DITA GOES TO DISNEYLAND:
AESTHETICS OF POWER AND PLAY IN CONTEMPORARY PIN-UP CULTURE

by

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ABSTRACT

Visual depictions of the human body engaging in beauty and glamour praxis serve as commentary on social mores, gender roles, and even political and economic power. This thesis is concerned with how beauty and glamour praxis interrogate, destabilise, and renegotiate assumptions about feminine bodies in popular culture across a variety of settings. My methodological approach comprises Michel Foucault's Technologies of the Self, Johan Huizinga's Characteristics of Play, and my own criteria for evaluating the effects of beauty praxis which I have termed Vectors of Glamour. This framework is used to evaluate contemporary pin-up culture as exemplified by Dita Von Teese, social media as a vehicle for the production and consumption of women's aesthetic labour, and the role of Disney parks as loci of beauty praxis. Dita Von Teese's corpus of work is characterised by normative femininity and the promotion of a glamourous, beauty-centred lifestyle. Her public persona reflects hegemonic ideals of feminine beauty. The use of social media to showcase pin-up imagery alongside other forms of women's aesthetic labour relies upon the false promise of affective empowerment. The pursuit of affective empowerment exploits women's labour in social media by perpetuating patriarchal economic and social systems. Disney parks are liminal zones that occupy a space between the magical and the mundane. The semiotics of luxury are embedded in the Disney parks experience and visitors engage in various forms of beauty and glamour praxis inside these liminal zones. The three case studies are further linked by nostalgia as a capitalist tool. Broadly, these case studies are situated within the discursive contexts of feminist thought, media studies, and critical tourism.

DEDICATION

For Rob, Poppy, and the Muse

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INTRODUCTION

Figure 1. Dita Von Teese Wants to Make Your Valentine's Day a Little Sexier, Photo by Albert Sanchez for Sharp Magazine, 27 January 2017, accessed 22 October 2022 <https://sharpmagazine.com/2017/01/27/dita-von-teese-wants-to-make-your-valentines-day-a-little-sex>

Contextualising Pin-Up Within a Theoretical Framework

In the image above, Dita Von Teese sports little more than a pair of sheer black opera-length gloves and a pensive expression.[1] The photograph is an example of the contemporary pin-up aesthetic, as popularised over the last 30 years by Dita and other pin-up models. It depicts a carefully crafted public persona rooted in a signature personal style. This photograph illustrates glamour and beauty praxis, while hinting at larger themes of power and play in depictions of femininity. This image evokes the erotic imaginary and draws the viewer in, perhaps to imagine themselves as being *with* the subject or becoming the subject herself. In this way, Dita Von Teese enacts power over the viewer whilst playing the role of a sex symbol.

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[1] Bianca Teixeira, 'Dita Von Teese Wants to Make Your Valentine's Day a Little Sexier', *Sharp Magazine*, 27 January 2017. <https://sharpmagazine.com/2017/01/27/dita-von-teese-wants-to-make-your-valentines-day-a-little-sex> [accessed 22 October 2022].

In this introduction, I situate pin-up, social media, and Disney parks as the case studies for this thesis. My work herein builds upon the scaffolding of Michel Foucault's concept of Technologies of the Self and Johan Huizinga's concept of Characteristics of Play. Further, I propose my own theoretical framework of what I term Vectors of Glamour: those phenomena which promulgate images of beauty to the public and engage its collective imagination. This introduction lays the foundation for what follows by briefly contextualising the moral, feminist, and labour-related aspects of beauty and glamour. I will identify gaps in the literature and discuss the value of my analytical approach to other areas of discourse. I define and situate pin-up within a socio-cultural context. Next, I construct my methodological approach by proposing a dialogical relationship between Foucault and Huizinga's work, as well as my proposed Vectors of Glamour framework. This framework will then be applied to three case studies: the work of American performer and model Dita von Teese, social media as a tool to curate images of women in the digital age, and the presence of beauty and glamour culture in Disney parks. I selected these case studies because they contain examples of beauty and glamour praxis within textual, technological, and physical domains. I argue that these three case studies exemplify my proposed Vectors of Glamour. Finally, I will conclude by discussing how the proposed framework may be applied to other areas of scholarship at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and the arts.

This work addresses three primary research questions. First, what does contemporary pin-up culture tell us about bodily power and domains of play, specifically regarding the work of Dita Von Teese? Second, how does social media impact beauty and glamour praxis, particularly in the context of contemporary pin-up culture? Third, how do

Disney parks function as loci of beauty and glamour praxis? This line of interrogation bears academic and social value because it examines the relationship between agentic selfhood and play as portrayed by media images of the feminine body. The human body represents the convergence of that which is concerned with the political and that which is concerned with play. Cosmetic, fashion, and media industries are built upon this very notion because they curate and profit from images of the body engaging in beauty culture. Despite the many mechanisms with which to critique images of the body in media, this thesis is concerned with the resurgence of mid-twentieth century style pin-up culture in the last 30 years as a central theme. I selected pin-up culture for three reasons. First, the presence of mid-twentieth century pin-up style in contemporary society (even if isolated to a relatively niche population) is anachronistic and the role of anachronistic or eccentric style can be viewed as a commentary on broader cultural values. Second, taking up this kind of sartorial anachronism may be understood as transgressive. Third, pin-up culture, as we will see in this thesis, is often associated with playful or fun images of female sexuality. Taken together, the factors situate pin-up culture — and by extension, beauty and glamour praxis — within the domains of personal agency and play.

Beyond just pin-up, this work explicates a novel framework with which to analyse beauty praxis in a variety of settings. This provides analytical consistency in evaluating the literature as it relates to each case study. In some examples, there may be more emphasis placed on specific elements of this framework; however, these three concepts — Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, or my Vectors of Glamour — should considered a single tool, rather than three disparate modes of

analysis. Having clarified the aims of this thesis, let us now examine the relevant conceptual parameters and scholarly contexts within which to situate this work.

Defining Pin-Up

The experiences of embodying and consuming pin-up culture can be defined as Technologies of the Self (per Foucault) and meet the characteristics of play (per Huizinga). I employ the term 'Technologies of the Self' to refer to those practices with which the individual constructs their self-identity. 'Play' or 'Playfulness' shall refer to behaviours that are carried out for pleasurable, rather than practical purposes. By placing the work of these two theorists in conversation with respect to pin-up, we can evaluate the interaction of beauty politics and beauty play. In some instances, play may also be considered a Technology of the Self in the context of this cultural phenomenon, particularly regarding sexuality or the erotic gaze. For the purposes of this work, the act of embodying pin-up culture shall be defined as engaging in personal aesthetic choices in the form of personal grooming and style. Consuming pin-up shall be defined as the curation/viewing of images or purchasing of clothing, cosmetics, or other ephemera associated with mid-twentieth century pin-up style. It should be noted here that many of today's pin-up consumers colloquially refer to recent pin-up styled art and design as *modern pin-up*. This suggests a general misunderstanding of what constitutes modernity in the historical sense (e.g., roughly the mid-1400s through World War II) and instead refers to contemporary history from the late 1940s onward. Though these terms are often used interchangeably in popular culture, every effort has been made to provide the correct historical designations to the examples in this thesis.

Before addressing specific examples, we must establish working definition of pin-up itself. With roots in the nineteenth century, photographic images of performers were used as advertisements for burlesque productions and later progressed to include images of models and actresses during the first and second world wars.[2] Maria Elena Buszek explains that the power of these images lay in the subject's ability to 'negotiate a rare grey area between the period's two poles of societal binaries for their sex. There existed alternative, unstable, and powerful roles for women in the contemporary public sphere — transgressive identities that were not only made visible but even celebrated'[3] Among well-known pin-up models were Bettie Page — whose work straddled the line between pornography, glamour, and film star — Josephine Baker, Betty Grable, Jayne Mansfield, and Dorothy Dandridge.[4]

The parameters of the image — almost always depicting the whole body — raise questions about the purpose of the image. Is it meant to elicit an erotic response? Does it communicate the inherent value of the female body or the labour of embodying womanhood? Eleni Lipsos asserts that pin-up intrinsically links the subject of the image with the value of displaying said image:

> [The definition] suggests that aesthetics play a crucial role in grasping the essence of pin-up. Finally it mentions the intended use of the pin-up image: for the purposes of display. Suggesting therefore worthiness in the subject of the pin-up, implying that it deserves to be seen by as many people as possible […].

> The pin-up girls featured in the pin-up image play a part in the context as a whole and by doing so seemingly achieve a subjectivity that is dependent

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[2] Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 43.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Feona Attwood, 'No Money Shot? Commerce, Pornography and New Sex Taste Cultures', *Sexualities,* 10 (2007), 441-56.

on them being featured in full-length view, as opposed to being presented in close-up.[5]

'Pin-up' is not the only phrase used to describe these types of images. The term 'cheesecake' was also used to describe the sexualised nature of the subject and contextualised the subject as that which is intended to be consumed by the viewer. The term originated in a 1662 publication which lamented the departure of certain local women at the hand of Oliver Cromwell: '*But ah! It goes against our very hearts, To leave the Cheese-cakes and the Tarts*'.[6] The term went out of use for about 250 years only to reappear after photographer James Kane exclaimed that the sight of the legs of an attractive woman with a windswept skirt was 'better than cheesecake'.[7] The term is not inconsequential as it relegates these types of images to a source of sensory pleasure for the viewer. Further, these images transmogrify the female body into something that can literally and figuratively be consumed by the viewer.

Other historical examples of pin-up include the Gibson, Elvgren, and Vargas girls. These were not photographic depictions, but rather drawn images reflecting the artist's ideal aesthetic values for women.[8] Drawn images added a fantasy element to pin-up which could exaggerate or completely change the model's physical characteristics based on the artist's creative whims. Vargas's artwork became synonymous with World War II imagery

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[5] Eleni Lipsos, 'Anatomy of a Pin-Up: A Genealogy of Sexualized Femininity since the Industrial Age' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2013), p. 16.

[6] Alexander Brome, *Rump, or an Exact Collection of the Choycest Poems and Songs Relating to the Late Times: By the Most Eminent Wits, from Anno 1639. To Anno 1661* (London: Brome, 1661), p. 16.

[7] Max Cryer, *Who Said That First?: The Curious Origins of Common Words and Phrases* (Sorrento, Exisle Publishing, 2010), p. 53.

[8] Buszek, p. 82.

as it was often featured on the noses of military aircraft and in magazines provided to

troops in the hopes of inspiring patriotism during the war effort.[9]

> The Oxford English Dictionary cites 1941 as the year when the word pin-up
> entered general usage. It also cites a reference to the 7th July issue of Life
> magazine of that same year hailing film star Dorothy Lamour as the U.S.
> Army's number one pin-up. The fact that the term "pin-up" enters the
> dictionary during the same year that the U.S. entered the Second World War
> is no mere coincidence: it suggests that pin-up served some purpose at this
> time in relation to United States involvement in the Second World War.[10]

Even today, the images most commonly associated with classic pin-up style depict

cosmetics, clothing, and hairstyles that were popular in the 1940s, 50s, and early 60s,

particularly in the United States. Red lips, black or brown winged eyeliner, and

voluptuously curled hair in the style of Victory Rolls were and continue to be the basis for

what is widely considered the classic pin-up look.[11] Despite the uniquely American origins

of the idealised pin-up body, these aesthetic preferences have since been taken up

worldwide. It should be noted that much of this period is often referred to as 'The Long

Fifties' — a term coined by Deborah Nelson referring to the events between 1945 and

1961.[12]

This style experienced something of a resurgence in the last 30 years, owing, at

least in part, to the work of American burlesque performer Dita Von Teese. Her self-

presentation is anachronistic — a form of eccentric glamour contrasting with current

notions of style and sexuality.[13] As evidenced by her presence in both alternative and

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[9] Buszek, p. 210.

[10] Lipsos, p. 14.

[11] Richard Corson, *Fashions in Makeup: From Ancient to Modern Times* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 2003).

[12] Deborah L. Nelson, 'Introduction', *Women's Studies Quarterly,* 33 (2005), pp. .

[13] Simon Doonan, *Eccentric Glamour: Creating an Insanely More Fabulous You* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), p. 47.

mainstream popular culture, she has entered the American collective consciousness in ways that many pop stars and actresses of the past two and a half decades have not because of her commitment to her image. It is a complete embrace of what we might think of as Old Hollywood glamour. She makes clear her dedication to this style choice: 'Beauty is my art. It's my nourishment, my salvation. It's what brings me joy.'[14]

Though she is mostly responsible for bringing this style of burlesque back into the contemporary imagination, Dita Von Teese is but one of many mid-twentieth century style pin-up models whose images were commercially circulated from the mid-1990s onward. Lipsos highlights the contemporary infusion of this imagery into the marketplace via popular gift shop trinkets.

> The initial trend for contemporary pin-up products surfaced during the early 1990s with retro greeting cards. Still sold today, these cards usually feature a recycled retro mid-twentieth-century image or photograph, matched with a contemporary ironic comment that effectively mocks the subject of the image. This popular formula has since found its way onto many saleable knick-knacks such as mugs, notepaper, key-rings, placemats and scores of other gift-shop items.[15]

What Lipsos labels as the 'postmodern appropriation' of these images for marketing purposes epitomises the intent of selling a product (consumer goods, patriotism, etc.) since the mid-twentieth Century.

Associations with patriotism or consumerism aside, if we are to place pin-up within a greater cultural context, we must pause to consider the semantics of the term itself. According to Merriam-Webster, the term is defined as 'a photograph or poster of a person

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[14] Dita Von Teese, *Your Beauty Mark: The Ultimate Guide to Eccentric Glamour* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), p. 5.
[15] Lipsos, p. 18.

considered to have glamorous qualities' and a 'pin-up girl' is defined as 'a girl or woman whose glamourous qualities make her a suitable subject for a pin-up.'[16] This definition confers a sense of worthiness upon the subject — she is deemed glamourous enough to merit depiction. It is also worth noting that the term refers to both the subject (the model) and the resulting article itself (the photo). The phrase most commonly used to identify female pin-up models is 'pin-up girl' as opposed to 'pin-up woman' which would instead imply adult autonomy. Along with terms like 'girlie mags' (a colloquialism for pornographic magazines featuring women), 'pin-up girl' suggests a kind of infantilisation of the subject, thus limiting her perceived agency.

It is paradoxical then, that the standard of pin-up beauty is one of voluptuous, post-pubescent proportions. An hourglass figure showcasing large breasts, a small waist, and large hips and buttocks is what is commonly envisaged as the classic pin-up archetype. These are the characteristics not of girls, but of women. Biologically speaking, this is the result of oestrogen which limits abdominal fat deposits and stimulates gluteofemoral fat deposits. As Devendra Singh states, the 'waist-to-hip ratio is an accurate somatic indicator of reproductive endocrinological status and long-term health risk.'[17]

The mid-twentieth century popularity of the hourglass shape (and its contemporary resurgence) can be attributed to the course of global geopolitical history. Author and researcher David Bainbridge writes:

> In the 1920s economic times were good in much of the Western world, social restrictions on women were decreasing and […] this period saw the demise of the physical constraints of the corset, and their replacement by the dietary constraints of a newly slim, almost boyish ideal. Women were also smaller

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[16] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 'Pin-up Girl' <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/> [accessed 30 May 2019].

[17] Devendra Singh, 'An Evolutionary Theory of Female Physical Attractiveness', *Psi Chi,* 10 (2006), 359-70.

in stature, due to childhood diseases and a less copious supply of calcium-rich foods.

Between the 1930s and 1950s, from the depression onwards, curvaceousness reappeared, aided by improvements in health and nutrition – and this trend even continued during the Second World War in countries which were not invaded.[18]

The post-WWII economic boom and availability of oral contraceptives from the 1960s onward led to an uptick in slimmer physiques — with some variation in the 1980s (shoulder pads telegraphing a slightly more masculine silhouette) and 90s (extremely thin *heroin chic* as exemplified by English supermodel Kate Moss).[19] While a popular desire for a comparatively slimmer figure persists today, this recent resurgence of pin-up may be considered a commentary on these beauty ideals. It should be noted here that whilst slimness is generally held up as the Western physical ideal, body type standards may vary greatly between cultures and across history. These standards are also influenced by factors such as globalisation, social media trends, health technology, and nutritional access. Later in this thesis, we shall examine the role of the fat activism and body positivity movements in relation to contemporary beauty standards.

To properly contextualise the pin-up model and all she engenders, it is necessary to solidify terms and impose a sort of taxonomy of glamour. For the purposes of this thesis, the phrase 'pin-up models' shall refer to the subjects of static images — either photographic or illustrated — of female-presenting individuals in the fashions popularised in the United States during the middle of the twentieth century. This term also extends to the act of engaging with pin-up culture as a consumer of social media, the economic

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[18] David Bainbridge, *Curvology: The Origins and Power of Female Body Shape* (New York: Abrams, 2015), pp. 149-50.
[19] Ibid.

market, and in academic discourse. The subjects' poses may be sexually suggestive in nature and may contain partial nudity, but they are not pornographic. They do not depict sexual acts, though they are frequently intended to evoke the erotic imagination. Pin-up, in this case, should not be confused with the performance of burlesque, though many burlesque performers, including Dita Von Teese, have a significant presence in the contemporary pin-up world. Despite the fact that pin-up has its roots in advertisements for burlesque performances, our contemporary understanding of pin-up is separate from the performances themselves. That is, whilst many burlesque performers have pin-up careers, not all pin-up models are burlesque performers. This is an important distinction because, despite some stylistic overlap, burlesque exists within the domain of live performance, whilst pin-up exists within the domain of static imagery. Now that we have contextualised contemporary pin-up as it will be analysed in this thesis, let us now consider how pin-up style engages with notions of political and bodily power through a Foucauldian lens.

Foucault, Power, and the Body

To deeply engage with the dynamics of pin-up, I suggest that we consider the body as a site of power. It is the work of Michel Foucault which informs this inquiry. Foucault's many writings and lectures on the topic of bodily power offer insight into the motivations and cultural implications of pin-up culture. Specifically, his work on docile bodies and the concept of Technologies of the Self provides a path to critical engagement with pin-up, and with beauty praxis overall.

Because of its many applications, Foucault's work on the docile body can be seen as a benchmark in cultural criticism around matters of the physical body. Though the original docile bodies, in his view, were those of soldiers being transformed into human military grade weapons, the basis for the docile body can also be used to understand pin-up.[20] Foucault classified the physical prescription for a soldier as a *bodily rhetoric of honour* believing that the 'soldier was someone who could be recognised from afar; he bore certain signs: the natural signs of his strength and his courage, the marks too, of his pride; his body was the blazon of his strength and valour'[21] We can apply these general characteristics to what we commonly envisage as the classic mid-twentieth century pin-up: an easily recognisable, feminine figure whose body communicates a general air of good health and self-care. Further, he states that

> Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile" bodies. In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns into an "aptitude," a "capacity" which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection.[22]

This statement about power and the body aligns with the experience of embodying pin-up: in the twenty-first century, dressing in an anachronistic manner is a purposeful choice and conveys an aptitude or capacity, as in the case of Dita Von Teese. It is completely deliberate. Here, we are faced with yet another paradox: the supposed empowerment associated with the choice of styling oneself in pin-up fashion is a direct result of the real and imagined standards of beauty conveyed in images from the 1940s through the 1960s.

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[20] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 2012), p. 135.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Foucault, p. 138.

In a broad sense, the pin-up body is a docile body. Foucault is clear that a docile body is 'one that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved. and that this docile body can only be achieved through strict regimen of disciplinary acts.'[23] In this way, the Technologies of the Self align with the act of curating a pin-up style appearance — the body is transformed to meet a specific, anachronistic style and the result is spectacle. The discourses surrounding femininity and even pornography square rather neatly with the Foucauldian approach.

In his seminal 1982 lectures at the University of Vermont, Foucault defined the Technologies of the Self as those techniques and strategies which

> permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.[24]

Informed by Foucault's work on governmentality, sociologist Nikolas Rose specifies how the Technologies of the Self can be more deeply understood in the domains of health and self-care by providing additional nuance and consistency. Rose points out the 'interplay between the technologies of discipline focused on the individual body and the technologies of bio-politics, which acted on those bodies en masse, intervening in the making of life, the manner of living, in how to live'.[25]

With respect to matters of the physical body, these concepts have great utility in explaining all manner of phenomena related to fashion, grooming, and care of the self.

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[23] Foucault, p. 136.

[24] Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 18.

[25] Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

While many Technologies of the Self are applicable to this analysis, I argue that the four categories most relevant to pin-up culture are responsibilisation, healthism/grooming, normalisation, and self-esteem (Figure 2). For the purposes of this thesis, they are primarily concerned with personal responsibility and self-reliance whilst being executed in such a way that is visible to others and open to external judgment. Furthermore, these Technologies of the Self engender both internal and external loci of control. Put another way, they represent the convergence of personal self-efficacy and external accountability.
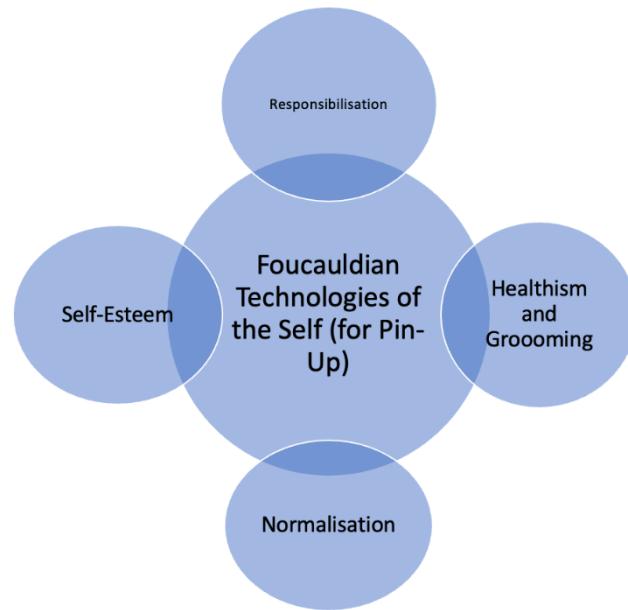
Figure 2. Foucauldian Technologies of the Self which have been selected for their utility in analysing pin-up

The technology of responsibilisation, in short, is the notion that the individual is responsible for their own physical and mental health and wellness. These concerns are not those of the state or other corpus of leadership, but of the self. This technology refers to an inherent sense of duty on the part of the individual. Here, self-efficacy means taking charge of one's own corporeality. Rose points to a key moment of transformation in our collective notion of health. Where once there was the goal of an absence of disease,

health now refers to 'a kind of overall 'well-being' — beauty, success, happiness, sexuality and much more.'[26] Further, this moment of transformation invoked a sense of choice and personal responsibility in the individual:

> In the second half of the 20th century, a new alliance formed between political aspirations for a healthy population and personal aspirations to be well: health was to be ensured by instrumentalising anxiety and shaping the hopes and fears of individuals and families for their own biological destiny.[27]

How powerful it is, then, to consider what Rose calls 'somatic individuality' — the daily self-care choices that highlight the biological. 'Our somatic individuality has become opened up to choice, prudence and responsibility, to experimentation, to contestation – and so to a "vital politics".'[28] This somatic individuality is the technology of responsibilisation made manifest.

Healthism/grooming refers to the visible practice of looking after one's own health (maintaining a 'healthy' diet, engaging in vigorous exercise, seeking medical intervention as necessary, etc.). In his writings on pleasure, Foucault explored ancient Greek philosophies on dietetic practices. Alimentary concerns were closely tied with moral concerns.

> The Pythagoreans, who doubtless played an important part in the development of dietetics, strongly emphasized the correlation between the care given the body and the concern for preserving the purity and harmony of the soul [...] The many alimentary taboos they set for themselves had cultural and religious significance; and the criticism they directed against every abuse connected with eating, drinking, exercises, and sexual activities had both the authority of a moral precept and the utility of sound advice for health.[29]

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[26] Nikolas Rose, 'The Politics of Life Itself', *Theory, Culture & Society,* 18 (2001), 1-30.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Rose, p. 18.
[29] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 102.

This early conflation of morality and health can be observed today in the ubiquity of advertisements for everything from weight loss programs to cosmetics. The lexical nature of this moralisation is illustrated by the frequent designation of indulgent, calorically dense foods (and their consumption) as naughty, whilst vegetables and low-calorie foods are viewed as inherently good. It stands to reason that this Technology of the Self ought to be explored in relation to pin-up which is concerned with the aesthetics of a specific body shape (traditionally, an hourglass figure), often achieved through diet, exercise, or other external modifiers such as cosmetic surgery or corseting.

Normalisation is particularly interesting because of its capacity to confer shame upon the individual who lacks a healthy or physically desirable appearance. Foucault espouses the view that the roots of normalisation are of a generally proactive nature — ways to inspire transformative action, rather than to exclude or chastise.

> The norm brings with it a principle of both qualification and correction. The norm's function is not to exclude and reject. Rather, it is always linked to a positive technique of intervention and transformation, to a sort of normative project.[30]

Further, these norms and the subsequent acts of normalisation that reinforce them are 'simultaneously positive, technical, and political.'[31] Dianna Taylor's exploration of Foucauldian norms and normalisation reveals the flexibility of this notion as it relates to biopower. 'It circulates between the disciplinary and the regulatory; it is something that can be applied to both a body one wishes to discipline and a population one wishes to regularise.'[32]

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[30] Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1974-1975* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 50.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Dianna Taylor, 'Normativity and Normalisation', *Foucault Studies,* (2009), 45-63.

Self-esteem encompasses the need to care for the self so that others will not have to provide care. Interestingly, this notion manifests in areas such as the consumption of self-help materials in the effort to become one's most ideal self.[33] This ability to look after oneself in all aspects is not simply a moral or social imperative, but rather it is what separates humans from animals. In his exploration of Epictetus, Foucault says that

> Man is defined in the *Discourses* as the being who was destined to care for himself. This is where the basic difference between him and other creatures resides. The animals find "ready prepared" that which they need in order to live. Man, on the other hand, must attend to himself […] because the god [Zeus] deemed it right that he be able to make free use of himself; and it was for this purpose that he endowed him with reason.
>
> The care of the self, for Epictetus, is a privilege-duty, a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence.[34]

Generally speaking, self-esteem is defined as 'a confidence and satisfaction in oneself.'[35] There are numerous psycho-social theories highlighting its importance, including its primacy in Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs where it occupies the highest level of psychological needs required for self-actualisation.[36] The importance of self-esteem cuts across sociological, psychological, and philosophical domains and as such, earns its place as one of the four Technologies of the Self which serve as the guideposts of this analysis.

The above examples illustrate the ease with which these four chosen Technologies of the Self overlap. Responsibility for the self is manifested by acts of healthism/grooming,

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[33] Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1974-1975*, p. 50.
[34] Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1988), p. 47.
[35] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 'Self-Esteem' <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-esteem> [accessed 3 March 2019].
[36] Abraham H Maslow, 'A Theory of Human Motivation', *Psychological Review,* 50 (1943), 370–96.

normalisation, and self-esteem. Healthism/grooming is an outward symbol of responsibility for one's physical body within societally normalised boundaries, and these acts confer a sense of self-esteem upon the individual. Normalisation offers parameters for responsibility, health, and expression of self-esteem. Self-esteem is a signifier of responsibility and health within societally normalised boundaries.

Mid-twentieth century style pin-up culture encompasses the concepts of responsibilisation, healthism/grooming, normalisation, and self-esteem because classic images of heteronormative, cisgender women convey responsible standards of grooming/self-care, attractive dress, overall good health, and a clear — if seemingly effortless — striving to present one's most desirable self. With these technologies of the self in mind, let us briefly turn our attention to how these Foucauldian concepts might be understood through an intersectional lens, particularly with respect to matters of self-care and personal identity.

These Technologies of the Self are deeply embedded in matters of identity. Contemporary pin-up is far more diverse now than it was over 60 years ago, though the goal of capturing the viewer's sexual imagination remains intact today. Intersectionality exists both within the viewer and the subject of the image as both contain multiple identities. This spectrum of identities spans gender, age, socio-economic status, physical ability, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. It should be noted that there is a rapidly emerging queer space within pin-up that did not exist in the mainstream during its mid-twentieth century heyday. In some ways, it could be said that engaging with any type of pin-up — either as a consumer or subject or both — is something of a democratising practice. Anyone with access to print or digital media can view the images and anyone

with access to a smartphone or digital camera can quickly disseminate those images. For example, a 2024 Pew study of mobile phone ownership found that 97% of Americans own a mobile phone, of which nine-in-ten own a smartphone (which includes camera functionality).[37] The widespread uptake of smartphone technology across socio-economic categories suggests broader and easier access to both digital photography and social media applications. Further, digital photography and social media (or internet browser) applications are factory standard for smartphones which reduces barrier to access. Someone who desires to create and/or share contemporary pin-up imagery need not employ expensive photography equipment and print media; they can simply snap a quick photo on their smartphone and rapidly disseminate it via their social media channels.

Though this thesis is concerned with contemporary facsimiles of mid-twentieth century pin-up style, it should also be understood that a variety of alternative pin-up communities have sprung up around the world, including the SuicideGirls online community characterised by subjects with extensive body modification (e.g., tattoos, piercings, scarification), often depicted in more hardcore scenarios involving bondage, fake weapons, or fake gore.[38] These alternative pin-ups exist both as a commentary on mainstream beauty standards and as a mechanism that supports the capitalist framework bolstered by those widely-accepted standards. That an array of fashion sensibilities and body types exists in pin-up imagery is evidence that the vocabulary of pin-up is as diverse as its adherents.

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[37] Pew Research Center 'Mobile Fact Sheet' < https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/#mobile-phone-ownership-over-time?tabId=4e4f05f3-58a4-4fc5-aab6-58b37a6dcb63> [Accessed 20 April 2024].
[38] SuicideGirls <https://www.suicidegirls.com/about/> [accessed 19 August 2018].

The term 'self-care' — found in everything from psychology journals to cosmetics advertisements — ought to be factored into our exploration of pin-up because of its recent conflation with the beauty and personal grooming industry. 'Self-care is a nebulous name for a group of behaviours that should have a simple definition: taking care of yourself. There's [now] a whole marketplace of self-care items capitalizing on our distress: self-care makeup […] manicures […] face masks […] massages […] detox tea.'[39] This disguising of glamour praxis as self-care praxis is insidious. At work here is the Foucauldian notion of care for the self as a reflection of attitudes toward the self and others. In essence, self-care evidences respect for others by keeping to widely held standards of personal grooming and hygiene. Even the pin-up market has staked a claim in the trend, as evidenced by the publication of *The Pin-Up Girl Wellness Workbook: Self-Care for Rockabilly Women*.[40] Self-care messaging manages to find its way into even the smallest corners of niche subcultures.

Identity and self-care are but two aspects of contemporary beauty culture that can be understood using a Foucauldian framework. Though briefly glossed here, these topics shall be further addressed — alongside other examples — in the chapters to come. Interestingly, matters of identity and bodily self-care in the context of glamour and beauty praxis can also be understand in the context of play.

