Domesticating Sexuality: Contextualizing the Contradictory Imagery of Female Consumerism, 1955-1959

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Abstract

American citizens of the later half of the 1950s witnessed notable shifts in their socio-economic status. The decade following the Second World War wrought prosperity, which stemmed as a direct result of the emergence of a mass media and the cultural amendments that followed. The media fashioned a new consumer culture, one based on material and individual products. The onset of mass advertisement and consumption lead to a dramatic and significant shift in female gender identity. The expulsion of women from the labor force resulted in a demand of a compliant, visually appealing, and domestic housewife. Women became marketable products through various advertisements in adult periodicals, romance novels, and etiquette books that focused on domesticity and cultivated a culture of vanity. These materials constructed a contradictory female consumer culture in that they emphasized collectivism and individualism simultaneously. The dual emphasis on femininity is present within etiquette texts as the authors prescribed a specific and satisfactory code of social behavior for women of this ear. The principle argument maintained that if women followed the provided guideline precisely, they would achieve marriage and domesticity. The romance novel, however, remained as more of a strategic etiquette concept enacted. The romance author encouraged women to perform as the heroine within their novels because that character successfully sought and obtained domesticity. The etiquette text explained the ideal while the romantic heroine represented it. The advertisements and articles presented in adult periodicals of this era existed as a means of effectively maintaining domesticity after the ideal had been achieved.

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Introduction

Contemporary American society frequently refers the decade of the 1950s to as one of immense prosperity, innocence, and joviality. This decade lies in-between two critical eras of American history, the Second World War and the restless sixties. As the United States transitioned from one decade to another, American culture changed dramatically as citizens witnessed a notable alteration in social and economic spheres. Societal values and norms transformed as individualism gained momentum and America evolved from an industrial to a consumer society. The emergence of a mass market and media juxtaposed with a dramatic rise in consumerism fashioned a new culture, one based on material products. The ascent of consumerism was attributed to the newly emerging culture of the middle-class. During the 1950s American society, particularly the working and lower middle classes, in an attempt to achieve normality in the post war era, constructed new traditions and culture with the concept of consumerism as the center.[1]

The most significant cultural change during this era was the shift in gendered roles and identities of women depicted consumer in products such as novels, etiquette books, and adult periodicals. In the aftermath of the Second World War, American society encouraged women to retire from their recently acquired positions within the American labor force and return to their homes permanently. This concept also had an effect on women who had not yet entered to workforce. Young women who anticipated entering employment were now encouraged not to do so. With this alteration came a re-discovery and emphasis on the compliant housewife, sexualized and domesticated by the

[1] Information consumption and the inequality of the middle class can be found in Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

mass media. The idea of the compliant housewife objectified women through their use of and inclusion in the consumer culture, becoming not only a compliant housewife but a marketable product. A culture of vanity was constructed for women, which placed strict emphasis on physical appearances. Women who engaged in superficial extensive grooming became marketable.

Adult periodicals authors between the years 1955 and 1959 perpetrated a contradictory female consumer culture emphasizing a domesticated housewife and a culture of vanity through a surfeit of advertisements and articles. Etiquette books disseminated this ideal through their emphasis on proper and acceptable feminine behavior. Works of fiction, specifically what are termed romance novels, targeted women and distributed this female construct. They demanded that women to perform like the heroines. These consumer products proposed, as did the mass media, through pictorial images, ideal stories, and how-to guides that women needed to be submissive and docile homemakers, concentrating on home and family, as well as desirable and sensual beings who significantly value fashion, cosmetics, and societal prestige. The simultaneous imagery of a cultivated female as a part of the consumer culture and novel culture of vanity is demonstrative of a dual emphasis on femininity.

Etiquette books of the 1950s represented contradictory imagery in that they encouraged domestic abilities and fashion. These text authors wrote predominantly for the younger female generations and proposed a how-to-guide for achieving popularity and male companionship. The ultimate goal of the etiquette text was to prescribe a code of behavior that would lead to marriage and domesticity. These etiquette authors encouraged young women to begin training for such a life through proper social conduct

which included such domestic duties as child rearing, party planning, and meal preparation. Etiquette authors also encouraged vanity through the emphasis placed upon clothing, make-up, and grooming. These authors simultaneously encouraged women to be domestically minded and conscious of their respective physical appeal. Authors utilized the vanity sections to depict the appropriate physical appearance that women needed to attract male attention and achieve marriage.

While etiquette texts prescribed a plan to obtain a mate and domesticity, romance novels executed their strategy. The heroine of the romantic novel followed a specific code of conduct regarding vanity with the goal of capturing and maintaining the attention of the hero. The romance author depicted the heroine as being physically appealing therefore deserving of male affection. Romance authors blatantly encouraged a culture of vanity through the depiction of heroine and her superior attributes. The romantic novel is demonstrative of a culture of vanity and domesticity because the heroine also sought marriage. The definitive goal of the heroine was to marry and become a homemaker hence demonstrating to the romance reader the significance of domesticity.

The adult periodicals of the 1950s, including *Life* magazine and *Good Housekeeping*, continued contradictory imagery by depicting women as homemakers overly concerned with beautification. The romance novel concluded with the heroine's impending marriage as the periodical concentrates on the married woman. Designers of adult periodicals constructed a cultivated female and a culture of vanity that was reflected through various articles and advertisements. These magazines offered articles and advertisements for household technologies as well as ones for fashion, diet, and

cosmetics. Adult periodicals presented a dual emphasis on femininity just as did the etiquette text and romantic novel.

The advertisements and articles presented in *Life* and *Good Housekeeping*, etiquette texts, and romance novels reflected the power of the mass media and market. These consumer products succinctly demonstrated a dual emphasis on femininity. The media came to gender products and advertisements due to the rise in consumerism. As consumers began to purchase more items, product companies began to contract mediums of the mass media to advertise and produce more which provided a significant consumer culture. Advertisements for products were found in adult periodicals, which is the most direct form of advertising. Etiquette texts and romance novels were advertisements in their own right. These texts and novels advertised a proper social behavior for women of the 1950s in regard to both domestic affairs and physical grooming. Women and young women of this era digested them as advertisements.[2] An advertisement in an adult periodical explicated to woman products that they should strive to obtain and use. The etiquette text and romantic novel were advertisements in that they presented a strict code of behavior for women and young women to adhere to. The behavior in these publications was a type of advertisement on what a 1950s female should be.

The periodicals and texts utilized sought a particular audience. This audience was composed primarily of the lower middle-class and working class. In the 1950s, the middle class is different than ever before and actually included some people who were previously regarded as the working class. The former working class, re-defined to be middle class comprised the principle audience for these texts. The working class

[2] Susan J. Douglas. *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media.* (New York: Times Books, 1994).

attempted to mimic the older middle and upper classes through the acquirement of material products and knowledge of appropriate social behavior. Women of this specific newer middle class tended to be financially comfortable, not lacking or enjoying absolute luxury, and worked as homemakers. The stereotype is that these women cleaned, cooked, catered to their husbands, and read how-to-guides, romance novels, and proper etiquette. This image resulted from the mass market and how the mass media fueled this image.

Etiquette books, romance novels, and adult periodicals were incredibly popular during the decade of the 1950s. Etiquette texts described and romance novels instructed appropriate behavior. Periodicals offered a glamorous version of domesticity. Guidelines for achieving marriage and domesticity offered women goals to strive for and a purpose. The concept of the homemaker provided women with a specific place within society, a niche that they were able to identify and belong. Women succeeded in this position of homemaker as opposed to the outside workforce that at this time was overwhelming dominated and controlled by men. The mass media advertised this position of homemaker as a significant part of society, which it was in many respects. Homemakers represented a specific class of people.

Etiquette books have been a significant part of American culture from the second half of the nineteenth century and the entirety of the twentieth century. People of the 1950s, however, witnessed a notable increase in etiquette publications due to the emergence and tremendous success of the mass media and market. Companies such as Maybeline produced products that emphasized vanity, while companies such as Maytag demonstrated the desire for domesticity and encouraged women to be homemakers

through their various advertisements for household technologies and products. During this era, publishing companies produced etiquette books and dispersed them in unparalleled mass due to the engorgement of the consumer market. The mass media and market constructed a reciprocal relationship, a symbiotic one. The media advertised products while the market demanded advertisements. The mass media, consisting predominantly of literature, television, and radio constructed the demand for these texts and proved to be directly responsible for the growth of female consumer culture. The literature of the mass media consisted mainly of periodicals, newspapers, and texts both fiction and nonfiction.

Literature sustained a relatively significant role within society. When defined in its most restrictive context, literature includes only works created through the written word and excludes such ancient forms as oral narratives and works of art. There are several distinctive genres of literature but the romantic variety has maintained a juxtaposition of longevity and repetition of thematic trends. The most significant trends, however, are the presence of a hero and heroine who effectively become consumed with one another and confront momentous odds to find contentment or tragedy.[3] The works of the Middle Ages through the skakespearian era to the romanticism of Austen, to the supermarket novel of the twentieth century exemplified this format.

In late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century America, adult periodicals emerged and have remained a medium of information and object of leisure activity. The intense popularity of periodicals during the later half of the 1950s played a significant role in the construction of a consumer society. Some of the adult periodicals consisted of

[3] This concept can be found in Pamela Regis. *A Natural History of the Romance Novel.* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 2003).

advertisements and articles that specifically assigned the specific role for women of the 1950s society. The designers behind these advertisements and articles contributed to a female consumer culture.

During this era of the 1950s, American society fueled the consumer market, which was accessible through advertisements and articles presented by television and magazines. The written materials and publications of the mass media were tremendously influential in regard to the way in which American chose to live their lives.[4] Women's decisions about what to purchase, for example, were frequently based upon the strength of advertisements and articles presented within adult periodicals. These choices ranged from the most trivial items such as shampoo brand, to the more expensive and dramatic goods such as automobiles.

Scholars fundamentally agree that mass consumption did influence, and in cases shape, cultural and gender identity while concurrently differing on whether the mass media projected positive or negative imagery. The scholarship on the emergence of the mass market and media conveys one central theme that manufactured products and the advertisements employed to distribute them had to a profound impact on American society and culture. While the arguments vary, the subject matter is fairly consistent. Collectively these scholars are effective in depicting the effects that commercialism had on American society, but do not argue whether or not those effects were superior or detrimental.

Susan J. Douglas, author of *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*, focuses great attention on the second half of the twentieth century in regard

[4] This concept can be found in Susan Strasser. *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash.* (New York: Metropolitain Books, 1999).

to consumerism, feminism, and the emergence of the mass media. Douglas contends that the mass media, through positive and negative imagery, prescribed a contradictory code of behavior for young women.[5] Douglas successful proves that specific media images within this popular culture bewildered and shaped an entire generation of young women. Focusing on songs, film, and television, Douglas does not illuminate the positive and negative connotations of individual magazine advertisements as is the case with several other secondary materials. James B. Twichell, in *Twenty Ads that Shook the World,* agrees with Douglas that the baby boomer generation was overwhelmingly affected by the mass media.[6] The baby boomer generation refers to the increase in birth rate during the 1950s. Children born during this era have come to be referred to as baby boomers.

Gary Cross's work *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* presents this argument as well. Unlike Twichell, Cross does take a definitive stance on the mass market, claiming that consumer culture was problematic due to its domination over individual in society.[7] Consumer culture created a society of individuals. Consumer culture explicated to society what it needed to buy and maintain. Individualism became a significant aspect of 1950s consumer culture.

Susan Strasser, author of *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* and *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* concentrates on mass production and how it altered American culture and existence. Strasser focuses how the invention and development of the mass market and media changed the scope of

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[5] Douglas, 9.

[6] James B. Twitchell. *Twenty Ads that Shook the World: The Century's Most Groundbreaking Advertising and how it Changed Us All.* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2000), 2.

[7] Gary Cross. *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 10.

household products, claiming that the media has personified progress.[8] Strasser also details how by examining these products after disposal, basically examining trash, can provide insight into how Americans were altered by mass consumption.[9] Both of Strasser's works detail the effects that the consumer market had on the American population. Consumer culture influenced women greatly.

Cross, Strasser, and Twitchell place the rise in consumerism and mass consumption in a broader context, focusing on all social, economic, and political classes as well as both genders. Douglas, however, is the only scholar that argues these media images were both positive and negative. Where Douglas concentrates on female youth, she neglects the dual influence of homemaker and fashion on adult women. Douglas focuses principally on young women, resulting in a gap in the literature. An examination of etiquette texts, romance novels, and the articles and advertisements in specific adult periodicals that were geared toward women expands on Douglas's work and demonstrates the simultaneous emergence of a culture of vanity and culture of domesticated housewife.

Scholars of the twentieth century romance novel occupy two opposing positions. Some scholars argue that the romantic novel was oppressive for women because limits their desires, goals, and activities. These scholars argue that romance novels depicted women as weak and represented flaccid consumers who were easily influenced.[10] Other

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[8] Susan Strasser. *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 291.

[9] Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want*, 17.

scholars, however, contend that the romantic novel created a liberating freedom.[11] In regard to etiquette texts, scholars tend to maintain that their popularity can be attributed to the growing middle class.[12] Persons of the emerging middle class sought to emulate the upper and middle classes, creating their own niche in American society.

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[10] This argument is present with the following works, Leslie W. Rabin. *Reading the Romantic Heroine: Text, History, and Ideology*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985). and *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction*, ed. Jean Radford (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

[11] This argument can be found in Pamela Regis.

[12] Content from Arthur M. Schlesinger. *Learning How to Behave: A Historical Study of American Etiquette Books*, (New York: MacMillian Company, 1947).

"A Code of Behavior, Prescribing Etiquette"

Etiquette books did not appear as an original genre of literature in the 1950s for they circulated within the eighteenth century and nineteenth century elite society. Etiquette text authors of the 1950s, however, did construct a unique formula. Etiquette authors based this formula on the dramatically changing society in which they lived. Female consumers bought and read these etiquette texts in mass due to the rise of the mass media and market. The mass media publicized these books while the market consisted of consumers who demanded products. A large audience with money to spend on consumer products comprised the mass market.

The term etiquette is a cultural concept and refers to social behavior and interaction. Etiquette is traditionally defined as "the conduct or procedure required by good breeding or prescribed by authority to be observed in social or political life."[13] In theory etiquette books describe an appropriate social conduct for the whole of society when in actuality; they catered the most to a select female audience. Etiquette authors wrote for men as well, but those texts were not as popular or so widely spread or read. This audience was comprised of young women, coming from financially stable and respectable families, hence the phrase 'good breeding.' In regard to age, these women ranged from their teen age years, where dating was the most popular activity, to their twenties, the age where domesticity appeared. Women of the 1950s consumed these books in record numbers and sought their advice ardently because these books provided a sense of purpose.

