Elle says to women: you are worth just as much as men; and to men: your women will never be anything but women ... Such is the world of Elle: women there are always a homogeneous species ... Man is never inside, femininity is pure, free, powerful; but man is everywhere around, he presses on all sides, he makes everything exist; ... the feminine world of Elle, a world without men, but entirely constituted by the gaze of man, is very exactly that of the gynaecium.¹

In an article in Lip in 1977 Beverley Kingston argued the historical importance of the women’s press.² For the feminist historian the pages of women’s magazines offer relatively unexplored sources for inquiry into women’s lives and interests.³ As Kingston noted: ‘the women’s pages and the women’s magazines are evidence. Their attraction lies in what they say, directly or indirectly, about matters which at one time were thought or assumed to be of interest to women’.⁴ However, Kingston’s argument can be taken further; for although the women’s magazine genre traditionally reflects a site of feminine interests, the pages are full of gender negotiation and definition. Through both advertisements and magazine content the boundaries governing perceptions of gender are both explicitly and implicitly established. Following on from Kingston, then, this article suggests that women’s magazines offer insight into social gender constructions and provide evidence of historically specific notions of gender.

1 R. Barthes, Mythologies, Paladin 1984, p 51. Barthes is referring to the French women’s magazine Elle.
3 By ‘women’s magazine’ I refer to the mass-produced weekly or monthly publications designed to appeal to women and incorporating areas of interest assumed to be specific to women - the home, family, beauty and fashion.
4 Kingston, p 27. Despite Kingston’s innovative article, women’s magazines have been given scant attention in Australian historiography, undergoing only exiguous investigation. There is not available, for example, a detailed publication history of Australian women’s magazines. For a history of the Australian Women’s Weekly see D. O’Brien, The Weekly: A Lively and nostalgic celebration of Australia through 50 years of its most popular magazine, Melbourne, 1992. For a history of Australian women’s magazines of the pre-World War I era see M. Tucker, ‘The Emergence and Characteristics of Women’s Magazines in Australia 1880-1914’, Ph. D. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1976.
Gender, as is generally noted, is a dynamic concept and cannot therefore be divorced from historical or cultural contexts. Both masculinity and femininity are continuously subjected to processes of interpretation and negotiation. These processes and the construction of gender difference are clearly perceptible in women's magazines; as Barthes makes clear, the content of women's magazines has traditionally been conditioned by the 'masculine'. In Australian women's magazines of the inter-war period, femininity and masculinity were represented through both visual and linguistic constructions. Such representations not only related to real world perceptions and experiences, but also served to sustain these perceptions by their conformity and conservative nature. Women's magazines must be seen in light of the social function that these magazines fulfilled in contributing to both the definition and the perpetuation of traditional notions of women's role and place in society. In magazine content and advertisements, prevailing notions of gender were made abundantly clear and the normative prescriptions of femininity by which women as historical subjects negotiated their lives were made explicit. At the same time, however, women's magazines represented a complex interplay of hegemonic gender construction and feminine subjectivity. For instance, one must keep in mind that readers, through their letters and comments, periodically challenged the dominant and prescriptive messages contained in magazine content and advertisements.

5 A. Brittan, *Masculinity and Power*, Oxford 1989, p 1. Brittan also makes clear that such negotiation and interpretation in western society is constrained by the underlying ideology of masculinism - which he defines as knowledge and power structures that perpetuate patriarchal and heterosexually confined social and intellectual thought in western society. Changing notions of gender definition do not, he suggests, challenge the fundamentals of masculinism as an ideology (see pp. 1-4).

6 Barthes, p. 51.

7 The author does not wish to indicate a reversion to early feminist writings which deemed women's magazines a social instrument of patriarchal exploitation. Betty Friedan, in particular, saw women's magazines as a critical moving force in creating for woman a view of her ideal self, with women's ultimate goal in life centred in the care of the home and husband (B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, Harmondsworth 1982, p. 58). Rather, this article seeks to highlight how dominant ideological constructions of gender are 'readable' in the articles and advertisements of women's magazines and suggest that it is pertinent that hegemonic gender constructions are made explicit if women's magazines are to be used as a source for historical inquiry into women's lives and experiences.

8 Recent feminist inquiry has highlighted, through the notion of the 'politics of pleasure', the theoretical complexities involved in analysis of popular culture and the recognition of individual subjectivity and enjoyment; see, in particular, L. van Zoonen, *Feminist Media Studies*, London 1994. The concept of pleasure and, perhaps equally, the utility value of women's magazines in a pre-electronic media era, along with notions of feminine subjectivity makes an analysis of women's magazines theoretically complex. Due to the limited size of this paper considerations of audience, readership and individual subjectivity are not included.

