

Feeling the Fantasy: Auto-Eroticism and Anxiety in the Physical Construction of *Cosmopolitan*  
Magazine

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## I. Introduction: The Necessity of the Material *Cosmopolitan*

Scholars who wish to explore the materiality of erotic periodicals within The University of Virginia's archive will find themselves in luck, that is, if they are interested primarily in *Playboy* magazine.<sup>1</sup> Alderman Library, a facility that boasts a weighty collection of volumes and microfilm for humanities and social science research pursuits, keeps more than an entire year's worth of *Playboy* within its current journals reading room (2013-2014). That Alderman keeps so many *Playboys* in physical copy in its archive informs us as to the types of erotic experiences and history that their archival process values as academically and culturally relevant to a scholarly audience. These *Playboy* magazines make a strong statement regarding the value placed on men's erotic experiences and current issues, while also drawing attention to the utter lack of comparable periodicals present at The University of Virginia that might primarily address women's erotic experiences and current social affairs. With its emphasis on open discussions of sexuality and inclusion of erotic fictions, *Cosmopolitan* magazine presents a comparable brand of contemporary periodical to *Playboy*, but is directed specifically towards a female audience.<sup>2</sup> Scholars who are interested in pursuing material periodical research or the physical history of popular culture will certainly find Alderman Library library quite helpful if they are interested in *Playboy*, but will emerge empty-handed if they need to examine *Cosmopolitan*, or any current women's magazine, for that matter.

This is not to say that *Cosmopolitan* does not reside in Alderman Library in some form. The older copies (1886-1963) are kept in microfilm, a collection which is quite thorough and has retained the essential aspects of *Cosmo*'s physical form, such as the advertising and editorial cohesion of the magazine. The copies from 1989 through the present, however, are not preserved as materially

cohesive resources. They can only be accessed online, where the magazines can be read as text only. The articles are converted to black, Times New Roman typeface against a white background. By robbing the magazine of its true form and reducing it to text content, the archive at Alderman Library provides an incomplete resource for its scholars. To study these contemporary texts thoroughly and informedly, we must have access to their full physical forms, including the advertisements, bindings, and perfumed aromas. The crucial interplay of advertisements, images, text, and physical construction allows the scholar to access a deeper understanding of the contemporary reader's experience and sensory relationship with the text.

Feminist scholars have taken up *Cosmopolitan* to explore the contemporary climate of young women's societal and political positions, feminist or otherwise. In *You've Come A Long Way Baby*, Natalie Taylor Fuehrer discusses the contradictions and complications presented by the women's magazine of the new millennium in her chapter, "Women's Magazines for the 'I'm-Not-A-Feminist-But' Generation." Discussing the way that women's magazines embody the slogan "the personal is political," Fuehrer reconciles the traditionally separated spheres of femininity and feminism, feminism and popular culture, politics and domesticity. She points out that *Cosmopolitan* represents this paradox: "Judging from the covers of today's *Cosmo*, young women are simply sexual beings interested solely in catching the attention of men and pleasing them...However, flipping through the same issue of *Cosmo*, the reader also finds advice for the young, responsible, professional woman beginning a career and an independent life" (223). She finds within the pages of *Cosmopolitan* the "Cosmo sex goddess" who is "an ambitious professional as well as a prudent money manager" (223). Brita Ytre-Arne's "Women's Magazines and the Public Sphere" also discusses the double life of the women's magazine, specifically the way that they work in and around the public sphere, through

their exploration of private interviews and stories, effectively constructing a new public space out of the intimate areas of the reader's life (258).

This millennial woman who is at once public and private, "sex goddess" and "ambitious professional" is also taken up by Marjo Kolehmainen in her reading on advice columns of *Cosmopolitan*, "Normalizing and Gendering Affects: How the Relation to Porn is Constructed in Young Women's Magazines." In her discussion of these columns where readers write in with their concerns about their husbands' or their own consumption of porn, she finds that these "sex goddesses" are steered away from pornography or told to use pornography not for their own erotic pleasure, but to exact revenge upon their own porn obsessed husbands (183). She finds that *Cosmopolitan's* readers are constructed as having an anxiety-filled relationship to pornography, where "women's affective responses to porn or their male partner's porn watching are often framed as psychological symptoms of... insecurity and low self-esteem" (187). In pornography's bridging of the private, erotic lives of women and the public, easily accessible world of online pornographic sources, women are constructed as problematic and incomplete, needing advice and policing when dealing with their relationships or sexuality.

Leslie W. Rabine also focuses on this doubleness within the women's magazine; she asserts that the women's fashion magazine propagates two bodies: "one body, represented in fashion photographs and upbeat copy, is the confident, free, sexually powerful image that readers can reproduce through skillful use of clothing and makeup. The other, which could be called the sociopolitical body, is enmeshed in a network of power relations that still subordinate women economically, politically, sexually, physically..." (66). Rabine's two bodies of the women's magazine embody the experience of the *Cosmopolitan* reader, at once free and empowered, but also regulated

by violent social structures. Extending the common ground between the arguments of Rabine, Kolehmainen, Ytre-Arne, and Fuehrer, I find that *Cosmopolitan* seems to construct a double vision for women. The projected reader of *Cosmopolitan* is problematic and inadequate, needing assistance and policing to become like the paragon of femininity and consumerism on the *Cosmo* cover. However, she is also self-sufficient, possessing a thorough grasp on current political and economic debates and functioning as a financially independent consumer and creator of erotic stimulation.

Although these recent scholars have examined the extent to which the textual editorial content of the magazine constructs a paradoxical double vision of contemporary femininity, there is still much work to be done by fully examining recent publications of *Cosmopolitan* in their full materiality. When I mention materiality, I mean the cohesion between advertising and editorial, the progression of content accessed through flipping or “flicking,” the visual arrangement of images on the page, the aromatic quality of the advertisements, and the particular appeal of the binding and packaging. Janice Winship puts forth a useful model for this type of work in her discussion of women’s magazines from the 1950’s to the 1980’s, *Inside Women’s Magazines*. She not only lays out textual examples from the magazines she analyzes, but also provides full visual spreads from the magazines, recreating the unique physicality that the magazine presents. To fully explore the constructed reader of *Cosmopolitan*, one who is at once autonomous and inadequate, I would like to propose a reading of *Cosmopolitan* as a physical object and as a textual, erotic experience. By reading *Cosmopolitan* as a physical object, I will highlight the ways that its materiality draws out pleasurable experiences which provide female readers opportunities for self-sufficiency outside of romantic partnerships. However, this auto-erotic meaning is created even as the reader of the text is constructed in terms of incompleteness and lack, vying for access into consumer and capitalist spaces of prosperity. The *Cosmopolitan* “sex goddess” might find a sense of self completion or pleasure

through the creation of autonomous erotic experiences as she handles the physical periodical, but she also finds in these same pages that she hasn't quite "made it," encountering the construction of her self as an incomplete member of a capitalist society.

I find that *Cosmopolitan* offers a uniquely physical experience, one that is immediate, intimate, and pleasurable. As Joke Hermes asserts in *Reading Women's Magazines*, we must recognize "that readers are producers of meaning rather than the cultural dupes of the media institutions" (5). *Cosmopolitan* encourages its readers to become "producers of meaning" by physically engaging with the pleurably repetitive imagery, tactile dismantling, and imaginative reconstruction of the text. When inside the space of the magazine, readers are released from the demands of their professional or domestic lives, creating a new space for individual, pleasurable reflection and absorption in the reimagination of their femininity.<sup>3</sup> The scents, fold out images, flaps, and tear out editorials of *Cosmopolitan* create an immersive, erotic reading experience, one that is centered solely upon the subjective perspective of women. *Cosmopolitan* creates an experience that is wrapped up in the individual senses and auto-eroticism, fostering a rich relationship with the self that lies outside of the heterosexual relationships so normalized by the magazine itself.

This thesis project will move through *Cosmopolitan*, considering it as a uniquely physical object that provides a removed space for women to access modes of pleasure, explore erotic narratives, immerse themselves in sensory experiences, and compile a new text that is uniquely their own through autonomous imaginative work. I will move through close readings of *Cosmopolitan*, focusing first on the status of the single female celebrity as cover model, working through the pleasurable continuum fostered between the narrative of her fantastical professional pursuits, the editorial voice of the magazine, and the implied audience of single female readers. Moving from the

cover into the pages of the magazine, I will discuss the construction of *Cosmopolitan's* perfume advertisements, pull outs, and binding. I will detail how these material constructions create auto-erotic meaning and pleasure through sensual immersion and individual, physical action. I will also explore how the repetitive advertisements induce both pleasure and un-pleasure as they build into an imposing, demanding visual experience. Finally, I will discuss the status of the “Red Hot Read” at the end of every *Cosmopolitan*, specifically, how these stories prioritize female climax and function as a narrative climax of the magazine as a whole. However, these stories are not utopias of liberated female orgasms; they construct the female climax as dependent and regulated by male pleasure, heterosexual interactions, and strict upper-class identities.

## II. Creating Continuity: Anxious Fantasies and Single Celebrities on the Cover of *Cosmopolitan*

*Cosmopolitan's* covers embody the double vision of the contemporary female readers, at once inadequately single and autonomously stable in their forwardly mobile career paths. The cover of *Cosmopolitan* constructs its readers as young, single females in their twenties and thirties, women who are not married and are just breaking into their careers. These women are outsiders to the spheres of capitalistic success and matrimonial, domestic bliss. We clearly see this construction in the April 2013 edition of *Cosmo* which featured an article on “Fun, Fearless Work” titled “Act Your Way to the Top.” This editorial claims to help the reader “fake it till you make it!” implying that the reader of this text is clearly not the boss or the executive leader in her workplace (Ledgerwood 124-125). This edition also features “How to Get Some When You Live With Your Parents,” which notes that “more than one-third of recent grads live at home...and they’re not sitting around dateless” (Shelasky 144). Implying that the reader is financially unstable and not settled down into



domestic settings, these articles clearly construct their readers as young, single women new to the workforce and still involved in the dating world. Specifically, these women are upper middle class or middle class women, college graduates moving into internships and career paths, rather than minimum wage jobs. However, *Cosmopolitan* does not just construct its readers as young, single females; their actual readers have become increasingly younger and less attached to traditional forms of domesticity in recent years. In her examination of the visual and textual inter-workings of women's magazines in the 1980's, Janice Winship notes that "although 60 % of *Cosmo's* readers are married, the feel of the magazine is single" (104). This statement still holds true today, if not more so; *Cosmopolitan* (2014) cites that 47% of its readers are single and 36% are married (Demographic Profile). The magazine has become more explicitly single, not only in its projected voice, but in its actual readership.