Young women utilized etiquette books as a set of guidelines to achieve popularity and male companionship. Etiquette authors encouraged young women to subscribe to the

[13] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfied: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated), 1996.

guidelines established within these texts because they promised marriage. These texts blatantly claimed that the fulfillment of advice provided would ensure the acquirement of a marriage proposal. The etiquette books went even so far as to claim that by following the advice offered women would have a successful marriage. Society expected women of the 1950s to marry and partake in complacent domesticity, therefore the mass media depicted women in such an environment. Etiquette books established a set of rules that led women to believe that if they followed said rules, they would acquire a suitable husband. Included with this husband would be a domestic life and all that it entailed. Etiquette texts maintained that women desired domesticity above all else.

Etiquette texts of the later half of the 1950s were contradictory and perplexing in nature, concentrating on both domesticity and vanity simultaneously. These books described for women the proper way to manage a household, raising children, and hostess an event or party. Authors covered these activities, however, on a superficial level, emphasizing concern over public appearance. For example, in dealing with child rearing, the guidelines demonstrated the appropriate way to have a christening. These texts also described to young women the proper way to teach their children courtesy. The management of a household consisted of keeping up with special occasions, table settings, serving food, owning and caring for pets, and answering the telephone.

While these etiquette books emphasized the significance of marriage and domesticity, they also placed heavy emphasis on physical appearance. Etiquette authors prescribed an appropriate dress code for young women that covered all apparel from female undergarments to overcoats. The dress code also included the different occasions and seasons for them to consider before dressing in any particular piece of clothing.

Popular and trendy fashion was heavily emphasized within these texts. Etiquette authors, through fashion advice, explained to young women the acceptable and non-acceptable ways to dress. The concept of appropriate dress juxtaposed with the concept of skilled domesticity wrought a contraction, a contradiction that young women digested in mass.

In addition to prescriptions on domestic activities and conduct of fashion and physical appearance, etiquette books of the later 1950s provided guidelines for social behavior in regard to having conversations, dancing, dating, and letter writing. Some of the etiquette books concentrated entirely on constructing and maintaining relationships of the friendly and romantic varieties. Young women were also given instructions for the proper conduct in the presence of members of the armed forces and political celebrities, as well as prominent business personalities. The behavior books were extremely influential in the lives of young ladies. These texts demanded obedience and adherence to their prescription to obtain popularity and avoid criticism and alienation.

Authors wrote etiquette books for three different age groups consisting of women, teenagers, and children. All of the etiquette texts produced contained the same themes and messages regardless of their intended audience. Etiquette texts concentrated on such themes as fashion, domesticity, popularity, grooming, and male-female relationships. Etiquette texts presented such messages as vanity through their emphasis on extensive grooming. These books cultivated a culture of vanity through their emphasis on make-up, hairstyling, and other efforts for a beautiful physical appearance that extended beyond basic grooming. The phrase culture of vanity refers to extensive individualism through intense grooming. Another prominent message that these etiquette texts presented dealt with domesticity, meaning the ability to efficiently manage a household.

Etiquette books described the societal imposed code of behavior for young women within the 1950s. These texts clearly defined the role of women within proper society referring to both historical era and cultural themes. Esther B. Aresty maintained that the "rules of etiquette develop slowly and their shifting patterns may reflect their historical times."[14] As etiquette is a cultural notion, it is also a historical one. Aresty also contended "Very often, a good reason has summoned a rule of etiquette into being, and when the reason no longer exists the rule dies out."[15] Innovative technologies weighed heavily on social etiquette and prompted the abandonment of specific customs and behavior. Etiquette authors demonstrated the expected behavior of society within the pages of 1950s etiquette books. Texts of the 1950s dramatically varied from the ones produced in the 1830s or even as late as the 1920s.

Aspects of social etiquette such as forms of communication and appropriate dress changed to reflect the trends of the particular era in which they are utilized. Culture played a significant role in social etiquette during the 1950s. Etiquette, a product of its time, represented and characterized culture. Numerous aspects of culture are steadfast and exemplified longevity while others altered from their traditional and original intent. The abandonment of calling cards, for example exemplifies a changed society. Etiquette texts demonstrate alterations in culture and depict new and changed aspects such as morals, values, and rituals. Aresty maintained fundamentally, "good manners are universal. But conventions differ greatly."[16] Aresty examines conventions such as

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[14] Esther B. Aresty. *The Best Behavior: The Course of Good Manners-From Antiquity to the Present-as seen through Courtesy and Etiquette Books*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 10.

[15] Aresty, 10.

[16] Aresty, 9.

handshakes, kissing, and food consumption to describe the differences between varying cultures.[17] Social etiquette is a cultural inherency as evident by varying ethnic and nationality peoples. Peoples of different cultures and nationalities vary on social etiquette as not all etiquette is universal in nature and execution.

Etiquette books during the later half of the 1950s provided a prescribed set of behavior for individuals, especially women, to follow, and carried the burden of maintaining the what they deemed proper behavior. The dissemination of this vital information elevated the texts in regard to importance as evident throughout the narrative. Helen B. Schleman and Dorothy C. Stratton, authors of *Your Best Foot Forward: Social Usage for Young Moderns*, contended that their text was geared toward the younger generation that were "interested in dating, care about improving their table manners, entertain and visit friends, meet a great many new people, and would like to do all these things easily."[18] The authors claimed that the simply following their guidelines, the younger generation would be better equipped to deal with everyday situations and cope successfully. The authors drew a parallel relationship regarding etiquette and claimed, "social customs are to society what habits are to the individual."[19] The emphasis that the authors placed on behavior was demonstrative of how classical behaviors represented society as a whole or at least the ideal that society constructed. The authors utilized this representation to argue the need for certain behavioral guidelines.

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[17] Aresty, 9.

[18] Helen B. Schleman and Dorothy C. Stratton. *Your Best Foot Forward: Social Usage for Young Moderns*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1955), v.

[19] Schleman and Stratton, 1.

Schleman and Stratton also argued, "it is important to learn social usages in order that you may be welcome at home, in other people's homes, and in general society."[20] This particular text emphasized the significance of good manners and social etiquette to be a proper member of society. The authors implied that neglect of proper social usage leads to alienation. Etiquette texts blatantly implied that alienation from proper society would be detrimental to one's well being.

This theme of alienation, resulting from the refusal to engage in appropriate social behavior, is also a theme in Carolyn Hagner Shaw's *Modern Manners: Etiquette for All Occasions*. Within this text, Shaw bluntly states, "to those who pretend to distain the accepted customs in dealing with others, I might point out that to cultivate good manners is actually being selfish in the best sense of the word."[21] The author actually criticized those who did not prescribe to proper etiquette. Also, the author extended beyond conventional criticism and made the statement that people did consider there to be an appropriate code of behavior and accepted it but choose to pretend that they do not. The author maintained that some members of society refused to subscribe to proper behavior in rebellion. These people recognized that it existed but did not wish to participate.

Similar to Schleman and Stratton, Amy Vanderbilt, author of *Everyday Etiquette: Answers to Today's Etiquette Questions*, emphasized the everyday aspect of etiquette and claimed that submitting to proper social conduct would provide a less difficult and more content lifestyle for women.[22] Vanderbilt argued that the absence of decent manners

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[20] Schleman and Stratton, 5.

[21] Carolyn Hagner Shaw. *Modern Manners: Etiquette for All Occasions*, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1958), 11.

[22] Shaw, 11.

would result in an disordered society where people would be insufferable to one another.[23] Vanderbilt explained that the comprehension of what good manners enabled people to be more comfortable with themselves as well as with society in general. Vanderbilt referred to good manners as the "traffic rules for society."[24] This concept was similar to Schleman and Stratton's argument where people and their actions represent society and not vice versa. As much as it is crucial to have established rules for driving, it was deemed critical by etiquette authors to have the guidelines for behavior in social settings.

Domesticity was also a significant topic within etiquette texts. Etiquette authors established and encouraged domesticity was established through descriptions such as how to become a good homemaker, wife, and mother. Authors represented domesticity through advice such as to be careful not to be "rude or snippy to the milkman or to the day worker."[25] Being home to greet the milkman is demonstrative of the emphasis placed on the domestic housewife. Another example of domesticity can be found in Shaw's text where she advises women to not get upset at their children in the supermarket in order to avoid embarrassment.[26] Grocery shopping was another stereo-typical image of the compliant housewife. The compliant housewife can be described as the acquiescent and accommodating woman. This female figure conforms to the images and etiquette imposed by society.

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[23] Shaw, 11.

[24] Shaw, 11.

[25] Shaw, 168.

[26] Shaw, 167.

Emily Post, in her work *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage*, refers to her audience as the "charming hostess" who has "cooked the dinner…and prepared to serve."[27] Post demonstrates the importance of domesticity through a discussion of a female's specific responsibilities. Post described the proper items that a good hostess and homemaker should possess in her home, especially her kitchen. Etiquette authors emphasized items such as lazy susans and service plates to not only make the work of a homemaker easier but to serve and host with a sense of style.[28] Authors encouraged style even within domestic chores because the concept of stylish material belongings, even appliances remained a facet of 1950s consumer culture.

Etiquette authors mentioned the subject of child rearing somewhat in etiquette texts, although it was not a prominent theme. When mentioned, however, the authors established the raising of children as a female occupation. Etiquette authors offered advice for establishing manners and appropriate social conduct from an early age. Shaw maintained that children should be taught basic courtesies such as 'thank you' and 'excuse me,' and that they should also be groomed for social occasions. Shaw contended, "a child at five, or even four, is not too young to begin learning how to be a host."[29] The concept of being a good host or hostess was a dominant theme present within these etiquette texts so they emphasized that children should be groomed for that particular role from an early age. Society, and by extension the mass media, encouraged women to be domestic and in turn teach their children the necessary skills as well.

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[27] Emily Post. *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage*, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1957), 383.

[28] Post, 383-384.

[29] Shaw, 165-166.

Etiquette texts gendered the place of children within society and set guidelines for them to follow and goals for them to achieve.

In direct opposition to the emphasis etiquette texts placed on domesticity was the heavy concentration on a culture of vanity. In etiquette texts, domesticity and vanity remained in opposition to each other but encouraged simultaneously. The concept of domesticity depended upon the female putting her family and home before herself while the culture of vanity encouraged individualism and narcissism. Etiquette texts covered a surfeit of information regarding how to dress, what make-up and perfume to wear, and other grooming considerations. Betty Allen and Mitchell Pirie Briggs authors of *Mind Your Manners* argued, "there is definite poise and confidence that comes from being well dressed and knowing that you are."[30] The authors encouraged their female readers to dress as they told them to in order to achieve sophistication. This etiquette text offered guidelines from what type of dress to wear and its coloring to what nail polish to use and how long to keep finger nails in the first place. *Mind Your Manners* also offered suggestions for an appropriate diet that would enable women to maintain better control over their respective figures with regard to weight and facial blemishes. Allen and Briggs stated, " whether you will be pretty or pimply depends largely on your diet."[31] The concept of beauty was as much of a concern for teenagers as it was for adult women. Etiquette books offered the same types of guidelines and presented the same messages for both adult women and teenagers.

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[30] Betty Allen and Mitchell Pirie Briggs. *Mind Your Manners*, (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1957), 84.

[31] Allen and Briggs, 80-81

Allen and Briggs maintained that proper grooming was the key to success in life. The claimed, "Neglecting this may prove costly to you. Today that friendships…are at stake isn't exaggerating the situation one bit."[32] Grooming, however, encouraged in all etiquette texts extended beyond the basic sanitary and common activities. It extended to activities that reside in a culture of vanity. Etiquette authors encouraged women to take great pride and effort into their physical appearance. In addition, etiquette authors encouraged women to be domesticated and charming, "remember that of all the things you wear your expression is the most important. Try to look and feel interested in things other than yourself."[33] Etiquette authors explained to women the significance of beauty but at the same time, they told women to not concentrate on it. The authors explained that they must place greater emphasis on female grooming because "personal appearance is a bit less important to boys than to girls."[34] The reason for this is simple; boys were not encouraged to participate in a culture of vanity and were not catered to by the mass media and market. The authors of etiquette texts and the mass media in general did not require boys to wear make-up, paint their nails, or style their hair. These texts expected females to engage in more than basic grooming by engaging frequently in such activities.

Etiquette books predominantly produced for teenagers remained virtually identical to the texts published for the adult audience, fundamentally women in their twenties, in that they emphasized appropriate social behavior in order to have an easier, and more productive successful life. The etiquette texts defined a successful life as one

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[32] Allen and Briggs, 82.

[33] Allen and Briggs, 92.

[34] Allen and Briggs, 90.

where marriage, and domesticity have been achieved as well as the possession of good friends and an attractive appearance. Teenage etiquette books concentrated heavily on dating and popularity. They also included information on being a party hostess. The most unsurprising similarity was that teenage etiquette texts maintained that people had an obligation to learn social customs and to engage in them as well. Teenage texts explained the need for appropriate social behavior in much the same way as texts for the older but described the need in more simplistic concepts. Enid A. Haupt, author of *The Seventeen Book of Young Living*, stated to her audience, "you are growing up today, learning to conform to the customs of today, and living through the events of today."[35] Haupt insisted that as young ladies matured they needed to be conscious of social customs and present themselves as not only products of their society culturally but as well behaved and traditional with regard to social etiquette. Haupt and other etiquette authors emphasized appropriate behavior as the only way to truly obtain a successful life.

Teenage etiquette books promised not only social acceptance through the extensive knowledge of proper social behavior, but they also promised popularity and prestige. Betty Cornell wrote *Teen-Age Popularity Guide* to aide teenagers in constructing and maintaining the perfect image. Cornell stated that following her advice, society would consider young women to be "polished."[36] Cornell explained that young women would be able to transform into "the kind of person who does the right thing naturally and easily at all times. You have that wonderful thing called poise. The girl

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[35] Enid A. Haupt. *The Seventeen Book of Young Living*, (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1957), vii.

[36] Betty Cornell. *Teen-Age Popularity Guide*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), 3.

with poise is the girl who knows about good personal care and good conduct"[37] Cornell's text contended that learning proper social conduct made one more popular and desirable as a friend and girlfriend. This text captured the attention of its primary audience with statements claiming that the girl who followed these guidelines would acquire the "dates, the class offices, the bids to college proms."[38] In a society based predominantly on consumerism with regard to fashion and individualistic products, such as make-up,this type of etiquette text was immensely appealing. Dating especially was a staple for young women of the 1950s because it eventually led to the inevitable domestic environment.