9 Even within articles and magazine content areas of resistance, often expressed through semantic devices such as humour, irony and metaphor or notions of double standards, open semiotic excess in which reader subjectivity may find expression; see J. Blix, 'A Place to Resist: Re-evaluating Women's Magazines', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 16, No 1, Winter 1992, pp. 56-71.
This article undertakes an analysis of the construction of hegemonic gender identities in women's magazines of the inter-war period. The study is confined to advertisements and therefore the intertextuality between notions of gender in advertisements and magazine content is only superficially touched upon. Although this pays scant attention to the full complexity of the sources it does highlight the extent to which women's magazines can offer insight into specific gender constructions.

Methodology

Images and discourses, which construct notions of gender, can be made visible by utilising the tools of semiology. Semiotics is the study of cultural meaning and is concerned with the way in which meanings are constructed and communicated within a given social context. Semiology provides a theoretical framework for the textual deconstruction and analysis of the relationship of social practice and the discourses surrounding this practice. In the last two decades semiotic analysis has been used extensively to highlight the ideological underpinning of advertisements which not only function to sell products but which can also be seen to create structures of meaning in society. The significance of such analysis derives from a recognition that advertising and the mass media furnish secular images that function as life-orienting and provide messages from which people form self-images, values and attitudes. Semiological analysis is concerned with breaking down the 'natural' dimension inherent in textual representations and seeks to disclose the ideological and cultural underpinnings that inform notions of 'truth' or 'fact' in socially constructed systems of meaning. In relation to gender constructions, a semiological framework can explore the 'natural' or 'self-evident' nature of gender representations by disclosing how notions of masculinity and femininity are endowed with restrictive and normative prescriptions of behaviour and social practice which govern perceptions of gender relations between men and women. In this way, semiotic analysis has proved a useful framework for decoding constructions of femininity in contemporary society; such analysis can also be undertaken by the historian to deconstruct images and representations of gender

Unfortunately a coterminous analysis of areas of resistance and semiotic excess found in readers contributions and articles are beyond the scope of this paper.

12 See also Barthes, op. cit.
13 M. Miles, Image as Insight: Christian Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture, Boston 1985, pp. 127-137. Williamson, p. 11, also makes this point.
14 Threadgold, p. 16.
within their historical context.\textsuperscript{15}

**Advertising and Modernity**

In the 1920s the women’s press in Australia, increasingly supported by advertising revenue, expanded and enjoyed comparative success.\textsuperscript{16} The expansion of the women’s magazine genre in the 1920s and 1930s coincided with the notion of the 'modern' individual and the growth of both consumer society and the advertising industry.\textsuperscript{17} In women’s magazines, advertising provided much of the 'colour' or visual aesthetics and constituted a site of specific constructions and representations of gender. Advertisements adopted notions of 'prestige', 'beauty', 'acquisition' and 'self-adornment'; concepts which formulated the modern individual’s sense of self as dependent on the provision and distribution of products. Further, advertising created the 'fancied need',\textsuperscript{18} developing concepts of self-consciousness and self-critique as the essence of the modern individual.\textsuperscript{19} While the emerging concept of the modern individual in advertisements targeted both men and women,\textsuperscript{20} there were some important differences in the way that femininity and masculinity were constructed through prescriptions of self-formulation. These variations not only drew on prevailing notions of gender but helped to sustain normative conceptualisations of gender difference.

The 1920s and 1930s saw a corresponding emphasis in advertisements and magazine content on modernity (the 'modern women') which endowed concepts of femininity and womanhood with a sense of empowerment, feminine progressiveness


\textsuperscript{16} My research has identified six Australian women’s magazines which were published for the first time the 1920s: *The Australian Woman’s Mirror* (1924), *New Idea* (1928), *Woman’s World* (1921), *Ladies Designer* later *Home Budget* (1922), *Fashion and Society* (1929) and *The Home* (1920). Additionally, *Woman’s Budget* (1906), *Everylady’s Journal* (1911) and *Australian Home Journal* (1894) were still published throughout the inter-war period. Of these magazines the *Australian Woman’s Mirror* survived until 1961, *Woman’s World* to 1952 and *Australian Home Journal* until 1983.


\textsuperscript{18} Ewen, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{19} See for example Ann Stephen, *op. cit.* Stephen discusses the manner in which soap industry advertising campaigns created the desire for 'white skin', purity and beauty: 'Across each page of soap advertising, in every disclosure of a 'beauty secret' for white skin were also unleashed fears of being undesirable, unfeminine, dirty and not white' (p. 60).

