

3

BAD GIRLS SELL WELL:
THE COMMODIFICATION OF
EVE IN POSTFEMINIST CONSUMERISM

That bad girl power I got, I'll abuse it tonight
Cause tonight got poison on my mind
That power I got, you'll be mine when I stay till real late
Got poison on my mind
I got that poison, I got that poison
I got that poison, that poison on my mind
I got that poison, that poison, that poison
I'll make you fall in love with me

—Nicole Scherzinger, *Poison* (2010)

You think I'm sexy, huh?
I'm international
Think you can make me fall?
What do you know?
I'm in my Louis Vuitton's,
Flyin' like a bomb,
And I'll be ducking calls 'til I go home

Girls bring the fun of life,
Sugar like apple pie,
Take a trip to paradise,
Let's have a party, y'all!
Beauty like you never saw,
Take your number, never call,
Bite the apple, take your heart,
Let's have a party, y'all!!

—Sugababes, *About a Girl* (2009)

She a bad girl, a real shopaholic,
She buying everything up man I can't call it,
And she a walking store, I'm talking 'bout her clothes,
I just pause, I'm in awe, cuz she a fashion show,
Real Louis bags and breathe Gucci,
Got a wardrobe like she's starring in a movie,

And she ain't even famous but she got her own groupies,
She got her own groupies,
She got her own groupies,
What a bad little girl I am (I got a problem)
What a bad little girl I am (I need you to solve it)
What a bad little girl I am
bad bad bad bad bad

—Rihanna (feat. Chris Brown), *Bad Girl* (2009)

Of the hundreds of advertisements I have examined in my extensive research on Eve imagery, the majority are of Eve alone, followed closely by images that show Adam and Eve together. In contrast, Adam appears alone in only about half a dozen advertisements.¹ This situation reflects the status of woman as sex object in popular culture and also the post-feminist social climate in which the images are produced. It also reflects the status of the woman in the biblical text. For me, as for popular culture and for so many interpreters over the centuries, Eve is the star of the story. So much narrative space is given to her in the so-called temptation scene in Gen. 3.1-7 that a visual depiction of this scene would tend to focus on Eve. In the biblical text Adam appears only at the end of the scene. Genesis 3 begins by introducing the serpent, who in v. 1 speaks to the woman. In vv. 2-5 the serpent and the woman discuss God's command not to eat the fruit of the tree, God's motive and the possible consequences of eating. In v. 6 the woman considers the possibilities: the tree is good for food, is pleasing to look at and is desirable to make one wise. So she takes some of its fruit and eats it. Up to this point there is no indication that the man is present, but the remainder of v. 6, 'and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate', is crucial for a proper understanding of the biblical story, for it makes clear that both the man and the woman are present at the temptation scene and that the man raises no objections to the woman's decision to eat of the fruit. Her disobedience to God's command is active whereas his is passive.²

For centuries Eve has been blamed and condemned for leading Adam into temptation, and recent feminist biblical criticism has done little, if anything, to redeem her image outside the guild of biblical studies.³ That

1. In the course of my research I have compiled a database of popular cultural images of Adam and Eve, in which 1027 of the images are of Eve and only 6 of them depict Adam alone.

2. Thus one of the consequences of their action is that the active sinner is made subordinate to the passive sinner (v. 16).

3. See, e.g., Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp. 72-143; Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender'; Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, pp. 72-121; Phyllis A. Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender*

Eve is to be blamed for the so-called fall of humanity is, in my view, not just a figment of the popular cultural imagination. She is blamed and condemned in the text too. She is the one who consciously and actively disobeys the divine command. She plays the stronger role. She is the first to take the fruit and eat it. She gave the fruit to her husband who simply eats. And, most damaging for Tribble's argument that both the man and the woman are equally guilty in transgression,⁴ is Gen. 3.17, where God says to the man, 'because you obeyed your wife and ate from the tree, which I commanded you saying "you shall not eat of it", cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life'.⁵ Indeed one would not expect an androcentric text produced by a patriarchal society to champion the cause of women. Even though the woman in Gen. 3.1-6 has a stronger role, this text teaches a lesson about the danger of allowing women to think for themselves and make decisions. The consequences are disastrous, and thus convey to the reader the idea that women should be subordinate to their husbands. Indeed, the subordination of the woman to the man is precisely the situation that Eve's punishment achieves: 'your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you'.

Advertising makes explicit what is implicit in the text: Adam allowed himself to be led astray by Eve. Thus women have power, the power to lead men into temptation, as well as the power to make decisions for themselves, regardless of the consequences. Where does this mysterious female power lie? For advertisers the answer is in female sexuality, and here one can argue that they are picking up on hints in the biblical text. In advertisement Adam is a passive character who plays a minor role in the temptation scene, just as he does in the text. Popular cultural interpretations frequently play on Adam's inability to resist his sexual desire for Eve when she offers him the forbidden fruit.

In advertising, offering the forbidden fruit, an apple, is a metaphor for offering the woman's body. In the Bible too there is a connection between fruit and female sexuality.⁶ A naked woman offers a naked man fruit that opens the eyes so that they know they are naked. Knowledge in

in *Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), pp. 123-93. More recent readings have been critical of claims made for gender equality in Gen. 2-3 by early feminist interpreters; see, e.g., Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?*, pp. 25-48; Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power and Promise*, pp. 22-38; Milne, 'The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture'; and Lanser, '(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden'.

4. Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 114.

5. For this translation of *shema' beqol*, see p. 25 n. 29 above.

6. See above, p. 33.

The text warns against women's power + influence

o + power lies in her sexuality

such a context could be seen as an allusion to sexual intercourse.⁷ In the biblical text Eve is primarily connected to the body whereas Adam is brought from the ground. Eve is brought forth from Adam's body:

This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called woman
because from man she was taken (Gen. 2.23).

Eve's punishment in the text is connected to her sexuality. She has to endure painful childbirth and she will desire her dominating husband sexually. In the biblical text, as in advertising, female sexuality is threatening. The biblical text tries to control it by blaming the woman and then having her ruled by her husband. Advertising also tries to control female sexuality, as well as to harness it and exploit it. The same danger and threat portrayed in the biblical text are present in advertising images of Eve: women are blamed for male desire, and for leading men astray. In the text, although the consequences of Adam and Eve's transgression are not all negative, woman must still be controlled. Although advertising celebrates Eve's transgression and her sexuality, it also, insidiously, controls women by defining for them a particular role. It tells women that their most important attribute is their sexuality. In order to have status and acquire wealth and power, a woman must be both attractive to men and more attractive than other women. Advertising purports to be empowering women with a female-defined sexuality but in reality male interests are so deeply embedded in culture that it would be difficult for women to create subjective representations of their sexuality without seeing themselves through male eyes. Margaret Miles comments:

The female body which has played such a central historical role in the circulation of meaning in the Christian West is perhaps too assimilated to the male gaze to permit inscription with new meaning, with a female-defined sexuality and subjectivity. Female nakedness is, after all, at least as vigorously appropriated to the male gaze in the twentieth century media culture as it ever was.

Instead of offering women new or alternative ways of viewing themselves, advertising rehashes old images and old stereotypes. It changes only the blurb. While female sexuality, as defined by Eve in postfeminist advertising images, remains sexuality defined by androcentric concerns, the

7. The verb *yada'* is a term for sexual intercourse; see Brown, Driver and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 394a; and the D.J.A. Clines (ed.), *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (8 vols.; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993-2011), IV, p. 100b.

The postfeminist female is defined as attractive to men

advertisers have a different agenda from that of the biblical text, with its concern to preserve patriarchal hierarchy. Where the Bible is concerned with keeping women in their place, advertising is concerned with making money. The representations of Adam in advertising merely underscore the importance of sexuality in the images of Eve. They are the exceptions that prove the rule, and the fact that a male naked body can mean something so different from a female naked body is testament to the deeply embedded gender stereotypes prevalent in popular culture and, I would argue, rooted in the biblical text.

The Serpent Beguiled Me and I Ate

In postfeminist advertising, the male domination of old is overthrown in favour of women taking control of the representation of their sexuality and using it for their own financial and social gain. The more attractive a woman is, the more successful and powerful she is; however, this state of success and empowerment can only be achieved by women through consumption of commodity goods. Women can only become, and remain, sexually attractive by buying perfume, wearing the right clothing, the right make-up, the right underwear. This active self-commodification and objectification, the advertisements suggest, will increase women's social status and economic power, a point made by sociologist Robert Goldman in his book, *Reading Ads Socially*:

Her appearance is her value, and her avenue to accumulating capital. Ironically, men once dominated women on the basis of proprietary claims made on the body of woman; today, male domination gets reproduced on the basis of women acquiring proprietary control over their own bodies—or, over the appearances given off by their bodies.⁸

It is not enough to be sexually attractive, however. To achieve financial and social success a woman must be more sexually attractive than other women, she must participate in a competition to attract the gaze and hold it. This competition inevitably means that women become more isolated from each other, losing their collective political power, because every other woman is a threat to the power achieved through self-commodification. Power achieved through self-commodification of sexuality must continually be pursued, it is a never-ending task. Therefore, images of Eve as postfeminist icon are as much about female envy as they are about female sexual power. Female power, according to these adverts, can only come about through desirable sexuality and desirable

8. Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, p. 123.

women reproduce
male control
by controlling
themselves

competition
over f. →
solidarity

sexuality can only come about through consumerism. In Eve images, as in all postfeminist advertising images targeted to the female market sector, power and success can only be achieved through consumerism. In short, in postfeminist popular culture, consumerism is power. The downside of this female empowerment through (hetero)sexuality is that it is an expensive and time-consuming task. Women must fight to achieve status through sexuality, continually measuring themselves against other women, continually updating the latest fashion, the latest make-up, the latest skin-care or exercise regime, continually striving to become more sexually attractive, continually consuming to become a more profitable commodity.