Dating was an extraordinarily popular subject within the etiquette books of the 1950s as it constituted a great wealth of the social interactions and relationships of the younger generations in particular. Etiquette texts examined the most basic and complex aspects of dating and provided realistic situations and advice. These texts also offered situation mishaps and plausible solutions considered appropriate by etiquette authors, and, by extension, society as a whole. Situational mishaps referred to instances where the female found herself in a difficult position. Schleman and Stratton defined dating as any venue and for any period of time such as "a few minutes spent over a Coke to the most formal of college junior proms with dinner beforehand and breakfast afterward. Or the term may refer to the man or girl whom one is dating."[39] The authors described dates as being varied in length and activity ranging form the simplistic to the more extensive outing. In Schleman and Stratton's description, the male is referred to as a 'man' while

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[37] Cornell, 3-4.

[38] Cornell, 4.

[39] Schleman and Stratton, 100.

the female was refused the title of woman and referred to as a 'girl.' This conscious title endowment demonstrated how etiquette authors treated the female with less respect and encouraged submissiveness. The authors described a male and female of the same age but only considered the male to have reached maturity. While etiquette authors wrote these texts for females the man was always depicted as being the more important gender.

In *Your Best Foot Forward: Social Usage for Young Moderns*, Schleman and Stratton depicted the female gender as docile and complacent, meaning that women felt contentment with their respective station in life. The authors expressed the societal belief that women should be obliging and charming regardless of the situation. In describing the appropriate behavior for a date that has escalated to a *petting* situation:

> Without making too much of a point of it, avoid settings that might prove too tempting from a petting point of view. If *he* suggests parking the car on a deserted country lane or sitting on an isolated beach…don't demand to be taken home immediately or threaten to get out and walk if your request is not granted. Your best weapon is flippancy. Tell him (laughingly of course) that he is too dangerous for you to be alone with him in any such romantic atmosphere.[40]

Schleman and Stratton blatantly advised the female to defer to the male's wishes and not express their own opinion of the situation. The authors encouraged these young female readers to lie, employing a rather charming and flirtatious tone. Schleman and Stratton encouraged women to not make a scene because that would be inappropriate and might possibly cause them to lose favor in the eyes of their respective date. Instead of encouraging strength, independence, and free-will, the etiquette text sought to construct meek and weak females. In conclusion the authors argued that if the female handles the situation responsibility, fundamentally utilizes said advice, then "instead of being

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[40] Schleman and Stratton, 105.

annoyed, he will doubtlessly be flattered that you consider him a temptation."[41] The authors encouraged women to remain in good standing with their dates regardless of the situation and implied that men would be impressed by the approachable social conduct of their respective dates.

While numerous etiquette books concentrated on variety of facets of social behavior, some texts tended to focus solely on one. Some authors concentrated on certain aspects of etiquette such as hostess duties, social interaction, and fashion. Emily Post's text *The Secret of Keeping Friends* proved exemplary of single focus. Post concentrated entirely on social interaction through the written word. Post advocated that good manners and the maintenance of friendships stem from keeping in touch and remembering special events such as anniversaries. Post contended that the secret to keeping friends was to send cards and letters.[42] The author argued that the greeting card "is not a mere caprice of fashion but significant evidence of a country-wide trend toward more constant friendly, social relationships."[43] Post described the greeting card as an act of good manners as well as newly established proper behavior. The greeting card is also demonstrative of the cultural changes within society that alter what is considered to be proper and respectable social conduct.

Post's *The Secret of Keeping Friends* centered on one specific aspect of social etiquette, demonstrated of contradictory imagery and the complex relationship between male and female. In this text, the author held the female responsible for not only

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[41] Schleman and Stratton, 105.

[42] Emily Post. *The Secret of Keeping Friends*, (Boston: Rust Craft Publications, Inc., 1955), 1.

[43] Post, 1.

remembering events and friends that pertain directly to her, but also to those of her husbands. This is demonstrative of domesticity. Post claimed that the female maintained even her husband's friendships. If a woman's husband neglects his friends or his wife, Post gave responsibility to her. Post inquired "Haven't you often wondered how many romances have gone on the rocks because for the life of him a man cannot remember...and how simple it would be to write Remembrance Days down!"[44] Post argued that the wife should keep track of the friends and engagements and provided guidelines on how to do so successfully.

While the majority of etiquette books during the later half of the twentieth century concentrated on young teenage females and women in their twenties, there were some texts published for children. These etiquette books taught children from an early age about proper social conduct and instill a sense of good manners. The approach of etiquette books for children, however, was different than those for older females. These texts utilized fantasy and adventure type situations to teach children how to behave appropriately. Sesyle Joslin's text *What Do You Say, Dear: A Book of Manners For All Occasions* exemplifies this type of method in that it proposed social situations and employed the phrase 'What Do You Say, Dear.' The author then answered the question with an appropriate response demonstrating good manners and social conduct. For example, one situation in the text stated, "You have gone downtown to do some shopping. You are walking backwards, because sometimes you like to, and you bump into a crocodile. What do you say, dear?"[45] The appropriate response was "Excuse

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[44] Post, 6.

me."[46] These children's texts were demonstrated appropriate responses for all of society such as this as well as phrases like 'thank you' and 'please.'

Joslin's text, even though it was geared toward children, was similar to the etiquette texts for older girls in that it represented the theme of submissiveness. The docile and submissive female was depicted in one specific situation within Joslin's text. Joslin constructed situation as an adventure and stated "You are a dangerous pirate and you have captured a fine lady to take on your ship. Every morning when you untie her so she can eat breakfast, she says, 'Good Morning. How are you?' What do you say, dear?"[47] In this situation, the author depicted the female as physically bound and existed as the pirate's treasure. Joslin depicts the female as docile and polite and she does not attempt to argue with her captor. In this particular example, the author depicted the female as complacent while the male held all of the power.

Another example in Joslin's text that represented the helpless female is the situation wherein it read "You are picking dandelions…a fierce dragon appears and blows red smoke on you, but just then a brave knight gallops up and cuts off the dragon's head."[48] In this situation, there is clearly a hero and heroine. The heroine relied upon the brave knight to rescue her. Through these situations, children's etiquette books established a pattern of female submissiveness that was supposed to last into adulthood. This pattern of submissiveness was frequently demonstrated and recognized easily in teenage and adult etiquette texts.

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[45] Sesyle Joslin. *What Do You Say, Dear?: A Book of Manner For All Occasions*, (United States: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1958), 20.

[46] Joslin, 23.

[47] Joslin, 41.

[48] Joslin, 8.

The theme of female submissiveness, as a facet of male-female relationships, directly relates to another common theme in etiquette books. The romance novelist always depicted the male as being more significant than the female. Etiquette books encouraged women to always consider the actions and feelings of the men in their lives above their own and to allow them to have the real power in the relationship. Schleman and Stratton deomonstrated this theme in that they stated that during a date among teenagers, it is "acceptable two use the girl's...family car...the man would be expected to do the driving."[49] The authors made the male automatically be the one to drive because etiquette books encouraged this particular social custom. The authors stated, "this...puts a social responsibility on the man."[50] Social tradition and custom demanded that the female be submissive and gave more responsibility to the male who the authors considered to be the more important person in the male-female relationship.

Etiquette texts depicted women as being the weaker sex. Etiquette authors depicted women as dependent upon men, which is not surprising due to the nature of the advice and author commentary. In the text, *Your Best Foot Forward: Social Usage for Young Moderns*, the authors discuss female independence and strength in that they do not expect to be catered to and claimed, "No girl expects to be transported by car or taxi everywhere she goes! Unless she is in formal clothes or the weather is bad, she is as capable of walking or riding on the bus as a man."[51] The statement appears, at a superficial level, to denote strength to the female, possibly even equality. On a deeper

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[49] Schleman and Stratton, 107.

[50] Schleman and Stratton, 107.

[51] Schleman and Stratton, 108.

level, however, there is a great discrepancy. The author allowed the female to act like a man under certain conditions only. The etiquette text included provisions for equality instead of making equality inherent; hence the statement proves worthless in that it has no real significant meaning.

Social etiquette was an exceedingly popular concept during the 1950s. Etiquette authors wrote predominantly for female teenagers and adult women and they digested these texts in mass. These texts emphasized the importance of proper social behavior and interactions. These texts proposed that females would be ostracized if they did not follow the guidelines set forth by the authors. These texts emphasized domesticity as well as vanity. These two terms often coincided and represented a contradictory image of the stylish and vain homemaker who supposedly prioritizes domesticity.

Many etiquette books, such as Post's *The Secret of Keeping Friends* offered worksheets for keeping track of duties to be performed and special things that must be remembered. Etiquette like *The Seventeen Book of Young Living* provided items such as menus for the planning of a successful party. Post offered worksheets and schedules to her female audience in order to aide them in balancing their social life with their domestic life, which frequently ran parallel. Etiquette books of the later half of the 1950s were contradictory in that they encouraged both domesticity and vanity simultaneously. Post depicted domesticity through etiquette features such as table settings, throwing parties, arranging and organizing gifts, child rearing, and certain social interaction. Post depicted a culture of vanity through etiquette book topics such as fashionable dress, cosmetic application, and grooming. Advice and information regarding other topics such as dating represented domesticity, through submissiveness, and a culture of vanity. Post

encouraged women to be submissive and to care about collectivism through domesticity. The author also encouraged both general and extensive grooming, therefore depicting individualism through vanity.

The dual emphasis on domesticity and vanity that was present within social etiquette books of the late 1950s was also present with romantic novels and adult periodicals of the same era. Etiquette books set forth guidelines for teenagers and young women of their twenties on social conduct. The social conduct that they were encouraged to engage in was for one purpose. The purpose of etiquette books was to outline a way to achieve marriage and domesticity. Etiquette texts, essentially, were outlines for finding a proper husband.

"A Plan of Action, Becoming the Romantic Heroine"

Etiquette books were theoretical approaches to achieving domesticity. The romance novel, however, was the theoretical outline put into action. The novel represents the path to domesticity. The romance novel not only prescribes a code of behavior like the etiquette texts, but the novel actually follows said guidelines. The most significant aspect of the romance novel is that the heroine was always successful in achieving domesticity. Hope and encouragement was generated for both the younger generations who were still occupied with dating and those women who were at the age for marriage. Marriage was an accepted given in the society of the 1950s as demonstrated through etiquette texts and romance novels.

While etiquette books of this era described an ideal that women should attempt to attain, the romance novel represented that ideal. Where the etiquette book describes how a woman should react in certain situations and in the presence of specific individuals, the heroine of the romance novel demonstrates the appropriate behavior. Should is the operative word for the etiquette texts because they iterate social perceptions and expectations. The romantic novel, similar to the how-to guide known as etiquette text, represents contrasting images. The overall tone of the romance novel demonstrates a contradiction. The heroine is depicted as independent and encouraged to seek her own happiness, but the contradiction is that happiness inevitably revolves around marriage, family, and the surrender of independence.

The romance novel as it is known today has idiosyncratic origins in the works of Jane Austen and her contemporary colleagues of the late eighteenth century. These authors constructed a specialized genre during the mid to late eighteenth century, a genre

in which there is a hero, a heroine, and an ultimately jovial conclusion. The romance novel of the mid-twentieth century, while not considered conventional literature, referring to classic work, due to its associations with popular culture, presented in various form the themes present in the genre of romantic literature. The forms that presented the literature included varying plot lines, environments, and settings. These themes usually consisted of romance, inevitable problematic plot line wherein the principle characters overcome a notable crisis, and sensible and simplistic solutions to that crisis. The novels published by Harlequin Books, exemplify this transition into modern romance. Harlequin offered a formulaic novel that embodied certain themes of romantic literature while constructing a unique standard. All novels were similar in regard to plot, character development, climax, and conclusion which resulted in the formation of new literary troupe.

Harlequin Books emerged in 1949 and altered the preconceived perceptions of what a romance novel entails. Harlequin, as a publishing company, originally replicated and mass marketed novels previously published by Mills and Boon on a monthly basis.[52] Several romance novels were written in the 1940s and published by Mills and Boon, which existed as the precursor for Harlequin. After a corporate merger, Mills and Boon became a subsidiary of Harlequin and continued to market and circulate romantic novels.[53] The authors of these Harlequin novels depicted the 1950s as one of prosperity complete with the expected housewife, with another commodity marketed specially for women. The publishing company offered women a product that truly embodied the essence of the decade with regard to societal customs and perceptions. The publication

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[52] Pamela Regis. *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 156.

[53] Regis, 156-157.

of romance novels also offered adult women a product reminiscent of the traditional children's fairy tale. The romantic novel greatly appealed to women because it promised true love, marriage, domesticity, and the cliché fairy tale notion of happily ever after.

The mass production of romance novels provided for the mass dissemination of media influences. Fundamentally the mass media and market heavily influenced the societal construct of the 1950s by illustrating, within romantic novels, specific prescriptions for behavior and status for women demonstrated within the plot. Harlequin novels established a concrete pattern of developing romantic relationships. This pattern included, among a multitude of others, the relegation of women to the domestic sphere through her engagement and a consensual marital relationship with a male.

Harlequin published romance novels as contemporary works and demonstrated societal values, norms, perceptions, and ideologies regarding the role of the female. The heroes and heroines of the romance novel are stereo-typical of the audience digesting said text. The romance novels represented relationships during the time in which they are written and proved to be stereotypical in this fashion as well. While frequently fairy tale-ish in nature, the authors of these novels presented characters the represented the general masses of reality. The whimsical romantic interludes, interactions, and the eventual contented resolution offered a picturesque lifestyle, one which women of this era desired and sought to achieve. While the persistent cheery finale is not based in reality, the characters as well as their attitudes are partially representative of the era in which they are written. The authors of these novels created characters that greatly depicted the 'perfect' decade.

The possibility of achieving the type of contentment found within the novel is a predominant reason of why romance novels were so successful. Women bought and read these books in massive numbers because they felt as if they could relate, or wished to relate to the female characters. Primarily, women ingested these works because they represented an ideal that they could strive to achieve. Through these novels, the romance authors provided an opportunity to their respective audience to aspire to the sophistication, beauty, and charisma of the heroine. As women of the 1950s era sought etiquette books for social guidance, they also read romance novels for the same reason. Romance novels left women fulfilled in a way that no other product of this time could accomplish.

In 1950s romance novels, there is ultimately only one type of heroine. The author depicted the heroine as being independent while dependent as well as engrossed in a dual culture of domesticity and vanity. The heroine embodied contradiction. The romance author always presented the heroine as being extremely attractive as well as knowledgeable of the need to be so. The heroine desired domestication and domesticity, however, internally and externally. The heroine felt the need for domesticity and displayed that desire through her actions and dialogue. The hero, however, was usually represented in two different ways. While always depicted as physically appealing, authors depicted the hero as either quiet and domineering or openly affectionate and demanding. In either classification of the hero, it is a given that the heroine falls deeply in love with him.

Romance novels contain numerous themes that revolve around the interactions of the two principle characters. These themes included submissiveness of the heroine, false

sense of independence of the heroine, and the feminine desire for domesticity. In their desire for a domestically oriented life, the female characters frequently criticized other single women and the professional world. The overall plot is always the same in each romance novel. The hero and heroine overcome some great odds to be together, whether it is through their doing or some outside force. The romance author always presented the male as the stronger character who sought the ultimate solution, while the female resolved herself happily to it.