Although these single female readers are seemingly celebrated by contemporary popular culture as the height of desirability and eroticism, single women are also framed as the object of concern and anxiety. Such celebratory and anxiety inducing narratives around single woman have seen a major revival on the scene of popular culture in the new millennium, and this revival and subsequent anxiety is also clearly demonstrated on the scene of *Cosmopolitan's* cover. Stories of predominately white, young, single women dominate television shows, the music industry, and popular films. The single women that star in these television shows, movies, and world tours also grace the covers of women's magazines, replacing the supermodel cover girl of years past.<sup>4</sup> I will explore how the post-millennial single woman that *Cosmopolitan* writes for is wrapped up in notions of instability and anxiety, creating a continuum that spans from the cover girl to the single female reader. I find that the intertwining of the cover model with the *Cosmopolitan* title perpetuates

an intertwining of the cover model, the editorial, and the female reader's narratives. This is a pleasurable intertwining, one that allows the reader to identify and feel intimacy with the fantasy of the cover's textual interplay and of the cover girl's narrative. However, the interaction between cover and editorial content also forges a continuum that creates anxiety and shame in the single female reader as she is compelled to identify with the problematized single status of the celebrity.

The position of *Cosmopolitan* cover girl has recently been dominated by young, single, female celebrities and singing stars. These young women give interviews on both their personal lives and their professional lives as actresses and singing superstars. They carry to these various magazine covers not only their statuses as physical paragons, but their personal narratives as unmarried women. The single cover woman is identified as representative of both the audience and the voice of the magazine. She speaks both from the perspective of a supposedly failed heterosexual life and to those who are attempting to remedy their own singleness. The intimacy fostered within this continuum between editorial voice, audience, and imagery is one that produces pleasure for the reader. This pleasure lies in identifying with the celebrity, envisioning herself as the cover girl, and imaginatively conflating the celebrity's story and interview with her own lived experiences as an unmarried woman.

The cover model of *Cosmopolitan* is representative of the editorial and advertising content to follow, especially as she represents the paradoxical construction of femininity within the text. In *Decoding Women's Magazines*, Ellen McCracken finds the stance of the women's magazine cover model to represent submission as she tilts her head and body towards the camera, communicating "an acceptance of subordination through the lowering of the head" (22). She also finds that the model "pictured in three-quarter length or full-length shots, exhibits the 'bashful knee bend,' a casual

and trusting posture that presupposes the goodwill of others in the surroundings” (23). McCracken also finds that the cover model displays “exaggerated expressions of delight, laughter, and glee which imply a kind of ‘flooding out’ on the emotional level” (23). While McCracken’s observations about the construction of the cover model as submissive or lacking in mental presence hold true on the covers of contemporary *Cosmopolitans*, I also find that the cover model of *Cosmopolitan* stands confidently and self-assuredly. Her hands are often on her hips, conveying a sense of capability, a “we-can-do-it” approach. She also stares directly into the camera, arrestingly and imposingly gazing at the reader with confidence. She is centered on the page, implying her centrality to the photographic interplay as she overlaps the actual title of the magazine. On the cover, the model’s face and hair typically obscure the majority of the magazine’s large title, *Cosmopolitan*, so much so that the word is technically, illegible. Not only does the image of the cover girl and the title become one, but the identity of the cover model supersedes the actual identity of the magazine, her image more important to the cover than the full text of the title. Both arresting and submissive in her stance, our celebrity cover girl draws the viewer in and immediately brings to mind an entire narrative of professional work and personal history, a narrative which is now tied up with the identity of the magazine.

Ellen McCracken discusses the importance of the cover and cover girl as magazine advertisement in *Decoding Women’s Magazines*. She finds that “the front cover...whose ostensible content is the editorial material one will find inside, is in fact, the magazine’s most important advertisement” (4). Like McCracken, I find the cover girl, with her stance exuding both confidence and submission, to be the most important aspect of invitation to the erotic reading experience of *Cosmopolitan*. She invites the reader to enter her world of success and stability, fostering a sense of

intimacy with the female reader. The overlapping of the cover girl's image with the title of the magazine also demonstrates the binding together of magazine identity, audience identity, and cover girl identity. This superseding of the title foregrounds the ways that the cover girl will essentially speak for the magazine, projecting a centralized voice that speaks to and for the single female. *Cosmopolitan* presents its cover girl to us in a way that establishes her narrative and physical presence as central, not only spatially, but to the identity of the magazine itself. The cover girl is always centered, presenting a very repetitive and predictable stance. The predictability of the cover model's arrangement on the front cover establishes a sense of trust and intimacy with its readers; they know what to expect and immediately begin to construct a sense of this particular episode's personality from the personality of the celebrity featured. The headlines of various stories surround her, enveloping her within the magazine's framework, furthering this connection between the single female celebrity's narrative and magazine's content.

I find that the interplay of text, title, and cover girl creates a pleasurable fantasy of identification for the reader. The notion of magazine cover as fantasy is similarly supported by McCracken who finds that, on the cover, "whether a perfect face, dress, meal, or furniture arrangement, these symbols appear all the more attainable because they urge the viewer to link the fantasy to her everyday life" (13). For example, when *Cosmopolitan* featured hyper-sexualized celebrity and model Kate Upton in November 2012, the episode was also named "*Cosmo's* Kama Sutra Bad Girl Edition" (See Image A). *Cosmo* associates Kate Upton's hyper-sexualized narrative as the face of *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit editions and the mass media fascination with her breasts with this particular edition of *Cosmo*, one that promises to instruct its readers on how to craft a similar hyper-sexual, adventurous image for themselves. The reader of the magazine is encouraged

to merge Kate Upton's sexually desirous narrative with her own, creating a pleasurable identification with the admiration and desire that Kate Upton represents. This type of transformative imaginative work is also demonstrated within the December 2013 issue featuring Miley Cyrus, who poses on the cover seductively biting her long red nails (See Image B). The caption "It's Party Time! Eat, Drink, and Twerk Your Ass Off!" is emblazoned over her abdomen, creating a clear connection between Miley Cyrus's very public twerking antics at The 2013 Video Music Awards and her professional image centered around partying and social adventure.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the magazine crafts a pleasurable continuity between its own voice and the voices of celebrities, one that allows the reader access to this fantastical world of sexual fame, admiration, and even notoriety.

*Cosmopolitan's* covers position their chosen celebrity as centered on the page, alone amongst a swirl of promising claims and editorial snippets. This presentation creates a pleasurable fantasy for women, where they can imagine themselves both in a tranquil space of solitude and immersed in a consumer and erotic paradise. McCracken argues that there is "pleasurable work" involved in the imaginative merging of reader and cover girl in the space of fantasy. An image of erotic and consumer fantasy is developed as these women stand alone on the cover of *Cosmopolitan*, inducing imaginative pleasure as they are unencumbered by children, school books, domestic trappings, or professional accessories. This notion of magazine as peaceful space of solitude is similarly proposed in Susan Fraiman's "Bad Girls of *Good Housekeeping*: Dominique Browning and Martha Stewart" (2011). Fraiman explores the way domestic spaces are presented in decor and housekeeping magazines and finds that they paint an image of domesticity "elaborated not for husband and children but as a language of female pleasure, self-expression, and autonomy" (263).

Whereas Fraiman writes on readers who are married women or mothers yearning for a quiet space away from the demands of their domestic duties, I apply this model to the single woman on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* who similarly represents a female fantasy of “self-expression and autonomy.” She stands alone, her story of independence and singledom establishing a space of imaginative identification with the single female reader.<sup>6</sup> The reader is invited to imagine herself standing alongside or in place of the cover girl, immersed within this consumer and erotic fantasy that is isolated from the demands of the professional work place and the domestic space. Although as McCracken notes, “There is often an implied male presence, communicated through the woman’s facial expression, make-up, body pose, and clothing...” (20), the cover woman does stand alone in this space where only her concerns and consumer questions exist. I will focus primarily on this aspect of fantasy on the cover, one that is similarly taken up by Leslie Rabine as she discusses the fantasy of women’s fashion magazines. In “A Woman’s Two Bodies: Fashion Magazines, Consumerism, and Feminism,” she addresses the fantasy space created by the fashion magazine, one that transgresses the boundaries of interiority into reality:

The fantasies generated by fashion magazines do not confine themselves to the page. They are actually acted out by readers on their own bodies. Imitated from magazines, movies, or videos, and worn in daily life, fashion erases the boundary between the “real” and the “fantastic,” between the private escape of fantasy and public intercourse. The pleasure of looking at the photographic images forms one part of a continuum with the pleasure of re-creating the body and the pleasure of masquerade. The continuum turns inside out the commonly accepted opposition between fantasy as internal, unreal, private, and reality as external (63).

