **nature**; they are products of signifying systems, and function to structure our perceptions of the natural and social world into order and meaning. You may find binaries underlying the stories of newspapers and television news, where they separate out, for example, the parties involved in a conflict or dispute, and render them into meaning full oppositions.

Binary Oppositions/Codes

2. *Ambiguities are produced by binary logic and are an offence to it.*

Consider the binaries mentioned so far.

LAND:SEA

CHILD:ADULT

US:THEM

These stark oppositions actively suppress ambiguities or overlaps between opposed categories. In between LAND and SEA is an *ambiguous category*, the BEACH - sometimes land, sometimes sea. It is simultaneously both one and the other and neither one nor the other.

Similarly, in between CHILD and ADULT there is another ambiguous category: YOUTH. And in between US and THEM there are **deviants**, dissidents and so on.

Binary Oppositions/Codes

The area of overlap shown in the diagram is - according to binary logic - impossible. It is literally a scandalous category that ought not to exist. In anthropological terms, the ambiguous boundary between two recognised categories is where taboo can be expected. That is, an activity or state that does not fit the binary opposition will be subjected to repression or **ritual**. For example, Anthropologist Edmund Leach suggests the MARRIED state and the SINGLE state are binarily opposed. They are normal, time bound, central to **experience** and secular. But the transition from one state to the other (getting married/divorced) is a *rite of passage* between categories. It is abnormal, out of time, and the edge of experience and in anthropological terms *sacred*. The structural ambiguity of youth is one reason why it is treated in the media as a scandalous category - it too is a rite of passage and is subjected to both repression and ritual.

Binary Oppositions/Codes

News often structures the world into binarily opposed categories (US:THEM). But it then faces the problem of dealing with people and events that don't fit neatly into the categories. The structural ambiguity of home-grown oppositional groups and people offends the consensual category of US, but cannot always be identified with foreigners or THEM. In such cases, they are often represented as folk-devils, or as sick, deviant or mad - they are tabooed.

Binary Oppositions/Codes

3 Binary oppositions are structurally related to one another.

Binaries function to *order* meanings, and you may find *transformations* of one underlying binary running through a story. For instance, the binary MASCULINITY:FEMININITY may be transformed within a story into a number of other terms.

MASCULINITY:FEMININITY
 OUTDOORS:INDOORS
 PUBLIC:PRIVATE
 SOCIAL:PERSONAL
 PRODUCTION:CONSUMPTION
 MEN:WOMEN

Binary Oppositions/Codes

First, masculinity and femininity are proposed as opposites, mutually exclusive. This immediately constructs ambiguous or 'scandalous' category of overlap that will be tabooed. Then, the binaries can be read downwards as well as across, which proposed, for instance, that men are to women as production is to consumption, or

MEN:WOMEN::PRODUCTION:CONSUMPTION.

Each of the terms on one side is invested with the qualities of the others on that side. As you can see, this feature of binaries is highly productive of **ideological** meanings - there is nothing natural about them, but the logic of the binary is hard to escape.

In the United States, when we hear the word 'race,' people generally think of African Americans,
When people hear 'sexual orientation,' they tend to think that means homosexual, gay, or lesbian.

When people hear 'gender,' they think of women.

In each, the dominate culture is left out of the equation. This is one way that dominant systems maintain themselves in that they are rarely challenged to think about their own dominance.

This is one of the key characteristics of power and privilege and why the dominant culture has ability to go unexamined and remain invisible.

Jackson Katz

In binaries there is a power code at work and
there is a dominant and sub group in each
relationship

Sexuality – Hetrosexual:Homosexual

Race – White:People of colour

Gender – Male : Female

The dominant group remains unexamined

The dominant group generates blindness

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WHAT bodies?

- REGULATED BODIES
- MODIFIED BODIES
- POLICED BODIES
- SICK BODIES

- Psychology of the Body
- Sociology of the Body
- Politicisation of the Body
- History of the Body
- Historical framework for theorising around the Body

Turner B. 1996 Intro chapter: The Embodiment of Social Theory in *The Body and Society*, Sage: London

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE FEMALE BODY

American Teenagers watch 31 hours TV a week
3 hours a week watching movies
17 hours listening to music
4 hours reading magazines
10 hours online

**10 hours and 45 mins of media consumption
every DAY**

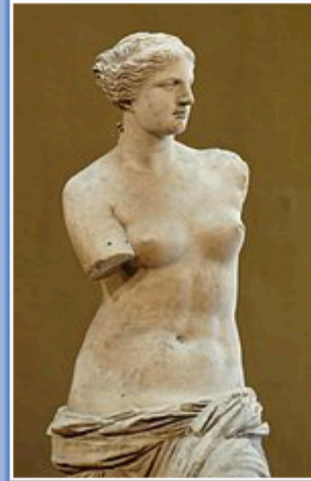
Miss Representation 2014

- The media is the message and the messenger
- We learn more from the Media than any other source in our lives – it shapes our discourses lives and emptions
- **Boys and girls get the same message - women are valued for how they look**