Romance novelists depicted women in their novels as being rather strong mentally and highly independent, regardless of their respective social and employment status. The romance author depicted the heroine as an independent person with her own opinions, aspirations, and passions. These characteristics appeal to the reader because they represent some form of power on behalf of the heroine. The authors, however, downplayed these attributes because of the emphasis they placed on the heroine's preoccupation with romance and marriage. The overall goal of the heroine is marriage and family. Any other activity, including employment in which the heroine engaged in, was simply just filler between adolescence and adulthood, which she obtained through marriage.

Romance writers presented the sense of female independence as a central and persistent theme within romantic novels. Romance authors utilized numerous events and actions in order to present the heroine as independent and confident. One such example was in Peggy Dern's *Nurse Ellen*, in which Dern depicted the heroine as being self-sufficient through operating an automobile. Dern claimed that the heroine Ellen "drove with the easy-self-assured confidence of one who knows her vehicle to the last nut and

bolt and is competent to handle any of its idiosyncrasies."[54] This sense of control and independence would appeal to romance readers because, during the 1950s, women did not have much control over their lives if they wanted to acquiesce to societal perceptions and expectations. Automobile advertisements in adult periodicals, for example, were directed toward men. The women in these advertisements were always ornamental and were placed within the passenger seat. This one instance may appear simplistic but in actuality, provides extensive commentary on the society of the 1950s and the contradictions this era possessed.

The heroine of *Nurse Ellen* is a confident and self-sufficient person, but has no desire to be so. Ellen lives on her own, pays rent alone, owns an automobile, and works as a nurse. This heroine is not content with her lifestyle, however, and sought an alternative. Throughout the novel, Ellen's most fundamental desire is to be married and manage a home. Ellen craves domesticity openly. Once Ellen's goal has been reached, she claimed that she is the "luckiest gal alive."[55] Ellen also claimed that she has a "woman's trinity," referring to a husband, home, and children.[56] After leaving her position as a nurse she speaks of her duties as wife and mother. The author comments that Ellen spoke "with such a lovely air of self-importance."[57] Dern presented Ellen as being fulfilled as a domestic entity, giving the impression that women should only chose a career until married. Ellen's self-sufficiency and her desire for domesticity is contradictory because if one is a homemaker, while she may be independent, she is not

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[54] Peggy Dern. *Nurse Ellen*, (Toronto: Harlequin Books, 1957), 10.

[55] Dern, *Nurse Ellen*, 116.

[56] Dern, *Nurse Ellen*, 118.

[57] Dern, *Nurse Ellen*, 116.

self-sufficient. There is dependency in domesticity. The heroine is knowledgeable in societal customs and voluntarily caters to the societal expectations of marriage and family.

As the romance novel depicted these women as independent and strong, the heroines are also represented as being docile, obedient, and generally submissive to the whims and direction of the primary male figure. These opposing characteristics co-existed within the realm of romance novels principally because the former is actually a faux depiction. The heroine in Mary Burchell's *For Ever and Ever* is a standard model as she is described as being "sweet and charming, with an air of delicacy which was appealing."[58] The women in these novels are always even-tempered and pleasant. They are never brusque, because this would make them less attractive to the hero. Romantic novel heroines vary in personality, but only slightly, for there is a set prescription in order to attract and maintain a husband.

In deconstructing the principal female character, she inevitably rids herself of ambition and independence in favor of domesticity. The end result is a contradiction. In each romantic novel, the heroine is depicted as being fairly content with her station in life. The emergence of the heroine's love interest, however, alters not only her personality, but her desires. The hero reminds the heroine of what she is supposed to want, which is marriage and domesticity. The hero appeals to the heroine's real desires and offers the appropriate environment in which to release them.

Every heroine follows the same pattern in 1950s era romance novels. The heroes, however, do not have one concrete pattern. Romance writers presented these

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[58] Mary Burchell. *For Ever and Ever*, (Toronto: Harlequin Books, 1956), 13.

heroes as having slightly more freedom and options. The hero possessed more options than the heroine, who is inherently fixed in a one-dimensional contradiction. This freedom can be attributed to the simplistic reality that the heroine must impress the male not vice versa. The female maintained a limited personality because she must be the one to appeal to the hero and make compromises to appear more attractive to the hero. The principal female character is more compliant and more complacent than the male character.

The author's description of the heroes within these romantic novels is two-fold, including two unambiguous categories regarding mental attributes. The first and most popular stereo-type of romance authors is the quiet and abrasive male. The male protagonist in Caroline Trench's *In and Out of Love* exemplifies this sort of hero. In describing the prominent male Jonathon, a surgeon in the heroine's hospital, Trench asserted that "he had a quick, abrupt manner and when negligence or carelessness was in question, a tongue of biting sarcasm."[59] Another character present within the book, a nurse and friend of the heroine, concluded that Jonathon "certainly wouldn't dream of making love to one of the nurses, or even thinking of us as people apart from our work. And you certainly won't fall in love with him."[60] Trench depicted Jonathon as being a strict individual with little patience and exceptionally dedicated to his work. This type of hero surprised himself with his own feelings of love having previously hardened his heart which resulted from suffering in a past experience. The hero's past experiences have given way to a callous exterior that the heroine alone can penetrate and heal. Essentially

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[59] Caroline Trench. *In and Out of Love*, (Toronto: Harlequin Books, 1958), 17.

[60] Trench. *In and Out*, 26.

the heroine can see through the rough exterior of the hero and soften him which is demonstrative of their romance and relationship.

The light hearted and arrogant hero can be found in numerous romance novels of the 1950s. A second example of the conceited and lighter hero can be found in Caroline Trench's *Nurse Trenton*, wherein Jane, the heroine, insinuated falsely that she was not romantically interested in Jarvis, the hero. Jarvis responded exclaiming, "I know you don't approve of me for some reason or other, but just think of the chance you would have of reforming me! You couldn't pass that by!"[61] This type of hero was more care-free and more likely to engage the heroine in bits of humor. Compared to the grimmer male character, this hero could be found in novels that were less dramatic and lighter in nature, although there was still a problematic climax that lead directly to a cheerful ending.

Opposite of the abrasive male, is the second classification of hero, which is the confident, if not slightly arrogant, male. This variety of hero was usually exceedingly charming, charismatic, friendly, and maintained numerous relationships with women at various levels of sincerity. Exemplary of this type of hero was the principal character in Norrey Ford's *The House of My Enemy*. In the first meeting between the hero and heroine, the hero Adam, immediately charmed her. Adam stated, "You're much too pretty to be a Bramhall, you must be a fairy changeling."[62] Here, the author instantaneously created this type of hero and complied with the set pattern. This remark

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[61] Caroline Trench. *Nurse Trenton*, (Toronto: Harlequin Books, 1956), 71.

[62] Norrey Ford. *The House of My Enemy*, (Toronto: Harlequin Books, 1959), 23.

was said right after the hero is introduced to the heroine and they immediately felt attraction toward one another.

This alternate type of hero pursued the heroine at an alarming rate. The heroine became overwhelmed with the hero and his pursuit, but remained positive about it. In *House of My Enemy*, for example, Adam was very expressive about his perusal of the heroine. This perusal did not remain unnoticed by the other characters within the novel as one female claimed, "I know that...type. Nothing deters them, once they've made up their minds. He'll marry you, whether you like it or not."[63] This classification of hero is the type to offer the heroine compliments and shower her with attention. This hero was a great deal more aggressive and purposeful as he began the relationship with a goal that he intended to achieve. The goal obviously was to court the heroine. The hero ultimately desired marriage with the heroine and sought to make her subscribe to his preferences.

In addition to a pattern for personality characteristics, there was also a standard troupe of physical attributes of the hero and heroine. Generally, both were incredibly attractive and were expressive of their attraction to one another. The author described Verity, the heroine in *The House of My Enemy*, as being "slim and supple, and carried herself with a litheness that was a delight" and the hero "watched her for a moment with fine male appreciation of the way she moved."[64] The author utilized these physical characteristics, or some variation of them, to describe the heroines and most frequently employed by the hero.

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[63] Ford,23

[64] Ford, 40.

Romance novels embodied a variety of characteristics about the ideal roles of women in the time in which they were produced. Jane Austen's novels represented a role model for the idea presented with these romantic novels. Austen's novels offered a prototype of the romantic heroine. These novels were representative of the societal expectations placed on women in regard to beauty. Just as adult periodicals provided a surfeit of articles and advertisements directed toward the beautification of women, romance novels blatantly provided such commentary.

The female characters in romance novels were extremely aware of beauty; they were either actively pursuing beautification or recognize the attractiveness of other women. The heroine was always modest, however, and would not refer to herself as visually striking or appealing even though she was presented as such. Verity, *House of My Enemy*, asks Adam "Do you like this one darling? Am I pretty enough for you?" when trying on formal dresses.[65] Verity demonstrated the heroine's preoccupation with beauty and eagerness to please Adam. Verity realized that beauty was a significant aspect of their relationship. While Verity's comment claimed some sarcasm, it is still evident that beauty was significant. Romantic novel heroines consistently tried to please the hero, thereby contradicting their sense of individuality and independence and rather demonstrating dependency.

The heroine's preoccupation with beauty can be evidenced through the 1950s romance novels. In *Love from a Surgeon*, the author depicts the heroine, Noel as being displeased with the lack of physical sophistication in the women surrounding her as she noticed their "sloppy clothes" and stated that "choosing a man's profession wasn't excuse

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[65] Ford, 113.

enough for being careless about their appearance. They could keep them clean even if they were shabby."[66] Noel also stated that "touches of femininity may make things more pleasant" in regard to career success.[67] Noel was a successful physician, but still catered to a culture of vanity and adamantly supports the societal construct of the 1950s that women were supposed to be attentive to their physicality. Romance novels demonstrated the common perception of 1950s society that women were to be visually appealing and emphasized a culture of vanity. Romance novels catered to the concept of vain domesticity that was projected through adult periodicals. In these magazines, women were shown engaging in domestic chores dressed fashionably and cosmetically enhanced. This dual emphasis on vanity and domesticity was supposed to be attractive the male and represented the influence of the mass market and media.

Just as romance novelists presented the dominant female characters as attractive, so were the primary males. Physically, the hero was rugged and possesses well defined features that somehow express his experiences. This was immensely appealing to the heroine. Verity, in *The House of My Enemy* refers to Adam's eyes as "sea-colored."[68] The heroine commented about Adam's eyes and how attractive they made him. This segment of Adam's physicality baited the heroine early as she stated "He disturbs me. His eyes go straight though me and I imagine he sees too much."[69] Verity has romanticized this particular physical characteristic by personifying Adam's eyes.

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[66] Elizabeth Gilzean. *Love from a Surgeon*, (Winnipeg: Harlequin Books, 1959), 27.

[67] Gilzean, 27.

[68] Ford, 42.

[69] Ford, 35.

Romanticizing physical characteristics frequently occurred in romance novels of the 1950s. Upon first meeting, the heroine in *Love is Forever* is captivated, "he was so devastatingly handsome that…she immediately set him apart as quite unlike any human person she had ever met before-someone polished and poised in a way she never thought possible for any one man to be."[70] The author described the hero as possessing a "beautiful mouth, a strong chin…and the way he kept his head erect on square shoulders suggested that under no circumstances would he humble himself to anyone," as well as being the "right height, and just the right slenderness of build, to make a suit of white drill look almost exquisite."[71] The heroine made assumptions on the personality and complexities of the hero based solely upon his physical appearance.

The description of attractiveness aided the heroine the ridding of her own personal ambitions in favor of marriage and commitment. The physical appearance of the hero solidified the heroine's trust and appreciation of her love interest. The actual courtship was fairly short, as the hero and heroine had been acquainted with one another for a long duration of time. The hero and heroine maintained a significant amount of physical chemistry throughout each novel which formulated the basis of their relationship. The short courtship alluded to the heroine having motives for marriage and domesticity regardless of her professed independence and ambitions.

Physical chemistry and attraction propelled the hero and heroine together and provided distinctive interactions. The exchanges between the male and female characters were often romantic and whimsical in nature. Alex Stuart, author of *The Captains Table*,

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[70] Barbara Rowan. *Love is For Ever*, (Winnipeg: Harlequin Books, 1957.), 14

[71] Rowan, 14.

captured this type of communication perfectly by claiming, "Catherine felt a thrill go coursing through her, like a strong electric shock, as his fingers touched hers. Her pulse started to race."[72] The successful romance novel demonstrated that the sexual chemistry between heroine and hero is undeniable and overwhelming.

While the interactions between male and female were romantic, they depicted the heroine as submissive. Underlying the romance was a submissiveness and obedience on behalf of the female. In *House of My Enemy*, Adam frequently treated Verity as an inferior and he enjoyed the concept of gender roles. For example, Adam says "Your job, O Woman," when telling her to go and prepare their lunch. Verity complied enthusiastically because wanted so much to please him. Another example is when Verity allowed Adam to win an argument and claims that she had "given way and left him victorious. She was glad about that. If he'd given way to her, no matter how chivalrously, she could not have loved him so much."[73] Verity was content to let Adam dominant her and applauded him for doing so. The sentiment that she could not love him as much if he had given in to her blatantly demonstrated the heroine's conception of male-female relationships. The societal construct of the 1950s provided gendered roles and positions. Men and women alike bought into these concepts. Another example of the heroine's consent was in *Nurse Brodie*, wherein she stated that "Inexplicably, I was content to go where he went, to do as he suggested, and to accept his leadership."[74] The author depicted the heroine in this novel as being a follower to the hero, which contrasted

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[72] Alex Stuart. *The Captain's Table*, (Toronto: Harlequin Books, 1959), 85.

[73] Ford, 117.

[74] Kate Norway. *Nurse Brodie*, (Winnipeg: Harlequin Books, 1959), 77.

to her independence illustrated in her position at the hospital. Another example of this mentality is in *In and Out of Love* where the primary female character claimed "I want to feel that whatever he does or says, I can trust him. I don't want to lead him; I just want to give all I can and know he will never let me down."[75] The author depicted the heroine as obedient to the hero, regardless of the situation. This type of mentality was encouraged and expected in 1950s society.

Peggy Dern's *Second Chance* exemplified the theme of female submissiveness as well. While acting in a seemingly romantic fashion at the climactic, love induced, conclusion, the hero Dale, exclaimed "You come here to me!...I am remembering something Vern said that a woman likes to be ordered around."[76] While the audience may interpret this line as an intimate tease, the overall effect has been obtained by the mention of it in the first place. Dale's words are still an assessment of the general mindset of the 1950s male.