\textsuperscript{20} Ewen, *op. cit.*, especially chapters 5 and 6, pp. 151-176.
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and shared experience. Moreover, the 'modern woman', in advertisement discourse, was increasingly constructed in terms of heterosexual desirability and aestheticism as more beauty and fashion products were marketed. Underlying this concept of modernity, however, were distinct notions of gender which constrained feminine lifestyles and achievements within traditional perceptions of women's role in society. Heterosexual ideology, constituting femininity and masculinity as relational opposites, governed gender constructions in women's magazines during the inter-war years. Representations of gender were underpinned by notions of a relational dualism that served to make specific gender constructs, and their connotative or interpretative manifestations, appear 'natural'. As a result, representations of femininity were confined by three specific constructions that underpinned gender definition in women's magazines. First, the concept of woman as 'server' was fundamental to notions of femininity and women's role in society. Secondly, critiques of 'looking', connoted through the 'male gaze' and through prescriptive formulations of self-assessment, constrained constructions of femininity through notions of aestheticism and heterosexual desirability; and thirdly, the dichotomy of public and private spheres governed perceptions of male and female social space.

**Woman as Server**

Advertisements sustained notions of the feminine role as carer and nurturer through a myriad of products. The feminine was represented as 'server' in relation to domestic chores, family health and well-being, and was consistently signified in both housewife and motherhood representations. Most notably, however, the concept of woman as server was constituted as fundamental to women's happiness through the construction of feminine success and social maturation as embedded in heterosexual romance. Articles reinforcing the concept of woman's role as emotional 'server' were underpinned by corresponding notions of masculinity as recipient or 'to be served'. Thus, women's primary duty was defined within the parameters of the emotional and material satisfaction of others. In an article in *Everylady's Journal*, for example, women were told that the 'perfect girl' is one who is 'supportive', 'doesn't nag' and who gives her man time to 'relax and have a meal, before burdening him with her daily problems'.

It is in the general content of women's magazines of the inter-war period and the 1920s in particular that notions of feminine subjectivity are most strongly expressed. The phrase 'critiques of looking' is used here to indicate the pervasive construction of the feminine as eternally being 'looked at' or subjected to the 'gaze' of others.

*Everylady's Journal*, 'The Perfect Girl: What is She Like?', 1 April 1930, p. 296.
When he comes bursting in with a story of his own importance to the wife of his bosom he expects her eyes to light with a kindly admiration. Indifference will hurt him, but she who fastens upon him the cold eye of the analyst has turned the hose of hate on the fire of love.24

Of particular interest here is the implicit textual concatenation of women's serving role with love and heterosexual happiness. Advertisement discourse explicitly constructed notions of woman as server in terms of feminine success and happiness and as predicated on satisfying male needs. In a simple advertisement for Kream Cornflour (Figure 1), for example, the visual image denotes a female participant serving pudding to a male participant sitting at a table. The visual image, framed by a heart-shaped border, is accompanied by the text: 'Wives are Sweethearts Again'. This advertisement clearly conflated women's domestic responsibilities with 'pleasing the man'; further, it constituted feminine happiness and the successful performance of woman's serving role as dependent on product consumption - 'wives' can be 'sweethearts' again if they serve the right product!

The notion of feminine happiness as embedded in woman's serving role, and its relational opposite, man 'to be served', is again made explicit in the advertisement at Figure 2. In this advertisement the masculine 'right' (or expectation) to be served is firmly established in the text: 'My first dinner at home for weeks'. This textual exclamation implies the masculine 'right' to find another source of satisfaction if his needs are not met in the home. Axiomatically, femininity is constructed in terms of serving in the textual declaration: 'Her puddings bored her husband'. This simple textual construction explicitly means feminine failure - 'bored' implying lack of satisfaction - and is reinforced by the implied (but temporary) loss of her man to (presumably) external sources where his needs can be met. In the textual narrative, however, discovery of the right product enables her to fulfil her role and to 'keep' her man (home for dinner after so many weeks!). Thus, product consumption and the entire text of the advertisement is predicated on the prescriptive notion of 'pleasing' the man and, thereby, the advertisement simultaneously reinforces traditional notions of gender. While it clearly constructed gender in terms of server and served, this advertisement also attempts to reconcile notions of modern femininity with traditional constructions of the feminine serving role. Significantly, the female participant is denoted in formal attire constructing femininity in terms of social companionship and heterosexual desirability. This reading is reinforced by the male participant's smile and hand placed on the woman's shoulder signifying approval. Moreover, the textual use of 'bored' suggests, not only 'boredom' with puddings but with the woman herself. This advertisement, then, reinforced notions

24 "The Job of Being a Wife: How Many are Qualified?", Australian Woman's Mirror, 23 December, 1924, p. 17.
Wives are sweethearts once again

When Kream Cornflour brings its flavour to new and toothsome dishes...

A CHOCOLATE BLANC-MANGE made with Kream Cornflour!