Applying this continuum model to the cover of *Cosmopolitan*, we find that the cover of the magazine creates a fantasy world that breaches the boundaries of private and public, creating an externalized imagination of the “re-created,” secluded, female body. With nothing behind her but the title of the magazine or a colored backdrop, she invites the reader to engage in a “masquerade” and explore the myriad of paths and options which surround her body, including most recently in April 2014, “Your Best Butt Ever,” “Hot Looks Under \$50” and “Break the Bed Sex: 21 New Ideas to Blow Your Own Damn Mind! (*Cosmopolitan* April 2014)”

Although these pleasurable, fantastical visions of the single life are fostered through the presence of actresses and singers on these *Cosmopolitan* covers, they also represent centers of policing anxiety and public concern, cultivating an anxious visual spread that constructs its readers as problematic and lacking. The contemporary cultural imagination of the single woman, both real and fictional, is at once enamored with her subversive autonomy and confidence, but also vexed over the presentation of her body and anxious over her unstable and unhinged social, romantic, and professional life. Anthea Taylor’s *Single Women in Popular Culture* (2012) addresses the supposed problem of the single woman, crafting a fully realized vision of the single woman in the pop culture world of the millennium. Taylor rebukes the notion of the celebrated single woman, instead advocating that the single female is a source of deep-seated anxiety in film, self-help books, reality television, and the blogosphere. This sharp take on the “reverberations of Bridget Jones’ Diary” and the legacy of Carrie Bradshaw articulates the problematic representation of the single female in the early 2000’s and 2010’s: “being a straight single woman, particularly for a prolonged period, is often seen as a failure to perform heterosexuality adequately or appropriately, especially in terms of the defiance of its key institution: marriage” (22). Although Taylor notes that the naturalization of single

women in the city is uniquely subversive as it establishes them in public spaces, she notes that being a single female is associated with victimhood and a general uneasiness (49, 22). Asserting the importance of popular media forms in helping “provide the narratives through which we come to constitute ourselves/are constituted as subjects,” Taylor believes that when the “idea of singleness” is “invoked in the public sphere...[it] appears with startling regularity as a problem to be rectified...” (6). Bella DePaulo works through similar notions of the problematic single state in *Singled Out*, where she coins the term “singlism,” or “the twenty-first century problem that has no name,” as the “stigmatizing of people who are single;” DePaulo asserts that “there is no way to be a good or worthy single person” (2,14).

The single females of popular television, film, and music featured on the covers of *Cosmopolitan*, such as Taylor Swift, Zooey Deschanel, and Katy Perry, embody this “problem with no name” discussed by DePaulo and Taylor. Although as McCracken notes, these confident and cool cover models hold a sense of power over the reader, inspiring “envy” and “feelings of superiority” these single women bring to the *Cosmopolitan* cover a sense of anxiety and heterosexual dread.<sup>7</sup> Bringing to mind immediately the public stage of their romantic and emotional collapses, these young celebrities craft a bridge between public and private single anxiety. As we purchase December 2012’s *Cosmopolitan*, we are invited to identify with and absorb into our own identity the romantic narrative of Taylor Swift, who has infamously dated a multitude of male celebrities since her rise to stardom. Her romantic escapades have all been carried out quite publicly and have blended into her work as a songwriter; her songs are infamous for referencing her multiple ex-boyfriends. She has been characterized as a demanding and overbearing girlfriend by social media, moving from man to man quickly and accruing an impressive number of ex-boyfriends and lovers. It has become



common on social networking sites to joke that Taylor Swift's exes should collaborate to create a song faulting Taylor Swift for the downfall of all her relationships called, "Maybe You're the Problem."<sup>8</sup> Labeled as neurotic and perpetually in and out of love, Taylor Swift certainly brings to the cover of *Cosmopolitan* an anxious narrative of heterosexual failure. Her December 2012 cover's subtitle reads, "Crazy for A Kennedy!" and her image within the magazine interview is titled, "Taylor in Love..Her days of being played by a boy are so over" (See Image C). These titles imply that Taylor is in a stable relationship for the moment, but they also frame her in terms of mental instability and heterosexual failure. Her interview is followed by a short interview piece with Taylor Lautner, American heart throb and one of Taylor Swift's many publicized ex-boyfriends (Lautner 42). Her supposed romantic success with Conor Kennedy is immediately shadowed by the ostensible evidence of her repeated failures in love, represented by Taylor Lautner. By creating this narrative from cover to editorial content that emphasizes both her current success in love with Conor Kennedy and also her past narrative of demanding serial dating failure, Taylor Swift's singleness is celebrated, yet policed and shamed by the construction of the magazine.

Just as single women are interpellated into pleasurable imaginative experiences as they gaze upon the cover of the magazine, erasing "the boundary between the 'real' and the 'fantastic,' between the private escape of fantasy and public intercourse," they are also drawn into policing, shaming narratives surrounding singleness. This narrative constructs a hybrid woman, comprised of the single woman on the cover and the proposed single female reader, creating an individual who is incomplete and insufficient as she embodies a supposed failure of heterosexuality.<sup>9</sup> The single female cover girl stirs up an imagination of problematic social interactions, career failures, romantic disappointments, and a generalized urge to police or fix her life. These *Cosmopolitan* covers

establish a continuum that is both pleasurable and deprecating between single female readers and the single female celebrities. This type of double vision extends into the pages of the magazine, employing an editorial voice and an advertising narrative that perpetuates both shame and pleasure for the reader. These material aspects demonstrate the duplicity of *Cosmopolitan's* imagined reader, one who is constructed as independent seeker of erotic gratification and inherently insufficient as a consumer and female.

### III. Auto-Erotic Pleasure and Consumer Shame: The Material Construction of *Cosmopolitan*

McCracken finds that a women's magazine "allows the pleasure of the transgressive and the forbidden, and then attempts to contain these elements by invoking the dominant moral values" (2). I will move through various physical and tactile aspects of *Cosmopolitan* that foster these pleasures of the "transgressive and the forbidden," namely, their binding, perfume and cosmetics advertisements, and cohesion of editorial and advertisement narrative. When inside the space of the magazine, readers at once find escape from the anxiety inducing world to which they have not yet been granted access and also find ways to create individual, pleasurable reflections that foster autonomy and a rich relationship with the self outside of a heterosexual partner. Just as the single female cover girl is both fantastical and shame inducing, the materiality of *Cosmopolitan's* pages works to construct the contemporary reader as both a complete, autonomous erotic woman and an inadequate member of a consumerist, capitalist culture.

As the reader holds and examines *Cosmopolitan's* outer binding and physical construction, she is compelled to construct erotic meaning through the design of the magazine spine. Each year of *Cosmopolitan* designates an erotic image of a shirtless man to grace the spine of the magazine; each

edition comprising the year features one section of the man's picture. When the reader has compiled each edition of the year's publications and places the magazines side by side, they create the completed image of the year's male model (See Image D). This unique aspect of *Cosmopolitan's* physical copies encourages the reader not only to purchase each edition of the year's publication, but also to bring together these copies physically on their coffee tables and bookshelves to forge a new erotic meaning, one that can only be realized through a direct physical interaction with the text. The image of the shirtless male model is fragmented and disjointed, a disunity that can only be mended by the reader as she constructs an eroticism that is, finally, whole and fully realized. The forging of this wholly realized erotic image encourages the female reader to find pleasure not just through the gaze upon the male body provided, but also through the independent, physical actions that create the image itself.

However, this fragmentation also presents a problematic objectification or dismemberment of the nearly nude male body, a pattern in advertising and popular culture that has been widely regarded as dehumanizing by feminist scholars. In her popular documentary, *Killing Us Softly 3: Advertising's Image of Women*, Jean Kilbourn discusses the cutting up or objectification of the female body frequently featured in advertisements of the twentieth century. She notes that women's bodies are "dismembered in advertising, over and over again just one part of the body is used to sell products. Which is, of course, the most dehumanizing thing you could do to someone. Not only is she a thing, but just part of that thing is focused on" (Kilbourn 2000). By fragmenting the anonymous, eroticized male body on the spine of the magazine, *Cosmopolitan* employs this same mode of objectification and dehumanization towards the male body that is so routinely used to objectify the female body.<sup>10</sup> *Cosmopolitan* compels its female readers to engage in an oppressive eroticism. The reader must

approach the male body in the same troubling way that the female body is approached, “hacked apart” and dehumanized, a visual approach that has become problematically naturalized by popular advertising campaigns and fashion spreads.

Entering into the space of *Cosmopolitan*'s pages confronts the reader with larger than life images of cosmetics and fashion advertising; these are images which, over the course of the magazine, forge a continuous and cohesive narrative about consumerism that incites erotic pleasure through repetition and overwhelming visual aesthetics. In Ariel Levy's study of popular culture, *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, she discusses the conflation of sexuality with consumerism in popular television shows such as *Sex and the City*: “There was as much focus on Manolo Blahniks and Birkin bags as there was on blow jobs. Buying things became a richly evocative experience” (172). Janice Winship also notes the intertwining of consumerism and eroticism, this time within the pages of *Cosmopolitan*'s advertisements, finding that “despite *Cosmo*'s glamorous reputation, it is less its fashion pages and more its profuse advertising which offers enticing consumer spreads with all the associations of female desire, pleasure, and fantasy” (101).

Like Winship, I also find that the reader is immediately exposed to these “enticing consumer spreads” as she opens the magazine. The first few pages of *Cosmopolitan* consistently feature eight to ten pages of larger than life advertisements, often taking up both pages and featuring imposing female faces. Leslie Rabine argues in “A Woman's Two Bodies” that “the endless repetition of similar images, most of which are inimitable to the point of irreality, invites a look that drifts rapidly through them in a semi-hallucinatory state” (63). Joke Hermes finds that the everyday reading of women's magazines is conducted with “far less concentration and much more detachment than other popular genres,” a reading style that follows Rabine's claim that the reader “drifts” through the text

(Hermes 14). Like Rabine and Hermes, I find the preliminary advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* function to create this “semi-hallucinatory” state for the female reader; they free the mind to enter an escapist fantasy as they frame the editorial text. The repetitiveness of the advertising images in form and theme create pleasurable, erotic meaning that is taken to the point of unpleasure or discomfort. These images produce not only pleasure in a repetitive, predictable form, but also induce an overwhelming reading experience that disempowers its readers through imposition.