The obedience of the heroine, attributed to love and passion for the hero, because he altered her life as subtly as he did dramatically. Simplistic changes can be witnessed throughout the novel, specifically alterations in mood, opinions, a generally the heroine's outlook on life. In *Nurse Harlowe*, after beginning a love affair with the hero, the heroine was said to have "looked bubbling within some secret excitement of her own."[77] The main male character brought out this pleasant aspect of the heroine's personality.

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[75] Trench, *In and Out*, 98.

[76] Peggy Dern. *Second Chance*, (New York: Valentine Books, 1958), 189.

[77] Arbor, 127-128.

Another example of mood changes caused by the hero's and heroine's interactions can be found in *The House of My Enemy*. Verity went out on a date with another male character. In speaking with the heroine, the man says "There's a sort of starshine about you Verity, something about you today that is over and above beauty. You've always been pretty and charming, but to-day you're irresistible, as if your fairy god mother had shaken gold dust over you."[78] The newfound beauty, charisma, and enchantment that Verity possessed were due to her time with Adam. The hero created a glowing and more attractive heroine.

The inferior role of women, in that they are not equal with men, was a common theme throughout 1950s romance novels. The author expressed sentiments predominantly through the words of secondary male characters. The hero's grandfather stated, in *House of My Enemy* that "one woman is as good as another…"[79] This figure also stated, "women don't understand business, poor things. A business to a man is what marriage and children mean to a woman," thereby demonstrating the notion that woman were not meant to enter the work-force as they should appropriately reside in the home.[80] Gender prejudice was a frequently theme present within these 1950s romantic novels.

This theme of gender prejudice presented itself in *Love from a Surgeon* where the heroine struggled against the preconceived notion that women were not supposed to be successful as she attempts to have a career in medicine. The hero of the novel expressed these sentiments but the heroine became consumed with him, demonstrating her

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[78] Ford, 58.

[79] Ford, 143.

[80] Ford, 156.

willingness to be overpowered. In Elizabeth Hoy's *My Heart has Wings*, this theme was overwhelming present as well. One of the tertiary male characters maintained that "The moment you have women in business this is the kind of thing that crops up. They can't keep their mouths shut."[81] The remark referred to the fact that the business owners assumed that a women was responsible for leaking their secret plans to the press. The men in this novel automatically jumped to the conclusion that another male could not be responsible. This character was stereotypical of the notion that women should work in their homes. It is representative of the notion that women were not meant to work in business.

The female characters, similar to the men, also expressed sentiments about women's place within society. Eventually, every heroine expressed the belief that women should be domestic and that their primary goal in life should be marriage, home, and family. The female characters, instead of celebrating career women, tended to be more critical and judgmental of them. The phrase "Old Battle-Axe" employed in *Nurse Trenton* proves exemplary of this type of criticism.[82] This term among others was frequently employed to describe older female nurses who never married and, according to the younger females, forced to remain working. The younger female characters who desire marriage and family view the career women as spinsters and cold due to absence of families.

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[81] Elizabeth Hoy. *My Heart has Wings*, (Toronto: Harlequin Books, 1957), 141-142.

[82] Trench, *Nurse Trenton*, 102

The judgmental and critical assessments of career women were a central sub-plot of Jane Arbor's *Nurse Harlowe*. Two young nurses, the heroine among them discussed their hospital superior:

> Gilly, do you think that if we don't marry, we shall get that way?
> Which way?
> Well, sour and narrow and critical, with nursing at our fingertips and nothing else that's human about us at all.[83]

Gillian and Marnie referred to their head nurse as being non-human because she did not marry in her youth. These two characters were nurses themselves, having put enough energy into training for a career yet still feel that they should be married. Many of heroines of romantic novels worked as nurses and to fill time until marriage. Having a career was, at its most fundamental level, a stepping stone to marriage and a life of domesticity. Romantic heroines thought of nursing as a temporary position until they could fill a permanent position as a wife and mother, working in the home instead of with the public.

Women of the 1950s era romantic novel were either employed or held a position that society considered appropriate. Women worked as secretaries or nurses, being the most popular position. It was rare for any of the heroines to maintain a more prominent position and business was strictly prohibited. Women maintained employment within these novels to provide excitement and offer stressful situations.

Commentary on the woes and hardships of nurses is frequently utilized by romance authors in order to create an exciting and full life of the heroine. For example, a female character speaking with the heroine who has returned from another nursing assignment to take her place once again, exclaimed "I couldn't have stood it any longer!

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[83] Arbor, 49.

I was just wondering whether to have a complete nervous collapse, commit suicide or murder when I heard you were coming back and I decided to stick it out for a bit longer. But I don't envy you, sister-phew!"[84] The female speaking was left with a tremendous workload when the heroine changed jobs. When the heroine returned, the other nurse was happy because she could give the heroine her patients back. The author depicts the heroine as a strong nurse who can handle a large workload. This type of situation created a heroine that was important, successful, and needed. These characteristics appealed to the female audience because it represents a life of excitement and importance. These situations were escapist because they allowed the reader to break away from the monotonous and ordinary facets of domesticity.

Love from A Surgeon is the only one where the heroine has a prestigious position, that of a surgeon. The downside of this position is that she faced great discontent from men and women alike. Regardless of her prominent position, the heroine does fall in love with the principal male character and opts for marriage and family. The heroine still trades her career in favor of domesticity. The heroine chose domesticity because society encouraged it and she was greatly affected societal perceptions and norms.

While stereo-typical of relationships of the 1950s, these romance novels represented an ideal conclusion. The most identifying characteristic of the Harlequin romance novel is the perpetual happy conclusion. The hero and heroine are always untied in bliss, having defeating all odds to be together. Smiles, laughs, and tears naturally accompany the climax and resolution of the romantic text. Sentiments such as

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[84] Trench, *In and Out*, 78.

"I've loved you from that first moment...you are the balance I need,"[85] and "More than content...It's all that my life could ask for,"[86] play a critical role in the termed happy ending. Once the hero has professed his love for the heroine and proposes marriage, she is more than happy to comply. The heroine always accepts his love and offer of domesticity.

The major player in the climatic conclusion is always the hero. The hero is always the first to go to the heroine and admit his feelings of love and, of course, is the one to propose marriage. The heroine is always ecstatic and plays a secondary role. The male character is constantly the person who resolves whatever problem or crisis that the two have been forced to undertake. Authors divided crises into two specific categories which are repetitive in most novels. The first type of crisis represented mistaken love. The hero or heroine assumed that the other is actually infatuated with a third party. The second type of crisis is that author did not allow the romantic to be together due to some outside force, such as family or work ethics.

The heroine always made the sacrifice and altered her life for the hero. For example, the heroine in *For Ever and Ever*, after finally having her love reciprocated, agrees to follow the hero where ever his employment takes him, "And she knew then that whether she went...on the Pacific cruise, or stayed in Australia, or returned to London, home was, simply here in his arms."[87] In the novels where the heroine is a nurse, she always leaves her position in order to marry and begin a family. Comments such as "by

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[85] Joyce Dingwell. *Nurse Jess*, (Winnipeg: Harlequin Books, 1959), 189.

[86] Arbor, 189.

[87] Burchell, 192.

the end of this week you're finishing your career" articulated by the hero.[88] The male expects his future wife to renounce her career in favor of domesticity. Other variations of this type of conclusion include "Oh, well, another good nurse gone"[89] and "you can't go earnest about being a career girl."[90] 1950s society expected these women to give up their careers. The romance authors depicted the heroines as being content in doing so because they preferred domesticity due to its appealing nature. Authors described the heroine's ultimate goal to be domesticity.

In *The Captains Table*, the heroine faced a dilemma and had to make a significant sacrifice. The heroine made the journey on the luxury ship intending to reside closer to her father overseas in order to spend more time with him in his old age. Once she fell in love with the hero, however, she had to choose between the two and the hero proved the victor. During the climatic ending, the heroine concerned herself with the hero only and what she could do to make him content. The heroine sacrificed time with her father, as other heroines separated themselves from their respective careers. The author depicted the heroine as independent but this label proves problematic, at best, throughout the novel. Eventually, the heroine succumbed to the prowess and demands of the hero and transforms herself in to an example of dependency and domesticity.

The romance novels of the 1950s concentrated just as much on domesticity as etiquette books and adult periodicals. The etiquette text offered a guideline for obtaining a suitable male for marriage and family. The romance novel then demonstrated the

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[88] Dingwell, 188.

[89] Trench, *Nurse Trenton*, 188.

[90] Arbor, 128.

appropriate characteristics and behavior needed to reach such a goal. The demonstration is successful and the next step is breeched, which is domesticity.

The dual emphasis on vanity and domesticity present within romance novels of the 1950s was contradictory in nature. Vanity, for analysis purposes, is defined not only in the cosmetic sense, but also in the sense of independence and self-importance. These novels placed women within the career sphere but encouraged them to succumb to home and family. The societal construct of the 1950s is clearly present within these novels and encouraged women to be visually appealing, yet prioritize marriage, children, and family.

Romance novels as contemporary were based so heavily in what was perceived as societal reality that the women of the 1950s consumed them in mass. Romance novels reflected the norms, values, and ideologies of 1950s society. The heroine, in particular, represented an ideal that women could endeavor to become. The romantic heroine represented the appropriate characteristics stated by etiquette texts. Achieving this ideal resulted in success as a woman, according the societal values and customs of this era therein lies the contradiction. Romantic novels voiced encouragement to be an individual and seek independence and beauty, yet also to desire compliancy in the home. These novels told women that they were supposed to desire marriage and want to be in the confines of their home. These novels also encouraged women to prioritize individualism and vanity through the heroine's own physical appearance.

Despite the contradictory imagery set forth by authors of these romance novels, they remained steadfast. The Toronto based company expanded greatly throughout the remainder of the twentieth century and grew in popularity to an unparalleled extent. The emergence of Harlequin, as a romantic novel publishing company, wrought a significant

change in women's fiction. The mass media published novels consistent in plot and tone, which provided women with an inherent comfort and sense of possibility.

The decade of the 1950s was essentially the hay day of domestication, vanity, and by extension contradictory imagery. The mass media capitalized on this concept through etiquette texts and romance novels as well as various advertisements and articles present within magazines catering to a female and or family-oriented audience. Adult periodicals of this era utilized the same stereo-types present within romance novels within their advertisements and articles and fueled a contradictory consumer culture. The adult periodical of the 1950s was the third step in achieving the concept of the ideal homemaker. These periodicals represented the married housewife and the tools that she needed to engage in domesticity.

"The Ideal Fulfilled, Understanding the Domestic Female"

Advertisement designers demonstrated domesticity and romanticized it in adult periodicals of the 1950s. Adult magazines fundamentally pick up where the romance novel concludes. The heroine who as successfully attained a husband and home must know how to provide for both. Periodicals such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Life*, and *Time* offer the basics of this lifestyle by presenting a plethora of articles and advertisements geared toward the domestic housewife. These advertisements and articles offer the heroine a new code of behavior as housewife and offer instructions on how to be successful at it. These periodicals, however, were just as contradictory as etiquette books and romance novels. While they emphasized domesticity, they also fostered a culture of vanity placed equal emphasis on beautifying products and household technologies.

Periodicals that were extremely popular during the 1950s included *Life* magazine, and *Good Housekeeping*. *Life* magazine focused heavily on issues of American society, meaning people's activities, significant domestic events, celebrity news as well as literature and aspects of American culture. *Good Housekeeping*, similar to the former periodicals, presented commentary on American culture, specifically literature and the arts, and society, but directly avoided major issues that we term as 'news' in today's society. Instead, *Good Housekeeping* concentrated directly on issues such as child rearing, women's health, relationships, and included advice columns. *Good Housekeeping* was a periodical published exclusively for an all female audience.

Life and *Good Housekeeping* were extraordinarily popular during the later 1950s. While accessible to either gender, *Good Housekeeping* was geared toward a female audience, specifically homemakers with children. *Life* magazine had a demographic

make-up of middle-class families that were family oriented and generally resided in suburban areas. These periodicals were geared toward men and women alike, in contrast to *Good Housekeeping*.

Just as etiquette books and popular romance novels such as those published by Harlequin provided contradictory imagery so did the adult periodicals of the late 1950s. Regardless of the specific production of the periodical for an exclusive female audience such as *Good Housekeeping* or the aim toward persons of both genders such as *Life* magazine, these periodicals encouraged domesticity and vanity in a consumer and product frenzied society. These periodicals specifically proposed that women needed to be docile and subservient to their husbands in numerous advertisements and articles. Within these same publications the media encouraged its female readers to prioritize narcissism and to seek out the various beautification products advertised. These ideals of domesticity and vanity are paradoxical in nature and wrought a complex as well as sustain an able female consumer culture during the 1950s.

The advertisements and articles present within *Life* magazine and *Good Housekeeping* were exemplary of the popularity of materialistic and individual products. Advertisements for items such as automobiles and household technologies were present in both periodicals. *Good Housekeeping* branched out further than other periodicals of the same era and included advertisements for personalized items such as lotion, shampoo, female undergarments, and trendy apparel. *Life*, however, proved to extend marketing further than *Good Housekeeping* by including advertisements for perfume, make-up, popular hairstyles, and hair color.

The women presented in the pictorial images regarding cosmetic products were always glamorous and set the beauty standards which women were expected to obtain. Obviously geared toward women, these advertisements projected the 1950s concept of beauty and encouraged vanity. The content of these advertisements stated bluntly that using specific products enabled women to achieve male companionship. The ads placed great emphasis on female beauty, encouraging a culture comprised of vanity and individualism.

Other advertisements within these periodicals focused more on familial objects for women. The advertisement designers intended for women to utilize these objects domestically. Some examples of these include specific household technologies such as stoves, refrigerators, and countertop appliances. While concentrating on household chores, the media projected women as being very beautiful and sensational. While there were advertisements directed toward males such as various automobiles, there was still a blatant message present for women. This message was that the media expected women to be domesticated and obedient. This depiction of women is evidenced through location. In automobile advertisements women consistently resided in the passenger seat, conveying the idea that women were dependent upon men.

Articles in adult periodicals were just as contradictory as the advertisements. Within several pages of one issue, women frequently found two distinct yet contradictory guidelines for being a woman. Many articles described for women how to become more beautiful through styling and fashion tidbits. Articles, in direct opposition with the ones emphasizing beauty, concentrated on the home. Many of these articles detailed how to organize a kitchen, clean more efficiently, and prepare meals quicker. Articles explicated

how women were supposed to be domesticated and preoccupied with their homes and families and proved to be a direct contrast to those articles that encouraged women to be alluring and sexual.

Between the years 1955-1959, *Life* and *Good Housekeeping* concentrated heavily on advertisements for various household technologies. These advertisements always employed glamorous women and displayed the image of vanity. In these advertisements the concept of vanity and individualism paralleled the notion of domestication. Advertisements in adult periodicals depicted women participating in domesticated chores while wearing high heels, jewelry and fancy dresses.