Since postfeminist advertising is concerned primarily with social status, power and female sexual and financial independence, many Eve advertisements feature a female celebrity playing the role of Eve. These celebrities exemplify the very concept that postfeminist advertising is trying to sell: female sexuality is the route to increased wealth, power and status. For instance, one of the highest paid models in the world, Naomi Campbell, takes the role of Eve in the 2005 Ford StreetKa advert (Fig. 3.0):

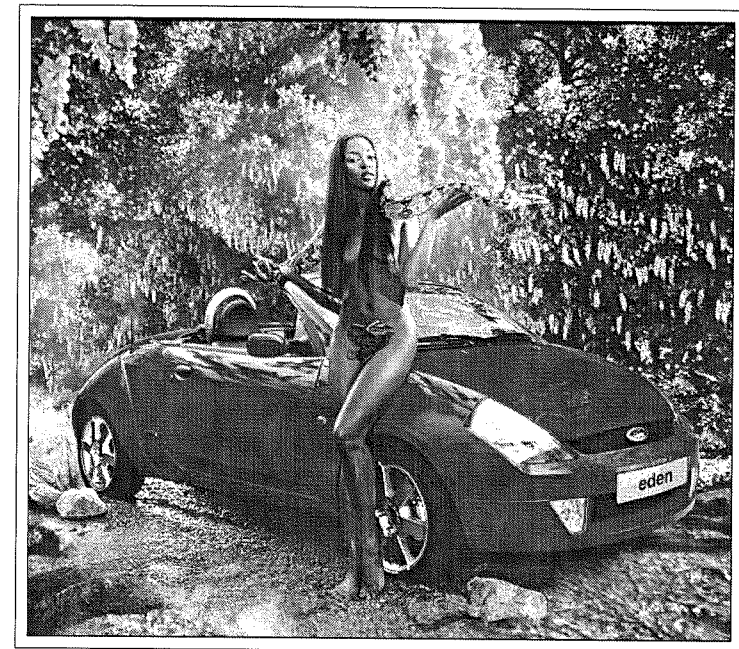


Figure 3.0. Print Advertisement for the Ford StreetKa Roadster, 2005

FF in postfem can't quite shake the bad
image - part of a f.'s success w her
badness + danger => sexuality is
still stigmatized

This advertisement shows Campbell in a Garden of Eden setting, standing in front of a red open-top Ford StreetKa Roadster. The by-line to the image is 'The Sinful New Roadster'. Campbell wears only a fig-leaf, and long hair extensions obscure her breasts from view. She is holding a snake around her neck, and she looks directly into the camera, fixing the viewer's gaze with her own.

Campbell, one of the original supermodels, was chosen for the StreetKa advertising campaign after Ford's marketing research showed that the target consumers (again the 18–34 females) for their new soft-top roadster thought the most attractive temptress of our time was Naomi Campbell. Well-known in the media for being both beautiful and confrontational,⁹ Campbell has a reputation for being a diva—a highly paid, successful female celebrity who is prone to being very difficult and demanding. The connection of the Ford StreetKa Roadster with the concept of temptation, which is connoted by the Garden of Eden set, and the choice of Campbell to model as Eve, the most desirable female celebrity to most young women consumers, suggests to those consumers that the car is as desirable as Campbell. Campbell, the advert suggests, would not only be the kind of woman to drive this car, beautiful, successful, wealthy, sexually desirable, feisty, but she finds the car incredibly desirable. The car is positioned as the apple in the image; both Campbell and the StreetKa Roadster are objects of temptation but the car is even more tempting than the ultimate contemporary temptress herself. The consumer is positioned as Adam and Campbell is simultaneously tempting us with herself (both her legendary body and her persona) and with the StreetKa 'apple'. 'If you drive this, you will appear as desirable and successful as Campbell', the advert suggests. The ordinary young women who are the target consumers of this car are not supermodels, they are unlikely to be wealthy,¹⁰ but they would want to be seen as sexually desirable, feisty and successful. The advertisement tells them that buying this car will allow them to achieve their aspirations.

Two advertisements illustrate a further technique to link the woman in Eve advertisements with the poison of the apple or the appeal of the serpent. By matching the shade of the serpent (Fig. 3.1) or the apple

9. Campbell had been ordered to attend anger-management classes by a judge after an employee had taken her to court for allegedly verbally abusing and hitting her. This was before Campbell was ordered to do community service for attacking another employee in a different court case.

10. The car was designed for 18–24 year olds and is in the lowest price bracket for a new car, and even though this would still be too much for the target group, it could certainly be bought one by their parents as their first car.

(Fig. 3.2), with the symbolic red lips of Eve, the connection between female sexual anatomy and the forbidden fruit or the 'evil' serpent is made clear. In the advertisement for the Boucheron fragrance *Trouble* the effect is emphasized further by the cropping of the woman so that her lips are the main feature of the image. This emphasizes the lips of the woman and results in the image not representing an individual woman but representing the dangerous sexual qualities of women in general.

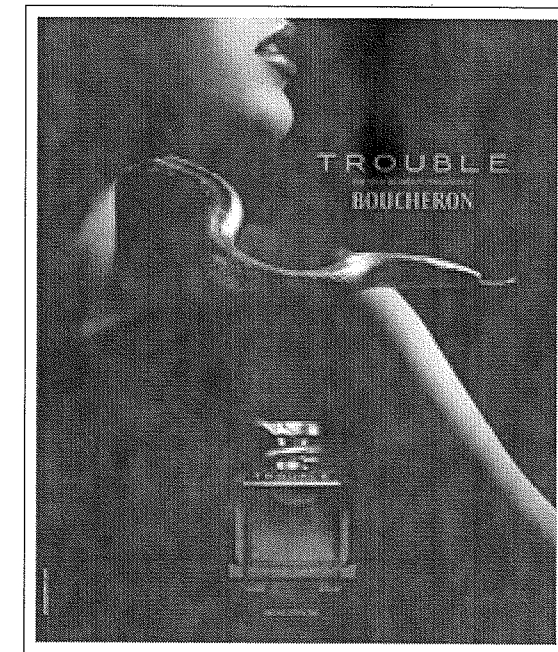


Figure 3.1. Print advertisement for Boucheron *Trouble* Perfume, 2002

In Figure 3.1 the serpent and the perfume bottle are matched perfectly with the woman's parted lips. The shared colour of the woman's mouth, the serpent and the perfume bottle creates a link between the snake in the Garden of Eden story and woman's sexuality, equating that sexuality with 'trouble'. In the image, Eve is truly a troublesome helpmate. However, the cropping of the woman's face, while enhancing the lips, dehumanizes the woman and removes her ability to confer the idea that she has power to the viewer via her look. In postfeminist Eve images, the concept of power—achieved through self-objectification and being sexually desirable to the consumer—is conveyed through Eve's return of the male gaze. In the Boucheron advertisement, Eve is prevented from conveying power because her eyes are cropped. She is rendered powerless,

while still representing sexual temptation, the male desire for the female and the destruction of the male (the 'trouble' referred to in the advertisement's strap-line) through that desire. The power that the advertisement suggests—the power to attract through female sexuality—is domesticated by the denial of Eve's return gaze.

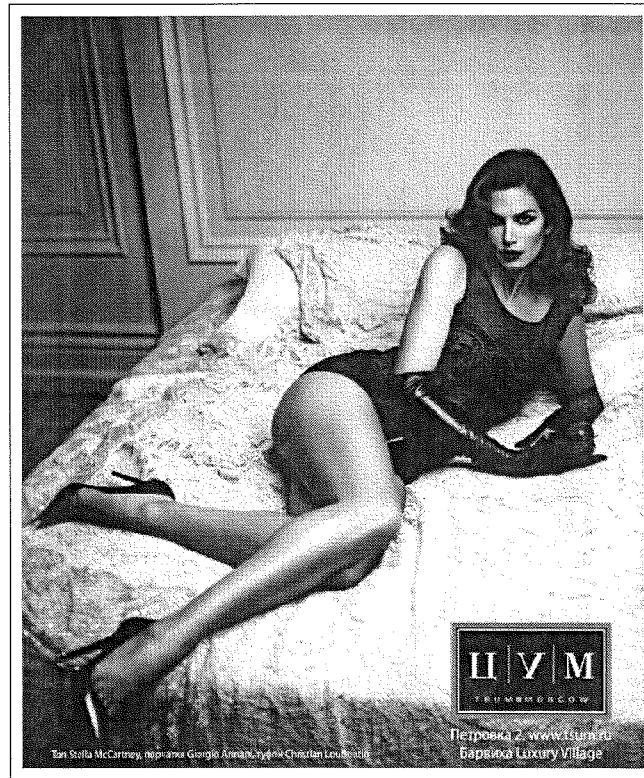


Figure 3.2. Print advertisement for TSUM Department Store, Russia, 2010

Similarly, in the advertising campaign for Russian luxury department store TSUM (Fig. 3.2), which features supermodel Cindy Crawford in various states of undress lounging on a double-bed, the theme is temptation. Crawford, as Eve, holds an apple matched with her lipstick, the two points of colour in an otherwise monochromatic scheme. She tempts the viewer sexually with her forbidden fruit, but she also tempts the female consumer into aspiring to be like her by shopping at TSUM and buying the clothes she models.

Double-edged sword - FF = sexy, powerful
FF = dangerous, trouble,
desire, feared

In an advertisement for Lolita Lempicka's *The First Fragrance*, the female return gaze is once again prohibited (Fig. 3.3). The image depicts a fantasy woodland scene, in which a woman in a torn evening dress lies on the trunk of tree, with one hand covering her exposed right breast and the other holding her head in a posture that seems to be a swoon or an expression of what could be either post-coital pleasure or post-traumatic distress.