May 2013’s *Cosmopolitan* clearly features this hallucinatory and overwhelming construction. The pages move through formulaic close-up shots, each mirroring the other and creating a repetitive, cohesive narrative that evokes a dream space. We are first greeted with a Bumble and Bumble’s two page spread advertisement for “Full Form Mousse,” featuring an ethereal brunette gazing off into the distance and an enlarged view of the mousse can (See Image E). This advertisement is followed by another close-up of a brunette model, this time advertising Lancôme’s “Color Design Eye Palette and Doll Lashes Mascara” (See Image F). Her face even larger than the last model’s image, this model stares into the camera arrestingly and imposingly.<sup>11</sup> This advertisement is followed by yet another ethereal, visually striking model for L’Oréal Paris’s “Healthy Look” hair gloss, one who stares out from the page, challenging the reader to “boost your color” (See Image G). These three advertisements that usher in the editorial content of *Cosmopolitan* mirror one another, creating a repetitive progression of imagery that incites what Rabine calls a “semi-hallucinatory” state. As these advertising images present repetitive types of images or similar types of women in similar poses or facial expressions, we find a pleasure inducing visual experience, one that is comfortingly predictable. The perpetuation of repetitive pleasure however, is quickly overstimulating, and might lead to forms of unpleasure. As the reader is invited to lose herself mentally and physically within

the text, the images become unsettling and the mounting assaults of these models' gazes become overwhelming. Their arresting impositions demand physical and consumerist perfection.<sup>12</sup>

The advertising content scattered throughout *Cosmopolitan* often works to create cohesive narratives surrounding the construction of an ideal femininity or an ideal sexual experience. Janice Winship argues in *Inside Women's Magazines* that "Ads are often strategically placed in relation to editorial material, encouraging readers to notice them..." (101). McCracken supports this claim and takes it one step further, finding that "a much more pervasive homologous structuration links ads and editorial material in women's magazines, so that ads seem a natural and logical extension of the editorial content" (38). The extension of editorial content into advertising is clearly demonstrated within two pages spreads such as the one featured in the May 2011 edition. On one page, "Slippery Tricks You'll Both Be Into" argues that "women who bust out the lube experience more satisfaction than those who don't. Need some ideas for unleashing this lightning in a bottle? We've thought of a few..." (Hilmantel 154). The adjacent page features an ad for sexual lubricant by KY: "Intense-Arousal Gel For Her," a product which promises to "make the big moment feel even bigger" (See Image H). These two pages work together to forge a continuum between advertising and editorial, where the advertising does not interrupt the narrative of the editorial, but instead continues the editorial's message about the exciting experience of sexual lubricant.

However, these advertising and editorial continuums are not always so neatly constructed and so easily digested as a cohesive unit. Often, the placement of advertisement next to a certain editorial will create an anxiety inducing association within the imagination of the female reader, drawing out feelings of inadequacy and shaming women for simultaneously being unsatisfactory home makers and career makers. In April 2014's section "Cosmo Careers," guest-edited by notable feminist

spokesperson and COO of Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg, women are told how to take control of their careers and “Make it happen!”<sup>13</sup> This section “tells you how to tune out doubts, draw in people, and lead with confidence. Because wherever it is you’re going, you belong in the driver’s seat” (Sandberg 127). This section features empowering and informative articles such as “The Power of Talk” which discusses the derogatory words used to describe strong women in the workplace and provides alternative words such as “assertive,” “outspoken” or “reserved” to replace “bossy,” “shrill” or “icy.” (Bennett 130). Another article, “The Doormat Dynamo,” notes that “successful women are taking charge at work but walking on eggshells at home. What’s going on?” (Bennett 142). Delving into the anxiety that follows successful career women as they attempt to find love or create a family, Jessica Bennett urges women to stop sheltering men’s egos and take ownership over their intellect and successful careers both in the office and at home around their husbands or significant others (142-145).

Although this section features these empowering narratives about challenging stereotypes and embracing your identity as an “executive leader” both at home and in the workplace, it is accompanied with advertisements for domestic products or products that are wrapped up in stories of stress or anxiety. The opening page of “Cosmo Careers” is accompanied on the left page by an advertisement for Febreze “Sleep Serenity” (See Image I). This advertisement features a woman lying peacefully on a bed, eyes closed, in an ethereal field of lavender with the caption “This scent makes me feel like I’m relaxing in a lavender garden surrounded by flower fairies” (126). Situating this woman in a fantasy world that aims to take her away from the clearly unbearable stresses of her “Cosmo Career” immediately establishes the message that “running the world” might be too exhausting, too stressful for women to handle without immediately lying down with “Sleep

Serenity.” The narrative of stress and inadequacy continues throughout the editorial focused on leadership in the workplace through an advertisement for Murad Acne Clearing Solution (See Image J). Facing Sheryl Sandberg’s opening piece titled “Like A Boss” that implores women to stop thinking of themselves as bossy, but rather as leaders, Murad’s advertisement sets up a Facebook format that labels a woman’s relationship status as “It’s Complicated,” her career status as “It’s Stressful,” but her skin’s status as “clear” with Murad (Sandberg 128, April 2014, 129). Through this adjacent narrative of stress and skin problems, our vision of women as “executive leaders” is tinged by a feeling that these lifestyles induce agitation, and even blemishes.

This section’s unsettled narrative perpetuates not only stress around the status of the working woman, but also anxiety about her situation within public spaces rather than domestic ones. Adjacent to an article titled “Dress for the Job You Want” that targets women who “want to make a big career change” lies an advertisement for laundry detergent, the new Tide Plus Collection (See Image K). This advertisement shows a large bottle of Tide “Downy” covered in a “cozy” fabric mimicking a plush blanket. A clear symbol of domesticity, the bottle of Tide Laundry Detergent draws attention to the status of the female reader as working career woman, rather than immersed within a domestic world. This advertisement creates anxiety around the ways that women straddle their public and private lives. The female reader might be interested in dressing for the job she wants, but in this moment she is also reminded of her supposed duty of managing the laundry of her household and the demands of the domestic space. By embedding these advertisements within “Cosmo Careers,” the editorial and advertisements form an unsettling narrative that perpetuates the very anxieties around “having it all” that the articles attempt to overcome.<sup>14</sup>



The pages of advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* also frequently feature pull out pages or fold out advertisements, creating a tactile experience that encourages the reader to immediately engage with the text as a material object. The fold outs which lie within the first few pages of the magazine typically include alternative covers or more extensive details on the product promoted. For example, in June 2012, the opening advertisement featured a fold out page that, when physically unfolded, revealed a three page spread for Maybelline “Color Show” (See Image L). In November 2010, *Cosmopolitan* similarly featured a fold out page as its first advertisement in the magazine for L'Oréal “Voluminous Million Lashes” (November 2010, Inner Cover). These fold out advertisements that often begin the narrative of *Cosmopolitan* immediately establish this text as one that is to be handled manually, manipulated from many angles and read tactilely. *Cosmopolitan*'s construction of fold outs, pull outs, and tear-out editorial and advertising material compels its female readers to not only deal with the text manually, but to pleurably assimilate *Cosmopolitan* into their lives and living spaces. These tactile sheets and pages afford the female reader the opportunity to place the tear outs or pull outs within their lived space and every day lives, effectively restructuring the text independently and recreating a new version of femininity all their own.

*Cosmopolitan*'s advertisements are often accompanied by pull out coupons, promoting a discount on a beauty product that might compel the female reader to rush out to the store to supposedly save money. These coupons function to construct the female reader as consumer, urging her to transport the consumer fantasy of *Cosmopolitan* into the reality of her purchasing habits. The April 2013 Edition of *Cosmopolitan* features a coupon for L'Oréal hair products within an advertisement for “Advanced Haircare”: “Save \$2.00 on ANY Advanced Haircare Treatment” (See Image M). In April 2012, an advertisement for Gold Bond Ultimate “Sheer Ribbons” included

adjacent to its page a combination sample and coupon for the body lotion, offering savings of \$1.00 off the product and providing a small sample of the lotion that the reader can “try now” (April 2012). These standard coupons not only construct the reader as consumer even after she leaves the space of the magazine, but also continue to demand that the reader touch and manipulate the text, sampling the products with her fingers, removing the coupons, and imbuing them with new life outside of the magazine narrative through personal expenditure.

The advertisements of *Cosmopolitan* also feature poster pullouts. Although they can not be explicitly redeemed for value on the marketplace, they still function to construct the female reader as consumer through a pleasurable assimilation of the text with the personal spaces of the reader’s life. In November 2012, Cosmo included a centerfold poster of the superstar Pink accompanying a CoverGirl advertisement reading “This is not your mama’s Covergirl” (See Image N). This message and the image of Pink with a black face mask implies a type of dangerous erotic experience, recalling images of sado-masochism or the masquerade; the reader is constructed here as young and desirous of an adventurous experience with cosmetics. This erotic image of Pink unfolds to reveal the poster within, a large fold out sheet that reads, “Blow me one petal soft kiss! Pink! (November 2012 96-97). The advertisement shows Pink centered among a bed of flowers and pink hues, suggestively lying on her back and looking up into the camera. The sexualized image of Pink and the erotic “blowing” implicit within the advertising slogan constructs the poster pullout in the tradition of erotic posters or pinup posters, intertwining the consumer experience with desirability. This image must be unfolded by the reader and physically torn out of the binding of the magazine, a tactile action that only aims to remove the poster and reposition it within the reader’s intimate spaces, such as the walls of the bedroom.

Just as Susan Fraiman claims that there is autonomous pleasure in the construction of the domestic space, I also find the construction of intimate spaces through poster pullouts and coupons to be a uniquely pleasurable act.<sup>15</sup> The reader can merge the fantasy life of the magazine with her bedroom and her wallet, spaces that are closed off and concealed. By including physical consumer pieces that can be removed from the text and repositioned around the body of the reader, *Cosmopolitan* creates a physical experience that encourages the reader to autonomously construct a new text, one that envisions femininity in the way that the reader chooses as she manipulates the coupons and posters in her own space. The new text that she independently creates from the pulled out pieces of *Cosmopolitan* encourages an empowered, creative self that is capable of reimagining femininity through her physical actions.