One very specific example of imagery that represented domestication and vanity simultaneously was in the January 3. 1955 issue of *Life*. The advertisement promoted a "Twenty-Minute Party Meal", and depicted a female and her two daughters preparing an evening dinner.[91] While these females were stirring and baking as well as performing other cooking tasks, they were wearing dresses and pearls.[92] Society, and by extension the mass media, encouraged women to dress their best in the home. Another example of this type of imagery is an advertisement for "Ezy-matic" bed linens.[93] In this ad, a homemaker was making the family beds. She was dressed in formal clothing and has professionally painted nails.[94] A third advertisement similar to those found in *Life* can be found in the January, 1957 issue of *Good Housekeeping*. The caption of this ad claims

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[91] *Life*, January 3, 1955. Vol. 38 January 1955-Febuary 1955, 16.

[92] *Life*, January 3, 1955. Vol. 38 January 1955-Febuary 1955, 16.

[93] *Life*, January 3, 1955. Vol. 38 January 1955-Febuary 1955, 55.

[94] *Life*, January 3, 1955. Vol. 38 January 1955-Febuary 1955, 55.

"Turn Work-Time into Play-Time…Contour your beds with easy Flexicorners."[95] The woman in the ad was making a bed and was not dressed for it because she wore make-up and expensive clothing. The advertisement depicted woman as being very beautiful. Through these advertisements, *Life* and *Good Housekeeping* magazines presented to its readers the concept that women must wear dresses and make-up to complete simplistic household chores and prepare meals for their families.

Many of the advertisements in *Life* and *Good Housekeeping* that included household technologies and chores claimed to make housewives' lives easier. An advertisement in the January 17, 1955 issue of *Life* for tomato sauce claimed "Quick Stunts with Hunts."[96] An ad for *Sunbeam* electric appliances found in *Good Housekeeping* is similar to the Hunts ad. The caption on this ad stated, "maintains perfect heat for wonderful cooking and frying results without constant watching."[97] The designers of the magazine created an advertisement that claimed that these products, geared domestically oriented women, made meal preparation more rapid and efficient.

An example of the combination of efficiency and beauty among household technologies can be found in the January 24, 1955 issue was for a *Maytag* washer and dryer. This ad displayed a homemaker folding laundry in heels and pearls while the caption stated "Now! High style comes to your laundry!"[98] The mass media, in this specific case, contended that because the homemaker is sophisticated her laundry devices should be as well. This is an excellent example of how even in advertisements for

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[95] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1957-June 1957, Vol. 144, 117.

[96] *Life*, January 17, 1955, Vol. 28 January 1955-Feburary 1955, 48.

[97] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1955-June 1955, vol. 140, 10.

[98] *Life*, January 24, 1955. Vol. 38 January 1955-Febuary 1955, 83.

household technologies; the mass media were demonstrating the need to be both domesticated and stylish.

One specific article in January 3, 1955 details "Ways to Cut down Kitchen Work."[99] This article described shortcuts to efficient and rapid preparation of meals. The article described the various canned and pre-packaged food stuffs that could save time for a hostess preparing a large meal.[100] The article stated, "there are many other ways to save a housewife's time, important among them the better organization of space and better choice of tools."[101] This article concentrates on household chores and how to make them more efficient therefore projecting the importance of domestically oriented housewife. The words housewife and homemaker were frequently found in these types of advertisements. In an advertisement, presented in *Life* magazine, for *Franco-American* gravy products, the caption stated "Many homemakers tell us that discovering…is like finding a new recipe book."[102] The ad designers employed these labels within the articles in order to re-emphasize the significant of and desire for compliancy in domesticity.

Adult periodicals of the later half of the 1950s produced advertisements that depicted a domestically oriented female even in the absence of household technologies and cosmetics. An advertisement for a *Boeing 707* aircraft is exemplary of this type of ad. The image in the ad is of a male and female sitting side by side in an airplane. The man is reading while the woman is knitting. The tag line read "Hardly time to start a

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[99] *Life*, January 3, 1955. Vol. 38 January 1955-Febuary 1955, 17.

[100] *Life*, January 3, 1955. Vol. 38 January 1955-Febuary 1955, 17.

[101] *Life*, January 3, 1955. Vol. 38 January 1955-Febuary 1955, 17.

[102] *Life*, January 3, 1955. Vol. 38 January 1955-Febuary 1955, 17.

sweater."[103] This advertisement gendered the passengers and allowed for the female to be depicted as docile and domesticated. Another advertisement that was similar in form was one for *Coke*. The image is of a woman reclining in an armchair, feet elevated, and speaking on the telephone. There is a vacuum cleaner placed strategically by her chair.[104] The ad describes how the woman is just pausing for refreshment and re-enforced the concept of the dedicated and docile homemaker.

In 1959, the media still published ads for washers and dryers such as the one present in the January 12 issue of *Life* magazine that projected a mother and her children docilely doing laundry in their best clothing.[105] The tag line is "You'll never lug laundry again", which played on the rise in efficiency of household appliances and tools.[106] The woman in the ad is very domestically oriented and motherly. The female in the ad is representative of how the creators gendered household chores and child-rearing. It is also representative of how advertisement designers relegated these domestic chores and activities into work for women.

Advertisements for other household appliances are similar to each other due to a trend of similar ideas of advertisement creators. One specific ad, for a Frigidaire, in the January 26, 1959 issue of *Life* strayed from the normal format. The image in the ad was of a homemaker wearing a crown while the caption states that "You'll feel like a queen in your kitchen…now the most feminine refrigerator ever!"[107] Instead of describing the

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[103] *Life*, January 5, 1959. Vol. 46 January 1959-Febuary 1955, 3.

[104] *Life*, January 3, 1959. Vol. 46 January 1959-Febuary 1955, 120.

[105] *Life*, Jan. 12, 1959. Vol. 46 January. 1959-Febuary. 1959, 1.

[106] *Life*, Jan. 12, 1959. Vol. 46 January. 1959-Febuary. 1959, 1.

efficiency of the new appliance it gendered it. The creator of the advertisement described the appliance as feminine therefore depicted it as a tool for women. The advertisement creator excluded men completely from the ad and blatantly excluded men from domestic chores.

In an advertisement for scouring pads, the creator presented the female with a halo, a well endowed chest and beautiful face. This advertisement represented the idea that homemaker are required to be attractive women. This sentiment is continued in similar advertisements such as one for liquid proof gloves. One catch-phrase for these gloves stated, "Hands tell your age...keeps them young!"[108] Another caption for these same items stated, "The very first manicure you save pays for your gloves."[109] There is a subtle meaning hidden within the later ad where it stated that a woman can pay for her gloves by not having to get another manicure. The meaning behind this is that women are encouraged and expected to have manicures, in essence, to keep their finger nails attractive and beautiful. These advertisements displayed how much emphasis was placed on age and beauty in adult periodicals.

In advertisements for make-up and other beautifying cosmetics, adult periodicals encouraged a culture of vanity and narcissism. There were various advertisements and articles that describe beauty and how women can strive to achieve it. In the January 10, 1955 issue of *Life*, for example, there were a total of fourteen small advertisements on one page. Out of these fourteen ads, ten of them were for beauty products such as hair shampoo, cold cream, and lipstick. James B. Twitchell, scholar of twentieth century

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[107] *Life*, Jan. 26, 1959. Vol. 46 January. 1959-Febuary. 1959, 43.

[108] *Life*, Jan. 12, 1959. Vol. 46 January. 1959-Febuary. 1959, 64.

[109] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1955-June1955, Vol. 140, 55.

American history, argued that the mass media allowed for consumption to be a "liberating way to construct the self."[110] Women can utilize various beauty products to achieve the sensational look that society encourages them to have. In essence, women can construct their own image on their own volition. The problem, for women, with this logic is that the mass media has already constructed female identity by advertising and promotion.

The creators of advertisements for make-up explicated to the female audience their proposed appearance. In an ad for a *Maybelline* "automatic" eyebrow pencil the catch-phrase is "ooooh! New eye beauty for you."[111] The word beauty is utilized to catch the reader's attention due to the extreme emphasis the mass media places on appearance. The following caption of this ad stated "Always ready to make your eyes far lovelier-in a minute's time!"[112] This statement referred to the simple act of beautification and how significant it became during the 1950s. This advertisement was placed strategically next to an article on Greta Garbo, a well-known actress who profited greatly from her angelic attractiveness. The message is clear, if a woman uses this particular eyebrow pencil, then she can have beautiful eyes similar to Garbo's.

Another *Maybelline* advertisement, in the January, 1957 of *Life*, was very similar in format and wording. This particular ad claims that "nothing does so much for a woman" and that this product is "preferred by women of good taste the world over"[113]

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[110] James B. Twitchell. *Twenty Ads that Shook the World: The Century's Most Groundbreaking Advertising And it Changed Us All*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2000), 11.

[111] *Life*, Jan. 10, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 96.

[112] *Life*, Jan. 10, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 96.

[113] *Life*, Jan. 7, 1957. Vol. 42 January. 1957-Febuary. 1957, 85.

The advertisement attempts to persuade the female audience that this product is the most sophisticated. If a woman wants to be viewed as beautiful and stylish then she need just to use this product. The mass media, especially *Life*, encouraged women to practice this type of vanity.

In some cases, advertisements depicted domesticity and vanity simultaneously. An exceptional example of this is an ad in the January 20, 1958 issue of *Life* for *Ponds* Cold Crème. The tag line for this ad stated, "You need never be too busy to be beautiful."[114] The "busy" in this article refers to acts of domesticity. In this advertisement, the media encouraged women to be domesticated and to cultivate beauty. *Good Housekeeping* utilized the same ad in their January 1958 issue. Earlier advertisements for this product, however, usually read "For today's naturally beautiful look!"[115] The mass media encouraged women to be beautiful but insisted that only specific products could aid them in their quest.

In many cases, similar to the advertisement for liquid proof gloves, advertisements concentrated on youth as it is associated with beauty. An ad for *Satura* moisturizer in *Life* depicts a young and attractive woman. The ad asked "What other moisturizer works so many ways to give you a younger look?"[116] This ad encouraged women to strive to look younger. A similar advertisement in the same issue is one for *Miss Clairol* hair color. The imagery present was a young woman holding a small child.[117] The tag line in this ad read "Are mothers getting younger or do they just look

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[114] *Life*, Jan. 20, 1958. Vol. 44 January. 1958-Febuary. 1958, 102.

[115] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1956-June1956, Vol. 142, 101.

[116] *Life*, Jan. 19, 1959. Vol. 46 January. 1959-Febuary. 1959, 82.

that way."[118] This product, through the ad, alluded to making women look more youthful. James B. Twitchell contends that the age of the model participating in the advertisement was usually a decade younger than the actual product user.[119] Both of these advertisements, *Satura* and *Miss Clairol* promoted a youthful beauty because beauty was an important aspect of 1950s society. Society encouraged women to reside in their homes but they also demanded that these same women take extra care with their appearance, going beyond just basic grooming to exaggerated beautification.

Celebrities, some as famous as Greta Garbo, a prominent film actress, frequently promoted specific cosmetic products. Donna Reed, a television actress, for example, was a spokeswoman for *Lustre-Crème* shampoo.[120] In this *Life* magazine ad Reed wore a full face of make-up, styled hair, and impressive jewelry.[121] The ad creators described the shampoo as being "Hollywood's Favorite" and the "favorite beauty shampoo of 4 out of 5 top Hollywood movie stars."[122] *Good Housekeeping* employed this strategic brand of advertisement as well. One ad for *Lustre-Crème* in the 1958 issue provided a caption supposedly written by film star Anita Ekberg. She stated, "I stared using…when I first came to Hollywood and I love what it does for my hair. Now I wouldn't be without

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[117] *Life*, Jan. 19, 1959. Vol. 46 January. 1959-Febuary. 1959, 90

[118] *Life*, Jan. 19, 1959. Vol. 46 January. 1959-Febuary. 1959, 90.

[119] Twitchell, 124.

[120] *Life*, Jan. 17, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 56.

[121] *Life*, Jan. 17, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 56.

[122] *Life*, Jan. 17, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 56.

it!"[123] Advertisement creators encouraged women to buy this type of shampoo because it promised to make them more beautiful and glamorous like celebrities.

Similar to the Donna Reed and Anita Ekberg advertisements was an ad for *Lux Toilet* Soap. The spokeswoman for this product was movie star Grace Kelley[124]. The tag line was "You don't have to be Grace Kelley to have a movie star complexion...that's the beauty of Lux".[125] This advertisement demonstrated that women should seek and achieve the type of beauty that graced this particular film star. A similar ad to this is one in *Good Housekeeping* for *Ponds Cold Crème*. The ad consistd of a beautiful woman who was formally dressed and the caption read "The lovely Marchioness...is noted for her exquisite complexion. In reference to her skin, care, she stated, 'It's now second nature for me to reach for Pond's Cold Cream after each washing."[126] These types of advertisements, as well as the former celebrity advertisements, promoted beauty by preying on women's insecurities over appearance and the general standard that the mass media presented. The advertisement designers depicted beauty as being more important than domestication and being domestic. Designers greatly promoted a culture of vanity with these types of advertisements.

Advertisement creators promoted the culture of vanity through numerous other advertisements for products that created beauty such an ad for *General Electric Sunlamp*, an artificial tanning bulb. The image in this advertisement was of an eye-catching couple but only the female appeared with tanned skin. The tag line stated, "Look better, more

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[123] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1958-June 1958, Vol. 146, 30.

[124] *Life*, Jan. 17, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 69.

[125] *Life*, Jan. 17, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 69.

[126] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1955-June 1955, Vol. 140, 103.

attractive all winter long" and the caption read "There's nothing like a tan to do wonders for your looks."[127] The marketers described the sunlamp as making one more beautiful. Designers directed this advertisement toward females and promoted extreme vanity. At the end of the ad, it stated, "Look for the Beautiful girl on the package."[128] This caption demonstrated how marketers utilize beautiful women to sell their products, in essence preying on women who desired to be more strikingly attractive.

Advertisements for fashion were similar to cosmetics and beauty ads in one noteworthy way. Both types of advertisements placed immense emphasis on the female body and demonstrated what the ad designers considered to be beautiful. Some fashion advertisements depicted women as strong, aggressive, and independent. This contradicted those advertisements which emphasized the domestic oriented female with her new household technologies and meal plans.

An ad for *Hanes* seamless stocking demonstrated this contradiction of vanity and domestication proficiently. The image in this ad of a pair of female legs, wearing the stockings and high heels, that remained situated vertically and crossed at the ankle.[129] The female is wearing a wide skirt that created the appearance of a tiger's face. The image possessed fangs and wore a fierce expression. This advertisement depicted the female as untamable and wildly enticing, at least when wearing these stockings.