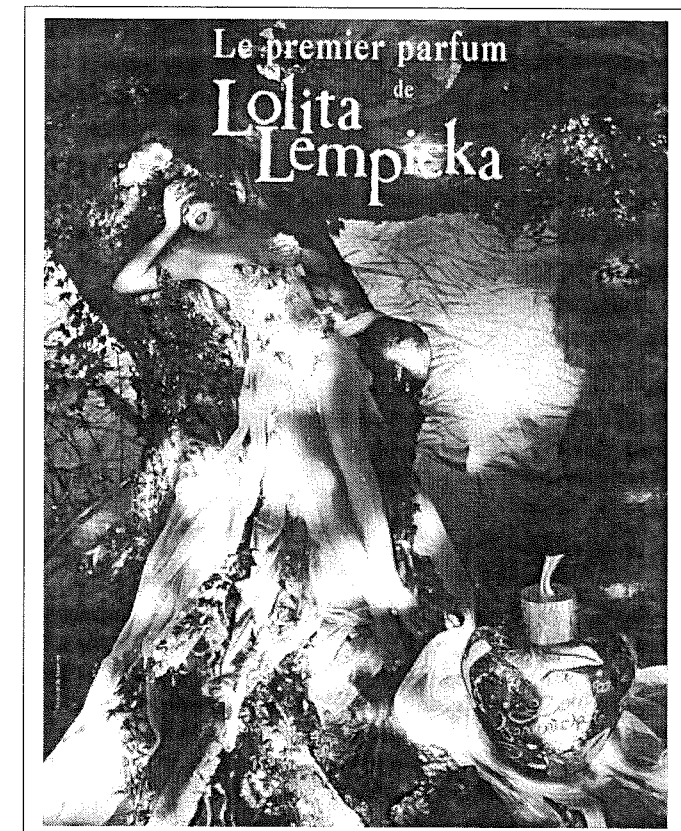


Figure 3.3. Print Advertisement for The First Fragrance by Lolita Lempicka, 2001

The woman's bare legs, abdomen and breast suggest that she has been involved in a sexual encounter. The image is ambiguous, however, about whether that encounter was violent or of mutual consent. The positioning of the perfume bottle near her feet connects the ambiguous sexual scene with the apple containing the first fragrance. As usual in post-feminist Eve advertisements, the apple connotes the forbidden fruit in

Genesis 3 and links the image of the ravished woman with temptation and desire. Is this an image of Eve after she has eaten of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil? If so, where is Adam? Whatever the story of the advertisement, the reason for the exhausted, prone, half-naked and dishevelled state of Eve is the effect of the first fragrance. The spectator-buyer sees that using the first fragrance can make a woman so sexually desirable that she will attract aggressive sexual attention, whether that attention is invited or otherwise. On its appearance in women's glossy magazines, the ambiguity of the advertisement and the suggestion of sexual assault—and indeed the insinuation of the image that sexual assault might be a desired outcome by women who wish to be considered highly sexually attractive—led feminist groups to protest against the image and petition for its removal from circulation. In fact, the publicity surrounding the image significantly increased the profile of the perfume and Lolita Lempicka won a prestigious Fifi advertising award for best advertising campaign at the 2001 fragrance awards.

Images of suggested sexual violence are commonplace in postfeminist advertising,¹¹ having become

...romantic and chic instead of being seen as grievously contemptible. Such ads are used by some of the most reputable manufacturers in mainstream magazines aimed at refined, stylish audiences... Ads convey the message that...women secretly want to be raped, and that women invite rape by their behaviour and attire.¹²

see recent ads for clothing

11. See also the double-page advertising image for *Agent Provocateur* underwear, depicting a murder scene in which a woman's body, wearing a transparent net bra, suspenders and stilettos, is sprawled on stairs. Her body is cordoned off with crime scene tape. The suggestion is that wearing *Agent Provocateur* underwear can have such a dramatic impact that it could cause one of its customers to be murdered. See *Agent Provocateur's* promotional coffee-table book, Joseph Corr  and Serena Rees, *Agent Provocateur: A Celebration of Femininity* (London: Carlton, 1999), pp. 168-69.

12. Cortese, *Provocateur*, p. 73. The idea that a woman and even a child bears responsibility for provoking a sexual attack is still in evidence in court cases in the UK. Most recently (25 June 2007) a 24-year-old window cleaner, Keith Fenn, was given a minimal custodial sentence of three and half years for two counts of raping a ten-year-old girl in a park. Due to the amount of time Fenn had already spent in prison awaiting his sentence, the sentence would mean that he only had to spend another four months in imprisonment for the crimes. In his summing up of the trial, Judge Julian Hall QC said that the girl looked sixteen and was 'sexually precocious' and that the child dressed 'provocatively'. In a previous child abuse case in February 2007, however, Hall suggested that compensation paid to a child-abuse victim could be used to buy the child a bicycle to 'cheer them up'. See Mark Tran, 'Call for Appeal over "Pathetically Lenient" Rape Sentence', *The Guardian* (25 June 2007).

Such advertisements display the flip-side of self-objectification in a society that still blames victims of sexual assault for attracting the 'wrong kind' of attention.¹³ Rather than resisting, problematizing or challenging such gender-biased attitudes, advertisements such as the one for Lolita Lempicka *The First Fragrance* help perpetuate the notion that a woman invites and welcomes all sexual attention from men, even rape, reflecting widespread sexist social attitudes to female victims of sexual assault and abuse.

The updated version of the Lolita Lempicka *The First Fragrance* advertisement displays a similar, if less obviously controversial, ideology to the previous image (Fig. 3.4). Once again, Eve is pictured in a fantasy woodland scene but this time she sits on the trunk of the tree, looking sideways into the distance. As before, the advertisers have chosen to have the model look away from the viewer. She looks into the distance, or at a person off-scene, and her expression seems unhappy. Light falls on her exposed bare legs and her face. The advertisement is once again ambiguous—not only does the woman wear a torn dress, similar to the one 'Eve' wears in the previous advertisement, but she appears to have a bruise on her left cheek-bone. This could be heavily applied make-up, but, given the torn dress, the sad expression of the young woman and the supposed 'overwhelming' effect of using the fragrance, one has reason to wonder. The light upon her face has bleached her eye make-up to the point where only half her eye-brow is visible; any make-up to enhance a cheek-bone should be bleached or at least have a much more subtle effect also. Whether the viewer decides that the mark is make-up or bruising is actually of less importance than the fact that the advertisement creates

13. See the following scholarly works for further examples of this attitude to victims of sexual violence: D. Abrams *et al.*, 'Evaluating Stranger and Acquaintance Rape: The Role of Benevolent Sexism in Perpetrator Blame and Recommended Sentence Length', *Law & Human Behavior* 3.28 (2004), pp. 295-303; D. Abrams *et al.*, 'Perceptions of Stranger and Acquaintance Rape: The Role of Benevolent and Hostile Sexism in Victim Blame and Rape Proclivity', *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 1.84 (2003), pp. 111-25; Helen Benedict, *Virgin or Vamp: How the Press Covers Sex Crimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); G. Bohner and N. Schwarz, 'The Threat of Rape: Its Psychological Impact on Non-victimized Women', in D.M. Buss and N. Malamuth (eds.), *Sex, Power, Conflict: Evolutionary and Feminist Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 162-75; K.K.P. Johnson, 'Attributions about Date Rape: Impact of Clothing, Sex, Money Spent, Date Type, and Perceived Similarity', *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* 23 (1995), pp. 292-311; G. Tendayi Viki and Dominic Abrams, 'But She Was Unfaithful: Benevolent Sexism and Reactions to Rape Victims Who Violate Traditional Gender Role Expectations—Brief Report', *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 47 (2002), pp. 289-93.

enough ambiguity to suggest that the woman could have been the victim of an aggressive encounter.

The image could depict the scene after the first Lolita Lempicka advertisement, when the woman was able to recover from her experience, but the Company has used a different model and her hair is styled differently. Whereas in the first advertisement the woman's hair-style was long loose curls, thrown over her upper face, after a dramatic sexual encounter, this woman's hair-style is far more groomed. She has flowers fixed into the side of her hair and the style seems to be still in place regardless of whatever happened to shred her dress or result in possible facial bruising. While the advertisements may be ambiguous as to what has actually taken place immediately before the scenes they portray, they leave the spectator-buyer in no doubt about the power of the fragrance to make women overwhelmingly sexually desirable.



Figure 3.4. Print advertisement for The First Fragrance by Lolita Lempicka, 2003

The Lolita Lempicka advertisements are unusual in terms of the pattern of representation in postfeminist Eve advertisements, however, because the models do not return the consumer's male gaze. Usually in postfeminist advertising, the models' acknowledgment and direct return of the viewers' gaze is a technique to convey not only the power of the woman in the image but also to signify resistance and challenge to traditional patriarchal social values, as Robert Goldman concluded in his study of 1980s and early 1990s advertising:

[Postfeminist advertising] reinforces a prominent ideological account of woman defined by the male gaze. The ability to survey is based on power, but here the female look confers power. Women's power over man is thus ironically depicted as a function of her willing acceptance of her vulnerability and powerlessness *vis-à-vis* men. Here, the woman as paragon of beauty commands the male's attention by making herself an object of desire.¹⁴

self-objectified

Such a fine line differentiates passive 'sexist' female objectification from postfeminist self-objectification that promotes female sexuality as a means to achieve power and success that postfeminist advertising images must attribute sexual agency to Eve in order to show that she is active and powerful in her objectification rather than passive and powerless.

For instance, like Lolita Lempicka, the perfume company Cacharel chose to use Eve imagery to represent their notion of desirable contemporary femininity. Also like Lolita Lempicka, the company updated its print advertisement to one that offered the same garden of Eden theme but enabled a slightly different reading.



Figure 3.5. Print advertisement for Eden perfume, Cacharel, 1995

14. Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, p. 117 (emphasis original).

Figure 3.5 is the first print advertisement for Cacharel's perfume, *Eden: The Forbidden Fragrance*. In the image Eve returns the viewer's gaze; however, her expression seems to be questioning the look of the spectator-buyer rather than obviously inviting it. At the same time, however, she also displays the forbidden perfume by holding it next to her exposed left breast, linking the idea of forbidden pleasure with both the bottle of fragrance and the woman's naked body.