This type of creative, tactile work forged by the unique physical construction of *Cosmopolitan's* advertisements continues into the editorial content of the magazine, where featured articles include pull out cards and sealed content. The pages which can be transformed into cards focus on sexual play, relaxation, or individual transformation. They beg the reader to manipulate them and incorporate them into both her mutual and auto-erotic life. In April 2011, *Cosmo* featured an article titled, “*Cosmo's* Sex Fantasy Game,” including, adjacent to the game’s instructions, twelve tear-out cards that “prompt you to create sexy, seductive, or wild scenarios you’re dying to act out together” (Miller 144-146) (See Image O). These cards are red, implying a sexualized flush or the eroticized lipstick that the story’s model is wearing. The perforated edges similarly signify to the reader how this text asks to be dealt with; the page must be torn, which might imply a mutilation of *Cosmopolitan*. However, the page must be torn for the text to attain its full meaning. Rather than mutilation, the tearing of the pages allows the reader to access the culmination of the editorial vision

to construct herself as autonomous creator of erotic meaning. The perforated edges of these cards indicate a text that must be transported, brought into the bedroom and into the space of the reader's sexual partnerships.

The twelve cards each feature three words, such as "Silk Nightie, Blindfold, Hotel Suite" or "Barn, Candles, Rope" (Miller 145). The reader is encouraged to pick one word from each card and to imagine a sexual fantasy involving these items or places. The words on the cards conjure up adventurous sexual fantasies that the reader can mix and match to forge a unique fantasy space for themselves and their partner. By tearing out these cards and choosing the words which most stimulate her, the female reader is provided with an opportunity to take an active, imaginatively dominating role in the bedroom. These cards demonstrate how *Cosmopolitan* challenges conventional gender roles of the masculine aggressor or feminine receptor in the bedroom.<sup>16</sup> The "Sex Fantasy Game" and its included tear-out cards provide the reader with an avenue to ownership over erotic fantasy spaces and empowerment through the physical collection of the cards and their use in her most intimate interactions. By erotically compiling the cards and assimilating them into her personal space, the *Cosmopolitan* reader becomes autonomous creator of sexual fantasy and imaginative play, articulated for a mutual relationship in the bedroom.

Certain pages of *Cosmo* encourage the female reader to tear out and collect cards to independently create a transformative, relaxing experience, one that indulges or pampers the senses to induce a freeing pleasure. In December 2010, *Cosmopolitan* featured an article in the section "You, Even Better" on relaxation and focusing techniques, describing the various psychological and emotional effects that viewing different colors or images has on the brain and on the actions of the female reader (Miller 148-149) (See Image P). "8 Pictures That Give You An Edge" featured eight

tear-out cards with different colors or pictures to increase productivity, relax the mind, or lift the mood of the reader. Korin Miller claims that, “certain images can do everything from make you happier to stop a snack attack. Using that info, we created tear-out cards that will revamp your life” (148-149) These include the color blue which helps the reader to “become inspired,” a picture of green leaves to “boost your mood,” a red card to “get focused,” a picture of a rainbow to “kill your cravings,” and a picture of baby meerkats to help you smile and “live longer” (148-149).

Just as the construction of the fantasy game cards encourages the female reader to take ownership of her fantasy life by tearing the pages of *Cosmopolitan*, these cards encourage the reader to take ownership over the “revamping” of her life through the act of tearing. By tearing out cards that promote relaxation, focus, or happiness, the reader is compelled to immerse herself in her own sensory experience and interior life. They provide an opportunity to focus fully on the self in a way that is specifically aimed to release tension, “calm your temper,” or find an emotional center (148-149). These are all imaginative actions that allow women to focus on themselves, but these emotional releases also imply an auto-erotic vision that revolves around the pleasurable release of tension and self soothing. This type of work is wrapped up in both masturbatory practices and indulgent self-pampering, actions which foster an eroticized relationship with the body.<sup>17</sup> By tearing out the cards, women can please themselves by releasing tension and working towards a more self aware mindfulness. The physicality of these pages creates a moment where the female reader can take control of the cards, using them to creatively foster a pleasurable “boosting” of her mood and autonomously reimagine her daily interactions through gratifying colors and images.

Open any *Cosmopolitan* and you will be greeted not only with thickened, removable pages, but with the thickened pages of perfume advertisements, accompanied with the overwhelming rush

of perfume, a sensory experience that envelops the reader within scents such as Calvin Klein's "Euphoria" or DKNY's "Be Delicious." In *Hope in a Jar*, Kathy Peiss delves into the development of the booming cosmetics industry of the twentieth century, an industry that included the growth of perfume products. She finds that perfumes became a "fascination" for the new woman, one that was reflected in the production of women's magazines, where editors proclaimed that "The fascination of subtle perfumes...is a frequent lure of the heroine of fiction" (Peiss 124). Throughout the early development of women's magazines in the twentieth century, perfume came to stand for a type of glamorous fantasy life, one tied in with the fictional heroines that graced the pages of novels and articles. In her "insider's" take on the women's magazine of the new millennium, Jennifer Nelson discusses the powerful effects that perfume advertisements have on their female readers. She asserts that the perfume ads, "sweeten pleasant feelings, reduce anxiety, change perception, and trigger memory or desire" (49). She also discusses the effect that these embedded scents have on circulation numbers, citing that the inclusion of perfumed scents increase sales by 136 percent (Nelson 49).

The aroma of perfume that floats up from the pages of *Cosmopolitan* is uniquely physical, fostering a sense of pleasure articulated as much for the self as for others. The perfumed pages create an isolated world outside of the editorial, one that encourages an erotic, tactile relationship with the text. The pages of perfume advertisements are thicker than the editorial or non-perfume advertisements and not included within the pagination of the magazine as a whole. For example, in April 2014's edition, the pagination moves from "Why Can't We Take A Compliment?" to an advertisement for hair color remover wipes, skipping over the advertisement for "Euphoria" by Calvin Klein (See Image Q). Perfume advertisements are also rarely followed directly by editorial in *Cosmopolitan*, instead framed by other advertisements that are paginated and therefore explicitly

included within the larger narrative. In August 2012, Versace's "Bright Crystal" was followed directly by an advertisement for "It's A 10: Miracle Leave in Product" (August 2012 121). These transitional tactics and exclusionary aspects immediately establish perfume advertisements as otherworldly and fantastical, existing outside of and requiring a slow transition back to a more grounded editorial space. The thickened pages of the advertisements ensure that the magazine easily falls open to these pages when flipping through or opening it for the first time, as if they were bookmarked for the reader's convenience. This type of immediate interaction with the perfumed pages is also encouraged by their overpowering scent, one that not only lingers years later and throughout the other pages of the magazine, associating the editorial pieces with this fantasy space, but also drawing the reader to locate the source on the thickened pages.

Through many interviews with frequent women's magazine readers, Jennifer Nelson found that women rub the scents off the pages and onto their bodies for a "quick pick me up" (49). Usually, the scents featured in *Cosmopolitan* are high end, expensive perfumes, such as "Poppy Flower" by Coach or "Yellow Diamond" by Versace (April 2012). These scents might be out of reach for the middle class shopper flipping through in the grocery aisle, but she gains access to these multiple worlds of consumer and upper class fantasy for only the cost of *Cosmopolitan*, \$3.99.<sup>18</sup> Quickly smelling and sampling the perfume on her wrist or neck, the reader assimilates this luxurious brand and experience into her body for the day. She can escape into the fantasy of the perfume world, sampling recognizable scents that bring with them connotations of wealth and feminine prestige. The isolation and distinction of the perfumed pages fosters a pleasurable relationship with the text where the senses are overpowered and the reader can escape into a fantasy of isolation and consumer success.

The physical construction of perfume advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* not only encourages the pleasurable act of sampling and class conscious fantasies, but also insinuates a type of erotic relationship with consumerism and pricing. Each perfume advertisement typically features on the front side of the page the advertisement's image of a spokesperson, celebrity, or model overlaid with the enticing design of the perfume bottle itself. However, its back page features the rectangular panel that holds within its depths the sample scent. These panels add dimensionality to the page, a depth that adds a sense of mystery and secrecy to the idea of Calvin Klein's "Euphoria" or Miss Dior's "Blooming Bouquet." These panels also encourage a tactile, physical relationship with the text, one that is figured in terms of heterosexual eroticism. These panels feature phrases such as "Lift here to discover Miss Dior Eau de Parfum" (April 2012) (See Image R), "Lift Here to Experience 'Closer' by Halle Berry" (October 2012), or "Open Here to Experience Vince Camuto" (April 2012) (See Image S). Not only do these phrases imply a discovery process of something concealed, fostering a sense of intimacy with the reader, but they also indicate a heteroerotic form of intimacy with the text, reminding the reader of the "lift" that she must produce in order to engage her male partner sexually.

By describing the exposure of the scent as a process of lifting and opening to "discover" or "experience" a pleasurable, sensory involvement with the page, these advertisements recall a type of erotic lifting and opening of the body that is tied up in male arousal and heterosexual intercourse. The use of the imperative here is also notable; the text demands to be interacted with manually. Although this phrasing does compel the reader to interact with the text through a heterosexual lens, one that is often centered around male arousal and orgasm, this phrasing also grants the female reader the opportunity to articulate male arousal on her terms. She "lifts" and "opens" the scented panel herself, creating a sensory experience that envelops her throughout the day and does not



necessarily involve a romantic or erotic interaction with a partner. The act of “lifting” the panel and the “quick pick me up” that ensues stimulates and demands physical action, perpetuating a reader who functions successfully as an independent self and initiates sexual interactions

Within the pleasure and independent eroticism perpetuated by the perfume advertisements of *Cosmopolitan*, there also lies an implicit narrative of lack and consumer inadequacy tied up with the erotic interplay of the lifting of the perfume panel. Upon opening the panel and immersing oneself within the fantasy world of the perfume advertisement, the reader finds a listing of the prices of the perfume. Within the aforementioned Christian Dior “Miss Dior” panel of *Cosmopolitan*’s April 2012 edition, we find the price listings of these products,

Eau de Parfum Spray, 3.4 oz. \$102.00

Eau de Parfum Spray, 1.7 oz. \$80.00

Perfumed Body Lotion, 6.8 oz. \$50.00

Perfumed Shower Gel, 6.8 oz. \$50.00 (See Image T)

With this immediate exposure to the pricing details, the erotic experience of the reader is now intertwined with consumer structures, ones from which she feels alienated as a woman who has not quite yet “made it” as a financially stable career woman, wife, or mother. These prices are clearly worlds apart from the price of the magazine itself, creating distance between the world of the perfume advertisement and the consumer life of the reader. By weaving narratives of consumer inadequacy into the pleasurable, auto-erotic perfumed aura of these advertisements, consuming products not only becomes an erotic act, but auto-eroticism becomes tinged with feelings of shame and alienation. The perfume advertisement, even as it inspires a pleasurable fantasy of isolation and independent arousal, creates a narrative of anxiety over financial achievement and class status.