Fashion advertisements concentrated heavily on the attractiveness of the product and how it morphed women into sensational and striking creatures. A good example of

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[127] *Life*, Jan. 24, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 1.

[128] *Life*, Jan. 24, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 1.

[129] *Life*, Jan. 10, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 97.

this was an advertisement in *Life* for *Maidenform* bras. In this ad, an eye-catching woman, in formal evening gown attire, positioned to face a hall of mirrors that continuously depicted her image.[130] The caption referred to how the woman was more beautiful and popular because of her usage of the *Maidenform* product. This particular advertisement did not display the bra on the female and left its appearance to the audience. However, many bra advertisements actually displayed women wearing their products. Advertisements for *Playtex* bras were very similar to *Maidenform* in that they emphasize slenderizing benefits.

Ads for items other than undergarments, such as for feminine products, also utilized the popularity angle. In an advertisement for *Tampax*, present with *Good Housekeeping*, the caption stated, "she's popular! she's a leader! she's a Tampax user!"[131] The ad proceeded to explain why Tampax made this particular female more intelligent and popular than the rest of her friends. This type of advertisement was extremely influential and taught women that there were certain products that could ensure their popularity. In these cases, the mass media purposefully constructed a consumer culture that was fundamentally based in and revolved around individualistic and superficial desires.

The fashion advertisements of the 1950s also emphasized feminine articles of clothing such as dresses and high heels. *Naturalizer*, a prominent shoe manufacturer, had advertisements in every year between 1955-1959 of *Life* magazine. Surprisingly,

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[130] *Life*, Jan. 24, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 116.

[131] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1956-June1956, Vol. 142, 20.

advertisements for this particular article were conspicuously absent from the issues of *Good Housekeeping*. Many other products and brand did, however, overlaped.

In every type of advertisement present in *Life* and *Good Housekeeping*, women wore high heels and dresses. In 1955, the dresses advertised were usually fairly simple but elegant. By 1959, however, more formal and trendy dresses were being advertised. Fashion began to change slightly through the last half of the 1950s. Sleeve and skirt length, and color, were examples of factors for the changing trends in fashion.

The advertisements that promoted varied cosmetics and fashionable clothing ran parallel to articles that concentrated on beauty and vanity. As there were articles on how to prepare meals rapidly and how-to guides for organizing the kitchen, there were articles that emphasized beauty. Articles that promoted vanity were in contradiction to those that encouraged domestication and obedience. The articles that encouraged beauty encouraged individualism while the articles that emphasized domestic prowess demonstrated the desire for selfless homemakers. There were various articles in *Life* and *Good Housekeeping* that projected the importance of beauty.

An exemplary article of the significance of beauty, present within *Good Housekeeping*, detailed how to become more beautiful. The title of the article was "How Women over 35 can look younger!"[132] The article stated that by participating in certain activities and utilizing certain types of products their skin would "act more alive, more bouncy to the touch...even fresh, young color will come back alive!"[133] This particular article equates beauty with age and contended that by following certain guidelines women would be able to decrease their age which would naturally amplified their beauty.

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[132] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1958-June 1958. Vol. 146, 3.

[133] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1958-June 1958. Vol. 146, 3.

Another article that projected vanity was in the January 17, 1955 issue of *Life*. This article titled "Speaking of Pictures: School Queens enact trades in charades" consisted of a two page spread on beauty queens.[134] The article described the queens as "pleasant to behold." The women in the article were wearing bathing suits and high heels. These women dressed sexually, not in homemaker apparel, and expressed conscious vanity as well as encouraging the female audience to achieve the same.

Another article that displayed a culture of vanity, in the January 24, 1955 issue of *Life*, was titled "The Debuts of Diane" in it was a brief synopsis of the "coming out" of a New York debutante.[135] The author of the article encouraged vanity for debutantes as much as it was for beauty queens. The article brushed over her achievements at junior college and instead concentrated on her cotillion, her weight, and alcohol preferences. There were no stories of college or professional success present in *Life* or *Good Housekeeping* magazines because the concentration was always on some form of vanity, such as an article describing the social life of a debutante.

An article in the January 13, 1958 issue of *Life* was similar to the debutant article in that it concentrated entirely on beauty with very brief mention of personal accomplishments. It was an article on female gymnasts who were attempting to make a name for themselves. The title of the article was "Brace of Balanced Beauties" and suggested that "a gymnast can be as graceful as a ballerina and as appealing as a model in a perfume ad."[136] The article concentrated on how attractive the author found the

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[134] *Life*, Jan. 17, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 8-9.

[135] *Life*, Jan. 24, 1955. Vol. 38 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 133.

[136] *Life*, Jan. 13, 1958. Vol. 44 January. 1955-Febuary. 1955, 8-9.

gymnasts and mentioned virtually nothing of their talents and absolutely nothing of their accomplishments. The title of the article alone alluded to the fact that the author placed heavy concentration on the appearance of the gymnasts instead of their professional achievements.

An article in *Good Housekeeping* entitled, "Every Girl should have a chance to dance," written by a guest columnist detailed the importance of dancing for young girls and women because the author considered dancing to be a beautiful art and "every little girl is born with a love of dancing."[137] The author stated that her male children considered football as their "paramount interests."[138] This article constructed a double standard that little boys were supposed to be interested in sports while little girls were supposed to dream of dancing. Throughout the article, the author insisted that all little girls should dance during their childhood because it is an appropriate activity for them to engage.

Along with advertisements for household technologies, cosmetics, and fashion, there were also advertisements for popular diet drinks and diet systems. Advertisement creators made these types of ads just as contradictory and bewildering as the ads for clothing and shampoo. Ad designers often depicted women in these advertisements as striving to be slender because society demanded thin to be fashionable. Light beverages and specific fad diets as well as life style diets were offered as the key to weight control and beauty.

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[137] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1955-June 1955, Vol. 140, 20.

[138] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1955-June 1955, Vol. 140, 20.

Good Housekeeping, specifically, contained numerous advertisements for diets that appealed to women due to their supposed ability to make a person more slender. This type of ad was found in the January 1957 issue for *Slenderella*, a popular diet system. The caption read, "you'll love being slender."[139] The explanation for the system stated, "and of course who can blame you when the temptation is a fabulous Slenderella figure."[140] The advertisement continued to explain the benefits of using this particular diet and encouraged women to do so in order to be more attractive. The benefits included "takes off weight, improves posture, made you the size you ought to be."[141] The last phrase of the ad demonstrated the construction of a culture of vanity and blatantly displayed the complex and powerful influence of the mass media through adult periodicals.

Good Housekeeping not only presented advertisements for diets and popular weight loss systems, but also actively encouraged its readers to participate. In the January 1957 issue of this periodical was an application for a diet plan.[142] The magazine offered readers a weight loss solution. The magazine itself sought readers to fill out the application, and in return, they received a personal diet plan. The instructions included an "expected to report your progress" clause.[143] This diet directly encouraged the readers of this periodical to be slender and told them exactly how to achieve a beautiful body and appearance.

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[139] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1957-June 1957, Vol. 144, 128.

[140] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1957-June 1957, Vol. 144, 128.

[141] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1957-June 1957, Vol. 144, 128.

[142] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1957-June 1957, Vol. 144, 128.

[143] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1957-June 1957, Vol. 144, 128.

An advertisement for the diet drink *Pepsi* exemplified the concentration on diet and body. In the January 23, 1956 issue of *Life*, *Pepsi* was referred to as the "light refreshment" because "Today's pace is for the slender."[144] This ad placed great emphasis on being slim. The ad designers represented both genders in this ad but the caption only discussed the female, "Little miss sit-by-the-fire doesn't live there anymore. Today, she's miss-get-up-and-go."[145] Why did the caption focus only on the female gender? The marketers of *Pepsi* realized that it was more likely to sell its product if it concentrated on women. Women were and still are depicted as being more weight conscious. This concept is due in large part to the societal construct that women must be thin to be attractive. In the 1950s, and even today, the mass media encouraged women to be more weight and shape conscious than men. Advertisement designers encouraged women to be weight conscious to be more physically appealing to men.

A similar *Pepsi* advertisement in January 1959 displayed how the mass media parallels the concept of weight control with popularity and sophistication. The ad claimed that by drinking this product one could "Look smart. Stay young and fair and debonair. Be sociable."[146] This demonstrated the social ties to *Pepsi*. The ad spoke to its audience saying, "As you admire the smartness, the sociability, the trim good looks of today's Americans, give credit to the new light look."[147] The marketers of this product preyed upon the societal construct that thin is better and more attractive. Women readers were forced to rise to the demand of a slim society by the mass media.

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[144] *Life*, Jan. 23, 1956. Vol. 40 Jan. 1956-Feb. 1956, 131.

[145] *Life*, Jan. 23, 1956. Vol. 40 Jan. 1956-Feb. 1956, 131.

[146] *Life*, Jan. 19, 1959. Vol. 46 Jan. 1959-Feb. 1959, 6.

[147] *Life*, Jan. 19, 1959. Vol. 46 Jan. 1959-Feb. 1959, 6.

Many of the products advertised in *Life* and *Good Housekeeping*, such as *Pepsi*, were representative of a dramatic change in American culture. Susan Strasser argued that "the emergence of a mass consumer culture transformed the routines of private life and their meanings."[148] The rise of a mass consumer culture resulted in the frequent use of new products within people's homes. Consumer culture altered not only the way people lived their lives but also their social interactions and habits. The lives of women especially changed with the onset of numerous beauty products. Women became trapped in a world that encouraged them to be domestically oriented, participating in household chores, and vain. In the 1950s consumer culture became exceedingly contradictory.

There were various advertisements and articles in *Life* that were directed toward male consumers but they lack any contradictory or bewildering imagery. Examples included advertisements for shaving crème, automobiles, and clothing. These advertisements were consistent in format and contend throughout the entire four years examined. Men were depicted as having one role and character unlike the dual identity presented to women.

The incongruous imagery represented in *Life* was directed solely toward women. There were no contradictory messages for men in this magazine. The advertisements and articles in *Life* that cater to men were associated with material items. In these images men are represented as the dominant sex. One pertinent example was an advertisement in the January 3 issue of *Life* magazine for a new 1955 Buick. In this advertisement, the ad designer strategically positioned the male as the driver while the female was placed

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[148] Strasser, *Waste and Want*, 17.

docilely in the passenger seat.[149] The marketers positioned the female as the passenger in the majority of automobile advertisements in *Life* and *Good Housekeeping* between the years 1955-1959. Another example was an advertisement in the January 17, 1955 issue where the ad creators placed the woman promoting the car either outside it or seated in the passenger seat.[150] Advertisers rarely depicted women as being drivers; instead they are portrayed as being an ornament to the vehicle. The same was true for any automobile advertisements found in *Good Housekeeping*.

Another example of women depicted as being inferior to men can be found in an article titled "My favorite Husband" in *Good Housekeeping*. This article, written by a married woman, discussed the advantages of a suitable husband. The author discussed her own husband and praised him on his treatment of other women. She stated "I like my husband to like women and he talks to them as if they had good sense. They aren't always sure how to take it. A woman we've known for years once said to me with puzzle in her voice, 'when I talk to your husband, he listens'."[151] The author of this article demonstrated the fact that men treated women as inferior in numerous regards. The female being referred to was surprised to be treated as an equal. The author described how the female was used to being treated as inferior and not worthy of proper conversation. This article demonstrated how in the 1950s, female homemakers were treated as glorified housekeepers.

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[149] *Life*, Jan. 3, 1955. Vol. 38 Jan. 1955-Feb. 1955, 50-51.

[150] *Life*, Jan. 17, 1955. Vol. 38 Jan. 1955-Feb. 1955, 8-9.

[151] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1959-June 1959, Vol. 148, 39.

As advertisers depicted women as being inferior to men in the various automobile advertisements, the advertisers also objectified these same women. Several advertisements employed women, without the presence of men, to sell vehicles. The image is typically of a female dressed glamorously standing beside it. It is reminiscent of episodes of Bob Barker's *The Price is Right* in every material prize is paralleled with a beautiful model. In one specific advertisement, present in the January 10, 1955 issue of *Life*, a beautiful woman was promoting a 1955 Buick.[152] There were also pictures of the engine and various other speed determining ingredients. The catch-phrase of this advertisement was "A Great New Car for the Young in Heart."[153] The images and wording of the advertisement appealed to the male desire for beautiful women and speedy vehicles. The female was not behind the wheel, wherein the advertisement would have been directed toward both genders. The ad creators objectified the woman in the advertisement by depicting her as being a counterpart or bonus to the new Buick instead of an equal consumer and driver.

In *Life* and *Good Housekeeping*, advertisers objectified women in articles for various products other than the automobile. One advertisement, in *Life*, a *Slyvania* television is promoted by a sensationally attractive female dressed in a ball gown.[154] The image alone displays that the manufactures of this television utilized the female body as a means to sell their product. The tag line read "lovely to look at and a great companion."[155] This phrase described the television set but also described the woman.

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[152] *Life*, Jan. 10, 1955. Vol. 38 Jan. 1955-Feb. 1955, 94.

[153] *Life*, Jan. 10, 1955. Vol. 38 Jan 1955-Feb, 1955, 94.

[154] *Life*, Jan.12, 1959. Vol. 46 Jan. 1959-Feb. 1959, 42.

There is a dual meaning in this advertisement because the marketers played on the femininity and beauty of the promoter. This objectification also produced contradictory imagery for women. An advertisement in *Good Housekeeping* followed the same pattern as the television ad in *Life*. The ad was for a *Carlton* Stainless Steel Sink and the image was that of a beautiful woman smiling down at her husband who was sitting in an armchair. The caption referred to the sink's "everlasting beauty."[156] The caption could describe the sink and the woman. Advertisers employed women, even in female periodicals, to market bi-gender items.

As well as being objectified, advertisers constantly placed women within a position of helplessness. A dependency upon the male of the household was a constant theme throughout these adult periodicals. A perfect example of this type of imagery was an advertisement for Safety Power Steering by *Saginaw*. The image was of a couple riding in an automobile while the female drove. Under any other circumstances, this ad would not be contradictory but would demonstrate the female ability to be independent. The caption of the ad, however, stated "It's like having a 'co-pilot' to help you!"[157] The rest of the ad discussed how sometimes a woman just needs a man to aid in her driving, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could have a nice muscular man handy to 'spell' you at the wheel…whenever you get arm weary from fighting traffic."[158] The advertisers destroyed their own advertisement because the fact that they positioned the woman as the driver contradicted the content of the advertisement because it re-enforced the common

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[155] *Life*, Jan. 12, 1959. Vol. 46 Jan. 1959-Feb. 1959, 42.

[156] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1957-June 1957, Vol. 144, 7.

[157] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1956-June 1956, Vol. 142, 24.