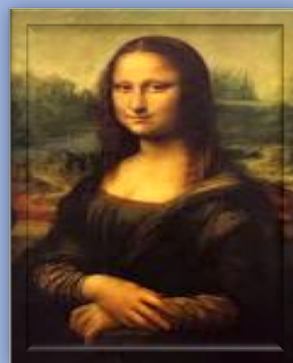
Pre-historic woman Goddess of Fertility



Ancient Rome & Ancient Greece



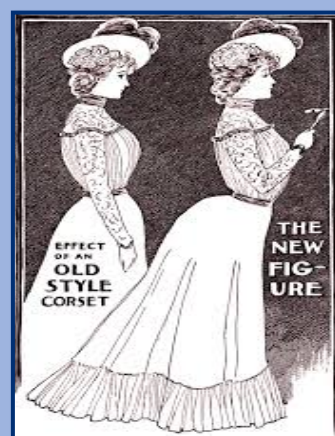
Elizabethan England and the Renaissance





Peter Paul Rubens

The 18th and 19th Century



THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY



MID 20TH CENTURY



Late 20th Century



A LOOK AT HOW BODIES CHANGED THROUGHOUT THE AGES...



Body 'enhancers' ?



**WORDS CAN BE
MEAN...**



the male gaze

Women being watched ...
Women being objectified ...

To be born a woman has to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women is developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. And so she comes to consider the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman. She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another....One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object — and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.

women being watched ...

“men look at women; women watch themselves being looked at”

Berger 1972:47

Women come to learn to view themselves and other women through the ‘male gaze’.

“Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of women in herself male: the surveyed male. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a site.”

(Berger 1972:47)

The Beauty Myth and the 'ideal' body

The 'ideal' body - which is internalized by women - is directly responsible for much anxiety and lowering of self-esteem among women.

It produces self-hate, guilt (connected with having failed, not tried hard enough) and insecurity, when it is not fulfilled.

Wolf N. 1990





Binary Codes and Binary Logic

the binaries that shape the body

masculine:feminine:

strong:weak

active:passive

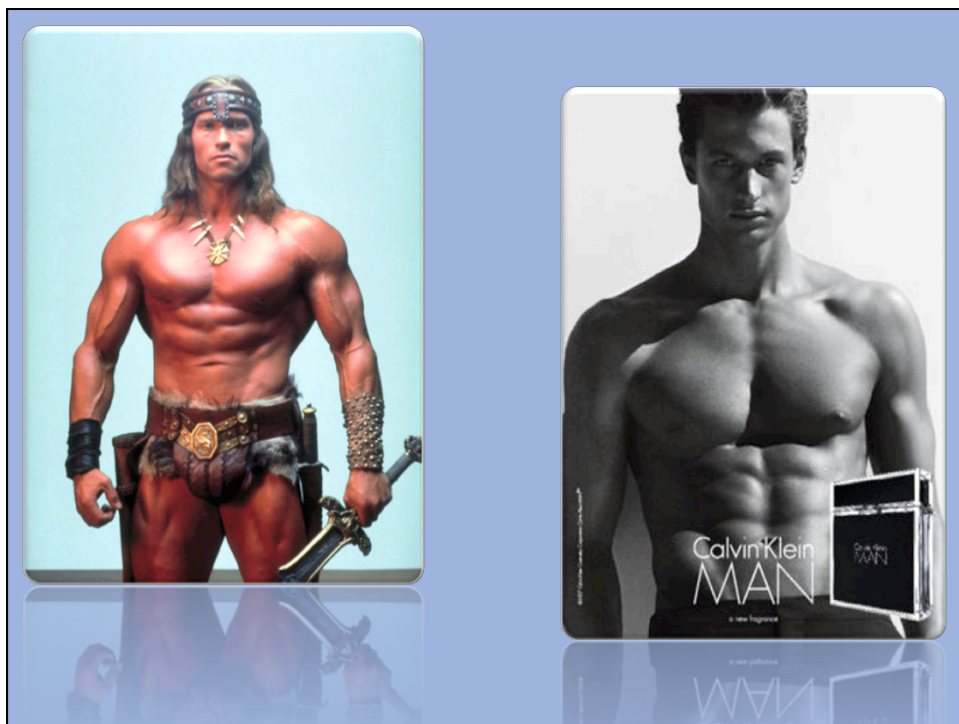
big:small

women being objectified ...

- objectification
- dismemberment
- the obsession with thinness
- infantilisation of women
- sexualisation of young girls
- silencing women
- ageism in advertising
- normalisation of violence against women

Women taking up **less** symbolic space
Men taking up **more**





Masculinity - Upping the ante

- `<iframe width="420" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/uOIIUQehzDI" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>`

The Good Body, 2004 by Eve Ensler (The Vagina Monologues).

In her play, *The Good Body*, Ensler sends a powerful message urging individuals to stop hating their bodies and encourages us all to challenge society's narrow definition of beauty.

In one particularly moving scene, Eve visits with a wise Masai woman in Kenya who is perplexed by Eve's own dissatisfaction with her body. As she looks at the African landscape she says to Eve:

excerpt from The Good Body, 2004

*“Eve, look at that tree? Do you see that tree?
Now, look at that tree (pointing to another one).
Do you like that tree? Do you hate that tree
'cause it doesn't look like that tree? Do you say
that tree isn't pretty cause it doesn't look like
that tree? We're all trees. You're a tree. I'm a
tree. You've got to love your body, Eve. You've
got to love your tree.”*