I chose Foucault as one of the two node stars of this work (alongside Huizinga) not only because of the enduring utility of his critical lens in understanding these case studies, but also because much contemporary feminist scholarship is still in conversation with or

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[39] Shayla Love, 'The Dark Truths Behind Our Obsession with Self-Care', *Vice*, 11 December 2018, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/zmdwm4/the-young-and-the-uncared-for-v25n4> [accessed 26 April 2023].
[40] *The Pin-up Girl Wellness Workbook: Self-Care for Rockabilly Women* (Rockabilly Essentials, 2019).

in opposition to Foucauldian constructions of gender, sexuality, and embodiment. To be certain, there are many other avenues with which to explore embodiment. For example, I might have chosen to centre my analysis on the concept of intersectionality. Whilst there are multiple mentions of intersectionality and the intersectional feminist lens in this thesis, I felt it was ultimately limited in its ability to function as a main theoretical framework because of its primary focus on group identity.

I do not intend to argue that Foucault is the only embodiment scholar whose work can be used to analyse these three case studies, but rather that his work is the most appropriate when put into conversation with Huizinga's view of play. Furthermore, these case studies are framed within the notions of reflexivity and positionality – concepts which are deeply suffused into Foucault's work on the body, biopower, and surveillance. Critics of this approach may assert that the Foucauldian lens is passé or over-used in contemporary scholarship, yet I argue that such discussion keeps Foucault's work evergreen. There cannot be a full analysis of embodiment studies without acknowledging his contributions to the academy. Let us now explore how Huizinga's conditions for play factor into the wider analytical framework proposed in this thesis.

Huizinga, Play, and the Body

Figure 3. FAO Schwarz Makeup Vanity Mirror Set, accessed 22 November 2022, <https://www.target.com/p/fao-schwarz-makeup-vanity-mirror-set/-/A-85378382#lnk=sametab.>

Foundationally, beauty praxis is often considered something of a playful or even frivolous domain. From the language of cosmetics marketing for teens and adults to images of children playing with beauty toys, the messaging around beauty as play is disseminated early and often in contemporary Western cultures. In the image above, American toy retailer FAO Schwarz advertises the Makeup Vanity Mirror Set, a kit containing a child-sized light-up vanity mirror with real cosmetics and applicator tools.[41] What is compelling about this product is that it clearly falls within the domain of child's play, yet it contains real cosmetic products meant to be applied to the skin, rather than plastic facsimiles of said

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[41] Fao Schwarz, 'Makeup Vanity Mirror Set' <https://faoschwarz.com/products/25-piece-stunning-style-makeup-vanity-set> [accessed 22 April 2023].

cosmetic progress used for imaginative or pretend play. In this way, the toy also communicates information related to the four Foucauldian Technologies of the Self discussed earlier (responsibilisation, healthism/grooming, normalisation, and self-esteem).

In *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1938), Johan Huizinga explored the role of play in society. Huizinga postulated that the play element in culture comprises five characteristics: freedom, an inherent separation from ordinary or *real* life, distinction from the mundane in locality and duration, a method of keeping order, and finally, immateriality — existing completely separately from the market so that one cannot draw profit.[42] The impermanence of cosmetics, clothing, and personal grooming habits means that one can experience a new set of style choices at any time. This aligns with Huizinga's characteristic of freedom. An internet search of the term 'beauty play' yields over three trillion results including links to photo editing smartphone apps, YouTube videos of children playing with toy makeup, and retail goods such as Sephora's 'PLAY' kit — a monthly cosmetic sampling subscription service.[43] The conflation of the concepts of beauty and play telegraphs the notion that one need not commit to a particular style or product to reap its social benefits. That very sense of freedom makes the spending of time and money seem like an easy social and moral imperative.

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[42] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).
[43] Sephora, 'Play!' URL [accessed 3 March 2019].
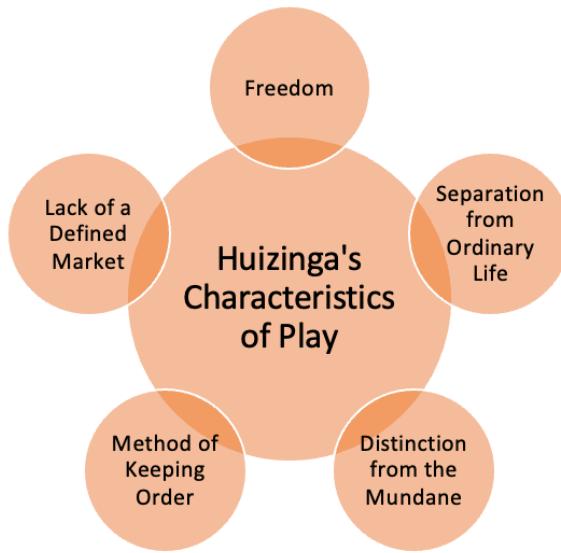
Figure 4. Huizinga's Characteristics of Play

Beauty play is also a domain that can exist separately from ordinary life, as in the example the figure above. In this case, the child is experimenting with image-making in a way that mirrors adult cosmetics use. Whether or not the child leaves the play area whilst still wearing the make-up, they have experienced the process of using the products and gazing into the mirror, appraising their personal appearance. In this way, the child using this kit also experiences beauty play in a space that is separate from the mundane in locality or duration (i.e., a designated play area in the home for a set period of time allotted by their guardian). There is a method of keeping order — in this case, the physical order of objects which can be stored in the compartments of the vanity mirror. The final characteristic of play per Huizinga — immateriality or lack of a market — can be seen as the child at play is not earning a wage for doing so. Whilst the toy market certainly exists, the end user is not likely to have purchased it as it would be given by an adult to the child. Beauty play in childhood is not generally considered a transgressive act, particularly

among girls. However, depending on the environment, beauty play may be considered

transgressive when boys are involved.

Beyond toy cosmetics, the discourses surrounding Disney princess toys are well-

trodden territory for scholars of feminism, childhood development, and media. Karen

Wohlwend's study of young children playing with Disney princess toys explores the

gendered identities and discourses attached to these toys, as well as how children perform

and modify narratives associated with these products.

> The notion of productive consumption explains how girls enthusiastically
> took up familiar media narratives, encountered social limitations in princess
> identities, improvised character actions, and revised story lines to produce
> counternarratives of their own.[44]

This points to the transformative power of play in early childhood and suggests the ease

with which feminine ideals are inculcated during developmental stages. It could be argued

then, that the act of childhood play is an early *Vector of Glamour* in itself as it acts as a

mode of transmission for beauty norms. While this thesis is generally concerned with

aspects of play as expressed by adults engaging with pin-up, it is important to consider its

roots in childhood.

There is a connection between childhood princess play and adult pin-up. Princess

imagery in childhood (via books, toys, games, movies, and television programming)

portrays princesses as hyperfeminine, pretty, virtuous, and kind. These characterisations

may also reference intelligence, tenacity, strength, or rebelliousness (i.e., Disney's Belle,

Tiana, Mulan, and Ariel, respectively) but they are not the primary attributes of these

figures. Rather, these qualities are revealed over the course of the story. Most static

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[44] Karen E. Wohlwend, 'Damsels in Discourse: Girls Consuming and Producing Identity Texts through Disney Princess Play', *Reading Research Quarterly,* 44 (2009), 57-83.

images of a princess depict only prettiness and not much more. In much the same way, static images of adult pin-up models depict prettiness (or desirability) and not much more. The pin-up is, first and foremost, a pretty object of desire or admiration. For example, Hollywood star and WW2 pin-up Hedy Lamarr invented the frequency hopping technology that would pave the way for WiFi and Bluetooth. Though she is now remembered and correctly credited for this work, she has always been first recognised for her physical beauty and screen presence.

Pin-up offers a sense of freedom of expression for individuals of any age. The sense of being stylistically frozen in time is a way of conveying a subtle rebellion against today's beauty standards. It is paradoxical, however, that whilst mid-twentieth century style pin-up attire does not conform to contemporary fashion norms, it is a facsimile of socially constructed beauty standards from another era. Further, the curation and promulgation of today's pin-up images through social media is further complicated by the use of computer programs and smartphone apps that reshape, smooth, blur, and filter the physical appearance. The desire for image manipulation existed long before these current tools were available. Artists like Vargas and Elvgren drew their models to suit a specific artistic vision. As early as the 1850s, photographers were combining multiple images into a single negative or using pen and ink to alter the final product.[45]

Musicians and other pop culture figures have used their art to criticise image manipulation. Courtney Love addresses this in her lyrics for Hole's 1994's *Doll Parts*: 'I fake it so real I am beyond fake.'[46] Love, like many other artists, laments the plastic and

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[45] Hannah Brooks Olson, 'Before Photoshop: A Brief History of Photo Manipulation'*, Creative Live*, 8 December 2017 <https://www.creativelive.com/blog/tbt-photo-manipulation-before-photoshop/> [accessed 20 May 2019]
[46] Courtney Love, 'Doll Parts', *Live Through This* (Geffen Records, 1994).

ephemeral nature of her public image. Further, the inauthentic nature of one image becomes moot when every other image can be easily manipulated. This begs the question: what is the social value of a dishonest image?

It is curious that a mid-twentieth century fashion sensibility is depicted and enhanced using today's technology. This leads us to consider whether these images are purely pastiche or honest homage to bygone fashion sensibilities. This is not a simple dichotomy — nothing related to the nexus of the sexualised body and political power could ever be. Rather than ascribe tidy definitions and parameters, this thesis works to problematise these dichotomies. To problematise them will require a nuanced blending of theoretical frameworks with contemporary cultural evidence.

The issue of manipulating the static image raises the question of authenticity in pin-up. If the resurgence of mid-twentieth century pin-up styles is meant to harken back to previously celebrated body shapes, it suggests the subjects' desire to be viewed as more authentic than their counterparts sporting more contemporary body shapes. Recall that one of Huizinga's requirements for play is that it must exist separately from ordinary or real life. Huizinga directly addresses this in relation to image manipulation in *Homo Ludens.*

> If we find that play is based on the manipulation of certain images, on a certain "imagination" of reality (i.e. its conversion into images), then our main concern will be to grasp the value and significance of these images and their "imagination".[47]

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[47] Huizinga, p. 4.

Huizinga goes on to say that the act of image-making is a sort of poetic function of play, which he labelled the 'ludic function.'[48] Hence, we can take both the acts of image-making and manipulation to be ludic functions which fall squarely within domains of play.

Huizinga uses the example of a child working with the process of image-making, whether in the creation of a static image or in the act of play acting. In this example, the child 'is making an image of something different, something more beautiful, or more sublime, or more dangerous than what he usually is.'[49] This statement could easily be applied to the vanity mirror toy cosmetic kit above. It also parallels the idea of the artist modifying the visual representation of the subject and again suggests that such modification is a ludic function. The key to the question of authenticity in pin-up lay in Huizinga's rejection of the notion that manipulated images are untruthful: '[This] representation is not so much a sham-reality as a realisation in appearance: "imagination" in the original sense of the word.'[50] We can dispense with the notion that photographic editing — at least for the purposes of the play act of pin-up — is inherently dishonest or an effort to espouse an alternate reality. It is, in fact, an extension of imagination. Interestingly, the idea that this is all an extension of imagination leads us to consider how style choices in domains of play may be understood through the lens of critical storytelling. Furthermore, the act of evoking the imaginary in a storytelling context raises important ethical questions.

Considering the ethics of disseminating digitally altered photographs, pin-up model and blogger Velvet DeCollete poses three questions: '(1) Is it fit for purpose? (2) Is it

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[48] Huizinga, p. 25.
[49] Huizinga, p. 14.
[50] Ibid.

creating a false ideal? (3) Do we know it's been photoshopped?'[51] She addresses these questions by differentiating between highly stylised cheesecake pin-up modelling and supposedly candid Instagram photos.

> Are you making a cheesecake image which is effectively highly photoshopped by definition? OR are you making your Instagram images so edited you make people wonder what happened between when you placed the photo on Instagram in the morning, to when they saw you? The initial is a style, the latter is a self-image issue.[52]

Intent, format, and end-user knowledge are powerful factors that must be considered when engaging with the question ethics of pin-up. If cheesecake pin-up is generally understood to be an artistic work, then the subject's appearance can be modified at will. As for whether it contributes to a false beauty ideal, that logic should extend from the domain of the technological to all appearance-modifying resources including cosmetics and hair styling products. Returning to the example of a child creating fantastical images, I would assert that all apparatuses of visual manipulation — from digital airbrushing to a £2 lipstick bullet — qualify as artist's tools and are essentially fungible.

As to whether the end-user is aware that an image has been altered is principally a matter of disclosure by the image's creator. Scott Fosdick and Shahira Fahmy suggested that altered images be noted with what they call a 'photation mark': a symbol that functions like a quotation mark for the written word and denotes an image that has been modified from the original.[53] Whilst this idea addresses the authors desire for epistemic honesty as a way to help the viewer determine the truthfulness of the photograph, it assumes that

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[51] Velvet DeCollete, 'Is Photoshop Harmful to Pinup Communities?', *Velvet DeCollete* <https://velvetd.com/is-photoshop-harming-pinup-communities/> [accessed 20 June 2019].
[52] Ibid.
[53] Scott Fosdick and Shahira Fahmy. 'Epistemic Honesty and the Assumption that Photos are True.' *Studies in Media Literacy & Information Literacy Education,* 7 (2007), 1-10.

alteration happens only after the original image was created, as is the case with Photoshop where attributes of an existing photograph are manipulated. However, today's digital filtering technology allows for images to be adjusted in real time so there is no lag. Artificial intelligence advances are closing the gap between the origin of an image and the way it appears once disseminated. Furthermore, today's image manipulation is a spectrum because contemporary technology allows for adjustment of even very subtle details. This leads us to another question: how much photographic manipulation constitutes a dishonest representation? There is a difference between, for example, subtly adjusting the colour temperature of an image and dramatically altering the shape of a subject's body. In the case of advertising, digital or practical enhancements that falsify the results of the product on offer are detrimental. This is exemplified by the Advertising Standards Agency's multiple warnings to cosmetic manufacturers to discontinue use of false eyelashes in mascara marketing campaigns.[54]

Ryan Moore posits that participation in pin-up — or any retro or nostalgic cultural practice — is a statement rejecting contemporary social mores as the pinnacle of human progress. '[These fashions] represent an indirect critique of modernity and our faith in progress, suggesting that the new and improved doesn't deserve the hype, that things are actually getting worse, and that the best is to be found in the forgotten ways of yesteryear.'[55] It is not insignificant then that during a time of rapidly advancing technology, a fashion sensibility dating back to the middle of the last century is experiencing a

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[54] Katie Morley, 'Rimmel Mascara Advert Starring Cara Delevingne Banned over Use of False Eyelashes', *The Telegraph*, 19 April 2017 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/18/rimmel-mascara-advert-starring-cara-delevinge-banned-use-false/> [accessed 19 April 2019].

[55] Ryan Moore, *Sells Like Teen Spirit: Music, Youth Culture, and Social Crisis* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).

renaissance. Further, this experience of retro style is a perfect example of how pin-up engenders play. Attending retro festivals or markets celebrating pin-up subcultures designates both freedom and a sense of separateness from the mundane in terms of locality and duration — two of Huizinga's requirements for domains of play.

Elizabeth Guffey diagnoses this phenomenon by saying that 'Retro quotes styles from the past, but applies them in anomalous settings: it regards the past from a bemused distance, its dark humour re-mixing popular mid-twentieth century drinks and serving them up as "atomic cocktails."'[56] This persistent recycling of fashion not only represents the cyclic acceptance and rejection of cultural sensibilities, but in the case of pin-up, it also shapes the metanarrative of the woman navigating spaces of play and power. This is a form of critical storytelling. The subject of the pin-up image today takes up these style choices as a commentary on the changing role of women in society. That choice is a political one. Here again we witness the nexus of beauty play and agentic selfhood.

What is it about these style choices that holds sway over their adherents? For those who sport pin-up style today, there is an inherent sense of fun or separateness which exists apart from the banality of 21st-century fashion trends. Classic mid-twentieth century style garments for women may be characterised by a range of features. For example, the 1940s styles saw 'utility wear produced during war rationing: squared shoulders, narrow hips, and skirts that ended just below the knee […] tailored suits were the dominant form of utility fashion.'[57] After the end of WWII, clothing tastes began to change, the squared-

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[56] Elizabeth E Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

[57] 'Women's Clothing 1940s', *Landscape Change Program* (University of Vermont, 2011) <https://glcp.uvm.edu/landscape_new/dating/clothing_and_hair/1940s_clothing_women.php> [accessed 12 December 2018].

off and more conservative utility look gave way to Christian Dior's New Look. 'The "New Look" began to replace wartime utility fashions. This new style embraced femininity, with rounded shoulders, shapely bust lines, closely-defined waistlines, slightly padded skirts, and full, billowing skirts that hung just below the calves.'[58]

The 1950s saw the continued dominance of Dior's New Look in the form of 'unpadded, rounded shoulders, shapely bust lines, closely-defined waistlines, and billowy skirts. Blouses, jeans, and long, narrow skirts were also quite popular.'[59] By the end of the 1950s however, the billowy look was fading out, replaced with sleeker lines, slimmer cuts, and long skirts or dresses worn with short jackets. Though pin-up images would have portrayed models wearing lingerie, swimsuits, short shorts with tight sweaters, or even in states of partial or full nudity, today's pin-up genre enthusiasts don all types of garments from the period. A Google search of 'pin-up clothes' yields over 1,050,000,000 results mostly comprising vintage or reproduction dresses, suit sets, jackets, and trousers. These style choices also confer distinction from the mundane in locality and duration when used as a costume instead of daily wear.

Bearing in mind the critical storytelling aspects of disseminating pin-up imagery, as well as pin-up's place in the evolution of women's fashion in the West, we can understand that these are domains of play. It may be rather unexpected, then, to consider how these domains of play intersect with some of the most well-known physical domains of play: the Disney parks. Despite the family-oriented nature of Disney parks, they are interesting loci of beauty praxis. In a broader context, they are a sort of living laboratory which exemplifies

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

the Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and my Vectors of Glamour.

Disney Parks and Other Loci of Beauty Praxis

In consideration of the physical domains of play, Disney parks function as a rather surprising place to experience pin-up fashion. Disneybounding is a relatively recent phenomenon whereby park attendees don everyday ensembles echoing the styles and motifs of classic Disney characters. This is not the same as dressing in full costume but is instead a subtle homage.[60] For example, a park visitor may design an ensemble of denim blue jeans, a yellow sweater, red lipstick, and an apple-shaped handbag in tribute to Snow White's iconic tale. While children do participate, Disneybounds are often carried out by adults visiting the park without children. Disney created an apparel range to capitalise upon this phenomenon. The Disney Dress Shop range can be found in multiple park retail establishments and features skirts, dresses, and accessories in classic Disney designs.

Beyond Disneybounding, which is primarily concerned with assembling more casual outfits to visit the parks, there exists a growing segment of park-goers who sport formal wear during their visit. Independently organised events including Dapper Day, Pin-Up Parade in the Park, and Tiki Day have spawned cottage industries with thousands of retro fashion aficionados gathering in vintage finery to celebrate the styles of yesteryear. Dapper Day is perhaps the largest of these events, with park outings taking place at Disneyland Resort in California, Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, and Disneyland

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[60] Kelsey Borresen, ''Disneybounding' Is the Dress-up Trend Creative Fans Are Obsessed With'*, Huffington Post*, 15 November 2017< https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/disneybounding-ideas-for-disney-lovers_n_59e5185ce4b02a215b325a30> [accessed 19 February 2019].

Paris. Though Dapper Day is not specifically devoted to mid-twentieth century pin-up, a large portion of participants dress in that style. Dapper Day has also spawned a multi-day vintage market and expo held in conjunction with the event on the Disney properties. Though one of Huizinga's requirements for play is that the space should exist separately from a defined market, I argue that the very presence of that newly emerging market in Disney parks further promulgates the opportunities for play because the exchange of these fashion goods allows more individuals to play with pin-up.

That beauty praxis exists in Disney parks should come as no surprise. Consider the fact that the Disney's portrayal of classical fairy tale princesses like Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White represent core intellectual property. Their beauty is deeply embedded in their mythos. Furthermore, their counterparts — villains such as Cinderella's Stepmother and Step Sisters, the Evil Queen, and Maleficent — are portrayed as ugly or as having a garish, unsettling appearance. It should come as no surprise that Disney parks are fertile ground for experimenting with notions of physical beauty.

One particularly fascinating element here is the interplay between our three case studies: Dita Von Teese goes to Disneyland to partake in Dapper Day and she also has a robust Instagram following, Instagram pin-up fans attend Dapper Day to create more photographic content for their social media accounts, and Disney — along with Dita, social media influencers, and scores of beauty businesses — profit from the whole enterprise. It would be too facile to suggest that this is purely an exploitative arrangement as these images and experiences result in an exchange of money. Though this is true, these arrangements also accrue social capital for all parties concerned. There is no cost to open a social media account or to follow the accounts of others. Though many social media

posts contain paid advertisements — Vectors of Glamour — that spread images of beauty to the masses. To be clear, my use of the term *Vector of Glamour* refers to any mechanism — commercial or otherwise — which promulgates standards, practices, or philosophies of beauty. Disney parks are but one loci of beauty praxis among countless others.

The dissemination of beauty images leads naturally to the spread of societal beauty norms which are then interpreted, modified, and reified by the audience. The belief that the practices of beauty are superficial or inherently negative in a postfeminist context is well-worn territory, yet it merits critical engagement. It is more interesting and useful to think of beauty as a goal, even if the definitions of beauty differ vastly from one another. Elaine Scarry writes:

> Beauty is sometimes disparaged on the ground that it causes a contagion of imitation, as when a legion of people begin to style themselves after a particular movie starlet, but this is just an imperfect version of a deeply beneficent momentum toward replication.[61]

This idea is something of a salvation for beauty in general. By this logic, the transmission of depictions of beauty and the subsequent imitation of those practices should be considered a net good for society.

I propose that it is helpful to consider the pursuit of beauty as a type of game or method of play that falls within specific parameters. Tami Spry views beauty as a form of performative autoethnography. 'Beauty is hard work. It requires craft. It requires rigorous reflexivity, composition, collaboration, and performance to be efficacious.'[62] This suggests that beauty is serious business, but I argue that beauty practices in the context of pin-up are taken up with a wink and a nudge, as Moore stated, to nostalgia and camp. Spry goes

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[61] Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013).
[62] Tami Spry, 'Skin and Bone: Beauty as Critical Praxis', *Qualitative Inquiry,* 24 (2018), 342-44.

on to tell us that beauty is a collective activity and is not something that can be fully engaged with on one's own. 'Beauty as a critical praxis […] is not a solo endeavour. As in performative autoethnographic praxes, the critically stunning capacities of beauty are not about "I". The challenge of beauty as critique is in how we create beauty coperformatively.'[63] This sentiment harkens back to the idea of critical storytelling: the styles we don, particularly styles from another era, exist as commentary on society. In this way, we can view beauty as a game — a political game characterised by very high stakes (e.g., the inherent political value of women, femininity, the beauty economy, and critical spaces).

The very nature of engaging with anachronistic pin-up culture is to buck trends, to not keep order. It could be argued that any method of keeping order in this sphere is related to the notion of Foucauldian responsibilisation. However, I would argue that the order achieved in the 'game' of pin-up is one characterised by its subjects abiding by the beauty standards of a previous era, even if doing so means rejecting the meanings previously associated with those standards. It is paradoxical, then, that even this act of rebelling from mainstream contemporary trendiness has become a trend in and of itself.

Further, there exists a defined market for the fashion, cosmetics, and ephemera associated with mid-twentieth century pin-up style including pin-up fashions at Disney parks, Instagram models, and Dita Von Teese herself. Despite the existence of said market, Huizinga's framework for establishing a domain of play can still exist with the

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[63] Ibid.

justification that it is a form of costuming or playing dress-up. Here, Disney princesses loom large in the promulgation of beauty standards, even for very young children.

> The pervasive availability of consumer products associated with the Disney Princess films blurs the line between play and reality, allowing children to live in-character: One can be Cinderella all day long, sleeping in pink princess sheets, eating from lavender Tupperware with Cinderella decals, and dressing head to toe in licensed apparel, from plastic jewel-encrusted tiara to fuzzy slipper-socks.[64]

Here, Wohlwend's exploration of early childhood Disney princess play addresses the ease with which a child can inhabit the character, thus removing the limitations of defined play times and spaces. In other words, play can exist round the clock.

Disney's iterations of depict fairy tale princesses in the context of a morality play (e.g., Cinderella and the importance of kindness over selfishness; Snow White and the value of kindness over vanity; Sleeping Beauty and the virtue of waiting for true love). In the Disney version of these tales, the heroines were lauded for their physical beauty and exemplified the moral of the story — of the triumph of good over evil. Ergo, their physical beauty is associated with inherent moral goodness.

Beauty as a Moral Imperative

Scarry's work classifies the pursuit of beauty as a societal positive, but what happens to this argument when we consider beauty to be an ethical ideal? Heather Widdows gives us a valuable lens through which to examine how engaging with beauty telegraphs inherent, personal good.

> Despite mantras such as "it's what's on the inside that counts" in an increasingly visual and virtual culture, and irrespective of whether we think

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[64] Wohlwend, p. 58

this *should* be the case, often it is what is on 'the outside' that counts. I argue that in such instances, beauty does not simply represent, but has *become* goodness. The symbolic nature of the relationship (where beauty signifies goodness) is broken: beauty is no longer a stand-in, or a place-holder, for goodness, but rather beauty *is* what desired (for itself and the goods that it is believed it will deliver). Beauty then becomes *the* (ethical) ideal to aspire to.[65]

Widdows cites fairy tales, along with Disney heroes and villains, as evidence. When considering popular images of forest hags, witches, or evil spirits, most people in the Western world will imagine an inherently ugly or frightening creature standing in contrast to a more visually appealing hero counterpart. Harkening back to the notion of technologies of the self, this line of logic means that humans ought to engage in practices that make them more beautiful (health, grooming) to convey their inherent goodness.

The Platonic ideal of physical beauty represented by *kalon* treats beauty as a moral objective.[66] In classical Greek thought, physical beauty was often classified by its symmetrical nature. Symmetry 'refers precisely to the sorts of harmonious and measurable proportions among the parts characteristic of objects that are beautiful in the classical sense, which also carried a moral weight. Plato describes virtuous souls as symmetrical.'[67] To be clear, this thesis is not aimed at addressing classical philosophy but is instead concerned with how society develops and promotes standards of beauty. That said, Plato's work conflating virtue with symmetry and a mathematical basis for beauty in a classical sense helps us to understand the foundations of beauty-as-morality in

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[65] Heather Widdows, *Perfect Me: Beauty as an Ethical Ideal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 18.
[66] Nickolas Pappas, 'Plato's Aesthetics', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 27 June 2008 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-aesthetics/> [accessed 3 January 2019].
[67] Crispin Sartwell, 'Beauty', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 4 September 2012 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/beauty/> [accessed 3 January 2019].

contemporary society. Though engagement with classical thought accounts for a portion of the argument, it is engagement with contemporary thought vis-à-vis Foucault and Huizinga that can round out that argument.

Combining the notions that beauty is an ethical ideal as well as a space for play, we can conceive that beauty — and pin-up by extension — falls within the realms of the political and the moral. This is because bodies and body-related topics are often imbued with political or moral language, as seen in popular language concerning nutrition ('naughty' or 'guilt free' foods) and personal grooming (the assumed self-worth of someone with a tidy or slovenly appearance). The pursuit of beauty commands us to be the most aesthetically ideal versions of ourselves in service of achieving a social good. But, what then, are these aesthetic ideals? Of course, the answer will vary by historical and cultural setting. Considering that political or moral stances are often understood in the context of power, let us consider Foucauldian assessments of power, and feminist readings of Foucault with respect to the body and gender.

Post-Foucauldian Feminist Scholarship

In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler delves into Foucault's prison analysis. The metaphorical possibilities offered by the prison construct are many. Many in the academy have attempted to extend the concept of prisons well beyond what Foucault or even Butler had imagined. At its core, however, the prison is a locus of control.

> Power operates for Foucault in the constitution of the very materiality of the subject, in the principle which simultaneously forms and regulates the

> "subject" of subjectivation. [The prison] is a vector and instrument of power
> […] and is materialized to the extent that it is vested with power.[68]

With respect to pin-up, we can understand this to mean that the societal values which dictated mainstream fashion in mid-twentieth century America served as a sort of prison endeavouring to reform the female body. One might say the same thing about all fashion norms around the world throughout history. Labelling the beauty industry as a kind of prison is, perhaps, glib on its face. We must acknowledge that this is clichéd territory. However, societal beauty norms characterised by the thematic elements of controlled bodies and behaviour, constant surveillance, and implied punishment for running afoul of regulations suggests a kind of intangible prison construct.

One of Butler's other seminal works, *Gender Trouble,* offers valuable insight into the act of embodying a specific style — pin-up, for our purposes — as a way of performing gender.[69] Dressing in a sexually suggestive manner then — or in an anachronistic manner now — was and is a performative act. By extension, this performativity can also be explained as a form of play and harks back to the work of Huizinga.

When thinking about pin-up in the presentation of the self, there are several interesting perspectives. Danielle DeVoss's work would view social media accounts and fashion blogs as identity projects.[70] These products cultivate a sense of self through an aesthetic lens while teaching the audience how to create similar looks. These are prime examples of the aforementioned Vectors of Glamour which promote beauty praxis. 'Ruth

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[68] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 34.

[69] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 22.

[70] Danielle Devoss, *Women's Porn Sites—Spaces of Fissure and Eruption or 'I'm a Little Bit of Everything*, *Sexuality & Culture*, 6 (2002), 75-94.

Barcan maintains that more generally, images — particularly those of nudity — now play an important part in the way we form our identities, constituting, to use Foucault's term, a major 'Technology of the Self'.'[71] Though not all pin-up depicts nudity, it is important to note that pin-up and pornography share the same roots: sexualised images of the female body. Barcan's assertion directly aligns the Foucauldian Technology of the Self with the embodiment and consumption of the sexualised image.

While Foucault's work is useful for understanding the performative aspects of pin-up, Angela King cautions against too readily applying the work on the prison and the docile body to the act of performing femininity. '[Gender] is a pervasive and powerful method of social control that both produces and restricts one's mode of being. Therefore, by neglecting to address gender in his studies Foucault can only have produced a partial account of the discourses surrounding the body and the discipline that shapes it.'[72] This is an important caveat because Foucault was gender-neutral in most of the language around docile bodies. We must be cautious against being overly simplistic in our application of his work.