#### IV. “Red Hot Reads”: Demanding and Regulating Female Climax in *Cosmopolitan’s* Erotica

After the reader has perused the perfume advertisements, fashion spreads, and informational editorial on “Fun, Fearless” work, love, lust, and fashion, she finds the last lengthy editorial piece, and, I argue, the narrative climax of the magazine: the erotica. This final substantial editorial piece in *Cosmopolitan* consistently contains an excerpt of erotic fiction or a romance novel’s most climactic moment of sexual tension and intercourse. The title of the section changes with the season or by year. In July 2011 the erotica section was titled, “Hot Summer Section: Three Steamy Stories, All Summer Long,” and throughout 2012 and 2013 the section was the “Red Hot Read.” With titles such as “Pleasure Island” (Mellor 282-283), “Dangerous Liasons” (Reece 218-219), and “Built For Pleasure” (Shalvis 232-233), these stories feature the most intense moments of sexual encounter which, in these stories, is always the climax of the female protagonist.

The erotic fiction of *Cosmopolitan* not only encourages an imaginative, masturbatory state through its explicit content, but also evokes a climactic experience through its placement in the magazine as the final piece that the reader encounters. Just as the content and cover of *Cosmopolitan* provides an auto-erotic avenue for pleasure, the situation of these “Red Hot Reads” as closing pieces and their focus on female climax forge a narrative climax for the reader. As Marjo Kolehmainen notes in her examination of *Cosmopolitan’s* relationship to porn, women are told “not to get involved with porn in the same magazines where men’s porn use is naturalized,” and “being a good girlfriend does not seem to fit in with the idea of having a personal relation to porn—at least in a heterosexual relationship” (187). However, *Cosmopolitan* certainly constructs a narrative format that urges women to consume pornographic material to independently shape a subjective climactic narrative. These fictions encourage women to engage in adventurous, erotic fantasies and to develop an erotic

relationship with a pornographic text, one that lies outside of their lived romantic relationships. This relationship with the text compels women to view their orgasms as an essential part of a sexual encounter and to imagine their climaxes through a lens that prioritizes the subjectivity of women. However, we must also address the problematically narrow possibilities for pleasure presented in the erotica of *Cosmopolitan*. These stories fuse female climax together with not only upper class identities and situations, but also male climax and heterosexuality. The “Red Hot Reads” of *Cosmopolitan* therefore offer yet another double vision of fantasy and sexuality, one that at once encourages women to be autonomous creators of erotic pleasure and regulates what version of eroticism can be imagined or embodied.

In *One For the Girls! The Pleasures and Practices of Reading Women’s Pornography*, an examination of pornography for women in magazines such as *For Women*, Clarissa Smith discusses the arousals and disappointments that women find in pornography created specifically for their erotic needs. She finds that the erotic stories in *For Women* create a “utopian ideal of reality” where women “want to feel that sexual representations offer them a vision of possibility...[These stories] confirm her sense of female sexuality and her own sexuality as a source of pleasure and not of embarrassment” (135). *Cosmopolitan’s* erotic fiction similarly functions to initiate a space where women find imaginative possibility through the act of reading, specifically, the possibility of a female orgasm. These erotic stories extend the pleasurable fantasy world of the cover and the advertisements, allowing the reader’s imagination to explore adventurous destinations, and, most importantly, to always reach climax.<sup>19</sup> In the excerpt from June 2011, “Sex Under The Stars,” the female protagonist is whisked away by a former lover on a boat where they proceed to have “waves of pleasure” that lead our heroine to “let go.” She narrates her orgasm in detail: “It washes into me,

over me, through me, bursting as it lifts me up into the night sky. My voice, unrecognizable, whimpers from far away, and every nerve is alight as I come back to earth, Aidan above me” (Green 238). The protagonist of this story immerses us within her narrative during her climax, describing her orgasm as both a sensory experience and an emotionally uplifting moment. The orgasm transports her to another place and time, and the reader is compelled to follow her as she is lifted up “into the night sky” and comes “back to earth” again. In May 2012’s story, “Packing Heat” we understand the climax through the protagonist’s subjective narration: “Her body convulsed around his. His spasms combined with hers in a climax beyond anything she’d ever experienced. It was if she’d lost all control” (Davis 249). By focusing on the subjectivity of the woman during her climactic moment, the story decidedly prioritizes female pleasure. This prioritization and female narration allows the reader to visualize her own pleasure through the eyes of the protagonist, clearing a space for independent imaginative work that is both auto-erotic and empowering. Instead of “78 Ways to Turn Him On” and “What Men Want Most at 9 P.M.,” stories featured on the cover, we find a space in the text that unmistakably revolves around female climax (*Cosmopolitan*, May 2012).

Female climax is prioritized not only through the space of the story, but also through the construction of *Cosmopolitan*, where these “Red Hot Reads” are situated as the final editorial moment. By placing this climax-centric piece at the conclusion of the magazine, rather than intermingled with the fashion spreads, confession stories, or domestic guidance pieces, *Cosmopolitan* perpetuates an erotic narrative structure that defines the female orgasm as a moment that must be achieved before the conclusion of an erotic experience. Although the magazine’s cover and sex tips might often dwell on what men desire or what increases their pleasure, the “Red Hot Read” consistently dwells on female orgasm, sealing each edition of *Cosmopolitan* with a climactic

experience for female readers. The erotic story becomes the climax of *Cosmopolitan's* physical construction, bringing to fruition the imaginative, fantastical experiences of the cover page, binding, perfume advertisements, and pull out material. The "Red Hot Read" is a textual explosion of these multiplicities of erotic constructions, one that makes explicit and demands the conclusion of the implicit auto-erotic propulsions of *Cosmopolitan*.

However, we must not ignore the restrictions of class and sexuality that arise in the erotic stories of *Cosmopolitan*. The intimate, thorough descriptions of female climax often occur in adventurous or glamorous settings, ones associated with the upper class or financial success. By intertwining these seemingly thrilling climaxes with characters and settings exuding landed wealth or luxury, these stories problematically place these "gasp" inducing, consistent orgasms out of the female reader's socio-economic reach. In April 2013's "Red Hot Read," "69th & Lex: Melissa's Story" we encounter the "residents of Garden Towers, located on 69th Street and Lexington Avenue on Manhattan's Upper East Side" who "are young, hot, successful, and incapable of staying out of other people's business and beds" (Knoll 220). These characters are clearly a part of the landed wealth of New York's elite, worlds apart from the scene of magazine browsing in the supermarket check out lane. Her climax occurs in the "Garden Towers" a space far removed from the projected financial expenditures of the *Cosmo* reader, who might need to "Save \$2.00 on Any Advanced Haircare Product" (*Cosmopolitan* April 2013). In October 2011's "Tastes Like Danger," the erotic narrative is filtered through the eyes of our protagonist, Jordan Rhodes, "the beautiful daughter of a Chicago billionaire and owner of the city's top wine store." Her immersive climax takes place in her mansion in Napa Valley (James 252). Jordan, "cried out and closed her eyes, kissing him as they both climaxed. They moved together, gasping and riding through the aftershocks..." (James 254).

Although these climaxes explore the subjectivity of women during freeing erotic moments, they routinely occur only in a fantasy world of wealth and upper class identity, one inaccessible, even unimaginable to many readers. Only these wealthy, fabulously glamorous women are granted access to such reliable forms of pleasure. By placing the predictable climax outside of the attainable world of the reader and within the “young, hot, successful” world of the Upper East Side or Napa, the erotic story regulates who can experience these adventurous climactic experiences, distancing the female reader of *Cosmopolitan* from her own erotic fantasies.

“69th and Lex” and “Tastes Like Danger” also feature a trope within the erotic fictions of *Cosmopolitan*: the synchronized climax. The male and female protagonists of the stories almost always climax together, creating a simultaneous erotic experience that is characterized as more desirous and fulfilling than if the male or female had climaxed alone, unaccompanied by their partner. The intertwining of male and female climax in each of these stories demands not only that these climaxes be strictly heterosexual, brought about by penile insertion, but that the female climax can not, or should not, occur without the regulation and supervision of the male orgasm. In “69th & Lex,” featured in an orange text box and in larger font than the rest of the narrative, Melissa details her climax in the “Garden Towers”: “‘Look at me,’ Jamie demanded. Melissa looked into his eyes as the heat in her stomach expanded and peaked, She gasped as she realized Jaime was coming too” (Knoll 221). By fusing the climax of Jamie and Melissa, the female orgasm is regulated and contained by male pleasure, limiting the ways in which readers might imagine the boundaries of their own climaxes. The synchronized climax similarly appears in March 2011’s “Undercover Lover,” the tale of a romantic rendezvous between Kylie Donovan, an undercover special agent, and Perry Flynn, a lieutenant officer. Their climactic moment is narrated through Kylie’s perspective:

His breaths sped up, and she knew he was almost there. Then she felt him swell, tighten, and erupt deep inside her...It was only now that she allowed herself to climax. Moving back and forth over his still-hard member, she brought herself there in just seconds (O'Clare 213).