Did ever hungry man’s eyes light on a more pleasing sight! Did ever anticipating palate taste a more delicious mouthful! Kream Cornflour brings its flavour to many dishes... soups... gravies... cakes... and puddings! Kream Cornflour contains richly nutritious elements fund in the sun-ripened Australian maize from which it is scientifically prepared. Order Kream Cornflour from your grocer... Dressed in its familiar pink packet, you can be sure of genuine Kream Cornflour, made by Maize Products Pty. Ltd., at Footscray, Victoria.

TRY THIS
Chocolate Blancmange

1/2 oz. Kream Brand Cornflour
1 oz. cocoa
1 pint milk
1 oz. sugar

Put the milk and the sugar on to heat. Dissolve the cocoa in a little hot milk, and add to the milk and sugar. Dissolve the cornflour with a little cold milk and stir into the boiling milk. Stir till it thickens, and cook about 3 or 4 minutes. Pour into a wetted mould, and set on ice to cool. Turn out carefully on to a glass dish and serve with whipped and sweetened cream.

Figure 1: Woman’s World, 1 December, 1931, p. 63.
and were, at times, reconciled with the traditional construction of woman as server. However, with prescriptions for feminine success and social maturation centred in marriage (finding and keeping a man) in magazine and advertisement discourse, the notion of woman as server underpinned perceptions of gender relations: woman’s role was to serve, failure to perform this ‘duty’ could result in ‘losing the man’ and as a corollary, losing claim to successful femininity.

**Critiques of Looking**

The concept of feminine success, as predicated on serving male desires, was further conscripted by advertising discourse through ‘critiques of looking’: that is, prescriptions of critical self-assessment, and significations of the looking of others, manifested particularly, in the ‘male gaze’. The interaction of feminine self-assessment and notions of being ‘looked at’ were established in many advertisements and in the visual imagery of magazines of the 1920s and 1930s. The ‘male gaze’ was consistently evoked, thereby constructing femininity in terms of pleasing male aesthetic desires. Additionally, social success, based on heterosexual desirability, constituted the most fundamental premise informing many constructions of femininity in advertisements. ‘Looking,’ manifested through the ‘male gaze’, was consistently reinforced by notions of self-critique - often signified by the ‘mirror’. Feminine self-contemplation or

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**Figure 2:** *Australian Women’s Mirror*, 22 October, 1935, p. 45.
narcissism was a recurrent theme utilised in both advertisements and magazine content. Women's basic social function and prescriptions for social success were premised on this notion of aestheticism. The concept of the 'male gaze' and feminine self-critique were so closely related that they frequently overlapped and became merged to the point that it is impossible to distinguish which form of 'looking' functioned at the primary level in any one instance: the overwhelming emphasis on feminine social success, as achieved through heterosexual desirability, was bolstered and made concrete by the concept of the 'male gaze'. Conversely, the construction of femininity as perpetually self-assessing through mirror imagery was underpinned by an eternal awareness of the 'looking' of others.

Articles reinforced the concepts of looking and of the 'male gaze' and regularly offered advice on how to 'keep the man'. In one article, for instance, in the Australian Women's Mirror, reader's were asked 'Men's Views on Women's Dress: How Can We Receive Them?', and were advised that, 'It is quite possible for a woman to ignore the suggestions made by men ... On the other hand, there's just a chance that man is after all, the woman's mirror, par excellence'. Similarly, the Australian Home Budget suggested, that in an 'age of self-advertisement', 'the home girl must see that she is attractive ... above all, she must be as feminine as she knows how' in order to make a man 'feel all bucked up and beaming'. Further, critiques of 'looking' regularly underpinned constructions of femininity in magazine content. The mirror, as symbol, was used to signify feminine self-assessment and self-critique and often represented the 'looking' of others. The Australian Women's Weekly, for example, advised its readers, when they had finished their dressing, 'to take a magnifying mirror in a strong light ... and examine your make-up critically' and Woman's Budget advised its readers that:

Ten minutes looking glass learning weekly should be the habit of every woman. After skin, hair, and general carriage have been studied, she should use the mirror to talk to. Speaking naturally in front of a mirror may show that too many facial contortions are made.

The 'mirror', as a symbol of 'looking', was also utilised in advertising texts. Some advertisements cleverly used the mirror image and feminine self-critique to engage and contextualise readers' attention. In the Kathleen Court advertisement of Figure 3, the viewer fills the outside space implied by the image. The hand holding the mirror is the viewer's hand, the viewer's face is positioned to be reflected in the mirror and, if the product advertised is used, the face reflected is her face. The text reinforces the concept of 'looking' - 'Every mirror tells a story', and like her own implied reflection she to can enjoy, 'a gay new adventure in facial loveliness'. Moreover, the mirror was often utilised in advertising texts as a personification of

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25 See for a further example the Yardley advertisement, The Home, 1 June, 1930, p. 76.
AIDS TO BEAUTY.