Rosalind Gill's work on sexual subjectification offers a critical examination of monitoring and self-surveillance in the pursuit of physical beauty. The author identified the elements of postfeminist media culture:

> [The] notion of femininity as a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the

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[71] Ruth Barcan, *Nudity: A Cultural Anatomy* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), cited in Attwood.
[72] Angela King, 'The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body', *Journal of International Women's Studies,* 5 (2004), 29-39.

dominance of a makeover paradigm; and a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference.[73]

Gill points out the 'intensified scrutiny of women's bodies [that] has become routine in consumer culture […] images of cameras, "photo beauty" or "HD ready" skin proliferate — underscoring the idea of women as under constant — magnified — surveillance.'[74] With regard to Instagram pin-up models, this Foucauldian explanation contextualises the acts of monitoring and surveillance. Gill asserts that social media is the new panopticon, subjecting women to the policing gaze of one another.[75]

Margaret Carlisle Duncan explores the panopticon in women's health and beauty media by identifying two categories of rhetoric characterising said panopticon. The first category, 'The Efficacy of Initiative,' implies that all that must be done to ensure a healthy and beautiful physique is commit to the process of creating it.[76] Furthermore, this type of commitment to self-perfection can be achieved by everyone, not just a select few with access to resources such as personal trainers or private chefs. Duncan warns of the ripple effect of this form of rhetoric: 'In suggesting that anyone can achieve a healthy, beautiful body, the magazine discourse sets women up for a lifetime of self-monitoring, exercise, and weight control.'[77] Duncan's second category of rhetoric perpetuating the beauty panopticon is 'Feeling Good Means Looking Good.' This notion espouses that fitness magazines conflate internal health with outer beauty. Before-and-After stories reinforce

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[73] Rosalind Gill, 'The Affective, Cultural and Psychic Life of Postfeminism: A Postfeminist Sensibility 10 Years On', *European Journal of Cultural Studies,* 20 (2017), 606-26.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Margaret Carlisle Duncan, 'The Politics of Women's Body Images and Practices: Foucault, the Panopticon, and Shape Magazine', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues,* 18 (1994), 48-65.
[77] Ibid.

the panopticon by pairing photographic images of previously fat or poorly groomed bodies with written text explaining changes to weight and measurements. 'We are likely to notice the visual contrast and to see that healthier bodies make for more glamourous, more attractive appearances.'[78]

These two types of rhetoric convey a moralistic urgency: your health and beauty are completely within your control and are 100% your responsibility. Duncan's assertions here align with the aforementioned Foucauldian Technologies of the Self in the forms of healthism and responsibilisation. Widely disseminated images positioning health-as-beauty and beauty-as-health imply a sense of righteousness. Does the reader look after her body the way the models do? Does her body look like theirs? If yes, it means that her body is correct and that she is living to her highest potential. If no, it means that her body is incorrect and that she is a victim of her own shortcomings by failing to commit to something as important as her own wellbeing. These messages are insidious, becoming embedded in social consciousness through every kind of media. Though Duncan's original postulations were specific to print media, they continue to be relevant to contemporary social media engagement.

This all suggests a vague and rather widespread sense of anxious worry about the body as it exists in contemporary society. The pursuit of physical beauty as an indicator of health often coincides with a sense of personal or societal anxiety, particularly regarding surveillance and self-monitoring of the body. As we will see throughout this thesis, social media drives a significant amount of discourse on health and beauty as matters of

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[78] Ibid.

personal responsibility. One of the aims of this work is to link this discourse to the performance of beauty praxis across a variety of settings.

Anxiety and Aesthetic Labour in the Digital Beauty Age

In the case of Instagram and other pictorial social media, the pursuit of the perfect self-portrait can be fraught with anxiety. Ana Elias and Rosalind Gill explore the cultural implications of beauty apps used to alter body appearance. They believe that the use of these apps to finely tune facial and bodily features exemplifies the 'wider trend towards self-tracking and self-monitoring.'[79] In particular, they argue that 'selfie-modification apps are technological filters intimately shaped by the "cultural filters" of postfeminism, by highlighting how they participate in the intensification of aesthetic surveillance and labour.'[80] With respect to contemporary pin-up images on social media, it is even more compelling to consider that these beauty apps are used to modify and deliver a 60-odd-year old fashion sensibility. These arguments are compelling because they drive the narrative of beauty as a domain of the political.

From a sociological perspective, this anxiety illustrates what Charles Horton Cooley termed 'The Looking Glass Self' — a constant monitoring and modification of our behaviours as dictated by the perceived responses of others.[81] For example, if someone perceives that others will notice and negatively judge a skin blemish in a selfie, they may take steps to conceal that blemish with cosmetics or a photo editing app or both. Taken

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[79] Ana Sofia Elias and Rosalind Gill, 'Beauty Surveillance: The Digital Self-Monitoring Cultures of Neoliberalism', *European Journal of Cultural Studies,* 21 (2018), 59-77.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1902), p. 152.

further, this anxiety deepens when the image value is quantified by the number of likes and comments posted in response. The fewer likes and positive comments, the less likely the subject is to post similar content in the future. In many cases, photos with a low number of likes or positive comments are deleted from the account altogether. Of course, one could argue that not all image-perfecting practices are taken up for the pleasure of others, but rather for one's own satisfaction. However, I would argue that — at least from a functionalist sociological standpoint — self-image cannot exist in a vacuum. Without establishing some type of feedback loop from an embodied other, the self cannot exist. In a social media context, those likes and comments are simply data points that inform the creation of the self.

Aesthetic labour and surveillance also extend to the business implications of a social media presence. One cannot fully delve into the social values imposed by Instagram modelling without also considering its economic aspects. Those with particularly robust followings on the platform are considered 'influencers' whose posts can equal brand recognition and buying power on the part of their audience. An image of the influencer using any consumer good — from lipstick to multi-vitamins to kitchen appliances and gym apparel — is an advertisement for that product, paid or not. The most powerful social media influencers can fetch up to $250,000 (USD) per individual post or mention.[82]

It is here that Gill's work on advertisements helps us to contextualise how these labour and surveillance practices interrelate. 'Advertisements do not work by imposing meanings upon us or by manipulating us in some crude way. They create structures of

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[82] Tara Johnson, 'How Much Do Influencers Charge? Paying Influencers 2019 Guide', *CPCStrategy Blog*, 24 January 2019, <https://tinuiti.com/blog/influencer-marketing/how-much-do-influencers-charge/> [Accessed 19 February 2019].

meaning which sell products not for their use value, their functional value as objects, but in terms of ourselves as social beings.'[83] These structures of meaning are projected, internalised, modified, and re-projected by the viewer who brings their own lived experiences to the moment. Those experiences colour and shape the advertisement's narrative for that individual.

Further, social media content lends itself particularly well to the construction of an aspirational identity. As most top influencers are celebrities, industry thought leaders, and prolific content creators, they are uniquely poised to project an idealised lifestyle replete with all the hallmarks of the *good life* — large homes, picturesque holiday destinations, and the possession of many luxury goods. These images are advertisements which communicate 'statements about who we are and who we aspire to become.'[84] The significance of this cannot be discounted because aspirational identities comprise nearly the entire foundation of marketing and by extension, become Vectors of Glamour unto themselves. Put simply, if not a bit cynically, our purchases are dictated by an idealised version of what we wish to be rather than who we are in the present moment.

Pin-up has a rich history of being used as a capitalist instrument. It might even be argued that pin-up is purely a marketing tool, especially when we recall that some of its earliest photographic forms were advertisements for burlesque shows. For example, if Dita Von Teese is photographed in her home surrounded by luxury goods, she is implicitly advertising those goods and invoking a desired lifestyle in the audience's imagination. In this case, she is acting as a social media influencer endorsing products that the consumer

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[83] Rosalind Gill, *Gender and the Media* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 50.
[84] Ibid.

could use to embody a similar lifestyle. She also explicitly endorses products having licenced her image for use by fashion designers, liquor brands, perfumers, and cosmetics companies. In addition to selling tickets for her touring productions and licencing her image for use by other companies, Dita has her own lingerie range and online merchandise store. She is a businesswoman and a sex symbol.

To understand the relationship between the influencer and audience in the context of an advertisement, let us consider Judith Williamson's version of Althusserian interpellation or hailing. The interpellation exists when we recognise ourselves in relationship with the subject without explicitly being called out by name. 'Adverts address us through the implied phrase "Hey You" and, we recognise that we are being addressed so, in that instant, we take on the (ideological) subject position being offered to us in that ad.'[85] Interestingly, in the context of Instagram pin-up, the 'Hey You' portion has transformed over time. Where once the 'Hey You' beckoned primarily to heterosexual men using the erotic imagination, it is now a clarion call to all who seek glamour via saleable goods.

Let us consider this notion of aesthetic surveillance and labour in the context of Technologies of the Self. Conveying stereotypical images of good health and personal grooming as well as a general responsibility for one's wellbeing is an act of aesthetic labour. This is a set of social and moral imperatives communicated with every selfie. It is an act declaring oneself to be fully realised in the public gaze. Elias and Gill are clear that this process is now 'wrapped in discourses that highlight pleasure, choice, agency,

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[85] Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Marion Boyers, 1978).

confidence and pleasing oneself, obscuring the extent to which aesthetic labour on the body is normatively demanded.'[86] This is an important distinction that illustrates a sort of concealment of the real nature of social media portrayals of beauty: normalising, monitoring, and curating the body on demand.

Though post-Foucauldian feminist scholarship addresses a broad range of topics, there are gaps in the literature and the methodological approach laid out in this thesis can effectively address these gaps.

Gaps in the Literature

There is a dearth of scholarship that places the work of Foucault and Huizinga in direct conversation with one another. Hutchings and Giardino juxtapose the work of both theorists in their analysis of parallels between Foucault's heterotopia and Huizinga's Magic Circle: 'Play spaces are defined by spatial, temporal, and social boundaries defined through ritual actions and agreements which create another form of self-delineated otherness that is taken on temporarily for play.'[87] Though this article was written with table top role playing games in mind, the combination of Foucauldian heterotopia and Huizingan Magic Circle can be effectively applied to the experiences of engaging with beauty and glamour praxis in a variety of settings. For the purposes of this work, heterotopia and the Magic Circle are exemplified by the Disney Parks. In recent years, there has been a marked increase in attendance to independently organised outings to the parks (e.g.,

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[86] Elias and Gill, p. 64.

[87] Tim Hutchings and Jason Giardino, 'Foucault's Heterotopias as Play Spaces'', *International Journal of Role-Playing,* 6 (2016), 10-14.

Dapper Day/Pin-up Parade, Gay Days, Tiki Day). These events demonstrate both the heterotopia and the Magic Circle as they are occasions with a distinct set of rituals and spaces in which to carry out this act of play. Other examples of the heterotopia and Magic Circle will be discussed throughout this thesis, yet Disney parks are large physical spaces in which to engage with beauty and glamour praxis.

To this point, I have not found work which combines the theoretical frameworks set forth by Foucault and Huizinga with the specific purpose of unpacking pin-up culture. My thesis will attempt to fill this gap in the literature using the work of these two theorists to critically engage with pin-up culture in the cases of Dita Von Teese, social media, and Disney parks, using post-Foucauldian feminist scholarship as a foundation upon which to build a critique. This analysis will interrogate the semiotics of pin-up and find novel methods of applying theories of bodily power and play, or in other words, beauty politics versus beauty play.

The act of creating a new framework — one that combines important philosophical (Foucault) and sociological (Huizinga) viewpoints with my own set of criteria (Vectors of Glamour) — is a novel way of critically engaging with the scholarship. It is a primary aim of this work to not only critique social phenomena using existing modes of analysis but also to expand the discourse in a compelling way. This work frames beauty praxis as a domain where the personal agency and a sense of play are inextricably linked. They exist in a kind of dance, each contributing crucial insight to the larger social discourse. Furthermore, this unique approach will enrich other areas of study including but not limited to bodies and embodiment, beauty, social media, play, travel, the semiotics and economics of leisure and luxury, and feminist scholarship in general. Throughout this

thesis, I shall make the case that this methodology can be used to interrogate many social and cultural phenomena.

Understanding the Vectors of Glamour

Given the above gaps, let us explore how my proposed approach works in practice. I intend to demonstrate a dialogical relationship between Foucauldian power and Huizingan play and then apply that relationship to contemporary pin-up as exemplified by Dita Von Teese, social media, and Disney parks using the Vectors of Glamour criteria. I have created a novel set of criteria that accounts for Foucauldian Technologies of the Self and Huizingan Characteristics of Play. This thesis will demonstrate the utility of this process of standardisation so that it may be applied to case studies far beyond pin-up. Using the acronym *PIN-UP*, I propose a comprehensive criteria.

First, it must be established that the case study in question **promulgates the achievement of glamour as a goal**. This promulgation may occur in nearly any manner but is most commonly observed in text and images available for public consumption. Examples of this promulgation include advertisements, entertainment media, popular music, and social media. Second, the case must **interpellate to activate the imaginary.** It must hail the viewer to imagine interacting with the subject(s) or to become the subject(s) themselves. The image may take any variety of forms but is most likely an advertisement, social media post, or other slice of entertainment ephemera. Third, the case must **normalise glamour praxis.** Its existence must suggest that participation in glamour praxis is normal, desirable, and achievable. Note that the terms *glamour praxis* here can be defined as any practice that seeks to cultivate an exciting or attractive quality.

Depending on the context, it may include elements as simple as daily beautification and grooming practices or as complex as permanent body modification. Additionally, the term *glamour praxis* encompasses not only physical signifiers but also personality affectations. Fourth, the case must **unify mechanisms of power and play.** It must suggest that *glamour* or *beauty praxis* is an enactment of bodily power as well as an opportunity for playful self-expression. This harks back to the selected Foucauldian Technologies of the Self (healthism/grooming, responsibilisation, normalisation, and self-esteem) and to the Huizingan Characteristics of Play (freedom, inherent separation from the mundane in locality/duration, distinction from real life, methods of keeping order, and a separation from a market/drawing of profit). It should be noted here that whilst the five criteria (acronymised as 'PIN-UP') must be present to be defined as a Vector of Glamour, it need not contain every Technology of the Self nor condition for play to be defined as such. Finally, the case must **promote methods and venues of glamour praxis.** It must recommend specific beauty or grooming practices (e.g., application of cosmetics or weight manipulation) and spaces (e.g., social media or public spheres) in which to experience them. The figure below (5) displays the criteria as well as the order in which they are typically experienced by the viewer.
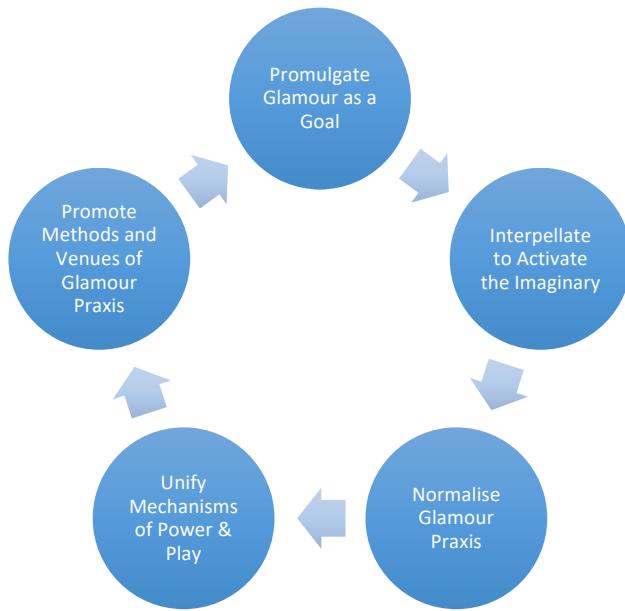
Figure 5: Method of Analysis for Vectors of Glamour aka PIN-UP

Taken together, these factors offer a unique approach to analysing, critiquing, and re-imagining the conversation surrounding beauty practices and their effects upon society at large. Though this process was created with Western pin-up in mind, it may be used to analyse any number of beauty practices in a variety of cultural, social, and political contexts. In the context of beauty culture writ large, the Vectors of Glamour acknowledge the reality of patriarchal expectations or limitations. They do not signify capitulation to an oppressive system but function instead as a pragmatic solution. In the coming chapters, I will address the overarching patriarchal social system as it relates to beauty culture and the heterosexual male gaze.

Methodological Approach

Having laid out an introduction to how this work employs the concepts of Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and my Vectors of Glamour (PIN-UP), it is important to remember that these three elements exist in the context of a single novel framework with scholarly utility beyond the pages of this thesis. That is, by placing these modes of analysis in conversation with one another relative to each of the three case studies herein, we have a template which can be applied to other examples of beauty praxis across a variety of settings and contexts.
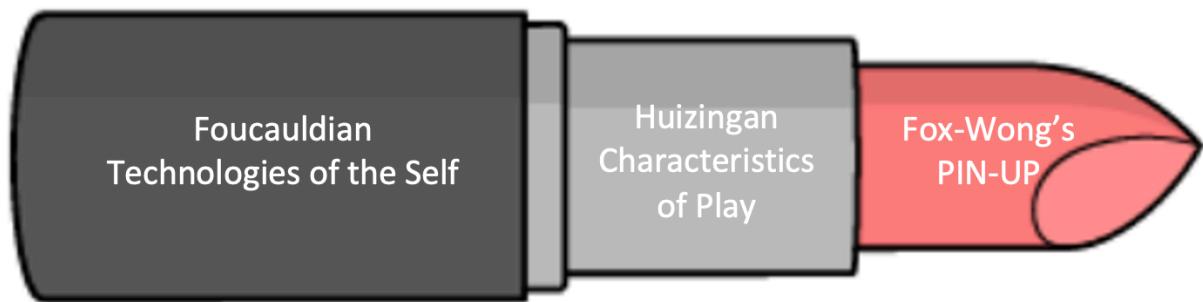
Figure 6. Methodological approach represented by a lipstick bullet, Lipstick image from EasyLineDrawing.com, accessed 22 November 2022, <https://www.easylinedrawing.com/how-to-draw-lipstick-step-by-step/>

In the figure above, my methodological approach is presented as a lipstick bullet. At the risk of appearing cheeky or glib, the lipstick bullet is a rather apt image to represent how Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and my Vectors of Glamour/PIN-UP should be understood as three components of a single unit. Further, a lipstick bullet is portable — able to be easily carried away from the makeup vanity and out into the world. This methodological approach is also portable in that it can be used to critique beauty praxis in a wide variety of contexts beyond just this work.

Critical analysis of beauty praxis has tremendous value in a variety of academic disciplines. Yet despite the massive social and economic implications surrounding the global beauty industry and media, glamour as a practice is too often dismissed as superficial. Glamour matters because physical bodies matter. The space they take up, the image they project, and the protections (or lack thereof) they are afforded in society are expressions of the inherently political nature of corporeality. For as long as people strive to attain a certain physical appearance — to attain glamour in whatever way they desire — it is incumbent upon the academy to consider how these practices affect society and interpret what that communicates about our world.

On balance, this methodological approach is somewhat complex in that it involves multiple theoretical components. It comprises elements from two central figures in philosophical and sociological thought plus my own series of proposed criteria for understanding glamour and beauty praxis across three case studies. I argue that the complex nature of beauty praxis — particularly within the context of feminist scholarship — requires an intricate lens with which to examine its characteristics. Lest this approach be deemed too Byzantine, I shall return to the lipstick infographic in the following chapters to provide high-level visual overviews of relevant themes. I constructed this methodological approach as a means of providing analytical consistency throughout this work.

Case Study Selection and Links

In evaluating case studies to demonstrate the Vectors of Glamour, I considered a variety of factors including their position in popular culture and historical relevance. Beauty culture is massive and highly context-dependent upon geographic, social, economic, and historical aspects. I sought case studies which shared multiple throughlines and contained various analytical possibilities within themselves. It was crucial for the principal examples to illustrate Foucauldian notions of normative embodiment, as well as the Huizingan Characteristics of Play. Many instances of beauty culture are referenced in the following chapters, however I selected Dita Von Teese, social media, and Disney parks as the principal examples because they all represent the use of contemporary technology to evoke nostalgic feelings in the consumer via the exploitation of consumer beauty culture.

Dita Von Teese represented a starting point as she successfully brought mid-twentieth century pin-up style back into the mainstream from the 1990s onward. With the rise of social media, Dita's work began to reach an even wider audience. In turn, this encouraged the use of social media platforms like Instagram in the dissemination of pin-up imagery. Disney parks speak to a broader cultural experience and the use of nostalgia as a tool to gain consumers and because of events such as Dapper Day, pin-up fashion is now celebrated in the parks. Whilst other case studies across beauty culture could be analysed, it is these three in tandem which allow for the exploration of Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, as well as Huizingan Characteristics of Play as they relate to nostalgia and consumer beauty culture.

In the following pages, each case study is contextualised within Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, the Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and as Vectors of

Glamour. Chapter 1 is an exploration of Dita Von Teese's efforts to bring mid-twentieth century pin-up culture into the mainstream, as well as her impact on popular culture. Chapter 2 addresses social media and its use as a tool to normalise beauty standards, particularly in the dissemination of contemporary pin-up images. Chapter 3 examines how Disney parks function as a loci of beauty praxis with the rise of events such as Dapper Day and Pin-Up Parade in the Park In terms of beauty praxis, these three case studies are linked by a false promise that what came before is somehow better or more premium than what is commonly available today. In this way, they exploit nostalgia as a capitalist endeavour. Having laid out the aims of this thesis and framing the methodological approach, let us now put these into practice by examining the first case study: the work and social impact of Dita Von Teese.

CHAPTER 1

SERIOUSLY PLAYFUL LUXURY:
DITA VON TEESE AS A PERFORMATIVE VECTOR OF GLAMOUR

Figure 2. Dita Von Teese photographed performing her signature martini glass routine, Getty Images via The Sunday Times, 16 February 2018, accessed 1 March 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pop-review-dita-von-teese-jhv3rbrlf>

Dita as a Performative Vector of Glamour

In the image above (7), Dita Von Teese is pictured splashing around a giant crystal-encrusted goblet during her signature martini glass routine. Served up on stage like a visual cocktail to be consumed by her audience, the routine is the centrepiece of her live burlesque performances. The act, as well as the martini glass piece itself, has had many iterations over the years and is an example of how beauty, commerce, and a retro aesthetic can be viewed as Vectors of Glamour.[88]

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[88] Will Hodgkinson, 'Pop Review: Dita Von Teese', *The Times*, February 16 2018
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pop-review-dita-von-teese-jhv3rbrlf> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Recall that one of the primary research questions in this work is: What does contemporary pin-up culture tell us about bodily power and domains of play, specifically regarding the work of Dita Von Teese? In this chapter, I shall begin by positioning Dita as a performative *Vector of Glamour* and discuss her rise to prominence in consideration of her predecessors and contemporaries, later delving into matters of normative femininity and self-care in terms of Dita's process of self-invention and self-care as a kind of ethical mandate. Going beyond Dita and contemporary pin-up culture, I shall examine Vectors of Glamour within other style subcultures including Japanese Lolita fashion and the process of Looksmaxing — the act of manipulating the appearance for personal, monetary, or social gain. I will present a review of critical feminist scholarship with emphasis on the Sex Wars of the 1980s and the work of scholars including Tong, Dworkin, MacKinnon, and Firestone. I shall then address the social and economic/labour aspects of beauty and glamour praxis, as well as the deeper meaning of the beauty ritual. I will conclude by providing a high-level summary of the methodological approach as it applies to the evidence presented in this chapter.

To sufficiently engage with Dita's work and societal position, this thesis will treat her as a text to be analysed as opposed to a celebrity to be adored. Personal and career choices aside, her position in contemporary popular culture could quite easily be interpreted as little more than a series of calculated industry moves and tabloid fodder. Viewing Dita as a text, therefore, allows me to criticise her work more fully and appropriately and what it means in terms of normative femininity, feminism, and Western popular culture in general.

Let us begin by considering how Dita Von Teese's work constitutes my proposed Vectors of Glamour. Recall that this critical framework comprises five core elements, acronymised as 'PIN-UP': the case study should **P**romulgate glamour as a goal**,** **I**nterpellate to activate the imaginary, **N**ormalise glamour praxis, **U**nify mechanisms of power and play, and **P**romote methods and/or venues of glamour praxis. In the broadest sense, Dita's entire public image — that of a polished and luxe pin-up queen — promulgates glamour as a goal. Her photos, licenced merchandise, workshops, stage show, and personal items for sale are avenues to globally disseminate her image. That image is calculated and communicates strict attention to detail. Dita has cultivated a decidedly elegant public persona with all the trappings of luxury including designer fashion and home décor as showcased in her social media accounts. In her media interviews and books, she frequently extols the virtues of elegance and glamour as everyday necessities, rather than occasional indulgences. In the process of sharing her image and personal philosophy via books, public appearances, and burlesque stage productions, Dita hails or interpellates the viewer to engage with beauty and glamour right alongside her. As we will see throughout this chapter, she preaches the gospel of living luxuriously. Her fans can purchase her used clothing, jewellery, and other personal effects so that they may fully imagine becoming her or someone with whom she associates.

This process of hailing the viewer is key to the Dita Von Teese brand and represents one of the foundational paradoxes of her image: though she espouses the luxurious life, she says that anyone can choose to live more glamorously, even if they lack the financial means to acquire designer goods. Dita promotes her own image and inspires her fans to take on a similar hyperpolished persona. She normalises glamour praxis in the

sense that it is embedded in everything she does. As we shall see, Dita is vocal about the fact that she inhabits her high-shine lifestyle 24/7. She rarely appears in public in casual clothing. In other words, when it comes to glamour, Dita never takes a day off. In doing so, she normalises her own form of all-consuming glamour praxis. Her corpus of work unifies mechanisms of power and play by making a career out of embracing an eccentric and anachronistic sort of glamour. Though she states that pin-up is something meant to be fun and creative, her pursuit of mid-twentieth century style is a serious and costly undertaking. Finally, Dita promotes methods and venues of glamour praxis through the sale of her licenced goods, how-to books, and tickets to her touring shows. Her audience can consume her advice on how to comport themselves whilst witnessing the spectacle of her stage presence.

All of this is to say that Dita Von Teese's public persona and business dealings make her a *Vector of Glamour* in and of herself*.* Furthermore, she uses her role as celebrity vedette to promote the pursuit of glamour as a goal for everyone, regardless of their background. Is this promotion of glamour praxis meant to convey a sense of egalitarianism among beauty enthusiasts? Perhaps. However, Dita's sartorial tastes skew toward the luxurious and luxury connotes exclusivity. She says that glamour and eccentric beauty can be achieved by anyone, yet she plays heavily with the semiotics of wealth (designer goods, luxury travel, expensive foods). She has crafted a public image that is synonymous with glamour. I shall make that case that Dita's role as a *Vector of Glamour*, though complicated, communicates a sense of bodily agency as a Technology of the Self (per Foucault) and engages the Characteristics of Play (per Huizinga). The result is a case of successful public imagecraft.

However, Dita Von Teese was not born Dita Von Teese. The process of creating her persona was a significant personal and professional endeavour spanning decades. Dita's personal transformation ought to be understood in the context of her predecessors and contemporaries, as well as what it means within a feminist and sociological framework.

Imagining Dita

Heather Renee Sweet transformed herself into Dita Von Teese, a corseted sex symbol who eschewed the so-called *heroin chic* gauntness of many of the 1990s runway models as well as the faux-bronzed and peroxide bleached images of the era's television stars and Playboy centrefolds. Her signature image was cultivated in the style of her idol Gypsy Rose Lee and pseudonymised in tribute to German film star Dita Parlo.[89]

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[89] Katherine Nguyen, 'Dita Von Teese: Call Her Old-Fashioned', *The Orange County Register*, 5 April 2006 <https://www.ocregister.com/2006/04/05/dita-von-teese-call-her-old-fashioned/> [accessed 22 June 2019].

Figure 3. Heather Renee Sweet before and after her transformation into Dita Von Teese, Dita Von Teese, 2013 via The Daily Mail Online, accessed 1 April 2021, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2333542/Dita-Von-Teese-poses-high-school-yearbook-pictures-transforming-brunette-burlesque-beauty.html>

In the image above, Heather Renee Sweet is pictured as a young woman before her transformation into Dita Von Teese.[90] This transformation from an all-American blonde girl-next-door type to a black-haired femme fatale in the tradition of starlets from Hollywood's Golden Age like Hedy Lamarr and Rita Hayworth is a kind of identity project which speaks to her ability to create a sphere of play using pin-up imagery. In this case, the sphere is characterised by the careful crafting of a highly polished, anachronistic mid-twentieth century style embedded in luxury signifiers (e.g., designer goods, frequent first-class international travel, and gourmet dining experiences). These signifiers are made visible in glossy photo spreads, interviews, and on Dita's social media accounts. Whereas

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[90] Jade Watkins, 'Pictured: Dita Von Teese as Blonde Girl-Next-Door Heather Sweet… Before Her Transformation into Burlesque Brunette Bombshell', *Daily Mail*, 31 May 2013, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2333542/Dita-Von-Teese-poses-high-school-yearbook-pictures-transforming-brunette-burlesque-beauty.html> [accessed 23 April 2023].

many of her predecessors and contemporaries portray a general insouciance about their beauty, her glamourous appearance is the result of obvious persistent effort. Her origin story also echoes the common American mythos of plucky self-invention and determination which aligns rather neatly with her mid-twentieth century wartime glamour aesthetic.

Though there are several contemporary pin-up models and burlesque performers who sport classic mid-twentieth century stylings of hourglass silhouettes, red lips and winged eyeliner, Dita Von Teese is arguably the most recognisable. Establishing herself among the preeminent tastemakers in contemporary pin-up circles points to a kind of sociological ingenuity — a living embodiment of Cooley's Looking Glass Self. Recall that the Looking Glass Self is characterised by a constant monitoring and modification of our behaviours as dictated by the perceived responses of others.[91]

Predecessors and Contemporaries

Von Teese rose to prominence during the late 1990s and early 2000s at a time when curvaceous ingenues like Pamela Anderson and Carmen Electra were defining popular female sex appeal alongside high-fashion waifish counterparts like Kate Moss (pictured below).[92]

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[91] Ibid.

[92] Calvin Klein, 'Kate Moss for Calvin Klein Underwear Advertisement' (1990s) in 'Heroin Chic', *Wikipedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heroin_chic#/media/File:Kate_Moss_Calvin_Klein.jpg> [accessed 23 April 2023]; Samantha Benitz, 'Carmen Electra's Transformation Proves She Looks Better Than Ever: See Her Style Evolution', *InTouch Weekly*, 26 April 2022 <https://www.intouchweekly.com/posts/carmen-electras-transformation-see-photos-then-and-now/> [accessed 23 April 2023]; 'Pamela Anderson as Cj Parker in Baywatch - 1990s', in 'C. J. Parker', *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._J._Parker#/media/File:CJParker.jpg [accessed 23 April 2023].

Figures 4, 10, and 11. Left: Kate Moss in a 1990s Calvin Klein underwear advertisement, accessed 1 April 2022, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heroin_chic#/media/File:Kate_Moss_Calvin_Klein.jpg>
Centre: Carmen Electra in 1996 via InTouch Weekly, accessed 1 April 2022, <https://www.intouchweekly.com/posts/carmen-electras-transformation-see-photos-then-and-now/>
Right: Pamela Anderson as CJ Parker in *Baywatch*, accessed 1 April 2022, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._J._Parker#/media/File:CJParker.jpg>

At the time, much of the Western popular beauty narrative was driven by the imagery of

Playboy playmates or Calvin Klein models. Patrícia Soley-Beltran wrote:

> the 90s economic crisis coincided with the displacement of the 'natural healthy looks' and the arrival of the 'moda povera' look, the waif, the grunge style and its blasé attitude. Kate Moss [...] was the only model since Twiggy to incorporate her working class background into her image [and her] minimal body epitomised the 'honesty,' naturalness, cleanliness, ingenuousness that the nineties [demanded] after the 'high artifice' of the eighties.[93]

Though Dita was featured in Playboy at the time, her overall rejection of the standards of

glamour during that period distinguished her as an alternative type of sex symbol. Her

existence as an alternative to popular standards of beauty at the time is paradoxical: Dita

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[93] Patrícia Soley-Beltran, 'Fashion Models as Ideal Embodiments of Normative Identity', *Tripodos. Blanquerna School of Communication and International Relations*, 18- (2006), 23-43.

represented the most common American standards of beauty from a half century earlier but was an anachronism in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Whilst many of her contemporaries including supermodels like Kate Moss or Hollywood figures like Pamela Anderson and Carmen Electra possessed a broader and more commercial appeal, Von Teese's niche reputation as a beauty traditionalist put her in the company of many leading names in haute couture including Jean-Paul Gaultier, Vivienne Westwood, and Thierry Mugler. Her alternative image — labelled by fashion and cultural commentator Simon Doonan as 'eccentric glamour' — appealed to a different sensibility.[94] Most of her contemporaries took up a kind of porn star chic that appealed to scores of young heterosexual males, whilst her fashion whims fell more in line with what their grandfathers pinned into lockers during World War II.