Kylie's climax is not only regulated by male pleasure, but delayed by her partner's orgasm. This self-regulation prioritizes the male orgasm and also characterizes the female climax as something to be finished within "just seconds." By delaying the female orgasm until the conclusion of her partner's pleasure, and then moving through her own climax quickly and efficiently, Kylie marks her own pleasure as less imperative than Perry's. Her pleasure is also defined as a direct result of penile insertion and stimulation, rather than auto-erotic or clitoral. This type of climax stands in direct opposition to the section following the "Red Hot Read," the "*Cosmopolitan* Shopper." The shopping section after the erotica typically features ads for sex toys and adventurous vibrators, products which almost always encourage women to engage in clitoral, auto-erotic pleasure on their own time, certainly not in "just seconds." The placement of the advertisements for vibrators and sex toys adjacent to the "Red Hot Read," a story which defines female pleasure as always resulting from penile insertion and policed by the male orgasm, again establishes a vision of female sexuality as both autonomous and regulated, fulfilled and inadequate without the presence of male stimulation.

#### V. Conclusion: Refusing the Death of the Magazine in the Archive

The study of *Cosmopolitan* as, first and foremost, a material text, opens up multiple points of access to examine the contradictory body and subjective space of the female reader. Beginning with the fantastical cover and construction of the spine and ending with the climax-centric narratives of

the erotic fiction, *Cosmopolitan* presents an arrangement of text, images, and flaps that encourage a tactile relationship with the text. The manual manipulation of the magazine perpetuates an auto-erotic relationship with the text, one that offers spaces to access pleasure and fantasy worlds through perfume advertisements, tear-out cards, coupons, and the repetition of advertising imagery. By promoting this auto-erotic life for the female reader, *Cosmopolitan* establishes its readers as autonomous creators of meaning, physically acting on their desires and prioritizing their subjectivity in erotic interactions. However, we also find a darker side to this erotic relationship that implicitly shames the female reader as an inadequate consumer, career woman, and keeper of domestic spaces. Class narratives abound in *Cosmopolitan*, creating material experiences that focus on female pleasure, but articulate that same pleasure only for the women who exist in upper class worlds of consumption, able to afford the expensive perfumes or the luxurious destinations featured in the “Red Hot Read.”

This thesis hopes to draw attention to the gap in the archive at the University of Virginia, where contemporary women’s magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* need to be housed in their material form, rather than in an online, digitized form. At the conclusion of my thesis, I approached a research librarian at Alderman and asked him what he thought of a possible donation of my four years of *Cosmopolitan* the collection of periodicals to Alderman. His reply was quite representative of the conversation around the future of magazines. He informed me that Alderman was being quite selective in their acceptances to the archive, due to a lack of shelf space. He also noted that the library was moving more and more towards digitized preservation of current periodicals, and he doubted that Alderman would accept *Cosmopolitan* in its physical form to add to the archive. Unfortunately, this archival trend



follows the increasingly digitized reading experience of contemporary magazines and journals. In a CNN opinion piece by Craig Mod, frequent speaker on the future of publishing and print media, he asserts that print magazines offer a pleasurable, finite reading experience, one that can simply not be captured by a digital text. Mod finds in “How Magazines Will Be Changed Forever” that “one of the qualities most natural to the user experience of print is the sense of potential completion, defined by the physical edges.” He stresses the importance of the finality of the print reading experience, noting that “the digital reading experience makes one want to connect and expand outward. Print calls for limit and containment” (Mod 2012).

I also find the preservation and consumption of these magazines in their physical form to be a valuable practice that allows for the preservation of the specific reading experience of the magazine. However, I locate the pleasure of reading the physical women’s magazine not in the reaching of limits and borders, but in the ways that these physical texts promote expansion and connections between the various spaces and identities that women inhabit throughout their days. Rather than stopping at the edges of the coupon or the erotic story, *Cosmopolitan*, with all its extractable editorials, can be carried into the bedroom or the wallet. The physicality of *Cosmopolitan* enables it to come apart at its edges, forming new texts and new meanings wherever its various parts finally come to rest. Rather than imagining the physical copies of magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* as weighty, deteriorating texts, let us envision them as living material artifacts representing a certain moment in the history of gender construction. If the physical copy is allowed to die unpreserved and unaccounted for, the scholar of post-millennial femininity, fashion, or sexuality will be inadequately equipped to carry out an immersive, thorough research process. If we do not preserve these texts in their physical forms, future scholars will never experience the perfumed aromas, lift the flaps of the

cover, or examine the tear-out cards that accompany certain editorials. All of these material forms might provide the scholar with new readings and new perspectives unimaginable when examining a black and white, text only translation of the magazine. By adding these volumes to the archive, our libraries will open up a multiplicity of potential research questions for future scholars. The material copies of *Cosmopolitan* hold a multitude of meanings and opportunities for research into the daily lives and reading practices of women. I hope this work encourages other scholars to take up the physical copy of the magazine, flip through its pages, and by doing so, delve into the unique questions and possibilities presented by each unique publication.

Appendix



A.



B.



C.



D.

Bumble and bumble.



There's more to love from Bb.Thickening at a Bb.Network Salon, Sephora, Bloomingdale's, Bloomingdale's and Space.NK. See Bb.Stylist tips at [bumbleandbumble.com](http://bumbleandbumble.com)

Big is back.



Bumble and bumble  
*Bb.*  
*Thickening*  
FULL FORM  
MOUSSE  
lifts, sculpts and holds  
full-bodied shapes

Bumble and bumble  
makes mousse modern.

Full, sexy hair – a Bb. signature – is setting trends at photo shoots and Fashion Weeks. From our stylists' testing grounds we bring you the ultra-dense, cushiony-creme Full Form Mousse, a new dimension of the top-selling Bb.Thickening Collection for bigger, bolder styles.

DEDICATED TO THE CRAFT OF HAIRDRESSING *Bb.*

E.

**LANCÔME**  
PARIS

Playful Eyes  
*made easy.*

NEW  
**COLOR DESIGN**  
EYE SHADOW PALETTE  
&  
**DOLL LASHES**  
MASCARA

**Color Design 5 Pan Palette.**  
Five shades, five minutes. Sweep and fanbase harmonies open and illuminate the eyes, creating that flirtatious doll-like look. For perfect doll lashes, complete with **Hyponose Doll Lashes** mascara. 20 eyeshadow palettes. Endless possibilities. Try different eye looks at [lancome-usa.com](http://lancome-usa.com)

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F.

**BOOST YOUR COLOR  
GO FROM MOUSY  
TO GLOSSY**

**HEALTHY  
LOOK**  
*crème  
gloss*

NO AMMONIA HAIRCOLOR

20  
#FRESHISTELE  
SHADES

Because you're worth it.  
**L'ORÉAL**  
PARIS

**GO FROM MOUSY TO GLOSSY**

- NON-PERMANENT COLOR = LOW COMMITMENT - LASTS THROUGH SHAMPOOS
- BOOST OF SUPER GLOSSY COLOR AND SHINE
- SLIP IN DEEP CONDITIONERS FOR SUPER-SOFTNESS

**"NOW THERE'S NO EXCUSE  
FOR BORING HAIR COLOR!"**  
Barbara Palvin

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G.









**BONUS SECTION**

# Cosmo's Sex Fantasy Game



*Bathtub  
Champagne  
Clock*

*Our cards prompt you to create sexy, seductive, or wild scenarios you're dying to act out together. Ready for an erotic adventure tonight?*  
BY KORIN MILLER

A searching but life experts say depends on many factors: being creative and expressing your desires. "Finding a way to share your wants—and having them fulfilled—in a creative way is the key to making your time between the sheets satisfying and hot," says sex therapist Barton Goldsmith, PhD, author of *Emotional Fitness for Intimacy*. So we came up with this sizzling fantasy game as a way for you to visualize (and act on) your wildest thoughts.

Here's how it works: On each card, there are three words. The person picking (take turns) must incorporate these items into an erotic scenario involving the two of you. For instance, maybe you're dying to find yourself in a **bathtub**, lit only by the **glowing candles**, and have him tie you up with a **rope** there and ready you for hours. Take your time describing the scenario in as sexy way, and act it out as best you can at home. Then vote to take a variation of that fantasy streamer up a notch down the road. You can also pick either one card a night for an sexy night or a few at a time to match things up. And since there are endless possibilities, the game can be played over and over.

Mirror	Silk Nightie	Bathtub
Strawberries	Blindfold	Champagne
Necktie	Hotel Suite	Clock
Barn	Bench	Shower
Candles	Bra	Whipped Cream
Rope	Mints	Tee Shirt
Stiletto	Bar	Picnic
Massage Oil	Over-the-Knee Boots	Playing Cards
iPod	Phone	Sweater
Tent	Board Game	Slype
Chocolate	Scented Lotion	Blazer
Camera	Fishnets	Feather

O.

## You, Even Better



**Decorate Your Home**  
Blue doesn't just help us chill out. The hue also makes us more creative, say researchers from the University of British Columbia. Place your keys on this card before you reorganize your place or take other actions to bring your A-game.

**Down Your Speed**  
Working out for just 10 minutes in a green environment lifts our mood and sense of well-being, according to researchers from the U.S.'s University of Essex. Study author Adam Pretty says focusing on a job of nature while taking the elevator or treadmill has a similar effect.

**Warm Up**  
Check out the image while you're waiting for your car to heat up. Why? Researchers from Boston University say that picturing something hot, like a fire or that suit, actually may make us feel warmer.

**Live Longer**  
People who smile live longer, according to a Wayne State University study. Big smiles are better—scientists say they're linked to positive health and longer life spans. Keep that in mind when you compare these alternative options.

**Live Longer (cont.)**  
Want to devour that fall of holiday cookies? Study from Australia's Swinburn University found that smelling an almond, like this one, helps for 10 minutes and boosts our focus and sends off cravings.

**Get Focused**  
The color red helps us stay more alert and focused, according to a University of London study. "It's really easy to associate it with passion, which is a great effort to boost attention."

**Get Focused (cont.)**  
University of Rochester scientists found that looking at photos of landscapes makes people more caring. And the more they read the post, the happier they were. So, dig out the postcard before your next drive with your snaky co-worker.