Helena Studdert

GAY NEW ADVENTURE IN FACIAL LOVELINESS.

NEVER BEFORE HAS MAKE-UP HAD SUCH FASCINATING POWER!

NOW—the pliant, subtle, dewy freshness of perfect preadolescent skin—for women of all ages. An end to the harsh, artificial look that comes from ordinary commercial toilet articles. Instead, magic creams, lotions, powders, lip and cheek colours that combine with Nature to take away the dull, maturing effect of time, clauscusing the result of using inferior lipstick in the past. The Kathleen Court Beauty Aides represent the most complete and most scientific range ever offered in Australia at reasonable prices. The quality of each article is the highest possible for its purpose—no harmful soap in the creams; no poisonous dyes in the lip colours; no burning or itchy rash or any product able to make the skin itchy as some. Where the product can be made to perfection locally, it is—where it can be made better locally, it is made. The modern factory, in two hemispheres, compels to produce this, the most successful series of beauty aids offered during the last ten years. Quality and Value tell.

A SPECIAL BEAUTY METHOD FOR PRESENT SEASON'S NEEDS:

At night, apply a little Kathleen Court Cold Cream, warm or cold. Next morning a little Hennafoam Shampoo. If starting to turn grey—a little Glandes' Scalp Stimulant will restore its youth. You may not need all these preparations at once, though, if you do, the total cost is the lowest known in any country for such abundant quality. Only high-class Chemists and Stores can supply you. If in any difficulty write personally to Kathleen Court, Australia House, Sydney, or A.M.P. Chambers, Wellington, N.Z.

Figures 3: Australian Woman's Weekly, 16 September, 1933, p. 37

the 'looking' of others. In the advertisement at Figure 4, for example, the female participant is not only using a mirror for self-contemplation but, presumably due to product consumption, has achieved the 'ideal', clearly signified by her 'kissing' her own image. In a similar manner a Berlei advertisement of 1937 portrayed a photographic image of a woman and her reflection in a mirror. The female participant was denoted with her arms outstretched to embrace her own image and the text declared: 'Your mirror will also approve'. Significantly, the 'mirror' in these advertisements was given an (implied) identity separate from the female participants, and as such, signified not the women's image of themselves but the 'looking' (and approval) of others.

The 'mirror' was frequently used in advertisements, beauty columns and visual

26 Berlei advertisement, Woman's World, 1 October, 1937, p. 41.
imagery. Readers were inundated with images of feminine 'self-looking' and were regularly advised of the importance of critical self-examination. More significantly however, the conceptualisation of femininity, as constituted by notions of 'looking', imbued constructions of the feminine with a visual essentiality; that is, as semipeternally open to the 'looking' of others. Thus other feminine identities and roles were, to some extent, marginalised in women's magazines by this emphasis on femininity as primarily visual.

The ubiquity of feminine self-critique, in magazine articles and advertisements, was predicated on assumptions of femininity as primarily embodied in heterosexual desirability. Consequently masculinity was both explicitly and implicitly constructed through significations of the 'male gaze'. Underpinning this construction of masculinity was both the perceived inherent right of the masculine to 'look' and the manifestation of femininity as 'to-be-looked-at'. As with the conceptualisation of woman's serving role as dependent on satisfying masculine needs, notions of feminine success were persistently constructed in relation to the 'male gaze' and as entirely dependent on pleasing male (aesthetic) desires. In a Palmolive...
advertisement of 1933, for instance, women were told that the male gaze was more critical than their mirror: 'More searching than your mirror ... your husband's eyes', and, more pertinently, that 'to hold their husbands' they must first 'hold their good looks'. Another Palmolive advertisement made the notion of feminine success, as dependent on pleasing male desires through aesthetic appeal, explicit in its text: 'I learned from a beauty expert how to hold my husband - and why so many women fail'. Similarly, in an advertisement for Lux Toilet Soap, women were reminded of the pitfalls of not maintaining their heterosexual desirability and, thereby, of not fulfilling the feminine role of satisfying masculine desire. In this particular advertisement, the female participant, finding her husband at the movies with another woman, exclaims: 'I look awful - and her complexion was really attractive'. The ultimate feminine failure was evoked in this advertisement, that is to be usurped by another woman - one who has followed the prescription for the feminine ideal. Again the feminine was defined in terms of the male right to be served or to have his expectations (of feminine desirability) fulfilled. Significantly, this masculine 'right' was signified in the textual narrative by the implicit construction of male infidelity, yet the advertisement clearly implied feminine failure. To establish the necessary product/success association (the advertisements principle aim), the main female participant, in the advertising narrative, uses the product Lux and, as a corollary, retains the affections of the man. In this way the advertisement reinforced product consumption as prescriptive. More significantly, however, the advertisement defined femininity in terms of heterosexual desirability and clearly constructed notions of feminine success as embedded in satisfying masculine desire.