To understand her approach to style, one must consider her in relation to her predecessors and contemporaries. After all, no celebrity exists in a vacuum. Rather, the public imagines them against the backdrop of their cohort, as well as those who came before. In 2012, Dita spoke of the challenges in creating a wholly individual persona in the early days of her career. 'People love to point at you and say, "You remind me of *this*." I would get a lot of Dracula and Elvira. People have a really hard time just looking at you for you.'[95] Cassandra Peterson's self-created character of Elvira (pictured below), Mistress of the Dark — the campy, late-night horror television host fashioned after Morticia Addams and Vampira — is an apt yet somewhat complicated comparison.[96]

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[94] Doonan, p. 47.

[95] Into the Gloss, 'Dita Von Teese', 2012 <https://intothegloss.com/2012/10/dita-von-teese-burlesque-dancer/> [accessed 20 June 2019].

[96] Matt Baume, 'Let Elvira Teach You a Thing or Two About Camp'*, Them*, 3 May 2019 . <https://www.them.us/story/elvira-profile-camp> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Figure 12. ELVIRA, MISTRESS OF THE DARK, Cassandra Peterson, 1988 ©New World Releasing/Courtesy Everett Collection via Them.com, *Let Elvira Teach You a Thing or Two About Camp,* accessed 1 April 2022, <https://www.them.us/story/elvira-profile-camp>

Both Von Teese and Elvira work under a stage name, created significant pin-up presences, worked with Playboy Enterprises, fashioned themselves as pop culture figures working with the collective imagination, and inhabit a sense of high drag.[97] Whereas Von Teese lives her entire life in the style of a mid-twentieth century bombshell, Peterson dons the Elvira image as a costume. Von Teese's entire lifestyle is pure mid-twentieth century glamour expressed in earnest, while Elvira is pastiche — a campy, if somewhat macabre sex symbol in the style of 1980s glam metal video vixens.[98] The latter's experience is truly separate from the mundanity of her daily life, right down to the character's daffy Valley

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[97] 'High Drag' is defined by writer Mr. Von B as 'being larger than life…aggregating all the stereotypes of femininity [...] big hair, big boobs, big hips.' Mr. Von B, 'Styles of Drag', *Huffington Post*, 12 March 2013, updated 2 February 2016 <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/styles-of-drag_b_2860808> [accessed 7 June 2019].

[98] Cassandra Peterson, 'About Elvira', *Elvira Mistress of the Dark* <https://www.elvira.com/about/>. [accessed 24 June 2019].

Girl-like vocal inflections played for comedic effect. Peterson takes up this costume of heavy makeup, a high-teased black wig, and low-cut gothic black evening gown only when appearing as the character. This aligns with Huizinga's assertions about the spatial and temporal domains of play in that the Elvira persona is an act confined to specific domains.

Recall that Huizinga established that the act of image-making is what he termed a *ludic function.* Further, Huizinga asserted that this constitutes someone making 'an image of something different, something more beautiful, or more sublime, or more dangerous than what [he] usually is.'[99] It is also important to note that this is an example of the unification of personal power and play. In this case, it is the economic power of Cassandra Peterson profiting from play acting the character of Elvira. There is a common link, however, in a Foucauldian reading of the two women. Both have reaped economic benefit from their bodies because they have successfully commoditised their appearances — their sex appeal. Their continued presence in the pop culture imagination implies a sort of nostalgia for days when notions of gender, sexuality, and womanhood were far less fluid. Though their centrefold styles are intrinsically linked to the heterosexual male gaze, it would be too simplistic to label them as anti-feminist for this reason alone. This is to say that the very choice to dress or act provocatively — as part of an act or in more pedestrian settings — is a way of expressing their agency. Let us now delve deeper into what this all means with respect to normativity, femininity, and choice.

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[99] Huizinga, p. 14.

Normative Femininity and The Politics of Choice

Despite changing social and cultural mores, it is nearly impossible to escape the notion that those who sexualise themselves are doing so under the auspices of unequal societal expectations of women. This is to say that no one is completely free of patriarchal expectations or limitations. If we fail to acknowledge this reality, the lens through which to understand this becomes moot. I argue that the proposed PIN-UP framework on the Vectors of Glamour constitutes an acceptance of this reality, not necessarily as capitulation to an oppressive system but rather as a pragmatic solution. We must pivot away from the cultural binary espoused by mass media and move toward a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the individual and society. This cultural binary typically portrays the individual as either completely subject to cultural norms or instead living antithetically to such norms. The PIN-UP framework therefore accepts the reality that patriarchal values are embedded in Western popular culture whilst considering the possibility that the nexus of play and power offer a practical coping mechanism.

Sharon Lamb's work on feminist ideals and female sexuality addresses these arguments by describing two critical paradigms. The first views '[the woman's] choices as heavily influenced by the rewards her community gives her for it.'[100] If she presents herself for consumption by men (e.g., stripping on stage or modelling suggestively for a pin-up photograph), her choices are motivated by what she gets in return (sexual approval, money, social access). The opposing viewpoint is that these choices do 'not present her as looking for rewards from privileged men but as having developed a false kind of

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[100] Sharon Lamb, 'Feminist Ideals for a Healthy Female Adolescent Sexuality: A Critique', *Sex Roles,* 62 (2010), 294-306.

subjectivity'.[101] The latter is an existentialist explanation of false consciousness in that whilst she believes she is acting autonomously, her choices are actually the result of ideologies imposed by a long-standing patriarchal power structure.[102] Simone de Beauvoir's work on *mauvaise foi* — or bad faith — considers the social narcissism of women acting under societal beliefs about the value of their beauty and attractiveness.[103] The value proposition associated with attractiveness is important, especially when considering the PIN-UP framework. Part of the utility of this framework is that it accepts the reality of patriarchal values while presenting a pragmatic way to cope with them. It is arguably useless to attempt an escape from the social value and economic power derived from beauty or attractiveness. Ignoring the fact that value can be extracted from perceived good looks is to ignore reality. Perhaps then it is the social narcissist as described by de Beauvoir who can most fully thrive under the constraints of patriarchy because they accept this reality. David Waterman writes that 'the narcissist finds unity in being both the subject and the object, defined as object not by the narcissist him/herself, but by other subjects within society.'[104] This refers to the relationship one has with their image in the mirror. I suggest that the narcissist who quests for beauty is one who embraces the practical reality that acceptance by other subjects within society is its own form of currency. That the narcissist works within the confines of a patriarchal society does not prevent them from objecting to patriarchal values. They can fundamentally disagree with patriarchal values but they acknowledge the utility of perceived good looks.

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[101] Ibid., p. 301.
[102] Ibid., p. 301.
[103] David Waterman, '"In the Eyes of Others": Social Narcissism in Beauvoir's the Second Sex', *Simone de Beauvoir Studies,* 14 (1997), 66-71 (p. 66).
[104] Ibid., p. 69.

Though Dita effectively set herself apart from her contemporaries, she could be criticised for using the mechanisms of patriarchy to diminish other women. She elevates her own status by vocally differentiating herself from the style choices and behaviours of other women — women she deems unremarkable. For example, she dresses as a 'normal girl' on Halloween each year, during which time she sports denim blue jeans or other contemporary clothing with trendy hair and makeup.[105] She effectively cosplays as an average woman. This could rightly be viewed as mocking 'normal' girls and women — elevating her hyper-glamorous status by punching down at those who wear these styles every day. In common parlance, Dita evokes the tropes of the 'pick me girl' or the 'Not Like Other Girls (NLOG)' girl.[106] These terms have fluid definitions depending on the context in which they are used but in essence, they both refer to women who purposefully set themselves apart from other women by touting their uniqueness, particularly with respect to the heterosexual male gaze. They are viewed as currying favour with heterosexual men by portraying qualities they believe other women do not possess — qualities that men are believed to desire. In contemporary discourse, 'pick-me girls' or 'NLOGs' are often accused of internalised misogyny. Sexuality and sexual subjectivity are often at the heart of 'pick-me' or 'NLOG' discourse.

In their study of women's sexual empowerment, Mindy J. Erchull and Miriam Liss employed a data-driven approach. In a survey of heterosexual, adult women, sexual subjectivity was categorised by the domains of sexual assertiveness, desire, and

[105] Bronwyn Isaac, 'Dita Von Teese Literally Dresses up as a 'Normal' Girl Every Halloween and It's Kind of Hilarious', *HelloGiggles*, 31 October 2016 <https://hellogiggles.com/dita-von-teese-literally-dresses-up-as-a-normal-girl-every-halloween-and-its-hilarious/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

[106] Iman Hariri-Kia, 'Everything You Need to Know About Pick-Me Girls, Explained', *Cosmopolitan*, 2 December 2022 <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/a42134933/what-is-a-pick-me-girl-definition/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

pleasure: 'self-sexualisation, enjoying sexualisation, and perceiving sex as a source of personal power.'[107] Their results point to the difficulty of differentiating the role of the sexual object from that of the sexual subject because they can be experienced simultaneously. Further, the authors conclude that if desire is viewed as the central characteristic of sexual subjectivity, then 'objectified sexuality is not the ideal route to an empowered sexual subjectivity.'[108] This is to say that if desire can be feigned (i.e., performing sexual interest for money or the faking of an orgasm), the sex object is not experiencing true agency. This all gives rise to a fundamental question that this thesis works to confront: if we say that women will only sexualise themselves as a response the patriarchy, are we are tacitly upholding patriarchal values which view women as lacking the ability to think critically and act with agency? To accept the possibility of full liberation is complicated by the fact that the very existence of a patriarchy means that we can never be fully free of its bonds. Self-aware and agentic sexuality is capable of simultaneously acknowledging and critiquing patriarchal values.

It is too simplistic to dismiss style choice merely as the bonds of patriarchy because so much of women's fashion history reinforces a feminine ideal via the male gaze. Shelley Budgeon's work considers choice feminism and normative femininity. Budgeon cites Ferguson's work on choice feminism as a 'term [that] more broadly describes perspectives which share an orientation to feminist politics informed by the interpretation of freedom as

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[107] Mindy J. Erchull and Miriam Liss, 'The Object of One's Desire: How Perceived Sexual Empowerment through Objectification Is Related to Sexual Outcomes', *Sexuality & Culture,* 18 (2014), 773-78.
[108] Ibid., p. 786.

the capacity to make individual choices.'[109] Budgeon further explains how normative

femininity is understood through the lens of choice feminism:

> Idealised femininity often obscures the intersectional social relations
> which constitute gender by misrepresenting white, middle-class,
> heterosexual and westernised femininity as the norm. Despite
> occupying varied structural positions subjects are interpellated through
> similar modes of address when encountering hegemonic ideals of
> gender. In practice issues held up as important for white, middle-class
> heterosexual women have not always been those deemed most
> pertinent for women differentially located in classed, "raced" and sexual
> relations. These material differences mean that women often find
> themselves 'othered' by dominant definitions of idealized femininity.
> Choice feminism takes this variation to mean, however, that differences
> between women are so immense that feminism can only remain
> relevant to women's differences by validating not the content but the act
> of choice itself, thereby diverting attention away from normative
> demands of gender.[110]

As a woman who pursued fame and iconicity using distinctive imagecraft, Dita's corpus of

work is dependent on mainstream acceptance of a mid-twentieth century American, white,

heterosexual aesthetic. Through an intersectional feminist lens, her work does not appear

to challenge notions of Western-ness, whiteness, nor heterosexuality. In this way, Dita is

not the transgressive eccentric she portrays herself to be. A career centred on stripping

down to pasties and a G-string might seem transgressive but in reality, it is based on

deeply ingrained and widely held beauty ideals (even if those ideals come from a different

generation).

Put differently, it is questionable whether Dita's anachronistic image choices reify

or run counter to the tenets of choice feminism. Her sexuality is a central aspect of her

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[109] Shelley Budgeon, 'Individualized Femininity and Feminist Politics of Choice', *European Journal of Women's Studies,* 22 (2015), 303-18.
[110] Ibid.

public persona, and she presents herself in the tradition of a mid-twentieth century glamour queen. In doing so, Dita is implying that her image is classier or more refined than other sexualised public figures. As previously stated, this hints at Dita being 'not like other girls.' She makes the choice to present a highly stylised sexuality but does so in a way that inherently criticises the choices of other women. She communicates that she is of higher value or esteem in comparison to others because her style is from another time. This hints at the use of nostalgia as a capitalist tool based on the false premise that things from the past are somehow purer or of higher intrinsic value.

In fairness, Dita is not herself an academic. Though she has publicly labelled herself a student of style and highly polished glamour, she does not claim to be an expert on how her image squares with feminist scholarship. Obviously, she need not be an academic to identify as a feminist; she can discuss how feminism has impacted her career trajectory without couching such discussion in an academic framework. Though she trades on her femininity, she does not owe the public an explanation for doing so. Furthermore, whilst Dita can be analysed as a text, she should not be treated as a cipher upon which to moralise about women's roles in society. She is aware of the complicated social politics which surround her career choices and avoids oversimplifying their effect. 'We should not be telling people what makes them feel degraded versus empowered. It's up to the individual person. But do I think sometimes it takes a little bit longer in your life to know yourself well enough to know what's OK? Maybe I shouldn't have been working in a strip club at 19.'[111]

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[111] Lyndsey Winship, 'Dita Von Teese: "Even When I Was a Bondage Model, I Had Big-Time Boundaries"', *The Guardian*, 29 September 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2021/sep/29/dita-von-teese-bondage-burlesque-night-strictly-metoo> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Dita also discusses objectification in the public eye and the nuances of performance on her own terms versus the terms of others.

> I definitely notice the times where I feel treated like a "thing", and it's never when I'm naked performing. It's when somebody knows I'm famous but they don't know what for and they want to take a picture. She mimes leaning in for a selfie. "It's easier just to smile,' she says, pursing her lips, "but that's when I'll feel objectified."[112]

This speaks both to the intrusiveness of fame and the choices involved in pursuing that fame. Dita's comments address matters of boundaries and control. That is, when she is modelling or performing onstage, she has control over her own choices — she is expressing agentic selfhood. However, when she is approached on the street for a selfie, she lacks that same immediate sense of control and sometimes relents for the sake of ease in dealing with the public. In this way, she is objectified and lacks agentic selfhood. Of course, this begs the questions with which famous people have always had to contend: Who has a right to a famous person's time, personal space, and image? Is it appropriate to approach a famous person when they are not performing and are simply going about their daily business in public?

These questions can also be asked of all women who are subject to a heterosexist gaze. Who has the right to another individual's time, personal space, and image? Is it appropriate to objectify and interact with a woman when she is simply going about her daily business? In this way, Dita's boundaries around fame and interactions with the public mirror the struggles many women face whether they are famous or not. In both cases, portraying normative femininity may mean contending with matters of social acceptance,

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[112] Ibid.

personal safety, and the ability to make a living. Personal boundaries and safety in the face of objectification can be understand as a kind of self-care practice. Though the term *self-care* has been co-opted by marketers and is rather ubiquitous in contemporary culture, it bears special significance in understanding Dita Von Teese.

Self-Care and Self-Invention

Dita Von Teese's persona is the result of her self-invention. Transformed from an unassuming, American Midwestern blonde into a raven-haired femme fatale acclaimed for her style and her body, she exemplifies careful cultivation and curation of a specific image at all times. Dita does not appear to leave her home without some measure of polish. Even paparazzi photos of her going to and from the gym depict her sporting a simple hairstyle, black tee, black leggings, ballet flats, and her signature red lip (pictured below).[113]

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[113] FameFlynet Pictures, 'Dita Von Teese Leavies a Pilates Class', *Zimbio*, 9 July 2013 <https://www.zimbio.com/photos/Dita+Von+Teese/JzQUHcIJ6UF/Dita+Von+Teese+Leavies+Pilates+Class> [accessed 1 October 2022].

Figure 13. Dita Von Teese exiting pilates class in Los Feliz, CA on 9 July 2013, FameFlynet Pictures, accessed 1 October 2022, <https://www.zimbio.com/photos/Dita+Von+Teese/JzQUHcIJ6UF/Dita+Von+Teese+Leavies+Pilates+Class>

Even when performing self-care — as in the case of exercise — she does so in the manner that reflects her self-invention. Therefore, I argue that this process of self-invention and self-care are inextricably linked, though they occupy two different domains.

In the previous examples of Dita's predecessors and contemporaries, there is a common theme of self-invention (e.g., Cassandra Peterson's professional persona as Elvira or any of the 1990s supermodels' elevation to the pantheon of famously beautiful women). Because self-care and self-invention are linked, we must begin by exploring the roots of self-care and how the term has been recently co-opted in beauty marketing and mass media. Originally conceived in the medical context of developing healthy habits

under the supervision of a physician, the concept of self-care transformed during this time thanks to the women's and civil rights movements around the mid-1970s. Aisha Harris writes that 'women and people of colour viewed controlling their health as a corrective to the failures of a white, patriarchal medical system to properly tend to their needs.'[114]

In 1970s America, the women's movement began using language emerging from civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Black Panther movement which espoused the pursuit of community health and wellness as a method of reclaiming power and self-sufficiency in the face of marginalisation and oppression. Writer and activist Audre Lorde's writing on self-care is often quoted. 'Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.'[115] While the original quote is based on Lorde's experience as a Black lesbian fighting cancer and communicates the necessity of self-care among marginalised communities — particularly women of colour and LGBTQIA+ individuals — it now often appears as a stylised social media post used to extol the benefits of green smoothies, nutritional supplements, and spa treatments.

Aspects of the wider beauty and wellness market have diluted and depoliticised the original message that caring for the self is a revolutionary act of self-preservation. In doing so, contributed to a global wellness industry valued at a staggering $4.5 trillion in 2018.[116] In the United States, this wellness trend caters most often to affluent, predominately white women seeking everything from inner peace to reduced cellulite and increased sex drive.

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[114] Aisha Harris, 'A History of Self-Care', *Slate Online*, 5 April 2017
<https://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2017/04/the_history_of_self_care.html> [accessed 23 April 2023]
[115] Audre Lorde, *A Burst of Light: And Other Essays*, (New York: Courier Dover Publications, 1988), p. 130
[116] Global Wellness Institute, 'Wellness Industry Statistics and Facts', 2018
<https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/press-room/statistics-and-facts/> [accessed 26 April 2023].

Rife with pseudoscience, uncredentialed celebrity nutritionists and wellness influencers push a variety of products with dubious health claims. The foods which form the basis of this wellness-oriented lifestyle — typically expensive, organic produce — are often assigned moralistic labels such as *clean, whole,* or *life-sustaining*. There is a dearth of representation of women of colour in the current wellness market. As Salma Haidrani writes, 'women's health, it appears, is assumed to be the sole preserve of white women [and] the clean eating movement that is the most pertinent example of the invisibility of women of colour. At present, there isn't a single WOC who's hit the mainstream.'[117]
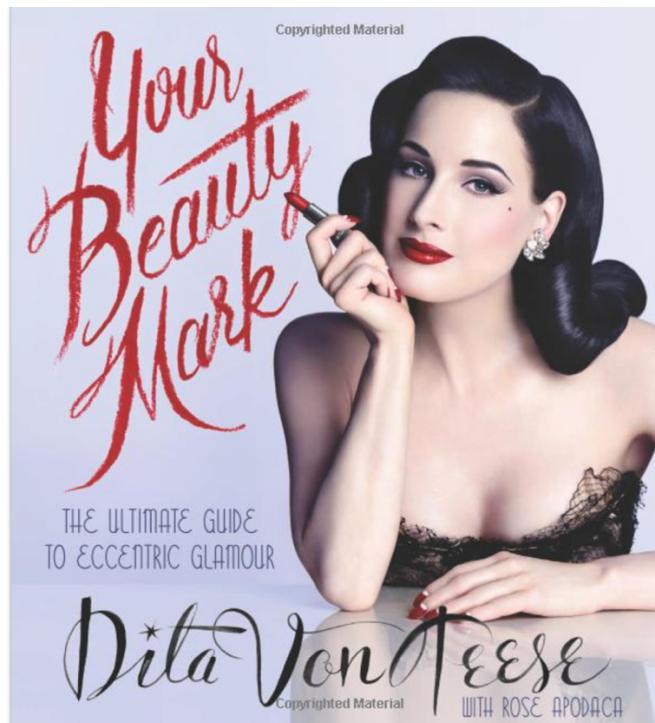
Figure 14. Your Beauty Mark: The Ultimate Guide to Eccentric Glamour, Cover image, accessed 1 April 2022, <https://www.amazon.com/Your-Beauty-Mark-Ultimate-Eccentric/dp/0060722711>

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[117] Salma Haidrani, 'How the Wellness Movement Ostracises Women of Colour'*, Medium*, 14 July 2016 <https://medium.com/the-establishment/the-wellness-movement-has-a-race-problem-fb6f64c24631> [accessed 26 April 2023].

Dita joined the white woman wellness trend in her book, *Your Beauty Mark*.[118] As a follower of celebrity nutritionist Kimberly Snyder who touts green smoothies and a primarily vegan diet to achieve health and beauty, Dita recommends avoiding certain foods such as dairy and red meat. She even devotes over two pages of the book's content to Snyder herself where she praises green smoothies as a panacea for a variety of illnesses.[119] Snyder is among those celebrity diet gurus who lack formal training in nutrition science, espousing the virtues of pseudoscientific dietary practices. This somewhat arbitrary approach to physical health and wellbeing — which favours marketability over medical soundness — is not new among celebrities. Even silent film-era Hollywood had its own untrained, self-made diet guru in Madame Sylvia — a shrewd self-marketer who claimed that she could slim down the bodies of her clients by squeezing the fat from the pores of their skin through massage and severe dietary restriction — all in the name of slimness and self-care.[120] Much, though not all, of the wellness industry is infused with a kind of hucksterism. While the styles change over time, there will always be someone trying to profit from the illnesses and insecurities of women around the world.

Regarding the Vectors of Glamour, I argue that the market which exists in relation to self-invention acts as a means of promoting methods and venues of glamour praxis. That is, despite the problematic commoditisation and subsequent transformation of the self-care philosophy by the mass market, self-invention is a way to engage with glamour praxis. The distinction here is that the watered-down, contemporary notion of self-care —

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[118] Von Teese.
[119] Ibid., pp. 46-50.
[120] Christina Newland and Karina Longworth, 'Make Me Over: Hollywood's First Weight Loss Guru Madame Sylvia', You Must Remember This, 2020, [accessed 23 April 2023].

that of face masks and bubble baths and green smoothies — serves to promote a peaceful and even glamourous calm within a stressful world. Paradoxically, those who engage with this type of beauty-based self-care often do so under the auspices of health and wellness, with external beauty as an additional goal. Therefore, we must be careful to separate politicised self-care and glamourous self-invention. While they may share traits, they are meant to achieve different ends. The former is rooted in fighting societal marginalisation, whilst the latter is concerned with conspicuous consumption in the pursuit of inner calm and outer beauty. That said, we should not assume a total binary distinction here as some overlap may exist. For some, fighting societal marginalisation may be linked with conspicuous consumption (e.g., wearing designer goods as a means to subverting assumptions about socioeconomic status based on race, ethnicity, or physical ability). One can also invent a more healthful, glamourous self through beauty praxis without engaging deeply in the political aspects of this work. This is a crucial distinction. Whilst Dita's case is not overtly political, I argue that her career success is the result of exploiting and critiquing patriarchal values for profit. She extracts value from her physical appearance but according to her own standards, they are not the standards of contemporary sexiness (e.g., the Kardashian family image juggernaut). That her standards are derived from a bygone era is of little consequence because her persona exists in stark opposition to commonly desired beauty traits of today, at least in the United States (e.g., heavy reliance on cosmetic injectables). That said, this persistent effort to differentiate herself from mainstream beauty icons may telegraph some level of internalised misogyny, as per the previously discussed 'pick-me girl' and 'NLOG' tropes.

Though Dita accepts the constraints of patriarchal values and often manages to turn them to her own advantage, she is not above critique. For example, her 'Opium Den' burlesque act which features Dita in stereotypical *dragon lady* garb (tight cheongsam dress, smoking a fake opium pipe, waving a Chinese fan) has been criticised as yellowface and perpetuating a negative, Orientalist image of Asian culture and Asian women.[121] In this case, she actually sustains patriarchal and Eurocentric values through the exploitation of stereotypical and eroticised Eastern imagery (Figure 15).[122]

Figure 5. Dita Von Teese in her Opium Den act as part of the Strip Strip Hooray stage show circa 2012, Accessed 1 April 2022, <https://dirtyfemmeburlesque.wordpress.com/2012/05/25/how-far-is-too-far-a-word-on-dita/>

[121] Alyssa McNeil Haney, 'Stripping (Away) the Stereotype: Race, Culture, and Gender in Neo-Burlesque Performance' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2015).
[122] Andi Stardust, 'How Far Is Too Far? A Word on Dita.', 25 May 2012 *DirtyFemmeBurlesque*, <https://dirtyfemmeburlesque.wordpress.com/2012/05/25/how-far-is-too-far-a-word-on-dita/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Her play acting as an Asian femme fatale represents a ludic function in that she is experimenting with matters of racial identity. It also reflects the rapidly decreasing social acceptability of employing *exotic* imagery associated with cultures of which the performer is not a member. The act garnered criticism from some audience members and fellow burlesque performers. Despite the problematic nature of the 'Opium Den' act, it does relate to play and self-invention in that Dita is temporarily taking on another identity, even if only for the purposes of entertainment. It is a ludic function. The stage, in this case, is the Magic Circle. In every space Dita occupies, on stage or otherwise, she presents herself as the product of self-invention. Beyond the project of the self-invention of the body's appearance is the maintenance of such an appearance. That is a separate project of self-care: one that can be understood through a philosophical, ethical, or moralistic lens.

Self-Care as an Ethical Mandate

In his textual analysis of ancient Greek thought, Foucault endeavoured to unpack the various philosophies of the body ranging from the medical to the spiritual to the sexual. In particular, he was interested in the dovetailing of liberal arts and medicine. In discussing Plutarch and Celsus, Foucault discusses the ways in which health and healthful practices are undertaken by the individual. In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3, The Care of the Self,* Foucault writes:

> Thus, medicine was not conceived simply as a technique of intervention, relying, in cases of illness, on remedies and operations. It was also supposed to define, in the form of a corpus of knowledge and rules, a way of living, a reflective mode of relation to oneself, to one's body, to food, to wakefulness and sleep, to the various activities, and to the environment. Medicine was expected to propose, in the form of regimen, a voluntary and rational structure of conduct. One of the points of discussion related to the

degree and form of dependence that this medically informed life ought to
manifest with regard to the authority of   physicians, The way in which the
latter sometimes took control of their clients' existence in order to manage it
in the least detail was an object of criticism, for the same reasons as was
the spiritual direction practiced by philosophers. And Celsus, as convinced
as he was of the high value of regimen medicine, was against subjecting
oneself to a physician if one was in good health. The literature of regimen
was meant to ensure this self-reliance.[123]

This passage speaks to the political and philosophical imperatives of self-reliance put forth

by the marginalised groups who promulgated self-care as a response to oppression. In

this way, care of the self forms the basis of self-invention. Again, though they are linked,

self-care and self-invention are not the same. Taken further, we could argue that self-care

is a moral imperative whilst self-invention is the aesthetic imperative. We also ought to

consider Classical thought's imperative for humans to pursue truth and beauty throughout

their lives.

Richard White assesses the tension between morality and freedom in Foucault's

analysis thusly:

Foucault shows how the discourse of sex is part of a larger formation that
was centred on self-cultivation, or the care of the self, rather than adherence
to strict moral codes. Even though Foucault talks about the possibility of
freedom in this context, however, it is still a limited kind of freedom for it
involves the intricacies of self-fashioning and creating oneself as a work of
art, and on the face of it this is a pale substitute for social and political
action.[124]

The above passage supports my argument that self-invention, though related to it, is not

the same thing as self-care in its most pure sense. Despite its utility as a *Vector of*

Glamour, the marketing of self-inventive tools and techniques does not serve the same

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[123] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3, The Care of the Self* pp. 99-100.
[124] Richard White, 'Foucault on the Care of the Self as an Ethical Project and a Spiritual Goal', *Human Studies,* 37
(2014), 489-504 (p. 490).

purpose as caring for the self in ways that engender radical commentary on marginalisation. Whilst White's analysis suggests that the project of creating the self as a work of art is a superficial one, I would argue that it is absolutely an enactment of personal agency. Even if the individual does not deeply engage with the meaning of their self-invention in a larger societal sense, the mere act of creating and sustaining the self in a purposeful manner is political. It is particularly powerful for women because they are expressing agentic selfhood in the face of overarching social systems. Expressing agentic selfhood comes in many forms, though this thesis is primarily concerned with expression via style choices and personal comportment. Two such examples in this category are Lolita fashion and the process of *looksmaxing.* Both are types of imagecraft and self-invention.

Defending Cuteness and Weaponising Beauty

Self-invention takes many forms from the mundane to the extreme. It encapsulates nearly all aspects of a cultivated appearance and personality. The ability to create the self can mean developing the self to fit a changing subculture or accepting and becoming comfortable within an existing social paradigm. In both cases, the individual is engaged in the project of building, defining, and positioning the self. Sporting mid-twentieth century pin-up style as exemplified by Dita Von Teese is an example of such a project. Whilst there are countless fashion and style genres in which to partake, this section explores two different subcultural looks-based phenomena: Lolita fashion as well as the concept of *looksmaxing* as a means of actualising self-invention.

Lolita fashion is an example of self-invention within a constantly changing subculture. Lolita fashion has its roots in the Japanese kawaii aesthetic and has since become a global phenomenon. Kawaii represents a type of appreciation for the vulnerability of cute objects or beings.[125] Kimberlee Coombes writes that 'Japanese girls use cute culture as a tool to create a community in which they can escape from the homogeneous patriarchal Japanese society. Cuteness is a non-threatening, passive vehicle that transports girls to a positive space outside the boundaries of Japanese society.'[126] The value of cuteness as a type of perceived sanctuary from patriarchal oppression is crucial to understanding the growth and popularity of this subculture among women and girls both inside and outside Japan. In this way, the kawaii aesthetic represents a coping mechanism. As an extension of kawaii, the Lolita fashion subculture is one generally characterised by hyperfeminine clothing and comportment. Not to be confused with the Vladimir Nabokov work of the same name (though it references the theme), Lolita fashion celebrates the choice to express cute girlishness in the face of a patriarchal power structure. Though it has roots in Japanese culture, Lolita fashion's spread to the rest of the world promulgates its rebellious spirit. Coombes describes this fashion sensibility thusly:

> Lolita fashion can be described as a style wherein girls dress up in clothing inspired by the Victorian era. Featuring excessive frills, lace and bows, Lolita fashion gives the wearer the appearance of an idealized aristocratic aesthetic. Lolita fashion is strongly inspired by the Rococo Era as well as the Lewis Carol novel, Alice in Wonderland.[127]

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[125] Kimberlee Coombes, 'Consuming Hello Kitty: Saccharide Cuteness in Japanese Society' (unpublished honours thesis, The Wellesley College, 2016)
[126] Ibid., p. 11.
[127] Ibid., p. 7.