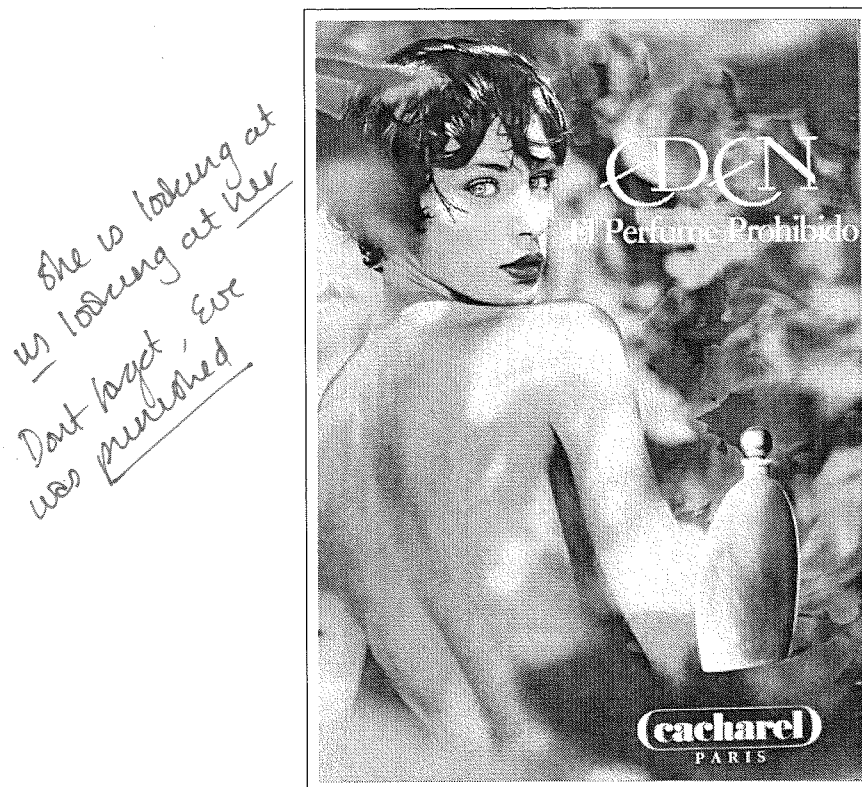


Figure 3.6. Print advertisement for Eden perfume, Cacharel, 2000

In the updated print advertisement for the same fragrance (Fig. 3.6), Cacharel's advertisers have chosen to make the overall impression of the image a little darker and more dangerous. The very name of the perfume 'El Perfume Prohibido' (The Forbidden Fragrance) suggests that the perfume will cause illicit or illegal consequences for the wearer. The second advert makes more of this notion than the first.

Both representations have cast Eve in a greenish-blue light. The second advertisement puts this colour against hot shades of orange and

yellow and a brighter green, whereas the first image placed Eve against a backdrop of pastel colours and gave Eve an innocent look, with a coiffed and quite androgynous hairstyle (making her more innocent looking, despite her bare breast and the 'El Perfume Prohibido' tag-line). The updated image presents a new version of Eve, a tousled-haired, pouty-lipped woman who does not display her breast to the viewer, but instead offers the spectator-buyer a tantalising suggestion of breast, just available for view under her slightly lifted arm. Although she may turn her back on the gaze, she does not turn her face—she returns the viewer's gaze with a knowing pout. She does not question the gaze, as her predecessor did; in fact, the image presents this version of Eve as if the viewer has surprised her. Now she knows we are looking, and she is complicit in the game of looking because the increased sexual attraction created by her looking is the desired effect of the forbidden perfume.

The promise of increased sexual attraction and the implicit promise of increased power with which it is associated is characteristic of postfeminist advertising. The power the advertisements promise to the spectator-buyer, however, is illusory. Postfeminist advertisements focus on the individual rather than the collective ability of women to create improvements in their lives. In these advertisements, the individual woman's body becomes the site of liberation and route for achieving power. The advertising constructs a femininity that is organized around sexual confidence and autonomy and promotes this femininity as an embrace of the assertive, liberated woman, the powerful femme fatale who debilitates men with her overwhelming sexuality. This femininity, however, allows the women who subscribe to postfeminist advertising ideology only tokens of power that are dependent on whether or not the woman competes for male attention, maintains her gender performance as sexually desirable temptress and participates in the constant consumerism that this brand of postfeminism necessitates. L.S. Kim warns against the dangers of self-objectification in her discussion of postfeminism in television:

Moving from passive object of the male gaze to self-objectification does not necessarily achieve subjectivity, and it can be a false freedom. Self-objectification could be defined as the conscious effort to gain attention through one's feminine traits—again, sexual attention, not professional attention.¹⁵

When a woman's sexuality becomes her ultimate tool for the achievement of power and social status, women are dissuaded from forming collective groups—the groups that really can achieve power shifts and

15. L.S. Kim, "Sex and the Single Girl" in *Postfeminism: The F Word on Television*, *Television and New Media* 2.4 (November 2001), p. 324.

increase women's social status—to challenge the socio-political conditions that make male/female child-care responsibilities still heavily imbalanced for women, that allow a pay-structure in which women consistently earn a lower salary than men for the same job¹⁶ and that maintain that women's best chance of achieving power and increasing social status is through exploiting the market value of their own sexuality. [In effect, postfeminist advertising ideology depoliticizes women's struggles for power in daily life and purports that women's power issues can be solved through consumerism.] Issues of gender equality are no longer about pay, unequal child-care, discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic abuse and so on, but become questions about the most effective perfume, underwear, chocolate or clothing to offer increased sexual desirability. The suggestion of postfeminist advertising is that the better looking a woman is, and the more she maintains her gender performance, the less she will struggle with the issues that 'normal' women have to contend with in life.

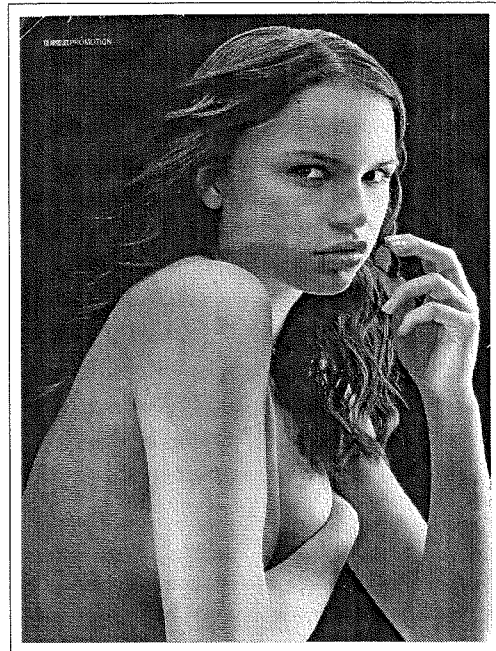


Figure 3.7. Print advertisement for Thorntons Eden Chocolates in *Glamour* magazine, February 2003

16. See Bunting, 'Baby, This Just Isn't Working for Me'.

As this book has so far argued, consumerism is the foundation of post-feminist advertising ideology, which links female power and resistance to traditional patriarchal values by means of self-objectification. Advertisers use Eve imagery to exploit *femme fatale* imagery and transform it into an image of contemporary female sexual empowerment through consumerism. A double-page advertisement for Thorntons Eden chocolates, which appeared in *Glamour* magazine in February 2003 makes the postfeminist advertising agenda I have been discussing so far in this book particularly explicit by virtue of the connections it makes between female sexual temptation and consumer empowerment. In the promotional article (Fig. 3.10) from *Glamour* Magazine in 2003, the link between Eve, young women and luxury products is made clear. The advertisement was included in the magazine as a triple page advertisement (the third page was a full page picture of the Thorntons Eden chocolates that the article was promoting). The first page shows the image of a young woman of the same age range as the target reader of the magazine (age 17–25) (Fig. 3.7). She is pictured from the waist up and she is naked, with her right arm covering her breasts. Although she covers her breasts with her arm and hand, the photo still allows much of her cleavage to be available for view by the spectator-buyer. The inside of the chocolate is red, which matches the shade of her lips, linking the forbidden fruit with the young woman herself. She is positioned as a temptation to the consumer in the same way as the chocolate; her function is to attract and to be consumed. The image suggests that the viewer has just caught Eve as she is about to bite into the forbidden fruit (the particular chocolate she is holding is actually called 'Forbidden Fruit' in the menu of Eden chocolates). Eve returns the spectator-buyer's gaze, although her expression is not welcoming—her look is simultaneously seductive (she is pouting rather than scowling or being pictured with her mouth open ready to eat the chocolate) and hostile—because, as the advertising copy suggests, the viewer has just interrupted her 'being bad' (Fig. 3.8):

We all have the right to be sinful sometimes, and we've uncovered the most deliciously decadent gift to entice and seduce in serious style. Get your wicked way, and you'll be glad to be bad. Here's our guide to uncovering your 'inner-Eve', where no sense is left untouched...¹⁷

The idea is that pleasure, style, consumer temptation and luxury products are all part of what a young woman needs to do to make herself feel good. The constant consumption of expensive luxury goods is naturalized in

17. Print Advertisement for Eden Chocolates by Thorntons, *Glamour* Magazine (February 2003).

these adverts. The young women reading this magazine may very well not have the means to afford luxury goods but that is not seen as an obstacle when the encoded message is that buying expensive things may be naughty but 'we all have the right to be sinful sometimes'.¹⁸

10 layers of Temptation

We all have the right to be sinful sometimes, and we've uncovered the most deliciously decadent gift to entice and seduce in serious style. Get your wicked way, and you'll be glad to be bad. Here's our guide to uncovering your 'inner-Eve', where no sense is left untouched...

- 1 *Forbidden Fruit*: Give in to temptation, because too much is never, ever enough. Curling up in your favourite armchair, with new season *Sex and the City* on the box and as many treats as you fancy to hand – bliss.
- 2 *Chocolate Heaven*: Slick, bright and modern – Thorntons Eden introduce the Kylie of chocolates, the silver Gucci stiletto of chocolates – sexy and modern – but with a fresh and original twist.
- 3 *Strolling Melancholy*: Melt away on the fluffy and sensual side of life. Think feel-good textures and gentle velvety touches for maximum impact.
- 4 *Secret Passion*: If he's buying you Eden by Thorntons, you know you've found a man with taste and style. Keep him to yourself.
- 5 *Vanilla Fudge*: Rich, intense flavours to savour morsel by morsel – a little of something sublime to pep you up after every hard day, or if you're feeling totally indulgent, throughout just the one intense, but beautiful evening...
- 6 *It's About Eve*: Think lusciousness and the fun can really begin. Eve might have been tempted by an old apple – but unfortunately, it ain't gonna work in the modern day, boys!
- 7 *Wicked, Sexy, Wild*: New, exciting, adventurous and varied. No, not a night out with your favourite delicious boy band, but close and certainly as seductive...
- 8 *Champagne Caviar*: Understand the importance of luxury: tiny Agent Provocateur knickers, cocktails and mini caviar blinis – a little of something really fabulous is worth 1,000 bars of anything else. Pure delight!
- 9 *Women in the Streets*: Replace the dinner switch and soft music of old, with a million tiny fairy lights and a devilishly handsome date. Modern-day self-indulgence is quite simply, a girl's favourite way to spend her time.
- 10 *Guilty Pleasure*: Big box, big smile, big connection. Lead us into temptation...