The Lux advertisement also drew on another form of 'looking' - the 'female gaze'. Interestingly, the principle participant's initial failure was constructed both through the notion of not maintaining her heterosexual desirability and, simultaneously, as seeing her failure manifested in another woman - the personification of the 'ideal' feminine ('her complexion was really attractive'). This notion of the female gaze was often used in advertisements to evoke the 'ideal' feminine to which women were deemed to strive. The female gaze constructed a feminine form of 'looking' often imbued with either envy or criticism. For example, in an advertisement for Sang-Cre women were told 'Don't envy - Get good health' and the visual image showed one female participant looking at another. The woman 'looking' was positioned with her back to the viewer, thus the viewer 'looked', and presumably, 'envied' with her. In some advertisements the 'female gaze' was found along with

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27 Palmolive advertisement, Woman's World, 1 November, 1933, p. 3.
28 Woman's World, 1 February, 1933, p. 3. In fact many Palmolive advertisements in various magazines carried similar messages of the need to please the male eye to ensure success in marriage.
30 Sang-Cre advertisement, Australian Woman's Mirror, 7 April, 1931, p. 29.
the 'male gaze' - 'idol of men, envy of women' - a Pompeain Face Cream\textsuperscript{31} advertisement declared; and an advertisement for 4711 Eau de Cologne directly addressed the 'gaze' of the viewer with the text: 'Do you want to be like her - well groomed, modern and beautiful?\textsuperscript{32} Through critiques of 'looking', advertisements conscripted every part of the female body and defined these parts in terms of the 'ideal'. Hair, legs, nails, hands, face and figure proportions were all conflated with the concept of 'being looked at' and prescriptions for the 'ideal' were embedded in product solutions.\textsuperscript{33} However, the feminine 'ideal', as epitomised in advertising texts, was always unattainable with advertisements holding the promise of the 'essential feminine' - 'more lovely', 'truer loveliness' or 'a completer [sic] beauty' - forever in product consumption.\textsuperscript{34} If, as Marilyn Lake has suggested, femininity was increasingly 'sexualised' in the late 1930s,\textsuperscript{35} it was at the same time constrained by notions of heterosexual desirability and by the relational dualism of gender constructions - signified by the 'male gaze'. Even as advertisements increasingly offered prescriptions of self-critique and product consumption solutions, there was a corresponding reinforcement of traditional roles and perceptions of gender in which femininity was defined in terms of women's aesthetic and serving role; and always in relation to masculinity.

Gendered Social Space

A further restrictive paradigm governing gender constructions in women's magazines of the inter-war period was the dichotomy of social space. With their explicit emphasis on the home as the 'natural' domain of women, women's magazines inherently divided femininity and masculinity into private/public notions of gendered space. This dichotomy of public/private spheres of influence was made explicit in advertising texts. The construction of woman as server in advertisement discourse was underpinned by the commonplace and seemingly 'natural' synonymity of women and the home. Counterpoint to this feminine/private association was the conflation of masculinity with public space. Masculinity in women's magazines was delineated in two distinct modes of representation. The public sphere, and its associated knowledge and authority, was constructed as inherently masculine;

\textsuperscript{31} Pompeain Face Cream advertisement, \textit{Everylady's Journal}, 1 December, 1926, p. 557.
\textsuperscript{32} 4711 Eau de Cologne advertisement, \textit{The Home}, 2 January, 1929, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{33} Ewen, p. 3, points out that advertising diverted consumer consciousness away from product utility: 'The use of psychological methods', he contends, 'attempted to turn the consumer's critical functions away from the product and toward himself'; he cites the text from a Curtex advertisement 'at every glance a judgement is made'.
\textsuperscript{34} See for example the Gossard advertisement, \textit{Australian Woman's Mirror}, 23 September, 1930, p. 47; Cashmere Bouquet advertisement, \textit{The Home}, 1 August, 1931, p. 59 and Berlei advertisement, \textit{The Home}, 1 February, 1933, p. 16.
conversely, masculinity in private space was confined by the concept of 'home as haven'.