There are a number of subgenres within Lolita fashion culture representing everything from dark, gothic looks to ones that celebrate particular occupations or nations. Much like Western mid-twentieth century pinup style, adherents to Lolita fashion have chosen an alternative look based on the aesthetics of another time and/or place (Figure 16).[128]

Figure 16. Women dressed in Lolita fashion. Rebels Market website*,* accessed 1 April 2022, <https://www.rebelsmarket.com/blog/posts/lolita-fashion-what-is-it-and-where-did-it-come-from>

In general, Lolita fashion represents escapism, whether from oppressive societal values or from the mundane challenges of daily life. In 2011, Osmud Rahman et al. wrote that these 'young people may enter into their dream/ideal world and create their own imaginary self, such as a descendant of a noble family, a sweet girl, and even a princess or prince. Indeed, they are living in a state of hyper-reality.'[129] In much the same way as

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[128] Daniel Hughes, 'Lolita Fashion: What Is It and Where Did It Come From?'*, Rebels Market*, 2 November 2021 <https://www.rebelsmarket.com/blog/posts/lolita-fashion-what-is-it-and-where-did-it-come-from> [accessed 23 April 2023].

[129] Osmud Rahman and others, '"Lolita": Imaginative Self and Elusive Consumption', *Fashion Theory,* 15 (2011), 7-28.

sporting Western mid-twentieth century style pinup, wearing Lolita fashion — whether occasionally or all day every day — represents an interpellation to activate the imaginary as well as a way of unifying mechanisms of power and play. The former is evidenced in Lolita fashion in its ability for the individual to imagine themselves in a dreamworld. The latter is evidenced by the intersection of play-acting the role of a girlish, hyper-femininity and in doing so, empowering oneself to escape their workaday worries. This play acting aspect also harkens to the Huizingan Magic Circle. Lolita fashion can be deemed a rejection of de Beauvoir's concept of the social narcissist who accepts and works within the framework of a bad faith system rewarding the most common types of beauty.

Kathryn Hardy Bernal's work in this domain addresses the tension between the concept of the Nabokovian Lolita as a sexualised literary character and members of the Japanese Lolita subculture (or 'Gothloli'). Bernal writes: 'The fictional character is interpreted as a child with adult feelings; the Japanese Lolita, or Gothloli, represents an adult or young woman with childish sensibilities.'[130] That is, the Gothloli rejects adulthood (or aspects of it) by engaging in childlike behaviours. On balance, the adult who dresses or play acts as a child ostensibly possesses adult faculties and reasoning, whereas the child experiencing adult feelings (as is the case with the Nabokovian Lolita) does not possess the requisite life experience to fully navigate such feelings. Lolita fashion simultaneously functions to shield oneself from the effects of patriarchy whilst directly commenting on its insidiousness.

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[130] Kathryn Hardy Bernal, 'Confronting the Hegemony: The Japanese Lolita Subculture and the Lolita Complex', 2nd Annual International POPCAANZ Conference, Langham Hotel, Auckland, NZ (2011).

Perhaps a more pernicious form of self-invention — *looksmaxing* — has recently taken root in some online communities. This is a process of becoming more physically attractive or desirable to achieve specific means and to extract *resources* from others. This is a concept that originated within the online communities of predominately cisgender men who self-identify as incels, or involuntary celibates. Some online incel communities are known for pervasive misogyny, homophobia, racism, and antisemitism. These communities are often characterised by their encouragement of violence against women and marginalised groups as retribution for being made to be involuntarily celibate.[131] The primary tenet of *looksmaxing* is that improving one's physical appearance will allow them greater professional and personal opportunity, including access to better jobs, more powerful social circles, and greater romantic possibilities. Unlike Lolita fashion, however, this process reinforces social narcissism by centring the notion that perceived physical attractiveness leads to greater reward. In the incel community, improving one's looks ranges from better attending to personal grooming or hygiene practices to extreme cosmetic surgeries meant to correct physical traits deemed socially disadvantageous.[132] Users who upload photos of themselves to incel forums for guidance are often met with brutal criticism of their appearance.

Looksmaxing is no longer the sole purview of incel men as it has recently gained notoriety among women hoping to achieve greater personal and professional success through their physical appearance. A popular discussion forum on the social media site

[131] Zack Beauchamp, 'Our Incel Problem', *Vox*, 23 April 2019 <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/16/18287446/incel-definition-reddit> [accessed 23 April 2023].

[132] Allie Conti, 'Inside the Disturbing Forum Incels Use to Brutally Criticize Each Other's Faces', *Vice*, 20 June 2018 <https://www.vice.com/en/article/3k449v/inside-the-disturbing-forum-incels-use-to-brutally-criticise-each-others-faces> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Reddit, r/Vindicta, was created specifically for cisgender women seeking to achieve more in life by enhancing their appearance.[133] Though not all cisgender women self-identify as incels — or femcels, in this case — the lexicon of *looksmaxing* is rooted in the incel subculture. The forum description states that 'this is about playing the game to win; this is about turning the ideals that have been forced upon us into a blade in our hands. This is weaponised beauty.'[134] Let us parse the concept of weaponised beauty. The previous statement acknowledges that those with perceived good looks generally have greater access in life. It asserts that the oppressiveness of socio-cultural beauty ideals is being consciously upended through the practice of *looksmaxing* for the benefit of the individual. Whilst much of the online male incel community is characterised by brutal criticism of each other's appearance, r/Vindicta espouses a more holistic approach to physical improvement. It promotes a 'strong focus on mental health and self-love during the *looksmaxing* process.'[135]

In the case of Dita Von Teese, her brand of self-invention is neither that of girlish or childlike cuteness as expressed by kawaii Lolita fashion, nor is it rooted in the inability to get a date because of her appearance. It is worth exploring, however, that each of the above subcultures are based on modes of self-invention. They also represent forms of escapism. In the case of Lolita fashion, that may be an escape from everyday societal conformity or oppression, whilst *looksmaxing* represents an escape from the reality of one's own poorly perceived natural appearance.

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[133] Note that 'r/' is the Reddit convention for denoting the titles of subreddits (discussion boards).
[134] 'R/Vindicta', *Reddit* <https://www.reddit.com/r/Vindicta/> [accessed 23 April 2023].
[135] Ibid.

Like Dita's work, Lolita fashion and *looksmaxing* represent the project of cultivating the self in any image the individual so desires. The existence of these two self-invention subcultures can be broadly understood as commentary on overarching social values. With these examples of self-invention in mind, let us now consider self-invention within the context of feminist scholarship.

Applying a Critical Feminist Lens

Dita Von Teese is an exemplar of the project of creating and sustaining the self in a manner counter to larger cultural expectations. When considering how Dita navigates her agentic selfhood in the face of the patriarchy, we are faced with the question of legitimacy: if an individual action is modelled on patriarchal values, is it legitimately a feminist act? Does it disrupt the notion of feminist rebellion if it recapitulates the desires of a predominately male heterosexual gaze? To fully understand, we must first problematise the dichotomy presented in Western radical feminist scholarship which labels actions as either feminist or not. For the purposes of this thesis, Western Radical Feminism shall be defined using the language of the RadFem Collective: 'women as a biological class are globally oppressed by men as a biological class [and] male power is constructed and maintained through institutional and cultural practices that aim to bolster male superiority through the reinforcement of female inferiority.'[136] I selected this definition of Western Radical Feminism because it addresses both institutional and cultural practices, rather than focussing solely on a single category of social influence.

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[136] RadFem Collective <www.radfem.org> [accessed 23 April 2023].

By this definition, one might infer that any and all agentic engagement with sexuality is made null by virtue of it happening within a male-driven social paradigm. This viewpoint implies that women who choose to make their living as pin-up or fetish models, burlesque performers, and strippers are doing so not as an expression of agentic selfhood, but rather in submission to patriarchal values aimed at governing women's bodies. Though there are various thought factions within liberal feminism, this thesis uses Rosemary Tong's assessment of second wave liberal feminism as a prioritisation of the self over the collective and the rational over the emotional. It should be noted here that Tong viewed second wave liberal feminists as revisionists who sought access and participation in a male-dominated society, whilst the second wave radical feminists sought sexual and reproductive liberation.[137]

Though I am being careful in this thesis to separate pin-up imagery from pornography, both categories invoke a historically heterosexual male gaze and, depending on the context, the line between the two is somewhat blurry. Some Western radical feminists view pornography — and by association, pin-up — as a form of outright subjugation. In *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, Andrea Dworkin conflates pornography with enslavement and a complete stripping of human dignity for women. 'A system of dominance and submission, pornography has the weight and significance of any other historically real torture or punishment of a group of people because of a condition of birth'.[138] That is, if the subject of the image — whether participating in a sex act as in pornography or merely appearing sexually alluring as in pin-up — appears as a

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[137] Rosemarie Tong, 'Feminist Thought in Transition: Never a Dull Moment', *The Social Science Journal,* 44 (2007), 23-39.

[138] Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, (New York: Perigee*,* 1981), p. xxxviii.

sex object, Dworkin believes she is a victim. Whether she has chosen to partake in this scene is of little consequence because she is automatically relegated to the role of the oppressed. In the case of Dita's appearances in the pages of Playboy or more niche fetish publications, there is no sense that she has been trafficked into that role, but rather that her image is the result of a carefully curated public persona.

Alongside Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon has famously courted controversy for her outspoken stance on the sexual objectification of women. 'To be sexually objectified means having a social meaning imposed on your being that defines you as to be sexually used, according to your desired uses, and then using you that way.'[139] Further, McKinnon asserts that consent to objectification is illusory. 'The appearance of choice or consent […] comes to define female sexuality, legitimising this political system by concealing the force on which it is based.'[140] This notion has special meaning in the context of Dita Von Teese, as well as her predecessors and contemporaries. In MacKinnon's framework, there can be no true consent to objectification and in this way, anyone who submits to objectification does so under inherent social duress. Does this stance therefore negate agentic selfhood as expressed by Dita and her ilk? MacKinnon's views are part and parcel to a larger schism among 1980s feminist thought leaders.

The 1982 Barnard Conference on Sexuality was a touchstone in the Sex Wars of the 1980s. There was a fracture within feminist scholarship between anti-pornography activists such as Andrea Dworkin, and more liberal, sex-positive feminists such as conference organiser Carole Vance. The conference put into sharp relief a fundamental

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[139] Catharine A. MacKinnon, ' Sexuality, Pornography, and Method: Pleasure under Patriarchy', *Sexuality and Gender,* (2002), 314-346 (p. 329).
[140] Ibid., p. 330.

division brought about by attitudes toward sex and sexual expression. The exclusion of anti-pornography groups such as Women Against Pornography (WAP), was met with protests and confiscation and destruction of conference materials.[141] Interestingly, these controversies are rather evergreen; the richness of feminist discourse in academia lends itself to varying opinions and actions. The Sex Wars and other critical debates in this area are emblematic of this richness. Further, I argue that these differences of opinion, both inside and outside the academy, are what propels feminist thought forward and what allows work such as thesis to come into existence.

Given this, how might MacKinnon and Dworkin's assertions apply to Dita Von Teese's work? In addition to her polished and genteel public image, Dita has also appeared in fetish pictorials — often in the style of Bettie Page, but also in pictorials depicting intricate and ornate Japanese style rope bondage. In 2001, Dita modelled for *The Seductive Art of Japanese Bondage*, a book of photographs created by bondage practitioner Midori and photographer Craig Morey.[142] Criticisms of Dita as a victim of patriarchy because nudity and stripping are centrepieces of her brand are myopic. These criticisms limit Dita's agentic selfhood as expressed by her eccentric style.

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[141] Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Context of "between Pleasure and Danger": The Barnard Conference on Sexuality', *Feminist Review,* 13 (1983), 35-41.
[142] Midori and Craig Morey, *The Seductive Art of Japanese Bondage* (Emeryville: Greenery Press, 2001).
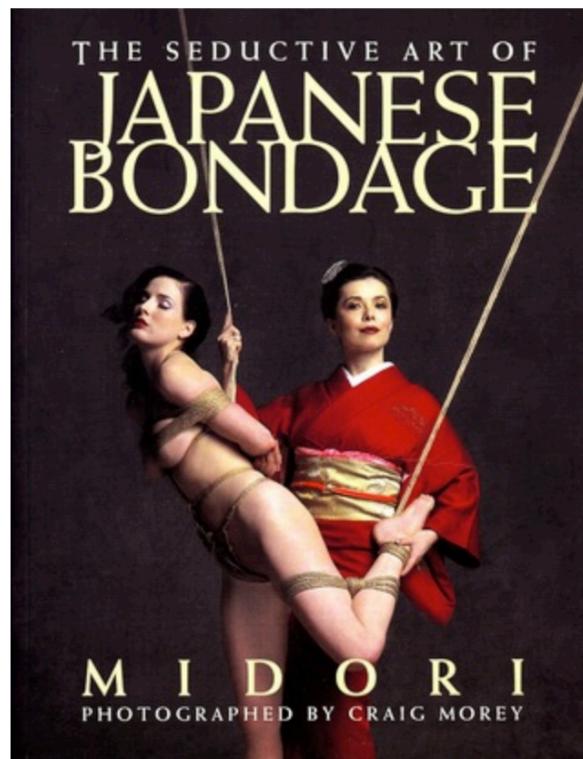
Figure 17. The Seductive Art of Japanese Bondage, Midori and Craig Morey, Cover image, accessed 1 November 2022,
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/504119.The_Seductive_Art_of_Japanese_Bondage>

Because Dworkin and MacKinnon define pornography as sexually explicit and generally violent in some way, we can infer that they would consider Dita's work to be the result of centuries of patriarchal oppression rather than a purposeful choice taken up in total agentic selfhood. Though there are many accounts of women who have been coerced into pornographic roles, there is a deliberate choice in being featured in contemporary pin-up. Bypassing that agency is to assume that contemporary women lack the intellectual capacity to understand the difference between coercion and true choice.

Radical Feminist scholarship is sometimes criticised for imposing an all-or-nothing categorisation of a woman's actions and whilst it may be tempting to dismiss choices as either feminist or not, women's aesthetic motivations are informed by a variety of

mechanisms. In other words, dominant Western feminist gatekeeping runs counter to the advancement of agentic selfhood among women and limits the fecundity of dynamic social frameworks to explain such selfhood. Shulamith Firestone's work on the dialectic of sex confronts this all-or-nothing nature by addressing a trend of absolutism among radical Western feminists. 'Sex objects are beautiful. An attack on them can be confused with an attack on beauty itself. Feminists need not get so pious in their efforts that they feel they must flatly deny the beauty of the face on the cover of Vogue'.[143] Whereas many of Firestone's contemporaries condemned sexual objectification, she is clear that the hatred or denial of beauty is not the issue, rather it is a matter of whether that beauty can be expressed alongside the body's capacity to age or change through time. The pin-up imagery of the mid-twentieth century is most commonly associated with the bouncy vivacity of youth — a friendly smile, taut skin, softly defined musculature, perky bosoms, and an hourglass figure. As pin-up style again rose to prominence in the 1990s, the subjects encompassed a more diverse range of body types. These varying bodies expressed agentic selfhood both as a means of reifying the sexualised gaze and confronting its historically narrow scope. This is to say that pin-up represents a way of partaking in and critiquing a predominately heterosexual male gaze. Today, thanks to the democratising effects of social media, bodies of all ages, shapes, abilities, genders, and races can be easily viewed. Perhaps this viewpoint is too idealistic — after all, despite much work to the contrary, there remains a dominant Western beauty standard. However,

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[143] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p. 96.

I argue that the very access to images of various types of bodies is compelling and democratising, even if they are not yet totally accepted in dominant culture.

One possible solution is to consider that the choice to take up provocative dress and sexualised imagery for oneself is a form of patriarchal bargaining. Deniz Kandiyoti's notion of the patriarchal bargain asserts that women may strategize and willingly subject themselves to outmoded gender roles in order to gain some type of advantage, even if that advantage is mere survival.[144] Though much of the scholarship on patriarchal bargaining is linked to issues such as gender roles within a religious or nationalistic framework (e.g., modest dress), it is also useful in explaining how women confront and comport their sexuality to financial, professional, or social ends. Furthermore, Kandiyoti criticises the manner in which some schools of feminist thought refer to patriarchy as a monolith, which she believes 'obfuscates rather than reveals the inner workings of culturally and historically distinct arrangements between the genders.'[145] This rejection of patriarchy-as-monolith invites analytical nuance in a way that some Radical Western Feminism has historically lacked.

Sexually liberal feminism — or sex-positive feminism — arose in response to the growing movement within Western Radical Feminism's condemnation of patriarchy's perceived violent sexual control over women. The former is characterised by the idea that all women's freedoms are inextricably linked to sexual freedoms and that sex workers, adult film performers, strippers, and models ought not be automatically portrayed as victims. In her 2005 reflection on the Sex Wars of the 1980s, Ellen Willis stated that

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[144] Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', *Gender and Society,* 2 (1988), 274-90.
[145] Ibid, p. 275

'pornography [as] violence against women was code for the neo-Victorian idea that men want sex and women endure it.'[146]

There is a kind of cultural nausea often attached to female sexuality-for-profit. This is characterised by notions deeply entrenched in capitalism-critical feminist scholarship. First, sexual subjectification is always embedded in monolithic patriarchy. Second, the existence of a market automatically disqualifies the subject from a deep feminist reading. What does this mean in the context of women who profit from depictions of pleasurable sexuality? Dita is essentially a media mogul building wealth upon her carefully crafted public image. Her work simultaneously comprises sexualised work and glamour play at once. Though she functions within a patriarchal framework, she has adapted a method of extracting material and social benefit from patriarchy. It should be noted here that a large portion of her net worth comes from fans who are women. All stakeholders in these transactions are Vectors of Glamour.

Despite Dita's significant efforts, she is not above criticism as a *Vector of Glamour*. This raises important question. Is there a sense of ethical or social responsibility at play? Is Dita a role model? Is the highly eroticised image she projects represent a net benefit for women and femmes? The answer to these questions depends on which metrics we might use to make such an assessment. Does she appear to be an economically self-made businesswoman? Yes. Is that business almost entirely constructed upon patriarchy and the heterosexual male gaze? Yes. Should Dita's work be disqualified from a deep feminist reading because she has built her business upon the performance of high femininity and

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[146] Ellen Willis, 'Lust Horizons', *The Village Voice* 18 October 2005 <https://www.villagevoice.com/2005/10/18/lust-horizons/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

sexual desire? No. Despite her eccentric mid-twentieth century pin-up style, she employs

the same mechanisms relied upon by her predecessors and contemporaries, such as the

supermodels of the 1980s and 90s.

The group commonly referred to as the *Original Supermodels* comprised Linda

Evangelista, Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, and Christy Turlington.[147]

Figure 18. Left to right: Linda Evangelista, Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, and Christy Turlington. Photograph by Paul Massey/Shutterstock for Harper's Bazaar. *The 25 Top Supermodels That Dominated Fashion in the '90s.* Harper's Bazaar, accessed 1 November 2022, <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/models/g32754339/90s-supermodels/>

These women seized the international imagination thanks to their ubiquity on fashion

runways, magazine covers, news programs, and even MTV — notably as the stars of

George Michael's now-iconic *Freedom '90* and *Too Funky* music videos.[148] Their

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[147] Bob Colacello, 'A League of Their Own', *Vanity Fair*, 30 July 2008 <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2008/09/supermodels200809> [accessed 20 June 2019].
[148] Barry Samaha, 'The 25 Top Supermodels That Dominated Fashion in the '90s', *Harper's Bazaar*, 9 August 2022 <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/models/g32754339/90s-supermodels/> [accessed 1 November 2022].

popularity and influence were crystallised by the early 1990s. 'As designer Michael Kors told the *Chicago Sun-Times* in 1992, "Christy and Linda and Cindy and Naomi are movie stars. They're the pin-up girls of the 90s."'[149] The pin-up designation is appropriate here. Whilst much of mid-twentieth century pin-up was found on military aircraft nose art or pinned into soldiers' lockers, the Original Supermodels appeared in *Sports Illustrated: Swimsuit Edition*, finding their place in the bedrooms of pubescent boys and young men, in addition to their extremely lucrative careers in runway and advertisement modelling. In both cases, the subject of these pin-up images is depicted as portraying a carefree, playful sexuality and hails the viewer to imagine that they are with the subject or are themselves the subject.

The Original Supermodels wielded tremendous power in the fashion and beauty media of the time.

> At the height of their power, [… they] were not only raking in millions a year but also dictating which photographers, hairdressers, and makeup artists they would or would not work with. They dominated the runways, the magazines, and the big ad campaigns to such a degree that 'it became a nightmare, especially for the clients.[150]

To appreciate the impact of this group of women is to recognise their critical role in the fashion labour market (and their tremendous profitability in the general entertainment and advertising industries). Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wissinger address the Foucauldian aspects of this kind of power:

> Contemporary emphasis on individuality and self-actualisation through work sees power operating through the requirement to be an 'enterprising individual', as a specific 'technology of the self' rather than through imposition of corporate power from "above". While not all workers experience such "freedom" from company control, a Foucauldian

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[149] Ibid,; Colacello.
[150] Ibid.

understanding of power shifts the emphasis from corporate codes and control to individually managed bodies.[151]

This is an important distinction because despite their images being promulgated by a powerful industry, they would have needed to be exceedingly disciplined in their self-management. These supermodels were self-actualised enough to get the attention of the fashion media, yet they were products of its cultural dominance. Whilst at their peak power, the Original Supermodels likely experienced pressure from the fashion industry but also disciplined their own bodies to fit the norms of said industry. 'The successful models are usually the ones who take on the responsibility of managing their bodies, becoming "enterprising" with respect to all aspects of their embodied self.'[152] Paradoxically, despite their roles as tools of the industry, they achieved self-actualisation in making crucial decisions about their careers and public presences. Here we see an excellent example of the technology of responsibilisation. Further, it is useful to superimpose Kandiyoti's concept of the patriarchal bargain: to manage or discipline the self in the face of a massive economic machine for one's own advancement (in this case, the fashion and beauty media) is to view these women as purposeful tacticians rather than victims of an oppressive male gaze.

The Original Supermodels were prominent figures in the cultural conversation and though there were powerful fashion models before and have been since, their specific mystique arose as the result of specific economic forces.

The rise of celebrity journalism in the 1970s, the globalisation of fashion and cosmetics brands in the 1980s, and even the recession that followed the

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[151] Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wissinger, 'Keeping up Appearances: Aesthetic Labour in the Fashion Modelling Industries of London and New York', *The Sociological Review,* 54 (2006), 774-94.
[152] Ibid., p. 774.

1987 stock-market crash combined to create a demand for internationally recognizable figures who could move merchandise on the strength of their beauty and personality. It helped […] that politically minded Hollywood stars "wouldn't do advertisements or be associated with fashion. So models took the place of actresses as icons of glamour."[153]

Recall that mid-twentieth century pin-up style — the style reflected by Von Teese — was also the result of economic shifts. Though the precipitating events were different, both types of style represented commentary on the social and economic times.

This group achieved massive popularity ahead of Dita's rise to prominence and captured the cultural imagination in a much larger way. They were as ubiquitous on MTV as on fashion runways. They were household names in a way that Dita is not. Dita occupies the niche. Unlike Dita or Elvira, their images were not self-made and were instead manufactured by the era's high fashion and advertising media machine. Dita engenders the luxury fringe whilst the Original Supermodels engendered — and, in fact, dictated — much of the mainstream notion of female beauty standards. Despite these differences, the manner and result of their aesthetic labour is much the same: significant presence in the public domain leading to iconicity and a pervasive sense of fabulousness.

Commodifying Fabulousness

Using the above examples, the complexities of aesthetic labour become apparent. In their study of fashion modelling, Entwistle and Wissinger assert that it 'involves the entire embodied self, or "body/self", and […] the effort to keep up appearances, while physical, has an emotional content to it. Besides the physical *and* emotional effort of body

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[153] Colacello, p. 356.

maintenance, the imperative to project "personality" requires many of the skills in emotional labour.'[154] *Emotional labour* to refers to a variety of aspects pertaining to the uncompensated, gendered efforts of women. This may include what is understood as *wifework,* or lending a sympathetic ear and a shoulder upon which to cry.[155] Emotional labour takes up time and space in the life of the individual and is typically regarded as a sort of free service provided by a well-intentioned friend, spouse, parent, or colleague.

Another form of emotional labour is the performance of sexuality or high glamour. For example, the character of Elvira is festooned in a vampy skin-tight, very low-cut black gown contrasted by her bubbly, girly Southern California personality. In the case of the Original Supermodels, a high-gloss celebrity aloofness is portrayed by their fashions at the time and the media's reporting on their behaviour.[237] That is, Elvira's sunny personality belies her sexy gothic attire and calls to mind the image of a young girl milling around a shopping mall whilst the Original Supermodels are modelling the fashion sold in that mall. Dita stands in sharp relief to both. Neither sexy cartoon nor inaccessible superdiva, her image suggests that she could be found in a dimly lit corner of a French cabaret or speakeasy, sipping champagne, and holding court with a cadre of wealthy male suitors.

It is compelling then to consider that an essential component of Dita's charisma lay in her hometown-girl-makes-good glamour, suggesting that if she can remake herself in the glamourous style of a bygone era, so too can anyone else. Again paradoxically, she represents a contrast to other women in the public eye via an inherent tension between the scarcity of her style of beauty and the popular media consumption of her imagery. Dita

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[154] Entwistle and Wissinger, p. 774

[155] Susan Maushart, *Wifework: What Marriage Really Means for Women* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008), p. 10.

speaks directly to the matter of reinvention: 'I […] recognized that I could transform, reinvent, and in doing so, live the life I always dreamed of living.'[156] Her homegrown backstory is subverted by her overt sexual presence, particularly as evidenced by the pioneering of contemporary burlesque that made her an international doyenne of seduction. Her photos and burlesque productions are designed to invite the audience to imagine that they are either *with* Dita or *are* Dita. This is an example of interpellation as it functions to hail the viewer and it evokes the richness of the erotic imaginary.

Von Teese's ability not only to participate in the pin-up market but to dominate said market is of great value because this domination makes her the primary agent of her own success. Though it could be argued that her public image is the result of manipulation by others, she appears to be the primary agent of her own self-image. Recall that the presence of a market within the sphere of pin-up complicates its designation as a domain of play, yet I maintain that the existence of a market acts as its own *Vector of Glamour* because it invites more people to experience pin-up as play. This echoes Entwistle and Wissinger's assertions about the technology of enterprise as a way to construct and reify the self.

Von Teese's extremely polished image is embedded in the semiotics of luxury and decadence. Conspicuous consumption of bespoke clothing, prestige cosmetic and skincare products, and loyalty to brands such as Christian Louboutin — its iconic, red-soled shoes are shorthand for wealth and glamour on their own. This all evokes exclusivity, not egalitarianism. To be clear, whilst the existence of the market for pin-up is

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[156] Von Teese, p. 10.

democratising, participation in said market is not. The remarkable amount of time, energy, and financial resources allocated to keeping up this level of polish means that Dita can avail herself of the services of fashion designers, stylists, makeup artists, and hairdressers. Her presence at photocalls during the Festivals de Cannes telegraphs access to elite entertainment and arts circles. Not everyone can achieve such exclusivity but nearly everyone can be hailed to imagine such a lifestyle. In every sartorial and behavioural choice, Dita relishes femininity and the performance of feminine traits, even those from other periods, as evidenced by her urging her fans to take up the practice of applying rouge to the nipples.[157] She frequently refers to herself in interviews and in print as a girl: 'No one can say "no" to the girl with the black hair and red lips. Or at least I like to think so.'[158] Whilst her burlesque and pin-up career align more with that of a sexually knowledgeable woman, she also inhabits the role of girlish coquette with ease. Her statement represents an inversion of the trope of women having to reject (or protect themselves) from desirous men. She plays with broadly accepted notions of femininity and does so by engineering her professional life around the portrayal of that femininity for profit.

Participation in and benefit from the fashion labour market — particularly in the cases of the Original Supermodels and Dita Von Teese — are manifestations of the work of femininity. Michelle M. Lazar's contributions to a postfeminist analysis of this matter situate this work within a larger discursive schema. Specifically, the author uses beauty advertisements to exemplify *entitled femininity* in three themes: '1) "It's about me!" focuses

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[157] Dita Von Teese and Rose Apodaca, *Fashioning the Femme Totale* (London: Dey Street Books, 2020), p. 76.
[158] Ibid.

on pampering and pleasuring the self; 2) "Celebrating femininity" reclaims and rejoices in

feminine stereotypes; and 3) "Girling women" encourages a youthful disposition in women

of all ages.'[159] This notion of entitlement essentially bolsters the entire economic machine

behind the advertisement and purchase of beauty goods. There is additional complexity

here in that while the individual is entitled to feel and act beautiful, they must contend with

the fact others feel entitled to view, judge, and consume their beauty. Further, Lazar

attributes this sense of entitlement to the 'formation of postfeminist feminine identities in

relation to broadly emerging themes such as "emancipation" and "empowerment."'[160]

Dita's case demonstrates these three characteristics. A core component of her concept of

glamour evangelism is to dress for the pleasure and empowerment of the self, not for the

gaze of others.

> I respect someone who is a Hanes cotton panties kinda girl, because I think
> it's important to know yourself and respect what makes you feel confident
> and good about yourself instead of trying to put on or tell someone that
> something else should make them feel sexy. I like to talk about what lingerie
> does for *me* and what garter belts and stockings do for *me*, and I talk about
> that rather than talking about what a man might like.[161]

Though Dita frequently refers to the excitement of dressing to stoke the desire of a lover,

she prioritises the agency and pleasure of the wearer above all else.

Lisa Downing's work encourages us to consider contemporary womanhood in the

context of what she terms *self-fulness* juxtaposed against the consequences of feminine

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[159] Michelle M. Lazar, 'Entitled to Consume: Postfeminist Femininity and a Culture of Post-Critique', *Discourse & Communication,* 3 (2009), 371-400.
[160] Ibid., p. 372.
[161] Claire Beaudreault, 'Dita Von Teese Talks to Us About Self-Love, Seduction, and the Magical Allure of Lingerie', *HelloGiggles*, 14 February 2018 <https://hellogiggles.com/fashion/clothing/dita-von-teese-interview/> [accessed 6 June 2019].

conformity. The notion of identity politics is ubiquitous in contemporary socio-political discourse and Downing responds by using the term 'identity category violations' to describe those individuals whose political affiliations or personal actions are at odds with the perceived normative characteristics of the group to which they are ascribed.'[162] Women who eschew the so-called feminine virtue of selflessness in favour of behaviours which are self-sustaining and emphasise their own primacy may then be considered 'a radical and deviant departure from the expected qualities of "woman" […] a strategic, political, and personal achievement.'[163] Dita Von Teese — a child-free, formerly married, burlesque performer and pin-up model who helms a successful business built on her international celebrity — could be argued to be emblematic of what Downing might consider a self-ful woman. Though she embodies a sexualised persona, she is first and foremost a businesswoman who has forged a highly paid career. This level of celebrity, whether the result of a patriarchal bargain or not, could be deemed an exercise of rational self-concern.