[158] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1956-June 1956, Vol. 142, 24.

depiction that women were supposed to be dependent upon men. Marketers brought the male into the advertisement in order to describe the benefits of this particular model. The mass media constructed this depiction and utilized to infiltrate the adult periodicals of this era.

Good Housekeeping, to accompany advertisements on fashion, beauty, and domestically related themes, sought to educate readers with ads and articles on home repair, child rearing, and etiquette. Directed toward a female audience that has had or planned to have children, this periodical contained a plethora of articles on the proper way to raise children. Articles ranged from the advantages of seat belts to car pools. One article for a school car pool contains a question and answer segment featuring inquires such as "How many car pools are there?", "Do school car pools really save time and energy?, and "How are school car pools started?"[159] These articles influenced young mothers tremendously and set a standard for which they encouraged women to meet. This concept was obtainable for a segment of the female population, those who had the means to drive a vehicle on a regular basis and who had the 'opportunity' to be a stay at home wife and mother.

In regard to home repair and construction, every issue of *Good Housekeeping* contained how to do it yourself articles. The problem with these articles was that they always depicted a man actually doing the necessary work and provided commentary for his progress. In an article for "resurfacing a tabletop," the author stated "Emily and I had an old table…I decided to resurface the top."[160] The key phrase in this article is that the

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[159] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1955-June 1955, Vol. 140, 26.

[160] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1955-June 1955, Vol. 140, 37.

man decided to do the repair and his wife had no role in it. Considering this a women's periodical, it would make sense to portray women physically doing the work. Instead, a man did the work and encouraged women readers to have their husbands attempt home repair. The authors of these segments of the magazine empowered women and in turn did just the opposite. Once again, this periodical demonstrated a female dependency.

Good Housekeeping, more so than *Life*, always contained numerous articles for etiquette for cases such as party hosting and wedding planning as well as articles that emphasized the duties of a good homemaker and wife. One article titled "Before I hire your husband, I want to meet you," describes the role that women frequently played within their husband's professional life. Advertisers expected the woman to be an exemplary homemaker because "the wrong wife can break the right man."[161] The article provided advice to women who were faced with meeting their husband's employers and a list of appropriate behavior. The list included that a good wife was "capable, a good citizen, friendly, adaptable" and her "primary interest is her husband, her home, and her children."[162] The article proceeded to also list the characteristics that a good wife should not possess such as being a "dominating woman."[163] This article blatantly emphasized domestication and all that it entails.

Life magazine and *Good Housekeeping*, through various advertisements and articles, encouraged a dual identity for women of the 1950s. Advertisements and articles that dealt with household technologies and chores emphasized a domesticated female

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[161] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1956-June 1956, Vol. 142, 52.

[162] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1956-June 1956, Vol. 142, 100.

[163] *Good Housekeeping*, January 1956-June 1956, Vol. 142, 100.

whose center duty was to keep a home and family. At the same time, however, these ads and articles projected attractive women hence proposing a problem. In these ads and articles women were always attractive as well as efficient in the home. The message here was that domesticated homemakers must strive to look sensational even while they were doing household chores.

The contradictory imagery continued with articles and advertisements on beauty products and female celebrities. Articles on debutantes and gymnasts promoted beauty and vanity over professional or intellectual successes. Advertisements on numerous cosmetic and fashion products also encouraged beauty above anything else. The articles and ads present in *Life* and *Good Housekeeping* demonstrated the emphasis that the mass media placed on vanity in the later half of the 1950s.

All issues of *Life* and *Good Housekeeping* proved to be extremely beneficial because of the great amount of articles and advertisements. The years of 1955 and 1959 proved to be the most useful. They were the most significant years because they began and ended the second half of the 1950s. They were the most useful because they enable a clear view of the trends and developments of the 1950s and how slightly the magazines changed. *Life* changed in one specific way, which is that by 1959 there was more emphasis placed on beautification articles and less on household technologies. Both types of ads were still present but they just were no longer equal. *Good Housekeeping*, however, remained more balanced throughout the five years.

The advertisements and articles in these adult periodicals explicated to the reading audience what was considered to be attractive. The problem with this logic was that consuming women were not the decision makers. Large corporations and numerous

periodicals decided what was beautiful or domesticated and thereby publicized it. The media created the mass market and the products advertised, and the consumer society had virtually no role. The mass media creates consumer culture and society adapts. Society does not create consumer culture but is transformed by it.

The advertisers did not balance the advertisements and articles in *Life* were not balanced equally in regard to men and women. Also these advertisements and articles were extremely gendered. If there was an article on male skiing, it will concentrated on the techniques of the skier but if that article was about a female skier, then it concentrated on what fashionable clothing she wore. There was a bias with *Life* magazine as is present in several of the adult periodicals of the 1950s. *Life* was similar to *Good Housekeeping* in that the designers directed the majority of its ads toward women instead of men. The marketers, however, created all of the advertisements and articles in *Good Housekeeping* and *Life* purposefully to be viewed by an all female audience. Some advertisements in *Life* were geared toward men but they were far outnumbered comparable to the advertisements directed toward women. Advertisements and articles that preyed on the domesticated housewife comprised the majority of material in *Life* magazine during the 1950s and all in *Good Housekeeping*.

Considering the balance of advertisements in *Life*, it is significant to examine the imagery presented and how it remained fairly consistent throughout the second half of the 1950s. While images changed in number, they maintained their contradictory nature. *Life* magazine and *Good Housekeeping* presented contradictory imagery through advertisements and articles during the years 1955-1959 and therefore established both a culture of beauty and culture of domesticated female homemaker. A dual identity

emerged for women through the advertising and products of the mass media and the mass market. The market produced items and the media advertised them in an effort to represent society.

The American society of the 1950s viewed themselves as extremely prosperous and therefore desired to depict that image. Society desired women to be homemakers because if women were privileged enough to remain in their households, then it was deemed that society must be prosperous. It became significant in the 1950s to depict an image of perfection. The media provided this depiction by depicting America as a prosperous nation composed of middle-class families with attractive stay-at-home mothers who use the latest and best in household technologies and beauty products.

Today's society commonly refers to the 1950s as the 'perfect decade' and the advertisements and articles presented in adult periodicals of the time reflect this phrase. It was not a perfect decade by any means, but the mass media, periodicals in particular, sought to make it that way. The materials produced by the mass media and digested by the mass market prescribed a perfect ideal for women to strive to achieve. In achieving this ideal, the society of the 1950s would flourish.

Conclusion

The established female role of the 1950s was a direct result of the intense changes within society. At this time, the aftermath of the Second World War had the general population in a duel state of disorientation. Society sought solutions to their situations and outlet to aid them in pushing past the war and the extremities it fostered. Americans desired and sought a noble and superior image for their society in an attempt to return to some form of normalcy. The Great Depression encompassed the era previous to the war so Americans had to retreat even farther to find an adequate model of a decent and unspoiled society. American society chose the 1920s as the mold to prescribe to, regardless how far detached it was from the current state of society after the war. Americans retreated back to the 1920s because it was considered to be more prosperous and displayed the early emergence of a middle-class.

The American working class found the concept of a middle-class incredibly appealing and this became the focal point of 1950s society. One of the most significant aspects of 1950s thought was that all of American society could live as well as the middle-class. The middle-class exemplified prosperity. Characteristics of the 1950s middle-class included home ownership, possession of at least one automobile, suburban in location, and a stay at home wife and mother. The suburban homemaker remains the most identifiable characteristic and representation of the 1950s middle-class. The imagery of the stay at home wife is a manifestation of consumer culture. During this era, a male was considered to be respectable and successful if his wife worked at home only. The housewife as well as the newly created household technologies and popular automobiles represented prosperity and a flourishing society.

In the attempt to return to the culture and societal structure of the 1920s the concentration on the middle-class demonstrated that the people of the 1950s actually constructed something new where they had to learn as they went along. Boundaries and new societal customs, values, and norms were formulated and blended together with older more traditional ones. A new emphasis on the domestic housewife created new social customs regarding entertaining, child rearing, and male-female relationships as well as social interactions in general combined with older ones regarding the same theme. The result was a unique society based entirely around the middle-class and female as homemaker.

Etiquette texts, romance novels, and adult periodicals exemplified 1950s thought regarding the middle-class and female position within society and offered a strict prescription on behavior. These materials offered a strict structure for women on how to live their lives. Etiquette authors told women that if they followed the guidelines, they could accomplish their goals. Romance novelists contended that women needed to emulate the heroines in their novels in order to achieve male companionship and happiness by extension. Advertisement designers and article authors, juxtaposed in adult periodicals, emphasized domesticity by displaying images of the housewife and glamorizing it. These authors created a specific message that claimed that if one worked hard enough, marriage and domesticity could be attained. Women of the 1950s did obtain the ideal of female domesticity presented by these materials in record numbers.

Products of the mass media constructed contradictory imagery. Materials such as etiquette books, periodicals, and romance novels encouraged a culture of domesticity and a culture of vanity. By telling women to be domestic, the authors of these products told

women to put their families and home before themselves, and to cater to their husbands. The emphasis placed on extensive grooming and beautification described a culture of vanity. This concept emphasized individualism and self-promotion. Although, 1950s women engaged in excessive grooming to please and attract men, they also practiced the necessary skills needed within the realm of domesticity. Overall, vanity represented individualism because it actually allowed women to put themselves first. Marriage remained the principal outlet for women of this era and vanity aided them in achieving it, so vanity ultimately was independence for women. This independence contradicted domestic dependency.

Etiquette texts, adult periodicals, and romance novels were exceedingly popular among women of the 1950s. These materials offered women a concrete and socially acceptable ideal to achieve. Etiquette books served as the theoretical basis for achieving ideal domesticity, adult periodicals encouraged a dual identity for women of the 1950s, while romance novels linked these two genres together and demonstrated the appropriate characteristics and behavior needed to reach this goal.

Guidelines for achieving marriage and domesticity offered women goals to strive for and a sense of purpose. Women's purpose within this society was to marry, manage a home, and raise children. The concept of the homemaker provided women with a specific place within a dramatically changing society, a niche that they were able to fit into. In essence, materials such as etiquette books, romance novels and periodicals provided with women with a new identity. In a society that trying to come to grips with the aftermath of war, domesticity gave women something to do that made them feel

important. Through these materials, society defined women. Women, in turn, immersed themselves in these texts and periodicals thereby supporting the definition.

Society encouraged women to buy into the messages and images put forth by products of the mass media such as etiquette texts, romantic novels, and adult periodicals. Women consumed these materials in mass therefore demonstrating a demand for them. Women bought into them because they reflected society, a society that was largely constructed by the mass media to begin with. The mass media created a female consumer culture that transformed women. The result became a simplistic issue of supply and demand, a symbiotic relationship. In a changing and bewildering society, the mass media constructed a specific role for the female and in turn the female embraced it. The literature geared toward women of the 1950s articulated the demands of society and women complied for they were at a loss and standstill in the aftermath of the Second World War and the influx of men taking over their positions in the work force.

Women succeeded in this position of homemaker as opposed to the male dominated outside work force that. Success was a significant idea in 1950s society. Women and men both strived to achieve it. The only venue completely accessible and acceptable for women during this time was domesticity. The mass media advertised this position of homemaker as a significant part of society. Women responded to the media and absorbed in great numbers the media's conception of what a comprised a homemaker.

The ideal set forth in the materials of the 1950s proved plausible for a great number of women to achieve. The tone of the 1950s was that everybody should strive to be middle-class. Society was more prosperous in the postwar era thereby providing the

necessary conditions for the emergence of a booming middle class. Women of the working and lower middle classes achieved the ideal and remained the intended audience. Predominantly the working class comprised the 1950s middle class. The working class attempted to emulate the upper and middle classes. The messages presented within these materials, however, claimed that women should be perfect. It was impossible for most women to act, look, and be perfect and happy and fit into the mold created by the mass media.

Many women who did subscribe to the 1950s notion of a specific female role did so because it was imposed by society. Most women, however, desired the 1950s image of female domesticity. It was appealing, an outlet from the work and chaos of the 1940s. This re-vamped image of the housewife during the 1950s depicted prosperity, a societal characteristic that meant and women alike sought to achieve. Women of the 1940s, however, did not contend with this type of straightforward and limited role. Women worked and society encouraged them to do so, as it was necessary due to the war. The emphasis placed on domesticity, however, was not as strong in the 1940s as it was during the 1950s. During the 1950s, society altered their cultural and social course completely through the domestication of working women. Many women, coming out of the war era, did not buy into the concept of domesticity but the majority succumbed. For some women of the 1950s, the idea of domesticity was liberating and to others it was stifling.

Although during the 1950s, the domestic female role appeared to be consensual in nature there was an undercurrent of discontent as evident by the 1960s second wave of the feminist movement. The women who participated in women's liberation during the 1960s were of the same socio-economic status as the women of the 1950s. Women who

lead the feminist movement during the 1960s were principally of college age and had witnessed the consumer culture and domestic nature of 1950s with regard to women. The women of the 1960s were those who refused to fulfill the prescription set forth by the mass media and rebelled against 1950s thought. The women's protest during the sixties demonstrated the fact that women were not complacent with their position within society but submitted because it was highly encouraged. Most women thought that they had to submit to a domestic life because they were not welcomed nor respected in the job market.

Today, Harlequin, and its subsidiary companies, publishes over one hundred romantic novels each month in varying categories. Readers can choose novels that combine romance with mystery, intrigue, and erotica among others. Novels are distributed world-wide and are available in numerous languages therefore reaching a broader audience. This popularity is attributed to the fact that women are still seeking the perfect ideal. Women still strive to achieve the happily ever after regardless of the changes within society. Romance novels are neglectful of the intellectual, social, and political barriers that stand as opposition. In theory, women are no longer confined to their homes or limited to career choices. In reality, domesticity is still a valid and socially desired way of life.

Every decade creates an identity for men and women. The 1950s combined elements of the 1920s with the post war era in order to provide women with a blueprint for how to conduct their lives, dress, behave, and strive to be like the upper class that exemplified the best a woman could become. In addition, these etiquette texts, periodicals, and romance novels display the values of the 1950s regarding women

through its emphasis on the combination of consumerism, physical appearance and domesticity. These materials also provided women with a sense of purpose regarding their personal lives, which rendered dependent following the Second World War.

Etiquette texts, romance novels, and adult periodicals are still produced in today's society. The materials demand an ideal image of beauty of social behavior that woman strive to achieve. Their popularity proves that woman continue to buy into a prescribed blueprint and a culture of vanity akin to the 1950s. Woman today are expected to subscribe to a culture of vanity as evident through these materials. Although domesticity is present today, it is transformed within the context of the working woman. Technologies within the home with regard to its upkeep of the home are produced to correlate with the woman's busy life. The mass media creates a consumer culture that fits the period of its production, a concept that emerged during the 1950s.

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