Figure 3.8. Print advertisement for Eden Chocolates by Thorntons, *Glamour* magazine, February 2003

18. '10 Layers of Temptation', Thorntons Advertisement, *Glamour* Magazine (February 2003).

The advertisement shows an image of Eve, in which chocolate has been substituted for the forbidden fruit, on one page, and describes the '10 Layers of Temptation' on the other.

The '10 Layers of Temptation' refers to the ten chocolates in a box of Thorntons confectionary and alludes to another well-established biblical trope, the Ten Commandments. Each chocolate has a name, the advertisement's copy lists each of the chocolates by its Eden-inspired name, and offers young women ways to 'uncover their inner-Eve' through self-indulgence.

The first 'layer', Forbidden Fruit, suggests that *Glamour*'s readers 'give in to temptation, because too much is never, ever enough. Curling up in your favourite armchair, with new season *Sex and the City* on the box and as many treats as you fancy to hand—bliss.' The advertising copy links Thorntons chocolates with postfeminist ideology of empowerment through sexuality and consumerism. By mentioning *Sex and the City* the advertisers suggest to the *Glamour* reader that Thorntons Eden chocolates are in the same bracket as the popular postfeminist television show. *Sex and the City*, HBO's phenomenally successful TV series, was at its peak of popularity in 2003. It centred around four female friends and their relationship, sex and wardrobe issues. By associating the two brands, Thorntons Eden chocolates and *Sex and the City*, with each other in the copy, the advertisers of Thorntons Eden hope to associate their product with the same 'cool' qualities as *Sex and the City*: sex and consumerism.¹⁹ Another 'layer of temptation' cements this connection between luxury consumer brands and Thorntons Eden Chocolates by saying that the advertised confectionary is 'the silver Gucci stiletto of chocolates—sexy and modern—but with a fresh and original twist'. The copy then goes on to create connections between the Thorntons chocolates and consumer indulgence with the vague direction for readers to 'Think lusciousness and the fun can really begin. Eve might have been tempted by an old apple—but unfortunately it ain't gonna work in the modern day, boys!' So, although the advertisement is targeting young female postfeminist

19. For more comprehensive discussions of *Sex and the City* as a postfeminist text, see Kim, "Sex and the Single Girl"; Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, 'In Focus: Postfeminism and Contemporary Media Studies', *Cinema Journal* 44 (2005), pp. 107-10; Diane Negra, "Quality Postfeminism?" *Sex and the Single Girl on HBO*, *Genders Online Journal* 39 (2004) (<http://www.genders.org> [accessed 21 February 2005]); Rachel Moseley and Jacinda Read, "Having it *Ally*": Popular Television (Post-)Feminism', *Feminist Media Studies* (2002), pp. 231-49, and Amanda D. Lotz, 'Postfeminist Television Criticism: Rehabilitating Critical Terms and Identifying Postfeminist Attributes', *Feminist Media Studies* 1.1 (2001), pp. 105-21.

consumers in a young women's magazine, it assumes that the young women are receiving gifts from men. In order to tempt these young women into transgression, the advert suggests, the men are going to have to buy them something that presumably runs along the same lines as the Gucci shoes that have been mentioned in the copy. Is this alluding to the power that postfeminism promises women in return for self-objectification? The power to achieve male financial support through being sexually desirable? The postfeminist idea of female empowerment through sexuality does not seem altogether too different from the husband-hunting that nineteenth century women had to go through in order to be financially secure.²⁰ For those women, trying to find the most eligible male to be a husband created competition among women and ensured that collective groups of women were unlikely to be formed because of the threat each woman posed to others. Similarly, postfeminism creates competition between women in terms of who can be the most successful temptress. Postfeminism can only benefit individual women, not women as a collective, since postfeminist advertising ideology is fundamentally exclusive: only the attractive, young, able-bodied and those who can give the appearance of being wealthy can participate in the competition for power.

At the end of the '10 Layers of Temptation', the Thorntons advertisement goes on to expose the deceit of postfeminist advertising ideology: 'Champagne Creation: Understand the importance of luxury: tiny *Agent Provocateur* knickers, cocktails and mini caviar blinis—a little of something really fabulous is worth 1,000 bars of anything else. Pure delight!' The advertisement describes luxuries that only a small percentage of young women aged between 18–25 could possibly afford, and yet these items are listed as if they are part of everyday self-indulgence for the *Glamour* reader—or if they are not then they should be. The underwear company mentioned by the Thorntons advertisement is currently a highly fashionable, highly expensive underwear manufacturer, who leads the way in postfeminist advertising. In their promotional coffee-table book, *Agent Provocateur: A Celebration of Femininity*,²¹ the company's creators, Joseph Corr  and Serena Rees, express the basic tenets of postfeminist consumer ideology eloquently:

20. See Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p. 100.

21. Significantly for this book, *Agent Provocateur* means 'spies who provoke others to act illegally', which reflects the same theme as Eve advertising—that through the manipulation and display of her sexuality a woman can provoke others to act illegally or transgressively. This is a basic theme of postfeminism and the reason why Eve has become a postfeminist icon.

At a time when political correctness has created an anti-individual environment to avoid offending anyone and when companies only act on ideas after the approval of marketing men, the aptly named *Agent Provocateur* was created to redress the balance. In a democracy where your only real choice is where you spend your money ('I shop therefore I am'), we found it necessary to open an outlet that we could use as a platform for our ideas and where we could provokingly display the sexuality of the female form without embarrassment or shame.²²

The idea that collective politics has been superseded by individual consumer choice is inherent in all postfeminist advertising, as is the fundamental fantasy that women have achieved professional and personal equality in contemporary society and so should inevitably make a return to 'femininity', which always involves the constant consumption of clothes, cosmetics, shoes and perfume. *Agent Provocateur's* statements expose the serious discrepancies in postfeminist advertising ideology: the idea that women have achieved equality but still need to be sold ways to achieve power is ironic, as is the idea that women can afford expensive luxury items in order to achieve this power when they are yet to receive the same salary as men for the same job. Women, contrary to what the creators of *Agent Provocateur* want us to believe, are far from equally represented in the highest professional offices in academia—medicine, law and politics—a fact that Corr  and Rees totally dismiss in their promotional literature:

That women would rise to the heights of corporate, academic, and artistic success was inevitable. Women were no longer objects of seduction but powerful and provocative seducers, as well as highly competent professionals. With the power of equality, and the right and ability to choose, there was a yearning to return to an expression of femininity that has been put aside in order to succeed. It was time for a return to femininity by exploiting female charm, and what better way to draw attention to female power than by emphasising the female form? We believe that the ultimate expression is for each individual woman to emphasize her femininity and to revel in her erotic life. After all, the instinct to display and attract is inescapable. The desire to be sexy and the innate sexiness of the body remain, no matter how it is politicized. If you've got it, flaunt it. If you don't have it, GET SOME!²³

The idea expressed in this quotation from Corr  and Rees—that women can buy sexiness, charm and thereby achieve female power (If you don't have it. GET SOME!)—is the concept that fuels postfeminist Eve advertising.

22. Corr  and Rees, *Agent Provocateur*, p. 7.

23. Corr  and Rees, *Agent Provocateur*, pp. 43–44.

As we saw in Chapter 2, the irony for women subscribing to the notion of female empowerment through self-commodification and sexualization is that, in participating in 'empowerment through consumerism' to become a more profitable commodity, in reality young women can suffer a tremendous loss. The difficulty for women who identify themselves with postfeminist values and view their bodies and sexuality as their most valuable commodities is that, because self-commodification leads to extreme competition among females, very few at any one time are successful in achieving power and wealth through their bodies. The few who are successful will change rapidly because the nature of consumerism is that what is considered desirable one year may well be passé the next, and the women who are fighting for their market share will have to work hard to ensure they maintain male desire and female envy. For instance, the most successful sexual-saleswomen at the moment are Beyonce Knowles, Jennifer Lopez and Scarlett Johansson—all of whom have developed themselves into the ultimate commodity: an identity brand.²⁴ These women are no longer only actresses and singers, their very identity is a commodity. This identity brand is based solely on the desirability of the women; the consumer has to want what these celebrities have. Johansson has a dizzying list of celebrity endorsements increasing her wealth each year: Calvin Klein fragrances, Dolce and Gabbana and Moët Chandon to name but a few of the most lucrative. She is also a 'spokesmodel' for the cosmetics giant L'Oréal, as is Knowles.

The companies hiring these female celebrities choose them because of their ability to represent the qualities they want associated with the product. For instance, L'Oréal wants to appeal to young, popular-culture literate, financially independent women. Thus they offer contracts to young female celebrities who are in the media eye, are considered highly desirable and attractive by consumers and who have achieved their status through their looks—perfect for a cosmetics company. In her press statement after accepting the L'Oréal contract, Johansson said, 'It is wonderful to be working with L'Oréal, a company that has celebrated

24. Both Beyonce Knowles and Jennifer Lopez are known to work out for two hours per day and have extremely restrictive diets to maintain their desirable and marketable figures. Knowles, in particular, has attracted criticism for admitting that she eats only slices of tomato and cucumber for lunch to keep body-fat to a minimum and fasted on a liquid-only diet to lose two stones for her part as the lead singer, Dinah, in the recent, hugely hyped and Academy Award winning *Dreamgirls* movie.

independent women for years',²⁵ making clear the link between cosmetics, consumerism and female independence.²⁶

Knowles's and Lopez's skills of self-commodification are formidable, with both of them flooding the market with popular film and album releases, appearing in numerous advertising campaigns and launching their own fashion, make-up and perfume lines. These women know how to sell themselves. They are the proof of the power of sexual objectification and they are the role models for current and future consumers. Significantly, Knowles, Lopez and Britney Spears, all known for their overt sexuality and all highly successful identity brands, appeared together in a 2004 TV commercial for Pepsi that was shown during the Super Bowl. The commercial showed the three women as gladiators who were about to fight in a contest, again linking commodified female sexuality with power and strength. The commercial was one of the most successful of all time.