Dita's paradoxical nature again manifests in the idea that what results from her self-fulness (emphasis on female sexual pleasure, wearing glamourous fashions for one's own satisfaction, business acumen, personal wealth, etc.) is a direct result of her reviving and promulgating mid-twentieth century Western beauty standards. The fruits of Von Teese's non-maternal labour would be considered strategic, political, and personal achievements. In this way, a glamourous image is coded with social, economic, and political messaging.

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[162] Lisa Downing, *Selfish Women* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 1-2.
[163] Ibid.

Let us now consider how these coded aspects collectively inform and reinforce the contemporary culture of beauty and glamour.

Codifying Glamour via Self-Confidence and Sexualised Power

Glamour is codified both by the body's appearance and the personality it expresses. Von Teese's views here were expressed in a 2014 video interview with Into the Gloss. 'A maestra of seduction — someone who truly knows her craft — knows that everything has to look like you didn't try, that you just are.'[164] In this way, her presence is characterised by Castiglione's concept of *sprezzatura* — a sense of the nonchalant, of not needing to try.[165] However, the reality of Dita's image, and most pin-up in general, is purposive and highly polished. Effortful curation is apparent to the consumer. With the exception of some alternative styles of pin-up (e.g., SuicideGirls) or candid film and photography, the viewer's imagination is captured in a systematic way; it is the result of an effortful creative process (art direction, styling, lighting, etc.). Put simply, the consumer is thinking exactly what the subject or creator wants them to think. This locus of control is important and speaks again to the topic of agency in sexual subjectification. In Dita's case, she can manipulate her audience's understanding based on both her appearance and being outspoken about the value of glamour in her daily life. This imagecraft represents an aspect of her aesthetic labour in the public eye.

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[164] Into the Gloss, *The Art of Seduction Ft. Dita Von Teese* , online video revording, YouTube, 1 April 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8on8i2M3dA8/> [accessed 3 March 2018].

[165] Christopher Lee, 'Sprezzatura: Dos and Don'ts', *Gentleman's Gazette*, n.d. <https://www.gentlemansgazette.com/sprezzatura-dos-and-donts/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Von Teese refers to self-actualisation through the feelings brought about by her daily practice of wearing lingerie for her own pleasure and not the male gaze: 'it wouldn't be sexy if it didn't make me feel good'.[166] Recall Lazar's assertion on entitled femininity and this again illustrates the notion centring the individual — 'It's about me.'

Lazar also states that:

> Aesthetic labour in postfeminist culture can be described as what women want and can achieve. The latter implies the moral character of the postfeminist subject as determined, proactive and confident, taking pride in her groomed appearance because it "speaks for" the woman she ostensibly is.[167]

This concept speaks to multiple elements of the proposed method for analysing Vectors of Glamour, particularly the normalisation of glamour praxis and the promotion of methods and venues of such praxis. In the cases of Dita, Elvira, and the Original Supermodels, their celebrity is encoded both by their sexuality and their aesthetic labour. As previously discussed, the images depicting these women evoke the erotic imaginary. This is a political act because it demonstrates power on the part of one who is imagined. Here again is imagecraft at work. If the audience is moved to imagine themselves as becoming the eroticised object (or being with them), that manipulation is an enactment of the objectified.

Those acts which manipulate the imagination can be understood as part of a greater system of beauty and glamour culture. This is often rooted in self-invention whereby one becomes part of that greater system. In an interview discussing the roots of her love for pin-up style, Dita says:

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[166] Ibid.

[167] Michelle M. Lazar, '"Seriously Girly Fun!": Recontextualising Aesthetic Labour as Fun and Play in Cosmetics Advertising', in *Aesthetic Labour*, ed. by Ana Sofia Elias, Rosalind Gill, and Christina Scharff (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 51-66.

> I wanted to be different. I wanted to be glamourous because I grew up very plain Jane, blonde, from a farming town in Michigan with sisters that were prettier than me and more outgoing than me. I just wanted to have a power and I think that glamour did that for me. The art of creation and morphing myself into what I always wanted to be gave me confidence.[168]

Again, she alludes to the confidence engendered by the process and result of self-creation. This comment evokes aspects of self-esteem, particularly with respect to care of the self. This idea was communicated by Erchull and Liss in their investigation of the relationship between sexual esteem and pleasure.[169] Dita's approach to her glamourous life — particularly as discussed in her books and interviews — could be criticised as centring the male gaze. 'Why not gild the lily — that is, use makeup and perfume and anything else you like — to make you more attractive to a lover?'[170] This statement reinforces the subject's agency in the design of the self. Recall here that Dita refers to her artful self-presentation — and the seductive effect it has on others — as a type of craft. Consider that someone's craft is a carefully honed skill that results from years of training and practice. This artful approach calls to mind Firestone's work on the importance of appreciating the sex object as a source of beauty. Self-invention and personal empowerment via glamour praxis hinge on one important aspect: the beauty ritual.

The Beauty Ritual

Dita's from-scratch act of retro glamourous image-making in response to contemporary notions of feminine desirability exists in its own sort of Huizingan Magic Circle and is

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[168] A Drink With, *Dita Von Teese Interview*, online video recording, Youtube, (9 February 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0sWhlhQHpQ> [accessed 19 June 2019].
[169] Ibid.
[170] Von Teese, p. 129.

reminiscent of how young children take on fantastical identities and craft customised narratives during play. The distinction must be made here, however, that whilst the Magic Circle is concerned with play spaces as a temporary domain, Von Teese embodies this mid-twentieth century identity completely. It is not a costume but rather a daily style choice. Huizinga points to the ritualistic aspects of this domain and period of play.

Figure 19. Dita Von Teese at vanity table. *Your Beauty Mark.* 2015.

Over the years, Dita has garnered as much media attention for her beautification process as its result. Her audience can take on her signature look via instructional YouTube videos, interviews in multiple fashion and lifestyle publications, licenced merchandise, a members-only app with access to video and photo archives, two coffee table books, and most recently, a successful cottage industry selling her used clothing and

home goods online.[171] She occasionally collaborates with musician Sébastien Tellier to produce breathy French synthpop records.[172] Her presence in the marketplace promulgates not only her own image and aesthetic but also those of Hollywood's Golden Age. In the tradition of her pin-up foremothers, she is a nose art model, though instead of B-52 bombers, her image is featured on Virgin Atlantic's passenger aircraft.[173] She is a theatrical phenomenon as well, touring her burlesque revues around the world to the delight of sold-out audiences.

Each of these commercial enterprises contributes to the narrative of the highly refined beauty ritual. Dita's star quality is a result of her own self-making. Huizinga states that the ritual space of play take can many forms:

> Just as there is no formal difference between play and ritual, so the "consecrated spot" cannot be formally distinguished from the play-ground. The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e. forbidden spots […] within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart.[174]

A 2015 video produced by Marie Claire magazine features Dita seated at her vanity table, speaking directly to the camera, and providing a step-by-step tutorial on how to apply red lipstick. This entire process harkens back to the sense of Althusserian interpellation, whereby the viewer is invited into Von Teese's boudoir and can imagine themselves both

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[171] Dita Von Teese, 'Depop Shop', <https://www.depop.com/ditavonteese/> [accessed 20 June 2019].

[172] Rachel Kahn, 'Dita Von Teese on Her Sensual Debut Album', *Vogue*, 9 March 2018 <https://www.vogue.com/article/dita-von-teese-sebastien-tellier-debut-album> [accessed 26 June 2019].

[173] Rachel Jacoby, 'Dita Von Teese Virgin Atlantic's New Pin-up Girl', *InStyle*, 2010 <https://www.instyle.com/news/dita-von-teese-virgin-atlantics-new-pin-girl> [accessed 26 June 2019].

[174] Huizinga, p. 10.

as Dita's friend *and* as Dita herself.[175] This suggests the same mechanisms of play at work when children engage in games of pretend. The total beauty ritual — application of other cosmetics, grooming of hair, and garment choice — exists in its own Magic Circle. Taken further, it can be argued that the vanity table itself is a Magic Circle. To envisage the vanity table as a Magic Circle is to accept that it occupies a kind of borderland — a liminal space — existing in the space between the aspirational and the mundane.

Such a notion is present in Foucault's description of heterotopias: those spaces that are 'something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.'[176] Foucault goes on to identify the mirror as one such space.

> [The mirror] is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy […] it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.[177]

The beauty ritual space — the vanity, in this case — is designated as the Magic Circle and the mirror can be designated as the heterotopia. The individual's visage gazing back at them in the mirror creates a kind of existential otherness. As we cannot gaze at our own faces straight on — only through some manner of facsimile — we can adjust the appearance of our self but not ourselves directly. This is the heterotopia in action.

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[175] Marie Claire Magazine, *How Dita Von Teese *Really* Applies Her Famous Red Lip*, online video recording, YouTube, 22 December 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KE8vkg4ijk> [accessed 3 March 2019].

[176] Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics,* 16 (1986), 22-27 (p. 3).

[177] Ibid, p. 4.

Role Model or Scapegoat

Today, Dita Von Teese is less of a household name than she might have been 20 years ago. She occupies a rather niche celebrity space. Whereas she may have once been more widely known as an anachronistic and eccentric 90s beauty who gained even more recognition by the mainstream resulting from her marriage to Marilyn Manson, Dita is consistent. From her aesthetic style choices to the tenor of her product endorsements, Dita's public image remains largely unchanged despite a rapidly changing world. Interestingly, despite her public devotion to all things mid-twentieth century, she has embraced social media to interact with fans and advertise performances and merchandise. Fans can purchase autographs, personal effects, and even personalised video messages from the star herself via e-commerce. Despite employing the trappings of mid-twentieth century glamour, her image is promulgated by contemporary means – principally via the internet. Her pursuit of fame and money notwithstanding, Dita earns her living in the public eye and whilst it would be perhaps more authentic to completely eschew the trappings of an online presence for the sake of her anachronistic lifestyle, it would also be bad for business.

Earlier, I stated that Dita represents the use of nostalgia as a capitalist tool. For nostalgia to be efficacious in this way, it should exploit the viewer's sense that what came before is inherently more precious than what is common today. In this way, her dependence on beauty standards from a bygone era communicates that she is a rarity among her contemporaries – she is *primus inter pares* (first among equals). Evoking imagery from the so-called Golden Age of Hollywood is a powerful way to associate herself

with the great beauties of the last 100 years. This craving for the past is built into Dita's public persona and it facilitates her commercial success. Put simply: nostalgia sells. As we will see in the coming case studies, the success of pin-up via social media and Disney parks is dependent on their exploitation of nostalgia.

Let us conclude by returning to the overall methodological approach. Throughout this chapter, I have examined the various mechanisms employed by Dita Von Teese to achieve her unique brand of stardom, how those mechanisms may be understood in the context of other fashion subcultures, and what that means through a critical feminist lens. The figure below summarises the overarching themes in this case study through the lenses of the Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and my own PIN-UP framework.

Self-creation and transformation via intense beauty and fitness practices, as well as pursuit of all-consuming glamour as a daily lifestyle, rather than as an indulgence.

Freedom and separation from mundanity through conscious imagecraft of eccentric glamour

Normalising and promoting glamour praxis through empowerment and playfulness

Foucauldian Technologies of the Self

Huizingan Characteristics of Play

Fox-Wong's PIN-UP

Figure 20. Methodological Summary for Case 1 - Dita Von Teese

Broadly speaking, Dita's work represents the Foucauldian Technologies of the Self because of her intense focus on self-creation and transformation into a glamourous figure — someone who fully embraces glamour in every aspect of her life. She uses the

mechanisms of responsibilisation, healthism/grooming, normalisation, and self-esteem to project her desired image to the public. In terms of Huizingan Characteristics of Play, Dita's carefully crafted public persona conveys a sense of high polish and luxury. As such, it represents her freedom from and separation from mundanity or ordinary life. Finally, everything she does in the public eye could be considered a *Vector of Glamour* because she normalises and promotes glamour praxis through the notion that glamourous beauty can be experienced in all aspects of life.

On balance, Dita's corpus of work represents a central problem within the popular discourse on media representations of sexuality. I argue that any public figure who promotes a specific beauty standard (whatever the aesthetic) is working to normalise it to the exclusion of all other types. In Dita's case, she evangelises the power of extremely polished and formal attire for everyday wear, and she does so as a criticism of other women who dress more informally. Recall here that she dons casual denim and tee shirts as a Halloween costume. Despite her claims of not being like other women, she promulgates the same beauty standards she claims to challenge. Her thinness, whiteness, and ultra-femme presentation are not at all eccentric or unusual, they are simply presented in a more polished or formal way.

In summation, contemporary pin-up culture — and Dita herself — are complicated by a variety of factors including images of normative femininity, scholarly positions regarding the commodification of female sexuality, labour considerations, and the shifting cultural conversation propelled by social media. In light of the arguments presented in this chapter, Dita is neither a role model to be idolised, nor a scapegoat to be used to moralise about deploying sexuality for economic and social gain. She is a complex *Vector of*

Glamour. Whether or not her work is 'good' for women — or the feminist cause — is of little consequence in this thesis. Rather, I am fundamentally concerned with how her work — and contemporary pin-up culture at large — promotes beauty and glamour praxis in others, particularly within the context of nostalgia. With respect to the promotion of beauty culture and praxis, let us now consider how social media functions as a domain of personal agency, sense of play, and as a *Vector of Glamour.*

CHAPTER 2

LIKE, FOLLOW, AND SUBSCRIBE:
SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TECHNOLOGICAL VECTOR OF GLAMOUR

Figure 21. Dita Von Teese. *The Branding of Dita Von Teese.* New York Times, 23 November 2012, accessed 1 April 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/25/fashion/dita-von-teese-from-burlesque-to-a-brand.html>

Social Media as a Technological Vector of Glamour

In the image above (Figure 21), Dita is draped across a vintage sofa in a New York Times pictorial.[178] The mirrored background and angle of the camera reveals her image in four directions. The viewer can see glimpses of her body not visible if viewed only from the front. These angles are no accident — they are intended by the photographer and/or art director to be viewed and considered. This is a visual metaphor for the way social media is purposefully curated to project specific images and ideas about an individual to their

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[178] Ruth LaFerla. 'The Branding of Dita Von Teese', *The New York Times, 23 November 2012.* <*https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/25/fashion/dita-von-teese-from-burlesque-to-a-brand.html*> [accessed 1 April 2022]

audience. In addition to her stage and modelling career, Dita Von Teese has cultivated a significant social media presence.

In this chapter, I shall address the second of my three primary research questions: How does social media impact beauty and glamour praxis, particularly in the context of contemporary pin-up culture? I will examine several topics related to pin-up culture within the context of social media, as well as consumer behaviours associated with social media participation. First, I shall position social media as a technological *Vector of Glamour*. I shall then address the business and economic aspects of social media participation via social capital and the influencer economy and provide an overview of the risks of social media use including online harassment. These areas of analysis will include discussions of social media work, agentic selfhood, and sexualised labour within the context of larger beauty market forces. Finally, I shall draw upon the work of organisational and pedagogical scholars to understand how participating in online pin-up and beauty communities may lead to a sense of personal and collective social efficacy. I will frame these discussions within my methodological approach comprising Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and my Vectors of Glamour.

In much the same way that Chapter 1 focussed on Dita Von Teese as a text, so too shall social media posts (including shared words and images) be evaluated as a text. Though the examples cited herein may depict individual contributors, I shall address social media postings as a corpus for analysis. Social media images selected for this chapter comprise a range of contributor characteristics. This includes posts depicting disability, diversity of body size, queer, trans, or gender non-conforming bodies, and multiple races and ethnicities. I selected these images because of what historically marginalised bodies

contribute to the conversation around beauty standards in social media. That said, there is an important caveat: social media posts made by individual contributors are not characterised by the same measured polish as those created by businesses and other formal entities, however the rise of the social media influencer economy has blurred the lines between the private social and public business spheres. Let us begin by analysing how matters of cultural capital are understood in the context of social media.

Conceptualising Capital

The term *social media* has become synonymous with online presence. Social media outlets including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok rely on an individual user's access to the internet via computer or smartphone app. The portability of the smartphone means that social media can be experienced twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, and anywhere the user has a WiFi or cellular connection. This pervasiveness of access means that the user can be always connected to their social apps.

From a sociological perspective, these outlets ushered in a type of globalised interaction never before experienced. Social media has changed the nature of everything from basic human interactions to complex bureaucratic operations. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu conceptualised three main types of capital — economic, cultural, and social — as a way of explaining the inherent value that may be extracted from various types of accumulated labour.[179] Bourdieu defined *economic capital* as that which can

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[179] Mark Granovetter, *The Sociology of Economic Life* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 78.

immediately be converted into money; *cultural capital* as that which is characterised by education, style of dress, or general comportment; and *social capital* as that which is characterised by social obligations or connections. Both cultural and social capital may occasionally be converted to economic capital based on the nature of the interaction.[180] Bourdieu summarised the three states of cultural capital:

> the embodied state […] in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realisation of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc., and the institutionalised state, a form of objectification that must be set apart because […] it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital that it is presumed to guarantee.[181]

For the purposes of this analysis, we will focus mostly on the objectified state of cultural capital, and the general aspects of social capital as it relates to influence.

Social media extracts economic value from user interactions between individual users among themselves, as well as between individual users and advertisers. Social media platform use is projected to grow to over 5.85 billion users by 2027.[182] Each user's activity represents an enormous amount of data which possesses significant economic value. As each platform grows its user base, the quantity of data generated grows exponentially. This determines what content each user experiences when they sign into the service. Lauren Jones writes that 'social media platforms utilise mathematical equations to identify patterns in behaviours such as clicks, shares, video views, and even time spent reading an advertisement. Simply put, these algorithms predict what content to

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[180] Ibid., p. 79.

[181] Ibid., p. 80.

[182] Statista, 'Number of Social Network Users from 2017-2025'
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/> [accessed 30 June 2021].

show and to whom it will be shown.'[183] With a basic understanding of these complex

algorithms, any individual or organisation seeking to increase their exposure and influence

can leverage a social network platform to their advantage. Because every data point can

be used for economic purposes, even casual participation in social media on the part of

the individual represents a kind of labour. Pictures, tweets, and videos shared on social

media convey an objectified state of cultural capital, as well as social capital. This has

given way to the rise of social media influencers.

Social media influencers — individuals who earn money from product

endorsements — are a growing international labour force. This sector represents a

blurring of the line between the private social sphere and the public market. Therefore,

when considering the social media influencer and their potential to extract economic value

from their online presence, it is tempting to assume a binary relationship between the

private and public domains. However, as we will see, it is the illusion of friendship between

the viewer and the influencer — the hailing of the imaginary — that allows for a profitable

exchange of goods and services. Dita Von Teese's Instagram account advertises apparel

and other consumer goods companies with which she has a business relationship, as well

as her Depop store where she sells her previously used goods including homewares,

apparel, tour merchandise, and jewellery.

The impact of the influencer is so great that agencies have now been created to

manage scores of hopeful online celebrities. Tools such as Influence.co — a website that

uses online engagement data to stack rank influencer reach — are used by advertisers

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[183] Lauren Jones, 'Social Media Algorithms and How They Work', *SFGate*, 29 June 2020.
<https://marketing.sfgate.com/blog/social-media-algorithms> [accessed 23 April 2023].

and other social media personalities to recruit influencers for paid collaborations and marketing deals.[184] The advertising power of the influencer now means that '72% of major brands say they are dedicating a sizable portion of their marketing budgets to […] people with a strong relationship to an audience who can heavily sway decisions like purchasing habits.'[185] The deeper connection here is evidence of interpellation to activate the imaginary whereby the audience can imagine themselves interacting with the influencer or even being the influencer themselves. This interpellation has economic value because it encourages the consumer to purchase the promoted products.

The objectified cultural capital of the influencer is indicated by their perceived level of stylishness, trendiness, or attractiveness. To be useful in an advertising capacity, the consumer should desire to become similar to the influencer and that desire is a result of how cool, trendy, or attractive they deem the influencer. Further, the more the consumer can imagine themselves becoming like the influencer endorsing a product, the more likely they become to make those same purchases. The social capital leveraged by the influencer is the economic value of a social relationship with the audience. It is important to note here that the type of social capital extracted from online interactions possesses different qualities than offline ones. This can best be understood through the framework set forth by Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Matthew Barnidge, and Andrés Scherman who identified three points of differentiation:

> First, social media alter the structure of social communication through the articulation of latent or weak-tie relationships. This articulation function means that social media provide users with new and different kinds of social

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[184] 'Influence', <https://influence.co> [accessed 23 April 2023].

[185] Chavie Lieber, 'How and Why Do Influencers Make So Much Money?', *Vox*, 28 November 2018. <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2018/11/28/18116875/influencer-marketing-social-media-engagement-instagram-youtube> [accessed 23 April 2023].

information about relationships, from which new and different kinds of value can be derived. Second, social media promote engagement with a broader range of media content related to politics and public affairs and they afford new ways to engage with semi-public conversations occurring in egocentric social networks. These behaviours represent different avenues for users to recognize and develop value in social relationships. Finally, social media provide new ways for users to convert latent social value into social or political action.[186]

The authors indicate the value of a call to political action, as well. In the case of social media, influencers can leverage their power to multiple ends. The mere act of purchasing may be deemed a political one. In a purer political sense, the influencer may choose to encourage their followers to become involved with social change or advocacy programs.

I have endeavoured here to establish the economic and social significance of the social media market. It is a powerful and far-reaching avenue for consumerism and consumerism plays a role in the consumption of pin-up (or any other eroticised imagery). With respect to this thesis, appreciating the consumerist aspects of social media and social media influencers is vital for understanding how it functions as a Vector of Glamour. With this in mind, let us turn our attention to possible theoretical interpretations of social media.

Theoretical Interpretations of the Influencer Economy

A Foucauldian reading of social media influence — and the social and cultural capital it elicits — should confront aspects of power and labour. In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault engages with a number of Karl Marx's statements regarding the relationship between

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[186] Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Matthew Barnidge, and Andrés Scherman, 'Social Media Social Capital, Offline Social Capital, and Citizenship: Exploring Asymmetrical Social Capital Effects', *Political Communication,* 34 (2017), 44-68 (p. 46).

power and labour. Marx writes that 'the work of directing, superintending and adjusting becomes one of the functions of capital, from the moment that the labour under the control of capital, becomes cooperative.'[187] In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* Foucault addresses this ability to monitor labour in action as a means to extract maximum value from every moment spent labouring — surveillance is a 'decisive economic operator both as an internal part of the production machinery and as a specific mechanism in the disciplinary power.'[188] Within the social media landscape, this surveillance can be measured by tweets, photos, comments, downloads, clicks, and time spent online. For example, if an advertiser pays an influencer to share photos and videos endorsing their product, they can monitor the influencer's labour using these metrics. Without said metrics, the influencer cannot account for the scope of their reach or the impact of their endorsement, whilst the advertiser cannot determine a return on investment.

In an assessment of Foucault's commentary on Marx's *Capital*, Alex J. Feldman addresses Foucault's statements regarding power and labour within a Marxist framework. Feldman refers to the productive force of social labour.[189] In the context of social media influence, the productive force of social labour can be understood as the economic value extracted from all participation in social media. Feldman further explores Foucault's commentary on Marx by examining the question of labour motivation. 'This is the problem of capitalist *assujettissement* [subjection] in the broadest sense: how to motivate

[187] Karl Marx and others, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy Volume One Volume One* (London: Penguin in association with New Left Review, 1990), p. 313.
[188] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, p. 175.
[189] Alex J. Feldman, 'Power, Labour Power and Productive Force in Foucault's Reading of Capital', *Philosophy & Social Criticism,* 45 (2019), 307-33 (p. 315).

plebeians to perform waged labour.'[190] The cachet — the social and cultural capital to be gained by the participant — is a way to motivate participation in social media. Though the individual consumer may not earn a wage from their time spent online, the value of their attention, clicks, and commentary can be directly translated into profit for a third party, be that an advertiser or influencer.

In the context of this work, assujettissement can be understood as participation in the social media labour market. Feldman analyses assujettissement where Foucault's conceptualisation of power meets Marx's conceptualisation of capital:

> The increase in productive power means a change in the species or form of the power or capacity. First, the 'increase' in capacity implies a reorganisation of subjective dispositions, as much as an increase in the "objective" factors, such as weapons or industrial equipment. Second, for something like a measurable and significant increase to be possible, a new form of collective assujettissement is necessary. This assujettissement should be heard in a triple sense. It entails, first, a subjectivisation, or the production of motivations, desires, habits and types of self-relation in the workers in such a way that they are subjectively bound to the production process (the wage is only one factor here). Second, assujettissement also means the subjection or domination of the workers. The subject formed is, finally, the logical subject or that of which powers can be predicated as if they were properties – that which appears as their bearer.[191]

Social media participation as it relates to economic value represents a sea change in the form of capital. That is, the advertiser or the influencer can labour in brand new ways: not by toiling in a factory but rather by showcasing goods and services online in the guise of a gentle recommendation from a trusted friend.

In relation to social media, labour is represented by ever-changing algorithms that track and organise what content the consumer views online. The production of motivations

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[190] Ibid., p. 321.
[191] Ibid., p. 315.

and desires binds the user to the production process via the perceived social capital that comes from interaction with an influencer. That is, if the user has hope that an influencer notices or engages with them in some way, the user is likely to spend more time generating valuable clicks and purchasing recommended goods. Finally, and perhaps most compellingly, the subject (the consumer, in this case) is deemed the property. In the case of social media, the value of a follower — someone who has subscribed to an influencer's account and receives regular updates in their social newsfeed — is immense. This value is so great that influencers and advertisers often purchase bulk fake follower accounts to increase the perceived value of their brand.[192] That fake followers can be purchased also speaks to the larger issue of the manipulative nature of social media. That is, social media feeds — including photos, videos, and written statements — are typically the result of carefully curated imagecraft, particularly in the case of influencers who seek to portray a specific lifestyle to their followers. This portrayal is not always an accurate reflection of their daily lived experiences and can be viewed as a type of play acting.

In terms of Huizinga's concept of the Magic Circle, recall that this space represents a 'temporary world within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart.'[193] As it relates to social media, the smartphone app or website occupy the space of the Magic Circle. An individual's online identity can be manipulated to reflect the reality they wish to communicate. This can take many forms including the heavy filtering or alteration of photos, the portrayal of a lavish lifestyle using expensive rented goods, or even the creation of fictional online identities used for the purpose of harming or

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[192] Chavie Lieber, 'The Dirty Business of Buying Instagram Followers', *Vox*, 11 September 2014 <https://www.vox.com/2014/9/11/7577585/buy-instagram-followers-bloggers> [accessed 23 April 2023].
[193] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: The Play Element in Culture,* p. 10.

manipulating others. Photo filters installed on camera apps can smooth wrinkles, change skin tone, or add whimsical animated elements in an Augmented Reality format. Filters are widely used and 'simultaneously reflect and perpetuate beauty standards in the digital space.'[194] There is an entire industry dedicated to creating the appearance of wealth and luxury in online social spaces.

> A project called Inequaligram, run by the City University of New York, looked at 7.5 million Instagram posts shared in Manhattan in 2014 and concluded that wealthy neighbourhoods were dramatically over-represented in posts, including those from people who lived in poorer parts of the city.[195]

The desire to craft fictional narratives around wealth and access has led to the opening of purpose-built theme museums and photo studios featuring elaborate backdrops — including private plane sets — that can be rented by the hour.[196] In its most extreme form, catfishing — the act of stealing another's online identity or creating an entirely fake identity for deceptive purposes — is usually considered a form of cyberbullying.[197] There exists a spectrum of deliberate online misrepresentation. Though not always intended negatively, the aggregated result shows deleterious effects on the individual and society. In each of the above examples, there exists a tacit reinforcement of normative beauty standards that are conveyed by the appearance of such signifiers as wealth, youth, and thinness. In this way, the scope of the Magic Circle is magnified because of the ability for the individual to

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[194] Jessica Wakeman, 'Your Favorite Selfie Filter Could Be Contributing to a Mental Health Crisis', *THINK NBC*, 15 January 2018 <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/your-favorite-selfie-filter-could-be-contributing-mental-health-crisis-ncna837376> [accessed 23 April 2023].

[195] Marie-Danielle Smith, 'Appearing Wealthy on Social Media Has Become Its Own Industry', *Macleans*, 10 March 2020 https://macleans.ca/society/appearing-wealthy-on-social-media-has-become-an-industry/ [accessed 23 April 2023].

[196] Hazel Cills, ''Fake Private Plane Girls': The Deceptive Genius of the Inlfuencer Backdrop Economy', *Jezebel*, 29 September 2020 <https://jezebel.com/fake-private-plane-girls-the-deceptive-genius-of-the-i-1845203013> [accessed 23 April 2023].

[197] Syahida Hassan and others, 'Social Media Influencer and Cyberbullying: A Lesson Learned from Preliminary Findings', *9th Knowledge Management International Conference* (2018), 200-05.

manipulate every aspect of their online identity. This is to say that the stakes are higher: changing one's online appearance is not just a playful experiment (though it may be in some cases), but it is a reinforcement of specific social norms.

To examine these effects, Connie Morrison researched the use of avatars created by teenage girls to represent themselves in online social spaces. For those girls who chose to represent themselves as animated avatars, rather than using real photographs, Morrison discovered the insidiousness of this form of online representation. 'While these avatars do not actively woo members into hegemonic or patriarchal discourses, their work is much more subtle. They prey on a desire to belong, to be cool, all while promising the effect of being unique.'[198] Though focussed on girlhood identities, Morrison's work can be used to highlight the subtext of the act of altering one's online identity: the use of physical appearance to imbue desirability or acceptability as a way of attaining social capital.

These assertions align with elements of my Vectors of Glamour, as well. Chiefly, the act of changing one's online persona is the result of a worldwide cultural obsession with **promulgating glamour as a goal.** In this context, the term *glamour* is a stand-in for a variety of the factors of desirability stated above, including wealth, youth, and thinness. To conceive of a different appearance or persona, the individual must be, in some way, hailed or **interpellated to activate the imaginary**; they must imagine themselves possessing these specific traits of desirability. That the use of photo filtering apps has become so ubiquitous in online culture is evidence of the **normalisation of glamour praxis.** Put simply, everyone else is doing it so what could be the harm? Any time the

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[198] Connie Morrison, 'Creating and Regulating Identity in Online Spaces', in *Girlhood and the Politics of Place*, ed. by Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), 244-58 (p. 249).

individual can gain social or cultural capital, especially when they can extract economic capital — is a time when they are experiencing the **unification of mechanisms of power and play**. Finally, the tools and behaviours associated with altering or fully falsifying one's online presence further **promote methods and venues of glamour praxis**. This is a powerful cycle characteristic of online social networking spaces. As the use of social networking platforms grows, societal attitudes towards modification of the online persona will change to reflect new social norms.

Taken together, the increased acceptance of these alteration tactics has led to their normalisation. What is most compelling about this phenomenon is that, at its core, it is not a question of dishonesty, but rather a question of adaptation and survival. If someone is deemed by either themselves or society to possess undesirable traits in the real world, they can achieve acceptance online using a variety of adjustments to their appearance or persona. In this way, the end justifies the means. If the user's lies or exaggerations about themselves online are couched in normalised practices (e.g., photo filtering apps) and this results in increased social capital or access, these practices become more easily accepted by others even if the truth is later discovered.