**Get Your Energy**  
A Harvard study revealed that people who sit in a brain scanner after a night are less likely to feel tired after a long day. The game increases activity in a part of our brain that helps us forget when we were tired in the first place. For this one, try to sit in the corner and find the actual words in order as fast as you can.





# 8 Pictures That Give You an Edge

Recent studies have found that certain images can do everything from make you happier to stop a snack attack. Using that info, we created tear-out cards that will revamp your life.

BY KORIN MILLER

148 COSMOPOLITAN DECEMBER 2010

P.

	
Become Inspired	Boost Your Mood
	
Warm Up	Live Longer

Q.

a new fragrance  
endless euphoria  
Calvin Klein

oops.  
Simply Wash Away  
Difficult Hair Colors!

Color Oops  
Hair Color Remover

Color Oops Wipes™  
Instantly Removes Hair Color  
Stains from Face and Hands

Color Oops  
Hair Color Remover

Removes Difficult Colors  
Removes difficult hair color

- Gently removes permanent & semi-permanent hair color
- Takes only 20 minutes
- Safe and Easy
- Ammonia free / Bleach free
- Re-color the same day

Color Oops Hair Color Remover

For more information go to [developus.com](http://developus.com)  
Ask Questions on [facebook.com/coloroops](https://www.facebook.com/coloroops)

Available at Albertsons, CVS, Health Drug Mart, Walgreens, Target, Walgreens & Walmart

R.

Miss Dior

Miss Dior  
EAU DE PARFUM

Lift here  
to discover  
Miss Dior  
Eau de Parfum

S.

AVAILABLE AT NORDSTROM

OPEN HERE TO  
EXPERIENCE  
VINCE CAMUTO

THE NEW FRAGRANCE  
BY VINCE CAMUTO

VINCE CAMUTO

VINCECAMUTO.COM

MISS DIOR	
Eau de Parfum Spray, 3.4 oz.	\$192.00
Eau de Parfum Spray, 1.7 oz.	\$96.00
Perfumed Body Lotion, 5.3 oz.	\$96.00
Perfumed Shower Gel, 6.8 oz.	\$96.00

# *Miss Dior*



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Playboy*, an American men's magazine featuring editorial and erotic photographs of women, was first published in 1953. Just as *Cosmopolitan* features an interview in each edition with a female celebrity, *Playboy* interviews a public figure each month. In "The Battle in Every Man's Bed: Playboy and the Fiery Feminists," Carrie Pitzolo discusses the ways that *Playboy* has historically straddled progressive, liberal viewpoints on women's liberation and equality while simultaneously engaging in the objectification of women through centerfolds and the title of the "*Playboy* Bunny" (Pitzolo 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Helen Gurley Brown's editorial leadership at *Cosmopolitan* helped to incite this avenue into pleasurable or erotic reading. Anthea Taylor notes that "with Brown's popular (feminist) texts in the early 1960's, the single woman morphed from dowdy, asexual spinster to a pleasure-seeking, unabashedly sexual subject" (49). The *New York Times* declared that Brown's *Cosmopolitan* offered "half a feminist message" to women who would otherwise have none (MacMahon 382). With her wildly popular and controversial *Sex and the Single Girl*, Brown created a prototype of *Cosmopolitan*; her work on this magazine was described as "an instruction manual that covers everything from recipes for the single girls' dinner parties, make up tips, where to meet men, financial advice, through to how to manage an affair with a married man" (Taylor 50). Anthea Taylor finds that *Cosmopolitan* established a voice much like a self help column, a girl who "speaks from the other side....married in her late 30's" (Taylor 50).

<sup>3</sup> Janice Radway argues in *Reading the Romance* that romance novels create a similar space for women to escape from domestic or marital duties into an erotic text. In her interviews with romance readers, Radway finds that the readers described the texts as an "escape" that can "diffuse resentment" or "relieve tension." (88, 95). Radway notes that reading the romance "connotes a free space where [women] feel liberated from the need to perform duties that they otherwise willingly accept as their own" (93). Radway goes on to elaborate the types of "duties" that the wife and mother of the twentieth century feel they must take on, such as "providing all the labor necessary to maintain a family's physical existence including the cleaning of its quarters, the acquisition and preparation of its food, and the purchase, repair, and upkeep of its clothes, even while she masterfully discerns and supplies individual members' psychological needs" (94).

<sup>4</sup> In *The New York Times*, “Trading on Hollywood Magic” describes “the shift from supermodel to Hollywood stars and public personalities on magazine covers” as “the latest sign of Americans' obsession with celebrity. And magazine editors think that preoccupation is the magic bullet that will move their merchandise” (Kuczynski 1999).

<sup>5</sup> At the 2013 Video Music Awards, Miley Cyrus gave a controversial performance of her hit song, “We Can’t Stop.” Her solo performance included many dance moves and back up dancers that critics deemed as perpetuating racist or offensive stereotypes (i.e. using black women and little people as props for her dance show). During her subsequent collaboration with Robin Thicke on his chart topper, “Blurred Lines,” Miley Cyrus “twerked” on Robin Thicke, a much older married man, and this performance was met with mass outrage by the general population for what many believed to be a provocative and raunchy demonstration of sexual promiscuity. Online critics noted that employing this style of dance was implicitly objectifying black culture by employing “black cultural signifiers like twerking... as a means of connoting that Miley's now wild and dangerous” (Makarechi 2013). However, others took up the notes of slut-shaming implicit within the conversation around the performance, as Robin Thicke’s participation within the dance show went without outrage (Yates 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Diana Fuss discusses the fine line between identification, desire, and consumption on the covers of women’s magazines in “Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look”: “Even the covers of magazines like *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Glamour*, or in this case *Cosmopolitan*, could be mistaken for the covers of some skin magazines commercially produced and marketed for consumption by heterosexual men were it not for the teasers running down the side that tell us that the image of this woman is intended to function for its female audience not as an object of desire but rather a point of identification. Presumably, the readers of these magazines are to desire to *be* the woman, not to *have* her” (714, 716). Later, she discusses the vampiric identification and consumption of fashion photography by the female subject. She finds that this vampirism “works more like an inverted form of identification-identification pulled inside out where the subject, in the act of interiorizing the other, simultaneously reproduces itself externally in that other” (730).

<sup>7</sup> McCracken delves into the psychology of visualizing the model: “the model sustains our envy and feelings of insecurity, predisposing us to be receptive to the products advertised both overtly and covertly inside...” (36).

<sup>8</sup> This phrase has arisen from the site “Tumblr,” and has prompted multiple parody songs on YouTube about Taylor Swift titled “Maybe You’re The Problem.” The phrase has become a culturally recognizable slogan that is immediately linked to Taylor Swift.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich’s *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and The Flight from Commitment* describes *Playboy*’s framing of the single man as heterosexual swinger rather than heterosexual failure. Ehrenreich notes that “In every issue, every month, there was a Playmate to prove that a Playboy didn’t have to be a husband to be a man” (51). She finds that *Playboy* was the voice of the “male rebellion,” an escape from the “bondage of breadwinning” (51).

<sup>10</sup> Diana Fuss addresses the dismemberment of the female body in fashion photography as an aspect of, what Lacan calls, “the infant’s pre-mirror experience of its amorphous self” (718). She also finds the fragmented body to act “for the female spectator as a cultural reminder of her fetishization, of the ‘part’ she plays in the disavowal of the mother’s castration” (720).

<sup>11</sup> Diana Fuss finds that the close-up of the woman’s face in fashion photography suggests “that one possible explanation for the fascination these images hold for women involves the pleasures evoked by the potential restitution of the lost object—specifically the reconstitution of the mother’s face” (722).

<sup>12</sup> Diana Fuss reads commercial fashion photography and advertising images through a Lacanian lens in “Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look”: “these photographs work as post-mirror phase images that create fascination precisely through a cultural staging of pre-mirror phase fantasies; they, in effect, mirror the pre-mirror stage, directing our gaze solipsistically back to our own specular and fictive origins” (716).

<sup>13</sup> For more on Sheryl Sandberg’s feminism, see her book on gender politics in the workplace, *Lean In: Women Work and the Will to Lead* (2013).

<sup>14</sup> In *The Atlantic Magazine*'s recent article, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," Anne-Marie Slaughter argues that women still cannot be both mothers and have high powered careers, finding that the only way the system will change to allow women to embody both these identities is through the election of female leadership and through a revision of the typical work schedule and structure of the executive work day (Slaughter 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Fraiman argues that the creation of the domestic space is a pleasurable act for women focused on independent fulfillment: "women may study pictures of super-tidied interiors not to feather the marital nest but, on the contrary, to find refuge from marital mess and instability. Perfectly ordered, impossibly beautiful, and carefully evacuated rooms, photographed with precision and tenderness— these images suggest once again a rejection of domesticity oriented toward (or even including) others, conjuring instead a leisured, serene, and sensual relation to home addressed to women themselves" (263).

<sup>16</sup> Sherrie Inness discusses the ways that the mannish clothing or menswear fashions featured in women's magazines create space for the bending and reinvention of traditional notions of masculinity and femininity through the mixture of masculine and feminine fashion aesthetics: "women dressed in men's clothing or mannish clothing do make appearances in women's magazines, particularly those devoted to high fashion. Clearly, women's magazines allow for gender play and even gender bending" (60).

<sup>17</sup> In *The Beauty Industry*, Paula Black discusses the intersections of desire and pampering, specifically how the space of the beauty parlor creates an escapist atmosphere that promotes self-pleasure and introspective work. Black states that "Pampering is not about necessity, but about desire. It is also about escape" (16).

<sup>18</sup> Pricing as of May 2014.

<sup>19</sup> In 2013, Natalie Kitroeff reviewed multiple scientific studies on the occurrence of the female orgasm, including a study by Elisabeth Lloyd that found that only 25% of women consistently orgasm during heterosexual intercourse alone, and especially so in a casual hookup setting (Kitroeff 2013).

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