Advertisers are not creating a link between commodified female sexuality and independence, wealth, power and social status that is not apparent to the target young female consumer herself: in the 2006 Forbes Celebrity 100 Power list, which lists the most influential celebrities each year, there were proportionately few women compared to the number of men. Tom Cruise was at number one and the top two women were Oprah Winfrey and J.K. Rowling, at numbers three and nineteen respectively. Most of the women on the list had made their name through their looks. On the Forbes website each celebrity on the most influential list has their two most marketable assets listed next to their picture.²⁷ Four of the celebrities on the list were models, Gisele Bündchen, Kate Moss, Tyra Banks and Heidi Klum, and they each had 'beautiful, sexy' or 'attractive, stylish' next to their photos. These women have become

25. <http://www.imdb.com/news/wenn/2006-01-05#celeb6>.

26. In Reebok's statement to the press, released after hiring Johansson to endorse one of their footwear ranges, Reebok describes the Hollywood star as a 'world renowned style icon' and 'an inspiration for today's young women', making clear the link between celebrities who commodify their sexuality to achieve a market value and the appeal of these celebrities to young women. Reebok wanted to exploit that link to achieve greater customer sales, knowing that young women would be more likely to purchase a product that was endorsed by Johansson in an attempt to emulate her appeal. See BusinessWire, 'Reebok Partners with Screen Star Scarlett Johansson to Create Red-Hot Fashion Collection, Scarlett Hearts Rbk' (22 July 2006).

27. http://www.forbes.com/2006/06/12/06celebrities_money-power-celebrities-list_land.html (accessed 21 January 2006).

powerful through being willing to participate in self-objectification and they were being rewarded handsomely for it. Indeed, Gisele Bundchen, currently the highest paid model in the world and number seventy-one on Forbes's list, is worth \$30 million for being 'beautiful, sexy'. Forbes goes on to say that Bundchen has 'twenty fashion contracts and her "assets" earned her more last year than many of the highest paid actors on the Celebrity 100'.²⁸

To succeed in popular culture women must be attractive and willing to exploit their attractiveness for its maximum market potential. This allows women to be powerful and wealthy, but still nowhere near as powerful as men, even if the women are out-earning them. Ironically, the two most powerful women on the list, and the only women in the top twenty, Oprah Winfrey and J.K. Rowling, earn far more than any other women on the list (Winfrey is described as earning \$275 million and Rowling \$75 million) and are described as having far more power and influence than any other woman on the list; however, they are also the only women who do not have any of the tags 'beautiful', 'sexy', 'attractive', 'stylish' or 'cute' next to their names as reasons for their success. Winfrey's most marketable qualities are described as 'intelligent, confident' and Rowling is 'talented, intelligent'. Their place on the list and the personal qualities that have led them to become so wealthy and influential simultaneously undermine and underline postfeminist advertising's notion that the locus of women's power is their sexuality: the most powerful and wealthy women in popular culture have not achieved that status through self-objectification but all the other women on the list have.

There is, however, a negative side to this self-marketing. The demands of successful self-commodification and the constant scrutiny of being the object of the gaze can take their toll on celebrities whose careers, wealth and status are founded on the marketing of their sexuality. Britney Spears, who shot to international stardom with her controversial single, *Baby One More Time*,²⁹ has made a highly lucrative career from self-objectification. From dancing provocatively in a school uniform replete with mini-skirt and pig-tails in the *Baby One More Time* promotional video, to exploiting the popularity of the Eve image in the MTV 2001 Awards by dancing in a garden of Eden inspired stage set with a python around her neck (the single most reproduced media image of that year),

28. http://www.forbes.com/2006/06/12/06celebrities_money-power-celebrities-list_land.html (accessed 21 January 2006).

29. Britney Spears, *Baby One More Time* (BMG, 2000).

Spears found status, power, fame and immense wealth through self-objectification.

Marketing herself as a brand, Spears introduced her own clothing range, attached her name to many brands (such as Sketchers shoes and Pepsi) and launched her own perfume.³⁰ In 2002, at the pinnacle of her career, Spears was named as the world's most powerful celebrity (male and female included) on the Forbes Celebrity 100 list. By 2007, however, Spears had dropped out of the influential Forbes list altogether, thanks to being admitted twice to a celebrity rehabilitation centre for alcohol dependency, two failed marriages, a media furore surrounding her parenting skills and a public breakdown, which saw her shaving her long hair-extensions off while the paparazzi frenziedly photographed the incident. Spears may well still be in the headlines but she is there as an example of a woman whose self-commodification has also caused her self-destruction.

Nevertheless, the drawbacks of female self-promotion through sexuality do not put off the target female 18–35 consumer, who is still attracted to the postfeminist advertising ideology that sells the idea of sex as the ultimate tool to achieve female empowerment. In this climate, images of Eve become ever more popular as a signifier of female independence and power through sexuality. The Eve image often functions as a vehicle, not just for already famous actresses, models and pop stars to connect their persona with the cultural myth of Eve, but for those 'wannabe' celebrity females wishing to become famous through their sexuality.³¹

Eve imagery has been regularly employed in two examples of women who have achieved celebrity status through self-promotion in reality shows or on social media. The first, Allison Melnick, a Los Angeles socialite and friend of Paris Hilton, has created a self-made brand from her famous friends and starring in short-lived reality shows. Melnick frequently uses Eve imagery to market her bar in LA, aptly titled 'Apple', and usually features herself in the bar's promotional material, all of which tends to have an Eve theme, with Melnick presenting herself as the forbidden fruit to be consumed. In the publicity shots for the opening of Apple, Melnick is represented in the standard Eve pose: red apple in

30. Britney Spears's fragrance, *Curious*, has made approximately \$100 million in revenue since its launch date in 2004, illustrating the selling-power Spears wielded at the height of her career.

31. The song Britney Spears performed at the MTV Awards in 2001, *Slave 4 U*, was a departure into a new, more adult sound for Spears. It is significant that for this transition from pop queen of the pre-teens to targeting an older audience, Spears's marketing team chose to exploit the Eve image to grab the headlines and make Britney's transformation from sex-kitten to *Femme Fatale* clear.

hand, returning the viewers' gaze. The red shade of the brand logo and the apple she's holding are toned in with Melnick's vest and lipstick, linking her body and mouth with forbidden fruit. On her arm is a tattoo, another of the bar's logos, which shows the outline of a bitten apple under which is written 'bite me'. Here Melnick plays with her sexy but feisty celebrity persona: 'bite me' is a play on words that in the context of the forbidden fruit theme of the advertisement could be a sexual invitation but is also a US idiomatic expression statement to show contempt or defiance. The 'bite me' logo, coupled with the heavy eye-make up and ambivalent facial expression, suggest that she is in control of her sexuality: she simultaneously objectifies herself and offers her body for consumption but distances the viewer with her dual messages.

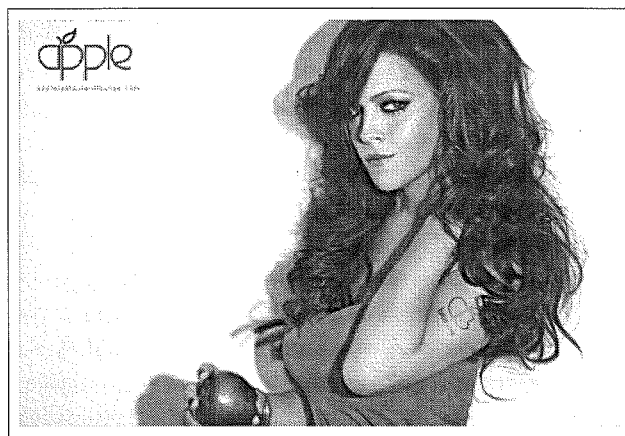


Figure 3.9. Apple Restaurant Lounge, 2010

A further 'reality' celebrity who has used Eve imagery to symbolize her newly advanced status is social media phenomenon Christine Dolce. Figure 3.10 is taken from Dolce's 2006 'Forbidden Fruit' themed Playboy promotional shoot.³²

Dolce, known as 'ForBidden', transformed herself from being a small-town beautician into a million-dollar fitness, fashion and glamour modelling businesswoman³³ following the huge popularity of her MySpace profile, on which has amassed over two million 'friends' since the launch of the social media site. Dolce's profile and subsequent branding centres around her self-objectification; she posts numerous provocative photos,

32. Playboy Magazine (October 2006).

33. See 'ForBidden Fruit: Big Business Tries to Make Friends and Influence People Online', *The Economist* (27 June 2006).

regularly updated, which have propelled her to celebrity status. Hailed 'The Queen of MySpace' by *Vanity Fair* magazine³⁴ and *The Tyra Banks Show*³⁵ Dolce uses Eve imagery to convey the strength of her sexual appeal to potential consumers but also to signify her postfeminist credentials as a woman who has turned her body into her business purely from posting semi-naked photos of herself on a social media website. Like Melnick, Dolce uses the forbidden fruit as a tool to simultaneously entice and distance the viewer. Dolce's 'brand name' ForBidden is as much a warning as the proffered apple and ample cleavage in the Playboy shoot is an invitation. Dolce's use of gothic imagery is part of the distancing technique she employs to counter her self-objectification. Dolce presents herself as a postfeminist vamp, a modern day version of the Poison Damsels from ancient Asian folklore where young women, raised on snake venom so that they become venomous themselves, prove fatal for the men who are seduced by them.³⁶ This notion of poisonous woman has become conflated in this image with Eve, where the apple signifies the temptation of the viewer but also the *Femme fatale* status of Dolce.



Figure 3.10. Christine Dolce Playboy promotional image, 2006

34. *Vanity Fair* Magazine (March 2006).

35. *The Tyra Banks Show* (6 April 2006).

36. Allen, *The Femme Fatale*, p. 50.

For example, in Figure 3.11 Dolce represents herself as a forbidden fruit, appealing to look at though she glowers at the viewer, and the word 'FORBIDDEN', written more like a command than a brand name, is typed in between her and the red bitten apple, which is punctured by various piercings—like Dolce's own body—and wrapped in a spiked collar.