The association of masculinity with public authority and scientific or professional knowledge, often signified by a 'white coat', was particularly prevalent in advertisements. In a simple advertisement for Hutton's products (Figure 5) for example, connotations of male authority were powerfully constructed. In this advertisement the two female participants ("wise housewives") 'don't argue' with the advise of the grocer (denoted in a white coat) - his knowledge and authority grounded in his masculinity and public expertise. If the 'housewife' is 'wise', and therefore successful in performing her feminine role, she heeds the advice of the public male figure. As a corollary, 'housewife' experience in product consumption is subsumed by the construction of knowledge as a masculine preserve in this advertisement. Interestingly, the signification of masculine knowledge and authority transcended class lines. Doctors, dentists, grocers and all expert or professional significations in advertisements during this period were represented by male participants. Consequently the representation of public knowledge (grocer, beauty expert) and professionalism (dentist, doctor) constructed a public, authoritative and homogeneous masculinity in relation to femininity as recipient of that knowledge. Moreover, the conflation of technological or scientific knowledge with masculinity was not confined to representations of professionalism; rather public knowledge was constructed as a 'masculine' preserve even in the private sphere. In an advertisement for Bushell's coffee, for example, the visual image denoted a male participant offering a jar of 'vacuum packed' coffee to a female participant and was accompanied by the text: 'Isn't this aroma lovely? It's just the freshest coffee ever opened. It's coffee packed the scientific way... sealed in a vacuum...'

Further, a similar advertisement for the same Bushell's product featured a young male participant along with the text 'Vacuum Packed...Mum'; thus the explanation of the scientific 'vacuum packed' process was attributed to the 'masculine' by the textual construction of these advertisements. As with the transcendence of class lines in relation to masculinity and public knowledge, the Bushell's advertisement indicates that male authority in relation to femininity also transcended age.

Same product advertisements made the distinction of public and private spheres of

K. Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family 1880-1940*, Melbourne 1985. Reiger suggests that the bourgeois ideology of family which saw the home as a 'haven' from the public world of business and labour was widespread in Australian society in the early decades of the twentieth century (see especially pp. 37-39).

The only feminine signification of professionalism was found in representations of the 'nurse'.


knowledge explicit. In one advertisement for Nestlé’s Milk, for example, the visual image portrayed a masculine hand holding a can of Nestlé’s Milk with the linguistic exclamation: ‘Purity and Protection’. Further, the advertising text was concerned with a detailed explanation of the processes undertaken to manufacture the product. Conversely, another advertisement for Nestlé’s Milk showed a female participant cooking. Included in the visual image was a little girl watching, thereby constructing femininity in terms of domesticity and motherhood. This visual image was reinforced by the text: ‘Such good milk for cooking, what captivating

40 Nestlé’s Milk advertisement, Woman’s World, 1 May, 1927, p. 295.
41 Nestlé’s Milk advertisement, Woman’s World, 1 March, 1927, p. 176.
puddings and cakes it makes'. Significantly, this advertisement did not provide the same detailed explanation of the manufacture process. These advertisements highlight the inherent dichotomy of gendered space in relation to constructions of gender difference. In advertisement discourse the public sphere and knowledge/authority associations were clearly constructed as exclusively masculine (product manufacture rather than utility).

Conversely, the private sphere, the home and domestic matters (product utility rather than manufacture), was constructed as a feminine preserve.

The association of masculinity with the public sphere was further constituted through connotations of performance based achievement. Masculine social success, in comparison to constructions of feminine social success as predicated on heterosexual desirability, was associated with public activities; for example, performance in the workplace. A comparison of two advertisements for Kellogg's All-Bran makes this distinction clear. Targeting male consumers, the first advertisement (Figure 6) incorporates a visual image of a male participant walking away from an office (in public space) with the text 'Sacked because he was always tired'; and continues: 'In every walk of life you will meet the "Weary Willies"...who are losing out'. Denoting a male participant and using the colloquial 'Weary Willies', this advertisement explicitly constructs masculinity in public space and masculine failure in relation to workplace performance. Conversely, in a second advertisement for the same product (Figure 7) the female participant is shown sitting at a dressing table and looking in a mirror (in private space). Notably, her back is to the viewer and her reflection, a 'tired' face, is the image the viewer engages. The text reinforces notions of feminine self-critique: 'What does your mirror say?'; and constructs femininity in terms of aestheticism: 'To Many women the mounting birthdays bring a little less beauty, a few more wrinkles, a complexion that has lost its youth and charm'. Concepts of self-critique and lifestyle changes are implicit in both these advertisements and each construct product consumption as prescriptive; yet gender and gendered spheres are also implicit in the visual and linguistic constructions of the advertisements. Masculinity and masculine success are defined in relation to performance and the public sphere. Conversely, femininity is constructed in private space and feminine success is defined in terms of heterosexual desirability through notions of physical attractiveness.