In the 2016 book *Capture Your Style: Transform Your Instagram Photos, Showcase Your Life, and Build the Ultimate Platform,* social media influencer Aimee Song guides the reader in maximising the reach and effectiveness of their Instagram feed in the development of an online business. She instructs readers on the finer points of curating an effective Instagram presence, covering topics ranging from photo geotagging and hashtagging, camera selection, affiliate programs, branded postings, and creating a fee

structure for potential advertisers and other business partners.[199] Fashion design icon Diane Von Furstenberg authored the book's foreword and extolled the value of this platform: Instagram is a fascinating way to communicate because it is about intimacy, of course, but it is also about immediacy […] authenticity and transparency are the order of the day.'[200] Compelling though the idea may be, it does speak to what I believe is the inherent paradox in social media: the creation of a false sense of intimacy between the consumer and the producer within a public domain. Von Furstenberg's assertion that Instagram engenders both intimacy and immediacy whilst placing value on authenticity and transparency on the part of the influencer is troubling in the context of a book about how to curate a lifestyle online. I argue that actual authenticity and transparency have very little to do with the effectiveness of a social media presence, but instead the illusion of authenticity and transparency is more important. Were actual honesty that highly valued, filtering a selfie or posing with rented goods to communicate luxury would be frowned upon. In short, the social media consumer generally seeks the same type of polished image they might get as a result of the Hollywood press machine, rather than an intimate and honest examination of the influencer's life.

As the influencer economy has become more closely tied to recognisable brands, these affiliations serve to legitimise the both the influencer's individual brand as well as the influencer economy as a whole. Diane Von Furstenberg's support for the whole enterprise in the form of her foreword to Aimee Song's book is an example of such legitimisation. These relationships are dependent on the advertiser's budget and the

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[199] Aimee Song, *Capture Your Style: Transform Your Instagram Photos, Showcase Your Life, and Build the Ultimate Platform* (New York: Abrams, 2016).
[200] Ibid, p. 2.

influencer's scope of reach online. Influencers with a smaller online presence will find it difficult to engage with very large brands. Conversely, small or emerging businesses will find in difficult to do business with very well-known influencers. In these cases, small companies seeking brand recognition and increased sales are encouraged to engage with micro-influencers — social media personalities with fewer than 10,000 followers. Micro-influencers typically provide more social interaction with the target market and cost less to hire than their more famous peers.[201]

Though most influencers market a contemporary aesthetic, we must now consider how mid-twentieth century style pin-up has found its way on to these platforms. We must also examine the implications of sharing bygone style images using a thoroughly contemporary mode of dissemination. The success of online pin-up and other fashion subcultures relies upon the establishment of social intimacy between the viewer and the influencer.

Pin-Up Style and Curated Social Intimacy

Influencers are adept at curating a kind of social intimacy with their viewers. This translates both to personal connection with the viewer and to economic value from business partners. Note that whilst many contributors discussed herein have a mid-twentieth century pin-up aesthetic, there are some outliers whose style or online presence are such that they should be included in this group. For the social media influencer, there is great importance in establishing one's brand and setting oneself apart from the many others

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[201] Amio Chowdury, '5 Ways to Find Micro-Influencers for Your Small Business', *Social Hire*, n.d. <https://social-hire.com/blog/small-business/5-ways-to-find-micro-influencers-for-your-small-business> [accessed 23 April 2023].

working in the same milieu. As such, influencers often attempt to differentiate themselves by injecting their own unique life experience into their online presence. Though the overall aim is to extract capital from an online persona, the influencer can amass a greater following by accentuating what makes them unique. Here again is evidence of the influencer's pursuit of authenticity (or at least the appearance of it) in the crafting of a social media presence.

Jessica Kellgren-Fozard (@jessicaoutofthecloset), British YouTuber, BBC presenter, and Instagram influencer, models vintage and pin-up attire whilst discussing her experience as a disabled lesbian. She describes herself as a 'Deaf + Disabled Activist and LGBTQ+ Advocate'. She occasionally employs communication and mobility aids on camera including hearing aids, British Sign Language, crutches, or wheelchairs in her videos. Her Instagram photos are often tagged with the names of companies from whom she has purchased clothing or with whom she has an advertising contract. As is the case with many social media personalities, she also has an online store where fans can purchase merchandise featuring her catchphrases and images of her and her wife.[202] Kellgren-Fozard has received criticism for not appearing 'disabled enough' to discuss disability-related issues owing in part to the fact that she only occasionally uses communication and mobility aids on camera.[203] She has leveraged her classic physical beauty, mid-twentieth century fashion sensibility, and experience as a chronically ill disabled woman into a business. In the Instagram post shown below (Figure 22), Kellgren-

[202] @jessicaoutofthecloset, Instagram Page, <https ://www.instagram.com/jessicaoutofthecloset/?hl=en>
[203] Niall Paterson, 'Jessica Kellgren-Fozard: I Got Online Hate for Not Being Disabled Enough', *Divided*, 29 May 2019 <https://news.sky.com/story/jessica-kellgren-fozard-i-got-online-hate-for-not-being-disabled-enough-11730880> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Fozard is pictured in her wheelchair wearing a pink ballgown, opera-length gloves, and carrying a fan.[204] The post's text refers to the need for representation of disabled bodies of all types in the media. The image displays a unique juxtaposition: a signifier of disability (wheelchair) used by a highly glamourous, traditionally feminine, cisgender, white body attired in formalwear. Kellgren-Fozard and her wife vlogged about the birth of their child in 2021 and have since used their social media platforms to discuss parenting whilst disabled.

Figure 22. Jessica Kellgren-Fozard, *Some Princesses Have Disabilities!,* United Kingdom. Instagram, 20 November 2020, accessed 28 November 2020.

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[204]'Some Princesses Have Disabilities! I wish when I was a child I could have seen a role model with a wonky body who took care of herself. Maybe then I wouldn't have felt like I needed to push myself beyond my physical limits just to match up to everyone else. Thank goodness we have the internet now and we can make our own representation! Tag someone who also needed a disabled princess' (Instagram) Jessica Kellgren-Fozard (@jessicaoutofthecloset), 20 November 2020. [accessed 28 November 2020]

Whilst some disability bloggers and influencers share unvarnished images of themselves in times of great physical pain, Kellgren-Fozard is almost always depicted in makeup, styled hair, and carefully curated clothing. In addition to the capital extracted from her social media career, she also benefits from the ability to style herself in such a way that aligns with conventional beauty norms. In *Perfect Me*, Widdows classifies two groups of disabled bodies: those whose disability or visible physical difference place them far outside the range of 'normal' and those whose disability or disfiguration is such that they can employ techniques (e.g., cosmetics, clothing, plastic surgery) to achieve what is commonly understood to be a 'normal-appearing' body.[205]

Missi (@curvecreation) is an Australian Instagram pin-up model, YouTuber, and burlesque performer who runs an online jewellery business. She describes herself as a 'fat, queer, body positive, endo warrior, pin-up.' Whilst she does do some professional pin-up modelling of mid-twentieth century style lingerie, much of her Instagram content comprises informal snapshots of her daily clothing selections and videos of her practicing burlesque routines. Her content also contains messaging around illness and body positivity that is meant to inspire or encourage the viewer.[206] Missi's photographic and video output is generally less polished compared to Jessica Kellgren-Fozard whose online presence also reflects disabled and queer experiences. Though she does sport a mid-twentieth century pin-up aesthetic, her frankness around her weight distinguishes her from contemporaries presenting a slimmer, more widely accepted pin-up body type. It should be noted here that whilst the classic pin-up physique is generally more curvaceous than

[205] Widdows, p. 150.
[206] Danielle (aka missi) (@curvecreation), Instagram Page, <https://www.instagram.com/curvecreation/?hl=en> [accessed 23 April 2023].

the very thin body types which would become the norm during the 1990s into the 2000s, the former is associated with a proportional hourglass shape less common among contemporary plus-size pin-ups. This also points to an important shift in the lexicon surrounding plus-size bodies: the use of the term *curvy*. Whereas the term was formerly used to describe hourglass figures featuring large busts, narrow waists, and wider hips, and slender extremities, it is now commonly used as an adjective describing fat or plus-size bodies in general.

Figure 23. Missi. Have another reminiscent shot from this gorgeous shoot last year. Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, Instagram, accessed 30 November 2020, <*https://www.instagram.com/p/CGtUS-wlVbe/*>

In a 2020 Instagram photograph, Missi is pictured modelling lingerie at a local pub.[207] Rúbia Guimarães Ribeiro and Maria Henriqueta Luce Kruse's work on the dissemination of women's beauty media analyses what is conferred by body weight within a Foucauldian context.

> The search for a slim body is seen as a strategy in which the technology of disciplinary power prevails […] we transmit very deep social meanings; one of them is that the girth represents, to the eyes of those who see it, part of the food that we take, which metaphorically represents our part in wealth distribution. As if our loyalty was represented by distribution rules and our adherence to the social cohesion. Thus, fat people are seen as people who cannot control themselves, as offenders who break the rules of nutrition, of desire and self-control.[208]

These perspectives tie directly back to matters of embodiment and the Technologies of the Self particularly to the technology of responsibilisation. This passage implies that a lack of control on the part of the fat person designates them as irresponsible and inherently deviant. By this logic, fat people violate societal norms. In the context of Missi's high-gloss photoshoot, the image of a well-groomed subject projecting sexual allure is juxtaposed against her frank representation of fatness. It is a transgressive act that confers information around material wealth, self-control, and sexual power.

In another example, self-proclaimed 'body activist and fat feminist mother' Amy Pence-Brown (@idaho_amy), is an American recreating images from Duane Bryers' pin-up drawings of Hilda the Fat Pin-Up Girl as part of her photo project *Reviving Hilda*.

> Her imagery has been a positive breath of fresh air in the body shame and sex shame-filled media we've been used to

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[207] , 'Have another reminiscent shot from this gorgeous shoot last year, because I'm working my toosh off today while also doing my laundry so no nice hair/face/clothes today.Wearing lingerie by @desvalidoau . Photography by @wolfe.st . Muah by @stephaniejane shot at the @babylon_newcastle' (Instagram) (Danielle (aka missi) (@curvecreation), 24 October 2020).

[208] Rúbia Guimarães Ribeiro and Maria Henriqueta Luce Kruse, 'The Woman Body in Review: The Imperative of Beauty', *Texto & Contexto-Enfermagem,* 23 (2014), 105-06.

consuming for so long. [She] shows us that at some time someone else found big girls' curves sensual, silliness sexy, softness endearing, confidence bold and bare skin beautiful. And that maybe, just maybe, we can find that in ourselves, too.[209]

Figure 24. Daily Mail courtesy of Amy Pence-Brown (@idaho_amy). Boise, Idaho, USA, accessed 1 December 2020. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-8105391/Plus-size-woman-recreates-1950s-pin-shots-body-positive-shoot.html>

Among photographs in the Daily Mail profile, Pence-Brown is pictured bathing herself. She often incorporates images of herself reading feminist and fat activist texts into her recreations of the Hilda drawings. Her Instagram content features not only her Hilda photographs, but also images from her daily life and messages about sex positivity.

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[209] Erica Tempesta, 'Body-Positive Pin Ups! Woman, 44, Celebrates Her Curves by Recreating Cheeky Calendar Shots of 1950s Plus-Size Pin-up Girl Hilda', *Daily Mail*, 12 March 2020 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-8105391/Plus-size-woman-recreates-1950s-pin-shots-body-positive-shoot.html> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Fat activism and body positivity are movements whose reach has grown with the help of social media and the ease with which images of fat or plus-sized bodies (including pin-ups) can be disseminated. There is significant overlap in the realms of Fat Studies scholarship, fat activism, and liberal feminism, particularly with regards to the emerging conversation surrounding identity politics. Within this area of study, Foucault's work has long been a bulwark in the analysis of societal expectations of the body. In *Fat Activism,* Charlotte Cooper applies a Foucauldian lens to the ways in which 'fat people are socially controlled, stratified, surveilled, regimented, patrolled, and self-governing.'[210] Cooper further asserts that she is 'not going to explore whether or not fat people are healthy, the prime concern in the world of obesity, although I am very much interested in how fat people cope with being treated as unhealthy.'[211] This sentiment — which ignores the medical aspects surrounding obesity, focussing instead on the feelings and social experiences of fat people — has been criticised as being anti-science and in conflict with reality.

Helen Pluckrose takes specific umbrage with Charlotte Cooper's book — and many of the core messages within the fat activist movement in general — which ignore the health challenges to an obese body. 'This neglect of science happens a great deal in Fat Studies, because, for the scholars and activists, "other ways of knowing" about obesity are far more important.'[212] I argue that these other ways of knowing indicate a problematic trend favouring modes of affective empowerment for marginalised bodies. In this way, affect eclipses and attempts to supplant the value of objective enquiry writ large. Pluckrose

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[210] Charlotte Cooper, *Fat Activism: A Radical Social Movement* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2016).
[211] Ibid.
[212] Helen Pluckrose, 'Big Fat Lies" the Fat Activism Movement Is Risking Lives by Suppressing Obesity Research', in *The Critic*, December 2019 <https://thecritic.co.uk/issues/december-2019/big-fat-lies/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

further objects to the notion among fat activists that societal concerns about obesity are rooted in bigotry. 'If concern about obesity and associated disease, disability and early death is understood to reflect a hatred of fat people, be linked to homophobia and have its roots in white supremacy and imperialism, it naturally becomes immoral to take any steps to reduce one's obesity.'[213] Pluckrose's statements represent an inflection point in the cultural conversation surrounding fatness, particularly with respect to fat acceptance as social justice. In their analysis of the fat acceptance movement, Deborah McPhail and Michael Orsini write that this work 'maintains that fatness should be uncoupled from pathology, as such framings attach fatness to a sense of moral weakness and failed citizenship, and can fuel stigma in various settings, even health care.'[214] Though Foucault's work is helpful in understanding how the plus-size body may be disciplined by and for society, this theoretical approach should not be interpreted as licence to reject an entire corpus of scientific research. Doing so ignores the very reality of the body in society because that body remains subject to societal surveillance whether or not it wants to be surveilled.

In the context of this thesis, there is nothing within the PIN-UP criteria which precludes images of plus-size bodies from functioning as Vectors of Glamour. Whilst I argue against the use of Foucauldian theory to justify anti-science messaging commonly associated with fat activism, it should be noted that the five criteria for Vectors of Glamour can be effectively applied to plus-size pin-ups or those of any marginalised identity. The promulgation of glamour as a goal, interpellation to activate the imaginary, normalisation

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[213] Ibid.
[214] Deborah McPhail and Michael Orsini, 'Fat Acceptance as Social Justice', *CMAJ,* 193 (2021), E1398-99.

of glamour praxis, unification of mechanisms of power and play, and the promotion of methods and venues of glamour praxis are just as evident in images of plus-size pin-ups as elsewhere in the online pin-up community.

Lailah Lancing (@ms.lancing) is a transgender model and performer based in New York City. Her Instagram content features pin-up style imagery and discussions about social justice, particularly around her experience as a transgender woman. Unlike many social media personalities discussed in this section, Lancing does not appear to sport pin-up style every day, yet when she does, she is commonly seen attired in classic mid-twentieth century pin-up style including Bettie Page fringe, red lips, and black winged eyeliner.[215] Pictured here in heavy pin-up makeup, tattoos, and red sequin pasties, she is posed in a provocative manner. Though her facial expression is less coy than would be typical of a mid-twentieth century style pin-up, the subject projects that same level of powerful hyperfemininity whilst appearing sexually commanding.[216]

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[215] @ms.lancing, Instagram Page, <https://www.instagram.com/ms.lancing/?hl=en> [accessed 1 December 2020].
[216] , ''Too much? GOOD! She X-tra!!! #sexypinup #transisbeautiful #owningit #sowhat #alittlethoty #naughtygirlsneedlovetoo #holidayphoto #transpinupgirl #transrockabillygirl #imsexyandiknowit #imagrownwoman #over40 #boobs #pasties #leopard' (Instagram), Lailah Lancing (@ms.lancing), 6 February 2020).

Figure 25. Lailah Lancing. *Too much? GOOD! She X-tra!!!* Brooklyn, New York, USA, Instagram, accessed 1 December 2020.<https://www.instagram.com/p/B8PABkCHqZn/>

In a 2014 visual narrative analysis of erotic self-shot images posted online by bloggers, Katrin Tiidenberg explored how the dissemination of self-created sexual imagery may be viewed as a Technology of the Self for both cisgender and transgender individuals. Specifically, the author refers to ways in which the internet offers the chance for experimentation by offering 'new forms of visual and sexual cultures; spaces for new kinds of sexualities, where they become destabilised, decentred, and de-essentialised. In a sense then, we can carve out stigma suspension spaces online.'[217] Tiidenberg argues that participating in these 'stigma suspension spaces' can be useful for the reclamation of the body aesthetic through the application of critical self-awareness and self-care in a

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[217] Katrin Tiidenberg, 'Bringing Sexy Back: Reclaiming the Body Aesthetic Via Self-Shooting', *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace,* 8 (2014).

Foucauldian sense. Taken further, the selfie (erotic or otherwise) can offer those who experience body or gender dysphoria — including transgender individuals — a satisfactory gender experience. The empowerment conferred by the deliberate sharing images of one's own crafting can be self-affirming.

In a Huizingan context, the experience of dressing in a pin-up style may offer transgender individuals the opportunity to experiment with traditionally feminine sartorial signifiers. Though the Huizingan framework is most associated with play spaces, experiences like dressing in a manner consistent with one's gender identity ought not be dismissed as merely a game. Indeed, it need not be specifically pin-up style but donning gendered clothing often functions as an important step in understanding one's own identity.

Figure 26. Wanneroo Times courtesy of Rachel Oliver, Perth, Western Australia, Australia, accessed 1 December 2020<https://www.perthnow.com.au/community-news/wanneroo-times/transgender-pinup-finds-liberation-and-confidence-as-a-woman-c-781377>

For Rachel Oliver of Perth, Australia, local pin-up social groups provided a friendly and safe space to explore gender-affirming clothing options whilst transitioning in her late 50s. Though she does not don classic pin-up attire daily, she explains that such clothing provided freedom of expression. 'The pinup groups in Perth are very accepting of me as a woman. When I transitioned, that allowed me freedom to express myself in that way. Older people like myself feel free to come out now, whereas many years ago we would probably have gone to our graves with this gender dysphoria.'[218] Though she is not a social media influencer earning money from an online presence, Oliver was included in this analysis because of the nature of her pin-up experience as part of local social clubs devoted to the aesthetic. Oliver states that her experience of gender benefits from this face-to-face communal interaction. In a 2016 Wanneroo Times article, she is featured in pearls and a mid-twentieth century style polka dot halter dress with cardigan.

Pin-up models of colour may confront unique challenges not experienced by their white counterparts. Pin-up model, burlesque performer, and Instagram influencer Ruby Champagne (@rubychampagne) says that pin-up is a way to celebrate her Latina heritage.[219] 'Perhaps I haven't been selected for certain features/shows or publications because I'm a curvy Latina. It doesn't bother me in the least as I've been given many other

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[218] Lucy Jarvis, 'Transgender Pinup Finds Liberation and Confidence as a Woman', *Wanneroo Times*, 17 August 2016 <https://www.perthnow.com.au/community-news/wanneroo-times/transgender-pinup-finds-liberation-and-confidence-as-a-woman-c-781377> [accessed 1 December 2020].

[219] @rubychampagne, Instagram Page, <https://www.instagram.com/ruby_champagne/?hl=en-gb> [accessed 2 December 2020].

opportunities that celebrate my curves and my roots.'[220] In a 2019 Instagram photo, Ruby Champagne is pictured wearing a sequin beret, a leopard print belt, and high heels atop a pile of crinoline.

Figure 27. Ruby Champagne. *I woke up like this,* Instagram, Los Angeles, California, USA, accessed 2 December 2020 <https://www.instagram.com/p/B0GlBvxjBT1/>

Whilst many contemporary pin-up models build their brand around a love of vintage style, not all will sustain the same aesthetic throughout their careers. Masuimi Max (@masuimimax) is a fetish and alternative model who previously performed almost exclusively in burlesque and mid-twentieth century style pin-up styles but now works primarily with bondage and horror imagery.[221] She cited early influences as Mamie Van

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[220] Sophia Florence, '"Be Proud of Your Hispanic Roots." Pin-up Model Ruby Champagne Talks About Her Experiences as a Hispanic Pin-up Girl', *That Pin Up*, 22 May 2019 <https://www.thatpinup.com/2019/05/Rita-Hayworth-Hispanic-pin-up-girl-ruby-champagne-Margarita-Carmen-Cansino.html> [accessed 23 April 2023].
[221] @masuimimax, Instagram page, <https://www.instagram.com/masuimimax/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Doren and Bettie Page and still occasionally appears in traditional mid-twentieth century style pin-up photos.[222] Max's focus has shifted to darker, more controversial territory including a feature as the cover model for of *Girls and Corpses Magazine.*[223] In a 2020 Instagram post, Max is pictured in a leather and latex harness holding a latex plush doll.[224] This ability to move in and out of different aesthetic milieus aligns both with Foucauldian technologies of self and Huizingan spaces of play.
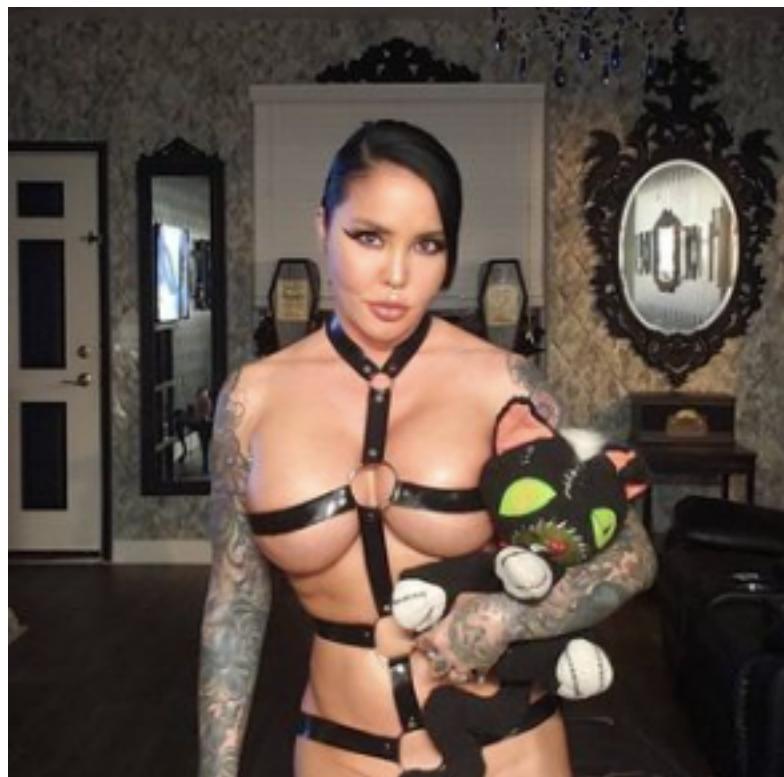
Figure 28. Masuimi Max. *I know you're cute but what am I?* Instagram, Los Angeles, California, USA, accessed 2 December 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CEmq3JhgChi/>

Angelique Noire (@the_angelique_noire), also known as The Black Pinup, is a pin-up model, vintage stylist, and Instagram influencer. She has amassed a significant

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[222] 'Interview Bites with Frankie Tease: Masuimi Max at Viva Las Vegas 15', *Frankie Tease Magazine*, 2012 <http://www.frankietease.com/2012/06/interview-bites-with-frankie-tease.html> [accessed 2 December 2020].
[223] www.masuimimax.com
[224] '''I know you're cute but what am I? Link in bio NOW!' (Instagram) @masuimimax, 2020).

runway, print, digital modelling, and stylist portfolio including advertisements for well-known fashion brands including Tiffany and Co., Chanel, and Victoria's Secret. Angelique has also been featured in collaborations with Dita Von Teese in promotion of her lingerie range. Among mid-twentieth century -styled pin-up models, Angelique's commercial success gives her access to a broader audience and range of professional opportunities than many of her lesser-known contemporaries. Her Instagram photos are highly polished and depict her in a variety of settings and attire from the everyday to the boudoir.[225] As a woman of colour, her work challenges a predominantly white narrative surrounding pin-up modelling. Tiffani Jones, writer and founder of the blog Coffee Rhetoric, discussed the lack of Black pin-up imagery and what it confers about black women's bodies, particularly when viewed by non-Black audiences.

> Black women's sexuality has always come under fire from intra-racial respectability politics, racio-misogyny and racism when juxtaposed against white womanhood; even presently in this culture of music video vixens and "booty mags", where certain physical attributes ascribed to Black women are only ever lauded when presented on non-Black bodies. And, since time immemorial, "white supremacist capitalist male patriarchy" [bell hooks] dictates beauty norms (as it does most other things) and media representation.[226]

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[225] , ''What are you grateful for today? I am grateful that I can spend the day at home to fight this cold. That makes it a #BookDay & #SleepyTime kind of day! This #flashback photo was taken for @teaseandcakemagazine. Wearing @lucyblingerie' (Instagram), @the_angelique_noire, 9 February 2018.

[226] Tiffani Jones, 'Secret History of the Black Pin Up: From Tease to Sleaze', *Coffee Rhetoric,* 20 October 2011, <https://www.coffeerhetoric.com/2011/10/secret-history-of-black-pin-up-from.html> [accessed 26 April 2023].
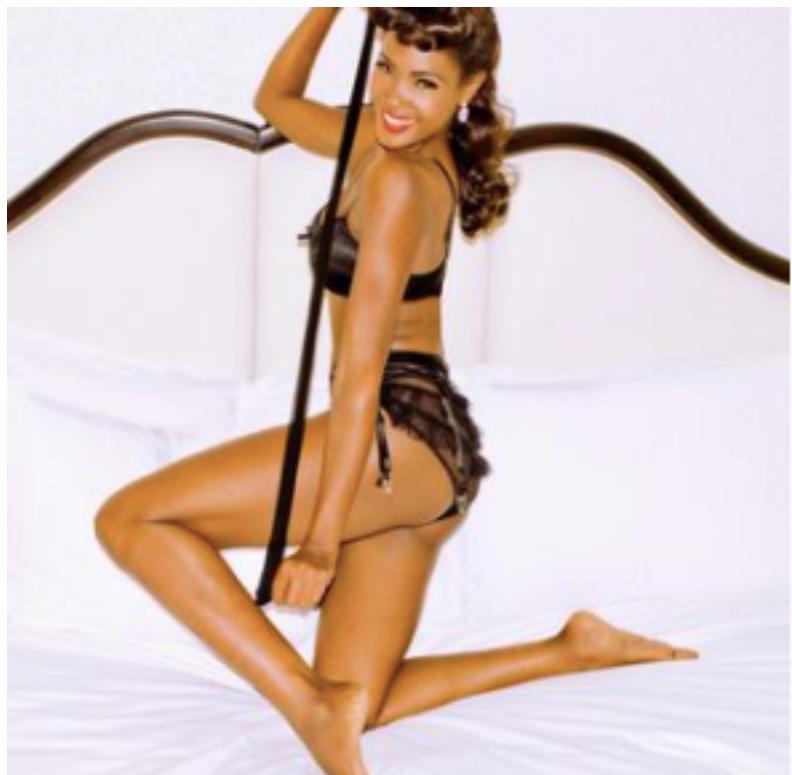
Figure 29. Angelique Noire, *What are you grateful for today?* Los Angeles, California, USA, Instagram, accessed 28 November 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Be-u_M_H5M4/>

In a 2014 interview with Vogue Italia's VBLACK blog, Angelique said 'I have always loved the 1940s and 50s pin-up style since childhood, but always wish I could see more Black women in this style from then and now. As a result of the lack of "Black Pin-up" images that existed, I created Angelique Noire in July 2011, as a way to show that Black women can pull this look off too.'[227]

American YouTuber and Instagram influencer Ti (@nappyheadedjojoba) originally gained online prominence as a natural hair and beauty vlogger but has since pivoted to offer more social and racial justice content, often discussing complex matters of race and

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[227] 'Interview with Angelique Noire', *Vogue Italia – VBLACK Blog*, 2014<https://www.vogue.it/en/vogue-black/the-black-blog/2014/07/angelique-noire> [accessed 2 December 2020].

capitalism centred on her experience as a Black American woman. Though Ti's aesthetic is not specifically that of a mid-twentieth century pin-up model, she was chosen for this analysis because of the political nature of her work through the use of makeup, hairstyling, and clothing. Per de Zúñiga et al., the act of partaking in the social media ecosystem is already inherently political and Ti's work specifically leverages her online presence to discuss the American socio-political landscape — typically whilst applying makeup or styling her hair on camera. Ti uses her platform and beauty-related content to discuss the nature of American politics and those working in American government.[228] Her YouTube content has been criticised for bringing polarising political discussions into what started as a beauty channel and has had several videos demonetised by YouTube's advertising algorithm on the basis of either coarse language or politically provocative imagery.

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[228] @nappyheadedjojoba, Instagram page, <https://www.instagram.com/nappyheadedjojoba/?hl=en> [accessed 24 April 2023].

Figure 30. Ti, *A #LosAngelesCountyVoterGuide from your friendly neighbourhood socialist,* Los Angeles, California, USA, Instagram, accessed 28 November 2020,
https://www.instagram.com/p/CGG2aK7Bryd/

In an Instagram video post from 8 October 2020, Ti discussed ballot propositions and candidates for the 2020 city, local, and national office, giving her support to politically progressive causes and individuals.[229] From a Foucauldian standpoint, her work exemplifies the concept of the body as a site of political power and that the actions of the body represent a kind of political technology. For example, Ti frequently discusses the

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[229] 'A #LosAngelesCountyVoterGuide from your friendly neighborhood socialist. Cheat sheet, in case you wanna screenshot. NO to Jackie Lacey. Vote her OUT. YES to @nithyaforthecity (LA City Council, District 4) YES on Measure RR YES on Measure J NO on Prop 14 (accidentally skipped this one -- it *sounds* good, but DSA and CA Environmental Justice Alliance agree that it just creates loopholes for private companies to benefit off of stem cell research by "loaning" Californians the money at rates where we'd have to pay back DOUBLE!) YES on Prop 15 YES on Prop 16 YES on Prop 17 YES on Prop 18 NO on Prop 19 NO on Prop 20 YES on Prop 21 NO on Prop 22 YES on Prop 23 NO on Prop 24 NO on Prop 25 Links in my bio to @dsa_la's and #LAProgressive's voter guides for more information.' (Instagram) (Ti (@nappyheadedjojoba), 9 October 2020.

political messaging behind sporting natural or protective hairstyles in the Black community. Ribeiro and Kruse state that 'this technology cannot be seen in a particular institution nor in the State; it is found in [sic] a completely different level, as a microphysics of power. In it, power is exercised not as property but as a strategy; with techniques and tactics that give its domination effects.'[230] This notion of power as strategy enacted through the body is well-represented throughout Ti's work. Though she does not employ pin-up style, this influencer's explicit linkage of power and beauty practices merits inclusion in this analysis.

Taken together, the above examples illustrate not only the influencer's quest for authenticity (perceived or otherwise), but also the politics of representation within and against a beauty narrative that is predominantly white, slender, cisgender, heterosexual, and non-disabled. In a Foucauldian sense, the self-sharing of images of bodies of all types is a Technology of the Self and should be viewed as an inherently political act, particularly when those images depict historically marginalised bodies. In a Huizingan sense, these individuals are not merely play acting a role — they are expressing a specific identity alongside the signifiers of glamour (e.g., styled hair, makeup, wardrobe). There is an interesting tension here because this glamorous polish can be understood as a method of normalising marginalised bodies. Finally, with respect to the Vectors of Glamour, it is important to understand that glamour of any type can fit the proposed criteria. Whilst definitions of glamour are highly subjective and contextually dependent — as are standards of beauty — those definitions are relatively inconsequential. Rather, the criteria

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[230] Ribeiro and Kruse, p. 107.

are focussed on how notions of glamour are disseminated. Having showcased a variety of social media examples, it is now useful to consider how social media enables mechanisms not only for creative self-expression, but also for harassment and potential violence.