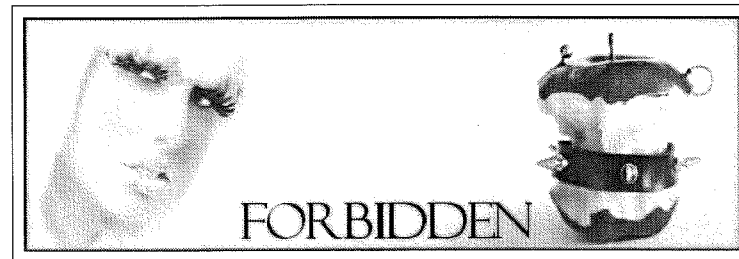


Figure 3.11. Christine Dolce MySpace promotional image, 2006

From the late 1990s to very recently Eve has been represented as the ultimate postfeminist icon of female sexual power; occasionally, however, her image develops into a more romantic representation of the feminine ideal. Figure 3.12 shows a recent advertisement for the new Nina Ricci perfume *Nina*. The image shows a young, beautiful woman with flowing curled hair in a pink ball gown. Red apples spill from the open door behind her and from a tree above her hangs a perfume bottle in the shape of a red apple. The woman in the image stares with desire at the apple, the by-line is 'le nouveau parfum magique'. Far from being an appeal to women's desire for power, this image appeals to a desire for fantasy and romance. The Nina Ricci website claims the perfume is 'a magical and enchanting fairy tale...an elixir, a promise of enchantment with the radiant power of seduction'.³⁷

The progression of the Eve image from *femme fatale* to fairytale princess is a further reflection of the progression of postfeminism. As society becomes ever more concerned with the breakdown of the family structure and the issue of working mothers and its effect on the stability of the family unit, postfeminist advertising images are beginning to lean more towards traditional images of romance, fairytale and fantasy taking women back to a feminine ideal of gentle beauty. The apple, of course, still signifies female individual choice and transformation—as in Figure

37. Nina Ricci website, http://www.ninaricci.com/#/parfums/line_nina/nina (accessed 2 April 2009).

3.12 where it is labelled as 'magic'—but Eve herself has been transformed from temptress to fairytale princess who still desires, although the advertisers' idea of what she must desire has changed. The change in Eve imagery in advertising is not only down to change in issues of post-feminism but also down to the advertisers' need to change the feminine ideals to which women must aspire in order to maintain women's levels of consumption.

In a blow to the postfeminist fairytale of the working-class girl who gets rich and happy from her assets, in 2008 the *Nina* perfume model featured in the advertisement (Fig. 3.12), Ruslana Korshunova, committed suicide³⁸ and two years later, 21-year-old pop star Florrie was announced as the new 'face' of *Nina L'Elixir* perfume.



Figure 3.12. Nina Ricci, *Nina*, 2006

38. Melissa Jane Kronfield, 'Supermodel's Death Plunge', *New York Post* (29 June 2008).



Figure 3.13. *Nina Ricci, Nina L'Elixir, 2010*

The campaign, which included a TV advertisement, is based on 'innocent temptation'³⁹ where Alice in Wonderland fairytale imagery is conflated with Eve-temptress imagery. In the TV version of the advertisement, Florrie is lying on a white bed, filmed from above, singing Blondie's Sunday Girl. Dressed in an outfit reminiscent of a child's party dress (the same outfit she wears in Fig. 3.13), she moves around a white bedroom before walking coquettishly through a series of bizarre landscapes filled with oversized apples and presents. The advertisement ends when she holds the red, apple-shaped bottle and stares back at the viewer in the standard Eve pose. The Nina Ricci website promotes the fragrance as 'the new outstanding chapter of Nina's fairy tale...sensual and sophisticated like its new modern princess'.⁴⁰ The *Nina* advertising campaigns infantilize women consumers, a common technique in advertising throughout its history,⁴¹ domesticating any perceived threat from the temptress, part of what Goffman calls the 'ritualization of subordination'. Goffman's

39. Nina Ricci website, http://www.ninaricci.com/#/parfums/line_nina/nina_elixir (accessed 3 April 2009).

40. Nina Ricci website, http://www.ninaricci.com/#/parfums/line_nina/nina_elixir (accessed 3 April 2009).

41. For a longitudinal study of the representation of women in popular culture, including representations in which women are infantilized, see Erin Hatton and Mary Nell Trautner, 'Images of Powerful Women in the Age of "Choice Feminism"', *Journal of Gender Studies* 22.2 (forthcoming 2013).

ritualization of subordination includes the 'the knee bend', as displayed by Florrie in the *Nina L'Elixir* image (Fig. 3.13):

Women frequently, men very infrequently, are posed in a display of the 'bashful knee bend'. Whatever else, the knee bend can be read as a foregoing of full effort to be prepared and on the ready in the current social situation, for the position adds a moment of effort to fight or flee. Once again one finds a posture that seems to presuppose the goodwill of anyone in the surround who could offer harm. Observe—as will be seen throughout—that a sex-typed subject is not so much involved as a format for constructing a picture.⁴²

Florrie also displays the 'head cant', a further infantilizing technique common in the 1970's advertisements collated and analysed by Goffman. Florrie's head is lowered slightly, a posture described by Goffman as one of 'acceptance of subordination, an expression of ingratiation, submissiveness, and appeasement'.⁴³ In contrast to the confident hand-on-hip sexualized body display of Christine Dolce, Florrie is a coy modern princess constructed to attract a young female 16–24 target age group. Margerie Barbes-Petit, Brand Director for Parfums Nina Ricci, targeted the young female consumer with a number of brand collaborations, including Sony's Singstar game, to promote Florrie and allow consumers the chance to 'compare themselves to the singer' by singing Sunday Girl, the song from the TV advertisement. Consumers who gave the best performances had a chance of winning *Nina* products and a Playstation 3 console and the event was promoted in stores as well as on social networking sites such as Facebook. 'Price is very important but consumers are still looking for creativity and differentiation in their products and at the point of sale. They can be seduced by a strong story and high perceived value,' explains Barbes-Petit. Samples of *Nina L'Elixir* were also given out in cinema foyers during the showings of romcom films in a further collaboration to target 16–24 year olds. The potent blend of consumerism, female-to-female comparison and celebrity aspiration that characterizes Eve images in contemporary postfeminist advertising is not limited only to the brand's promotional image, then; rather, it permeates all areas of young women's lives and becomes a pervasive influence.

A further common technique used in advertising is cropping the shot to include or exclude certain body parts to bring the focus of the shot to particular areas of the body.⁴⁴ Often cropping works to objectify and

42. Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, p. 45.

43. Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, p. 46.

44. See G. Dyer, *Advertising as Communication* (London: Methuen, 1982); R. Coward, *Female Desire* (London: Paladin, 1984); Jean Kilbourne, *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

fetishize bodies, but where faces or eyes are cropped from the shot this technique can also function to dehumanize the person in the image.⁴⁵ For example, advertisements in which Eve is pictured with the serpent from Genesis 3 are usually more overtly sexual than those where she is pictured with the forbidden fruit. Furthermore, these images are usually unsuccessful at in any attempt to represent female sexual empowerment because of their use of cropping, which removes any sense of agency or self-empowerment through sexual objectification that could be attributed to Eve if these techniques were not employed. As I have argued above, the images of Eve with a red apple usually represent Eve as the ultimate agent provocateur. She is a postfeminist icon because she is, according to the advertisements, able to tempt others into doing what she wants because of her overwhelming desirability. In advertisements where Eve is pictured with only the snake, the postfeminist idea of empowerment through sexuality is undermined. The adverts are more concerned to display Eve's flesh and use the serpent as a phallic symbol than to present Eve as an empowered, sexually assertive individual (see, e.g. the advert for *Trussardi Python* perfume in Fig. 2.10). Significantly, the essential returned gaze of the female in postfeminist advertising, which is necessary to signify her empowerment, is almost always absent from these images.

Similarly the two brochure covers below (Figs. 3.14, 3.15) for Leeds Victoria Quarter's promotional magazine, *VQ*, and the clothing company, *Sisley*, further illustrate the disempowering effect of the absence of the female return gaze in postfeminist Eve advertising. Each cover features a representation of Eve with the serpent; however, both images have employed the sexist advertising technique of cropping the eyes from the head of the women, which objectifies and dehumanizes the women in the shot.⁴⁶ In the *VQ* advertisement, this technique is used to allow the consumer to see themselves as the tempting Eve, consuming to make herself even more desirable in the *VQ* garden of Eden. The *Sisley* shot, however, is aiming for the shock factor in the hope that young consumers will take notice of the brochure and then buy from it, since it is associating itself with sexuality and rebelliousness, themes that are attractive to its late-teen target consumers.

45. Cortese, *Provocateur*, p. 42.

46. This technique is traditionally almost always used on females in advertising except in postfeminist advertising when it is used on male bodies to objectify and sexualize them. See the discussion of images where Adam is depicted alone later in this chapter.