The notion of gendered social space constrained constructions of both femininity and masculinity. Representations of masculinity in private space were confined by the concept of 'home as haven'. Masculinity in private space, especially in the visual imagery of advertisements, was constructed through signs of comfort, most often a newspaper, pipe or cigarette, slippers and armchair. Femininity, conversely, was most often represented in private space as 'working'. Moreover, the active role of woman in the home was regularly reinforced by significations of motherhood. Idealised in advertisements and often constructed in practical advice articles,
In Every walk of life you will meet the "Weary Willies"... men and women who are losing out because they are always tired. They try hard enough... but most often the poisons from constipation sap energy and strength—and bring illness, defeat and old age prematurely.

What a pity, when eating a delicious cereal could prevent it all! Kellogg's ALL-BRAN is guaranteed to relieve both temporary and chronic constipation! Two table-spoons daily—at every meal in severe cases.

Kellogg's ALL-BRAN brings relief in a natural, healthful way, by sweeping the intestines of all poisonous wastes. Eaten regularly it helps keep the system healthfully clean.

Is not this far better than taking pills and drugs that are often habit forming and may become ineffective?

ALL-BRAN also adds iron to the blood. It is a delicious cereal with cold milk or cream. Use it in cooking too. Recipes on the packet. No cooking required. At your grocer's.

Figure 6: Woman's Budget, 8 May, 1931, p. 23.

motherhood was represented in women's magazines as a central and 'natural' aspect of women's lives. Fatherhood, however, was only occasionally represented and was nearly always posited as disassociative and non-active. The near invisibility of fatherhood created a paradigm in which women were made responsible for the well-being of children; fatherhood was more often constructed, in advertisements
WHAT DOES YOUR MIRROR SAY?

TO MANY women the mounting birthdays bring a little less beauty, a few more wrinkles, a complexion that has lost its youth and charm. Yet for others, time seems to stand still.

The difference is often a matter of diet. So many foods lack sufficient roughage or bulk. Without it, constipation is inevitable. Its poisons spread over the whole system, causing ill health and loss of youth.

Today, you can prevent it easily by eating Kellogg's ALL-BRAN. Two tablespoonsful daily are guaranteed to prevent and relieve both temporary and chronic constipation. In stubborn cases, eat ALL-BRAN with each meal. This is so much better than taking pills and drugs that may be harmful.

Eat Kellogg's ALL-BRAN in some form every day. You will like its delicious nut-like taste. Delightful with cold milk or cream, fruits or honey added. Use it for making bran tea cakes, breads, or add it to soups. No cooking required.

Kellogg's ALL-BRAN also brings iron, which colours cheeks and lips with the natural tint of health. At all grocers.

Figure 7: Woman's Budget, 22 May 1931, p. 45.

particularly, in a generational sex role typification - a role model for the male child. This motherhood/fatherhood dichotomy was closely connected with constructions of gender in private space. In the Player Piano advertisement in Figure 8, for example, the female participant is denoted in close proximity to, and as actively involved with, the children. Through this visual positioning the advertisement defines (active) motherhood and infuses the visual text with notions of domesticity. In contrast, the male figure is positioned in the background and is spatially distant from the other participants. Moreover, the male participant is pictured engaged in masculine 'comfort' pursuits. In the

On going research indicates that fatherhood is more explicitly constructed in the post-World War II period in conjunction with an emphasis on the nuclear family in advertisements and magazine content.
WHAT DOES YOUR MIRROR SAY?

[Text not legible]

Muller, Inc. 250 W. 30th St. New York 1, N. Y.
Figure 8: Australian Woman's Mirror, 1 September, 1925, p. 61.

home, thus, masculinity was constructed as non-active (the home associated with comfort) and femininity, through representations of domesticity and motherhood, was constructed as active. In public space masculinity was represented as active through notions of public authority and knowledge and through performance in the workplace.
Conclusion

In the advertisements in women’s magazines of the 1920s and 1930s the construction of hegemonic gender identities is clearly visible when a semiological framework is employed to deconstruct images and representations that appear, on first glance, commonplace and ‘natural’. The growth of consumer society saw a corresponding reinforcement of notions of gender difference, manifested in women’s serving role and through representations of gendered social space, and an increasing construction of ‘modern’ femininity predicated on aestheticism and product consumption. In advertising texts, notions of modernity were reconciled with traditional perceptions of gender by constituting aesthetic femininity as fundamental to feminine success through the paradigm of heterosexual desirability - specifically formulated through critiques of looking and the ‘male gaze’. Thus, even as advertisements sought to construct femininity in relation to an emerging consumer culture, they simultaneously reinforced the relational dualism of gender relations which constituted feminine success as predicated on pleasing male desires and needs. Through their magazines, women were told what constituted feminine and, as a corollary, masculine behaviour, and were made aware of socially accepted notions of masculine and feminine social space. Notions of gendered behaviour and concepts of gender difference, as constructed in the advertisements of women’s magazines thus, offer some insight into the constraints, perceptions and discourses through which women lived and negotiated their lives in Australian society in the inter-war period.

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