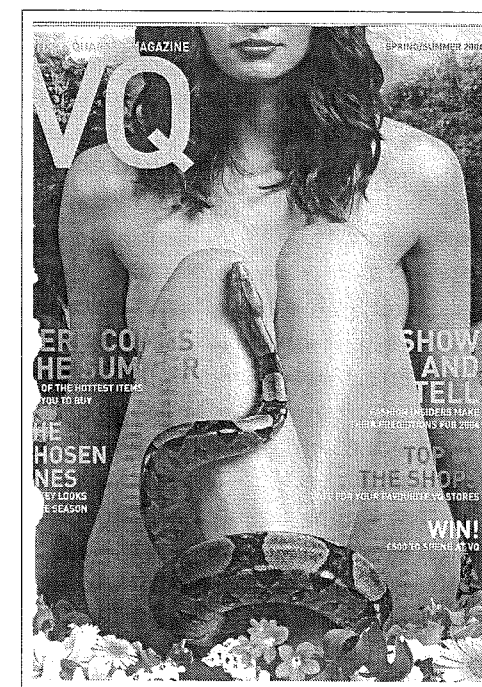


Figure 3.14. Cover of *VQ* magazine (Leeds Victoria Quarter), Spring/Summer issue 2004



Figure 3.15. Cover of *Sisley* brochure, *Lost in the Garden of Eden*, Spring/Summer issue 2001

Unlike the unisex brochures of Sisley and VQ, the Trussardi print advertisement appeared in a women's magazine. Interestingly, the perfume did not sell well. Whether that is because postfeminist consumers picked up on Eve's lack of agency in the image or it was simply a matter of the perfume being unpleasant is not really the issue, since well-chosen advertisements have always sold mediocre products to consumers. The issue is that this advertisement highlights the fundamental weaknesses of the postfeminist theme of female empowerment through self-objectification. The images are merely a recycling opportunity for traditional patriarchally defined images of women in art produced in the nineteenth century and in advertising produced in the 1970s. Postfeminist images are packaging the traditional methods of women's negotiation tactics to achieve power in patriarchal culture as a new form of feminism. In fact, this kind of 'every woman for herself' survival tactic that women use in societies defined by men is long established. For example, the form of postfeminism sold in advertising today is remarkably similar to the strategies of female sexual guile promoted by Helen Gurley Brown in her 1962 smash-hit bestseller, *Sex and the Single Girl: The Unmarried Woman's Guide to Men*.⁴⁷ Brown's book was a self-help manual that provided strategies for the modern single career girl of the time (who eventually became the *Cosmo* girl) to rise above her limiting circumstances through the tools of feminine transformation and sexual guile. Throughout the sixties and on through the next few decades, Brown celebrated an exaggerated femininity that hinged upon the power to remake oneself into a sexually desirable temptress. Brown summarizes the fundamental ideology of what was to be seen by young women as female sexual empowerment in postfeminist advertising over forty years later: 'Sex is a powerful weapon for a single woman in getting what she wants from life'.⁴⁸

The sexual strategic approach of Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* formed the template for the postfeminist empowerment through self-objectification that we see in popular culture today.⁴⁹ Despite the overwhelming similarities between the Gurley Brown self-help guide and postfeminist advertising ideology, a significant difference is that Gurley Brown was advising women who did not have equality in any sense in

47. Helen Gurley Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl: The Unmarried Woman's Guide to Men* (New York: Open Road Iconic Books, 2012). Such was the popularity of this book that it has been reprinted many times since its original release in 1962.

48. Gurley Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl*, p. 7.

49. Indeed Hurley's 1982 book, *Having it All: Love, Success, Sex, Money Even if You're Starting with Nothing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), reads like an early postfeminist manifesto.

society. The women who bought her book were women who felt they needed to transform themselves into sex objects to achieve any form of power in their lives. Gurley Brown's book, however, still proves relevant for a modern market. *Sex and the Single Girl* has already been reprinted twice since the turn of the century, along with its companion guidebook *Sex and the Office*.⁵⁰ Postfeminist advertising ideology, however, assumes that women enjoy equality in every area of their lives, ignoring the fact that this is not the experience of the women who subscribe to this brand of postfeminism. Advertising would not be successful at selling strategies for achieving female power if women already had it. As Jon Stratton comments in his study of the commodification of the body in advertising, *The Desirable Body*, 'turning men's desire for the female body to their own advantage...[is one] of the multiplicity of ways in which women today negotiate certain circumstances in their everyday lives'.⁵¹ Following the lead of the Gurley Brown promotion of female sexuality as a way for women to achieve power, postfeminist sexual empowerment ideology, with its focus on the individual rather than the collective, does not offer any concrete solutions for obtaining equality, and only substitutes an autonomy based largely on sexual empowerment that is exclusive and dividing for women. Because postfeminist advertising ideology is concerned with selling products to women, the emphasis of the sexual empowerment they promote comes from exploring lifestyle choices and personal pleasures rather than outlining agendas for more direct and recognizable kinds of social activism. A recent advertising campaign for GHD hair straighteners demonstrates this point further.

GHD is the market-leading brand for hair straighteners, a position it has maintained through highly effective promotional campaigns that reverse traditional readings of myth and fairytale to promote the concepts of individual choice, female-to-female sexual competition and empowerment. GHD summarizes its brand ethos as 'the spirit of transformation'⁵² and the advertising campaigns extend transformation to be as much about life transformation as hair. Since 2009 GHD have an ongoing campaign, *Twisted Fairytales*, in which well-known fairytales Rapunzel, Red Riding Hood and Cinderella get a postfeminist makeover—literally in the case of Cinderella—all with the strap-line 'You Can Do Anything with Your Hair'. In each advertisement it is the heroine's GHD-styled hair that is

50. Once in 2003 and once in 2012.

51. Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 239.

52. 'About GHD' on the official GHD website, <http://www.ghdhair.com/about-ghd?PID=PRO-020&CRE=230&PLA=1> (accessed 21 December 2011).

the source of her empowerment. This series of advertisements follows the controversial GHD: *A New Religion for Hair* campaign, which focused on female sexual jealousy and competition with tag-lines such as, 'May my new curls make her feel choked with jealousy' and 'Make him dump her tonight and come home with me'. The campaign was banned after complaints from the Bishop of Liverpool and members of the public that the advertisements were offensive to the Christian faith.⁵³ The replacement Twisted Fairytales campaign maintained the equation of sexual attractiveness with sexual empowerment but focused more on empowerment through independence and personal choice than female sexual competition. In one image, for instance, an unsmiling Red Riding Hood stares back at the viewer, with an axe in one hand and in the other a basket with a wolf's tail poking out. The advertisement carries the rhyme:

Little Red Riding Hood, neither timid nor shy
While straightening her locks, a wolf she did spy
But far from fainting or running a fever
She started to laugh and pulled out a cleaver

More recently Eve has played a key role in advertising campaigns to communicate GHD's brand ethos of personal transformation through physical appearance and making the right consumer choice.

In 2010, for example, Eve imagery featured in the Choose Your Destiny campaign, an interactive 'tarot'-style website-based campaign in which consumers could choose their 'destiny' by the colour of their GHD straighteners. Choosing green meant choosing the personality of Eve, and choosing envy. In this campaign, as in postfeminist rhetoric more widely, that other women should be envious of your appearance and by extension your life, as symbolized by the consumer choice of GHD straighteners, is a desirable destiny to choose. In 2011 in a brand collaboration move similar to that of Nina Ricci's use of pop singer Florrie, GHD appointed pop singer Katy Perry as its 'brand ambassador'. Perry's fan base is huge and made up of young females in particular, and GHD can target its own market through Perry's worldwide tours, films and videos.⁵⁴ GHD's 2011 Christmas campaign continues the Snow White

53. See the ASA Adjudication on the campaign at http://www.asa.org.uk/ASA-action/Adjudications/2008/3/Jemella-Ltd/TF_ADJ_44122.aspx (accessed 26 August 2010), and Mark Sweney, 'Beauty Ad Banned after Christian Outcry', *The Guardian* (12 March 2008).

54. See GHD and Perry's brand tie-in events to target their crossover markets: 'GHD Katy Perry Tour Activation: Our Activation of Katy Perry's California Dreams tour delivered an amazing 51% Redemption for GHD', *Slice Experiential Marketing and Events*, <http://slice.co.uk/about> (accessed 21 December 2011).

theme but conflates the fairytale with Eve mythology. In the advertisement Perry is the innocent Snow White transformed, having bitten the poisonous apple/forbidden fruit, into a 1920's *femme fatale* siren. Again, colours are chosen carefully in the image to match the colour of the apple with the heels of Perry's shoes, her nails, lips and the GHD carrying case, linking sexiness with financial success and consumerism.

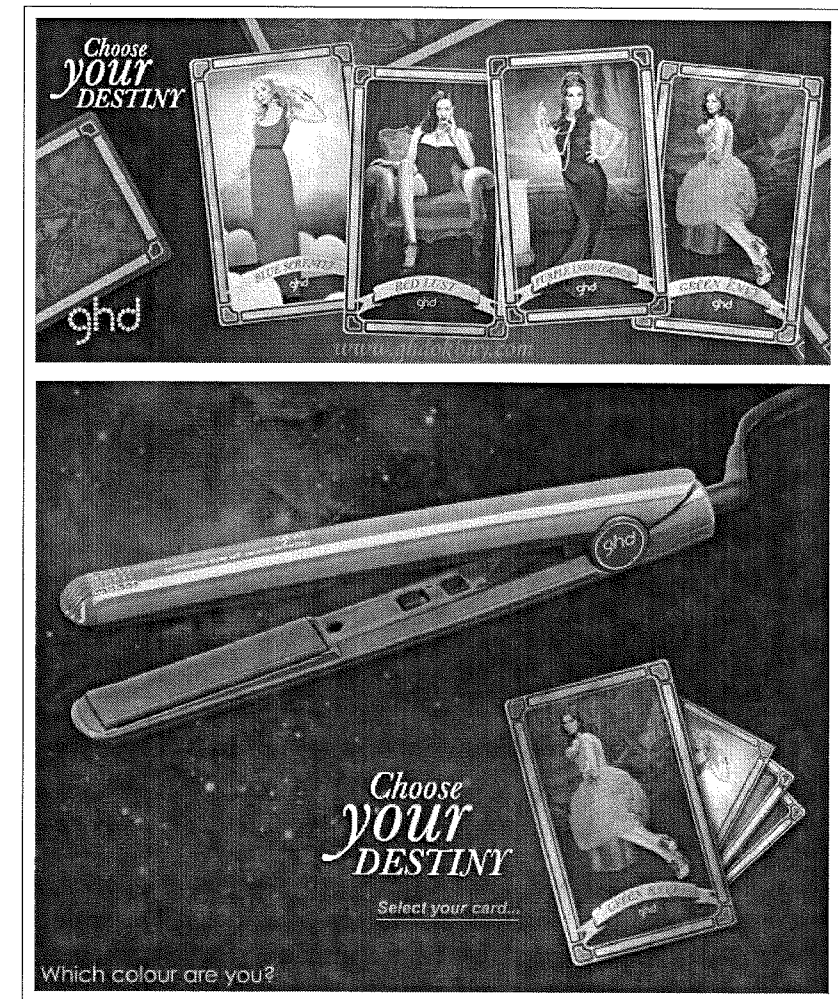


Figure 3.16. GHD, *Choose Your Destiny*, 2010