Cyberbullying and Harassment in Social Media Spaces

As social media emerges as a primary form of human interaction, so too does the opportunity for intimidation of those who participate. In this section, I will explore how participation in social media — particularly image sharing — represents an avenue for the bullying and harassment of women and those of marginalised identities. I will also contextualise these phenomena within the work of Foucault, Huizinga, and my criteria for Vectors of Glamour. Whilst bullying and harassment are both characterised by 'actions of power and control, actions that hurt or harm another person physically or emotionally, and an imbalance of power between the target and the individual demonstrating the negative behaviour,' harassment specifically refers to behaviours targeting protected characteristics including gender identity, religion, disability, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.[231] Understanding the nature of cyberbullying and online harassment is relevant to the overall aim of this thesis because of the risks faced by those who share images on social media, particularly in the case of women and marginalised bodies.

Despite the glamourous nature of pin-up imagery, those who share these images on social media may still face cyberbullying and harassment. Pin-up models may be

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[231] PACER'S National Bullying Prevention Center, 'What Is the Difference between Bullying and Harassment?', <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/info/questions-answered/bullying-harassment.asp> [accessed 24 April 2023].

targeted by anonymous online commenters who make threatening statements via comments section or direct message. These statements may include 'harsh words about body type, general cattiness or even [a model] being told to take her own life.'[232] Though pin-up modelling reflects a specific aesthetic, this type of invective is commonly used against women across social media, regardless of their sartorial choices. In a 2016 interview with the vintage lifestyle blog Perfectly Pinned-Up, model Emily Doll described experiencing online cruelty from people known to her.

> Right after I had done my first professional shoot I was attacked by a group of personal friends. They shared my photos and tore me apart all over social media calling me "fake" and a "poser" and that I "needed my ass kicked," says Doll. "It was really hard to endure because I loved these people and I looked up to them and the lifestyle they lived and wanted to share it with them. They turned on me in a heartbeat.[233]

Pin-up model Derby Dollface also reported experiences with online abuse. 'The majority of bullies [do what they do] so they don't become a victim themselves. We see it everywhere these days, social networks and cyber bullying, apps that help you bully, pages dedicated to slander and humiliation of others.'[234] It is interesting to note that some of the bullying described here can be explained by cultural gatekeeping — a way for those inside a niche community to criticise or restrict participation within the same community. Gatekeeping is common across social media. Recall the earlier example of social media influencer Jessica Kellgren-Fozard who has been criticised for not appearing 'disabled enough' to merit her online presence as a disability advocate. In the context of mid-twentieth century style pin-up, this cultural gatekeeping refers to the actions of individuals

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[232] Heather King, 'Pin-Ups Stand up to Bullying', *Perfectly Pinned Up* 2016.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.

who deem themselves to be arbiters of taste and overall accuracy of style. Regardless of whether the abuse comes from strangers or those known to the target, the effects are similar: manipulating the target's psychological or emotional state and the possibility that the target will change or modify their behaviour.

Unlike in-person teasing or violence, cyberbullying and harassment in online spaces represents a new kind of victimisation. Social media provides would-be harassers with the space to carry out their actions anonymously. In a 2016 study, Paul Benjamin Lowry et al. proposed the social media cyberbullying model (SMCBM) which draws upon structures of social learning and perceived anonymity to explain how participation in social media fosters cyberbullying behaviours. The authors identified three elements of online social structure leading to such behaviours:

> (1) Moving from offline social interactions to interacting through social media can result in a meaningful shift in a person's social environment.
> (2) The scale and scope of cyberbullying allows people, through social media, to affiliate and interact with more communities than is possible through other means.
> (3) Social media strengthens the perception of anonymity, which fosters the underlying causal mechanisms of online disinhibition and deindividuation that change social learning and encourage cyberbullying.[235]

The first element refers to the transformation and eventual replacement of the individual's social environment — typically when in-person interactions are supplanted by online interactions of varying types. This variation depends on the type of social media (e.g., moderated or unmoderated discussion forums).[236] The second element refers to social media's massive reach across geography and time which permits interaction with vastly

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[235] Paul Benjamin Lowry and others, 'Why Do Adults Engage in Cyberbullying on Social Media? An Integration of Online Disinhibition and Deindividuation Effects with the Social Structure and Social Learning Model', *Information Systems Research*, 27 (2016), 962-86
[236] Ibid.

more groups and individuals than possible with in-person interactions. The third element refers to perceived anonymity online which allows the individual to become less inhibited in their behaviour on the belief that their identity is concealed and that consequences are likely to be minimal or non-existent. Taken together, these represent a powerful model for explaining why it might be easier for someone to post threatening, hateful, or otherwise cruel comments online than to express those same sentiments in person.

According to a 2017 study by the Pew Research Centre, women experience a higher incidence of online harassment than men. Further, women — particularly young women — are more likely than men to be the targets of online sexual harassment.[237] As a result, women may choose to modify their online behaviours or attempt to erase their social media history to avoid victimisation.[238] Sexually charged comments directed at women on text and image-sharing social media such as Instagram may be explained by pervasive hegemonic masculinity. Nathian Shae Rodriguez and Terri Hernandez's study of social media accounts aimed at male university students and featuring sexually suggestive images of female university students explores how Instagram use encourages participation in hegemonic masculinity. The authors were specifically concerned with the creation of subjective meaning through viewing and interacting with such images.

> Instagram's ability to harness networks of people, coupled with its significant role in everyday life, helps foster interpersonal meaning between images and their perceived representations—meanings that are subjective between the viewer and the object presented. Subjective meaning is constructed through visual representations and interactions. Therefore, Instagram is

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[237] Maeve Duggan, 'Men, Women Experience and View Online Harassment Differently', *Pew Research Center*, 11 July 2017 <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

[238] Rachel Noelle Simons, 'Addressing Gender-Based Harassment in Social Media: A Call to Action', in *iConference 2015 Proceedings* (2015).

capable of shaping how users come to think about images and the contents within those images.[239]

In this way, Instagram — and other social media platforms featuring a combination of text, static image and/or video — may act as transformative spaces which change the individual's response to an image via participation alongside unseen others in the audience. In a discourse analysis of comments about the women featured on the account, Rodriguez and Hernandez noted that the tone created a 'direct and sharp in their conveyance of objectification of the women's bodies and used to reinforce a dichotomy of power' and included statements such as 'nice boobs,' 'rack city,' 'YOU HOT PIECE OF ASS,' 'The ass is too powerful,' and 'Now those are some very talented tits.'[240] The authors of this study concluded that this manner of social media participation is marked by hegemonic masculinity because it functions as a sort of virtual locker room or fraternity house where rules of public respectability or etiquette are eschewed.[241] This finding can be extrapolated beyond social media accounts aimed at university-age heterosexual men.

In a broader sense, the pervasiveness of hegemonic or toxic masculinity online makes the harassment of women rather intractable. The problem remains despite attempts to develop and enforce policies related to cyberbullying and harassment. The policies and their subsequent enforcement are quite inconsistent both within and across different social media platforms: 'from mild censuring to the involvement of law enforcement'.[242] Identifying instances of cyberbullying and harassment relies on a

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[239] Nathian Shae Rodriguez and Terri Hernandez, 'Dibs on That Sexy Piece of Ass: Hegemonic Masculinity on TFM Girls Instagram Account', *Social Media+ Society*, 4 (2018).
[240] Ibid., p. 6.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Jessica A. Pater and others, 'Characterizations of Online Harassment: Comparing Policies across Social Media Platforms', in *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Supporting Group Work* (2016), pp. 369-74.

combination of algorithmic detection of specific text, as well as manual user reporting.[243]

These mechanisms, coupled with the general unevenness of policy application, makes

social media into a space in which to exercise cruelty.

Frances Ranney analysed contemporary sexual harassment policy through a

Foucauldian lens and argues that 'sexual harassment policy works as a discursive

technology, a collection of interlocking discourses that provide vocabularies whereby

behavioural standards are described and treatments for violators prescribed.'[244] Though

Ranney specifically discussed the dynamics of workplace sexual harassment policy, the

concept of enforcement as a discursive technology can also be viewed in social media

policies. Ranney further argued for a user-centred sexual harassment policy which values

the knowledge of the individual user — a sentiment echoed by Pater et. al. in their analysis

of policies across social media platforms. Foucault viewed sexuality as historically

'rigorously repressed […] because it is incompatible with a general and intensive work

imperative.'[245] This raises two important points. First, it frames sexuality as being

antithetical to capitalism. In the case of social media portrayals of erotic images — and of

course, pin-up itself — the labour and resulting product are sexualised. Second, applying

Foucault's statement to discussions of sexual harassment — originally based on his

assertions around Victorian-era surveillance of sexuality — leads us to the question of

whether sexual harassment should be perceived as inherently sexual in nature. Further,

should harassing or abusive language be deemed corrective in nature? That is, should

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[243] Ibid.

[244] Frances J Ranney, 'Beyond Foucault: Toward a User-Centered Approach to Sexual Harassment Policy', *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 9 (2000), 9-28.

[245] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990), p. 6.

social media invective be interpreted to correct or modify the behaviour of the subject? I

argue that cyberbullying and harassment should not be viewed as corrective, yet this kind

of cruelty is defined by its intention to modify the behaviour or emotional state of the target.

Overall, cyberbullying and harassment are mechanisms that fundamentally

impinge on agentic selfhood. Danielle Keats Citron argues that sexual harassment of

women constitutes a fundamental threat to agency. 'Online threats of sexual violence

"literally, albeit not physically, penetrate" women's bodies. They expose women's

sexuality, conveying the message that attackers control targeted women's physical

safety.'[246] This process of victimisation decentres the individual social media contributor

and shifts the focus instead to the harasser. In their study of online harassment of women,

Jessica Vitak et al. found that this sense of losing control over one's personal safety is

common among women targets of online abuse and results in a variety of responses.

> Victims of online harassment may experience emotional
> distress, with negative consequences including withdrawal
> from social network sites or, in extreme cases, self-harm.
> Women are nearly twice as likely to list "fear of personal injury"
> as their foremost concern while interacting online, followed by
> fears related to their reputation. Given these concerns, many
> women choose to self-censor when using mediated
> communication platforms; in more extreme cases—such as
> when harassment persists over time—they may delete their
> accounts completely.[247]

This range of responses represents a way of coping with the fear and shame associated

with online harassment. Coupled with the inconsistent enforcement of the policies aimed

at preventing abusive online behaviours, there exists a clear threat to the ability of women

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[246] Danielle Keats Citron, *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 384-85.
[247] Jessica Vitak and others, 'Identifying Women's Experiences with and Strategies for Mitigating Negative Effects of Online Harassment', in *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing* (2017), pp. 1231-45.

and non-gender conforming people to safely express themselves online. That they may choose to self-censor their shared content or remove their social media presence altogether speaks to this impingement on agentic selfhood.

In a Huizingan context, play spaces are not immune from cruelty simply by virtue of existing as play spaces. Though Huizinga accepted that cruelty or abusive behaviours could coexist with the element of play in culture, he contextualised such behaviours within the parameters of politics and warfare. Indeed, he believed that 'play can be cruel and bloody.'[248] I argue that this should be extended to the emotional and psychological warfare that exists in cases of online harassment whereby the target is purposely made to feel unsafe or is coerced to modify their behaviour accordingly. Cruelty exists in social media spaces and it does not disqualify those spaces from being characterised by the play element. Play and social violence are not mutually exclusive. Cyberbullying and online harassment could even be deemed artefacts of play and cultural violence on social media.

Rule-making is a vital aspect across a variety of play spaces. Robert Anchor cited Huizinga's defence of the 'civilising influence of the play element in warfare inasmuch as it gave rise to chivalry, which in turn served as a basis for modern international law' because of the way rules of warfare are understood and moderated between nations.[249] Anchor further asserts that, in cases where international law has been violated, the play element is brought into sharpest relief.[250] That is, the violation of the rules makes their relationship to play most evident. I argue that the concept of warfare ought to be extended to matters of cyberbullying and abuse via social media. My justification for this is twofold.

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[248] Huizinga, p. 208.

[249] Robert Anchor, 'History and Play: Johan Huizinga and His Critics', *History and Theory*, 17 (1978), 63-93.

[250] Ibid.

First, to hold a social media account is, in most cases, to officially accept that platform's Terms of Service which enumerate disqualifying behaviours related to online abuse. To participate in social media is to first have acknowledged that platform's rules of engagement. Second, online acts of chivalry can be seen across social media and may range from one user defending another from abuse in the comments section to the formally regulated social media Terms of Service. There also exists a sort of false online chivalry known was *White Knighting*, which refers to instances where men come to 'unsolicited defence of a woman online, in the hopes of romantic or sexual favour' or more generally, 'someone who rushes to the defence of another online, usually a person whose actions are not seen as worthy of defence.'[251] In both cases, there is an attempt at chivalrous behaviour whereby the defender acts as referee and protector.

Finally, as it relates to this thesis's proposed Vectors of Glamour, cyberbullying and harassment should be understood as an unfortunate side effect. Regarding the promulgation of glamour as a goal, those who promote glamour as something to strive toward may find themselves targeted for their aesthetic choices, particularly if those choices fall outside of socially accepted norms. In terms of interpellation to activate the imaginary, a perpetrator of abuse may view glamourous content and imagine themselves not as the subject nor their intimate, but perhaps as an intervening force who can control the subject's behaviour by making them feel unsafe. Regarding the normalisation of glamour praxis, an online harasser may object to such normalisation and resort to bullying tactics against their target. In terms of the unification of methods of power and play, the

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[251] 'White Knight', *Dictionary.com* <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/white-knight> [accessed 24 April 2023].

perpetrator may react negatively to others' expressions of bodily power and play. In cases where methods and venues of glamour praxis are being promoted, the perpetrator may object to such promotion and lash out at a target. This all points to the fact that the Vectors of Glamour should not be considered inherently positive nor negative. Rather, each criterion is contextualised by the surrounding circumstances. Social media as a technological *Vector of Glamour* should also be analysed via the connection between sexualised labour and consumerist influence. This connection is especially relevant not only for contemporary pin-up culture in social media but is also observed in other niche online spaces.

Prosumerism, Sexualised Labour, and Mommy Influencers

Let us now explore the concept of prosumerism and its relationship to sexualised labour on the part of social media influencers particularly those whose metier is online pin-up modelling. The term 'prosumer' was coined by futurist Alvin Toffler in 1980's *The Third Wave*. The term is a portmanteau of *producer* and *consumer* and is refers to an individual who both produces and consumes.[252] More specifically, prosumers may be defined as 'individuals who consume and produce value, either for self-consumption or consumption by others, and can receive implicit or explicit incentives from organisations involved in the exchange.'[253]

In their analysis of sexualised labour in social media, Jenna Drenten, Jessica Gurrieri, and Meagan Tyler examine how digital technologies encourage prosumption via

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[252] Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: Bantam Books New York, 1980).
[253] Bodo Lang and others, 'Prosumers in Times of Crisis: Definition, Archetypes and Implications', *Journal of Service Management* (2020), 176-89.

the 'explosion of user-generated content online, whereby consumers of Web 2.0 platforms are actively involved in the production process of content that is co-opted for the social, cultural and economic value it generates.'[254] The authors identified the influencer-led 'attention economy' based on sharing images of their bodies as a prime example of prosumerism via social media.

> For influencers, the body plays a critical role in the "selfies" that are the end product of their prosumer labour. For the women who upload these self-representations to social media, conformance to heteronormative prescriptions of attractiveness and femininity is fundamental in gaining attention. This is enacted through a range of fashion and beauty practices, appropriate lighting and posturing, and the use of image-enhancing and photo-editing applications that in turn maximise the number of "likes" on a post — a quantification of attention and monetisation potential. It has been observed that women's self-presentation on social media is highly sexualised. Posting sexualised photos on social media has been related to wider cultural pressures that convey to women sexiness is both valued and a means of gaining attention.[255]

Drenten, Gurrieri, and Tyler state that 'emotion, aesthetics, and sexualisation underpin the performance of sexualised labour.'[256] In this context, emotional labour represents the extraction of economic value from the prosumer displaying their body for public consumption whilst manipulating their own emotional response to such consumption. Aesthetic labour results in compensation based on the body's appearance. Sexualisation loosely refers to an influencer's sexual appeal.[257] Each of these aspects highlights the influencer's performance in online spaces to earn a wage. These elements of influencer-facilitated attention marketing are critical to the influencer's success. They must curate an

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[254] Jenna Drenten, Lauren Gurrieri, and Meagan Tyler, 'Sexualised Labour in Digital Culture: Instagram Influencers, Porn Chic and the Monetization of Attention', *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27 (2020), 41-66.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid.

online persona and interact with account followers in such a way that can be commodified and monetised, yet there is often significant unpaid labour associated with these practices, such as in cases when content created by the influencer is stolen by another entity and used to market products without the influencer's knowledge.

In the image below, Instagram and Playboy model @dizzymslizzyy appears in in a photoshoot for Bettie Page Lingerie, a range of mid-twentieth century style undergarments.[258] The account features a heavily sexualised aesthetic and represents sexualised labour to promote her modelling business and various advertisers.

Figure 31. Dizzy Ms. Lizzyy. *Pretty in Pink.* Instagram, accessed
23 November 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/ClEQ7uTOy3u/>

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[258], 'Pretty in Pink ✨Loving this one! @bettiepagelingerie newest lingerie set is so beautiful.' (Instagram)
(@dizzymslizzyy, 2022).< https://www.instagram.com/p/ClEQ7uTOy3u/ [accessed 23 November 2022]

Sexualised imagery has been a unifying characteristic throughout the history of pin-up modelling. The subject of a pin-up image has always been expected to be physically alluring and the emotional, aesthetic, and sexualised nature of this performance could be seen even before the advent of digital media. In this way, the subjects of pin-up imagery fit the definition of sexualised labourers. Whether those images were disseminated by post in the 1950s or via social media today, the pin-up subject remains a consumer good.

In what implies a somewhat Foucauldian framework, prosumerism can also be understood through the lens of self-care practices. Toffler cited the rise of self-reliance in the form of home pregnancy tests, at-home medical testing, and other over-the-counter technologies which allowed the individual — particularly mothers — to produce and consume their own medical diagnoses.[259] Toffler was also concerned with how this rise of prosumerism was associated with women's unpaid labour. He identified two sectors in the economy. 'Sector A comprises all that unpaid work done directly by people for themselves, their families, or their communities. Sector B comprises all the production of goods or services for sale or swap through the exchange network or market.'[260] Women who function primarily as homemakers or child carers exemplify this unpaid prosumerism. Today, prosumerism is common for women who earn their living via social media by both producing and consuming online content. This is especially true in cases of women who integrate content about their families, as in the case of mommy bloggers. This prosumerist content can be viewed both as a way to feature self-reliance as well as a playful form of self-expression.

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[259] Toffler, p. 265.
[260] Ibid., p. 266.

In the image below, social media personality Lauren Riboldi (@ockeydockey) shares an Instagram ad in the form of a family photo shoot.[261] This is an example of prosumerism in the form of mommy blogging and social media whereby the author curates a seemingly personal family image and uses it as an advertisement.

Figure 32. Lauren Riboldi and family, *Who needs a self care spa day,* Instagram, accessed 1 December 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/p/ClpJjsUPpu5/>

According to Huizinga, one of the characteristics of a play space is that it exists entirely detached from a market economy. It is understood to be an act of freedom and

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[261] L a u r e n O c k e y R i b o l d i , '#ad #gilettepartner Who needs a self care spa day!? Hehe had so much fun recreating this cute photo that we took when Cru was just a tiny baby 🥺 swipe to see! Josh & I are big fans of gilette razors!! If you are a man looking to pamper yourself or if you want to pamper a man in your life- the GilletteLabs with Exfoliating Bar is an amazing gift option this holiday season!! I hear their latest innovation in shaving design and technology makes shaving as quick and easy as washing your face the razor is designed to combine shaving & gentle exfoliation. And their new look is super sweet. It makes our bathroom vanity look good 😍 the link is in my bio to check it out:) available at @target #target #targetstyle #ExfoliatingRazor #EffortComesEasy#QuickAndEasy'. [Instagram] @ockeydockey, [accessed 1 December 2022]

pure expenditure existing in opposition to seriousness and consequences. French literary critic Jacques Ehrmann disagreed with this assertion. 'But even if play is understood as a "pure" expenditure, an expenditure for nothing, it consumes something nevertheless, if only time and energy, but sometimes also considerable property. It would be appropriate then to account for this expenditure, to learn where it went, what it produced.'[262] Though I accept most of Huizinga's conditions for play, I, too, disagree with his stance on how the economy may manifest within spaces of play. When juxtaposed against the state of contemporary social media and prosumerism as unpaid labour, Ehrmann's concern about the consumption of time, energy, and property is evident. Social media influencers, including pin-up models, invest significant labour in the curation of their online presence to share their images, engage with their community, and perhaps to earn a living. The sheer massiveness of the social media landscape means that few would-be influencers are able to extract financial value from this work. Even those who do earn a living online are likely doing so through hours of unpaid labour (e.g., photo editing, time spent interacting with followers, curating the overall appearance of their social media feed).

Interestingly, the simultaneous production and consumption of online content on the part of the influencer can be understood through the Vectors of Glamour. The promulgation of glamour as a goal is embedded into the structure of social media prosumerism because the influencer's engagement with glamourous imagery begets engagement from the audience and vice versa. Social media marketing — which is almost entirely dependent on this cyclical prosumerism — is effective because of its ability to

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[262] Jacques Ehrmann, Cathy Lewis, and Phil Lewis, 'Homo Ludens Revisited', *Yale French Studies* (1968), 31-57 (p. 42).

interpellate to activate the imaginary. Normalisation of glamour praxis can be envisaged in prosumerism through frequent engagement with content social media influencer content. This often means constant checking of one's social media feed for new content which suggests that the user may become deeply enmeshed in the lifestyle curated by those influencers they follow. Prosumerism in social media also lends itself to the unification of mechanisms and power and play by providing income — or at least the hope of it — to influencers who have monetised their online presence through simultaneous production and consumption of content. Methods and venues of glamour praxis are promoted here through the prosumerist activities of influencers who are paid to endorse or review beauty or lifestyle products whilst engaging with an advertiser's clientele via social media channels.

Overall, a prosumerist understanding of the social media influencer economy aligns nicely with the Foucauldian and Huizingan theoretical frameworks, as well each of the Vectors of Glamour. Understanding this prosumerism through the lens of sexualised labour is particularly useful when considering how capital can be extracted from social media pin-up modelling by the individual influencer, advertisers, and the owners of social media platforms. I have suggested that social media channels represent economic power within a play space because of the unique nature of the influencer economy. Prosumerism through sexualised labour makes this evident, whether for niche influencers such as pin-up models or mainstream lifestyle influencers. With the relationship between labour and social media influencer in mind, let us now turn our attention to what it means to employ today's rapidly advancing technology to showcase mid-twentieth century fashion sensibilities.

Classic Style, Contemporary Technology

When considering the presence of pin-up online, we must acknowledge the taxonomy of search terms related specifically to this mid-twentieth century style. Terms such as *cheesecake, vintage*, and *pin-up girl* describe what is usually classified as pin-up in the style of Betty Grable, Bettie Page, and Dita Von Teese. Terms such as *rockabilly* or *psychobilly* describe musical genres. The former describes a blend of 1950s rock and roll and country music sounds. The latter describes a more violent punk rock sound. These terms also describe the aesthetic associated with these musical genres which can include at least a hint of mid-twentieth century fashion. As discussed in the introduction, Western pin-up style is most typically described by the fashion trends from the 1940s through to the 1960s or offshoots thereof. Some elements are characterised by a distinctly World War II-era sensibility (e.g., Vargas girls and bomber plane nose cone art), whilst others are characterised by the counterculture of the era (e.g., greaser gangs).

Within the social media landscape, those influencers who put forth vintage styles may have fewer followers than those who possess a more widespread appeal. Though they occupy a niche, they can still benefit from partnerships with brands most closely aligned with pin-up culture including clothing and cosmetics companies. On balance, the attraction to any era of vintage fashion may be attributed to factors such as a desire for familiarity, a rejection of fast fashion culture, the influence of films and television, and the ecological sustainability of recycling or reusing a garment.[263] Attitudes toward vintage clothing notwithstanding, the role of the social media and online commerce has

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[263] Tracy Diane Cassidy and Hannah Rose Bennett, 'The Rise of Vintage Fashion and the Vintage Consumer', *Fashion practice*, 4 (2012), 239-61.

significantly reduced the barriers to entry for the individual wishing to experiment with their style choices. 'The Internet has dramatically increased the awareness and popularity of vintage fashion making it accessible to a wide audience. There is a wealth of information on the background of vintage fashions with forums dedicated to the topic that can be used to aid consumers with their purchases.'[264] The matter of access is fundamental to my argument that social media serves a *Vector of Glamour* within the PIN-UP framework. Discussion forums, social media comment sections, and livestreamed interactions between users all represent ways to encourage participation and sell goods. For these images and interactions to be effective, however, I argue that they must portray a sense of authenticity. In terms of the fashion influencer economy, that authenticity is crucial to building a brand and sustaining an audience.

In an exploration of what they term 'entrepreneurial femininity' among fashion bloggers, Brooke Erin Duffy and Emily Hund discuss the trope of 'having it all' and how the portrayal of such a trope conceals the means to achieving it.

> top-ranked bloggers depict the ideal of "having it all" through three interrelated tropes: the destiny of passionate work, staging the glam life, and carefully curated social sharing. Together, these tropes articulate a form of entrepreneurial femininity that draws upon post-feminist sensibilities and the contemporary logic of self-branding. We argue, however, that this socially mediated version of self-enterprise obscures the labour, discipline, and capital necessary to emulate these standards, while deploying the unshakable myth that women should work through and for consumption.[265]

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[264] Ibid, p. 248.
[265] Brooke Erin Duffy and Emily Hund, '"Having It All" on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-Branding among Fashion Bloggers', *Social Media+ Society*, 1-11 (2015), (p. 1).

Duffy and Hund's identification of the three tropes that portray the image of 'having it all'

aligns with Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizinga's concept of the Magic Circle,

and my proposed Vectors of Glamour.

According to the authors, the first trope — destiny of passionate work — functions

as a way to 'rationalise un- or under-compensated labour in both the fashion and new

media sectors, illuminating how producers derive value from their creative activities

irrespective of monetary compensation or material rewards.'[266] Here, the individual

producer chooses to focus on the experience of sharing their passion for fashion even if

the their labour goes unpaid. It is assumed here that the fun of sharing one's interests is

its own reward. Even in the absence of a clear marketplace wherein the social media

contributor is being compensated for their work, this notion of destined passionate work

aligns with my proposed PIN-UP framework. Unpaid social media labour in the beauty and

fashion spheres still promulgates glamour as a goal, can interpellate to activate the

imaginary, normalise glamour praxis, unify mechanisms of power and play, and finally,

promote methods and venues of glamour praxis. The mechanisms of power and play

being unified in this example may be understood as the power of following one's own

dreams, of fulfilling one's own destiny. In other words, they have enacted agentic selfhood

by pursuing their own desires.

The second trope of having it all — the glam life — is an aspirational practice

whereby the content creator projects the trappings of luxury.[267] As previously discussed,

there now exists an entire economy devoted to the rental of luxury goods and studio space

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[266] Ibid., p. 4.
[267] Ibid., p. 6.

with which an individual can portray a wealthy, glamourous lifestyle. This aspirational imagery dovetails with the five criteria for Vectors of Glamour, particularly the ability to interpellate to activate the imaginary. It is interesting to note here that the imagination of the viewer is not the only one being activated. In cases where the content creator is renting an expensive car or taking photos on a set decorated as a private jet, it is also the creator's imagination being activated. Excluding very wealthy celebrities who actually do have access to genuine luxury goods and private transit, those social media personalities who present a facsimile of glamour and high-cost living can use these tools as a way to imagine themselves occupying a higher socioeconomic station. Further, this fake wealth economy presents the possibility of play acting in a Huizingan sense. It could then be argued that this is merely an advanced form of the same type of dressing up and playing pretend that a child might do in their early years. Just as a child need not actually be born into royalty to don a plastic tiara and pretend, a social media personality need not actually be vastly wealthy to appear as such. Despite these similarities, it is important to recognise that the former is concerned with a child having playful identity experience, whilst the latter involves a conscious manipulation of the audience — typically for the purposes of making money. I argue that despite Huizinga's insistence that a play space exist separately from the market, this fake wealth influencer economy can still be considered a play space by experimenting with matters of identity.

Duffy and Hund's final trope — carefully curated personal sharing — is a matter of performing authenticity and vulnerability against a backdrop of the aspirational.[268] Here

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[268] Ibid., p. 7.

again is a central paradox in social media: the influencer must appear as authentic as possible but does so in a manner that projects an aspirational personal and socioeconomic status (e.g., the depiction of luxury goods in Instagram posts). Authenticity takes the form of sharing personal challenges such as images of a messy home, the details of a painful breakup, dire medical diagnoses, family difficulties, or struggles with mental illness. The level of candidness will vary based on the influencer's overall aesthetic and online persona. This struggle between the truly authentic and the heavily curated is problematised in cases where an advertiser is paying the influencer to tout their brand. It is nearly impossible to be completely authentic when such authenticity would conflict with an advertiser's carefully created corporate image. The authors write that 'the presentation of the self must be carefully managed in a way that still enables brand partners to communicate meaning […] .since commercial brands are unlikely to partner with [those] lacking a commodifiable ("glam") social media image, the codes, aesthetics, and subjectivities of mainstream fashion culture get reaffirmed.'[269] Whilst there are social media influencers whose brand aligns with vulnerability and authenticity, they may be less likely to be engaged by advertising partners seeking to project a specific narrative around their products.

Taken together, the three tropes focussed on having it all highlight the greater challenge embedded in general feminist discourse: women balancing the personal and professional. Helen Gurley Brown's 1982 book *Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money Even if You're Starting with Nothing* was a self-help book very much of its time, espousing

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[269] Ibid., p. 7.

the equal importance of a slim figure and professional ambition.[270] The late editor of *Cosmopolitan Magazine* was a sort of proto-influencer who used her station as a means to become her own *Vector of Glamour*. She had professional success, pursued personal interests, and sought romantic and sexual fulfilment. She did not have children, and Gurley Brown's work evangelised the message that women should experience all that life has to offer. In the years since the publication of that book, the notion of women having it all frequently includes discussion of raising children, being open to romantic possibility, professional advancement, and general personal or creative development all whilst being glamourous in appearance and comportment. In the context of Duffy and Hund's work on fashion influencers in social media, the three tropes — destiny of passionate work, the glam life, and carefully curated personal sharing — suggest the leveraging of personal passion to pursue professional success.

Recall that Dita Von Teese's own social media presence communicates these three tropes, as well. Her devotion to her brand of high gloss glamour is complete; she has called it her life's mission as discussed in Chapter 1. Though her public persona is extremely polished and well curated, she will occasionally speak to her personal struggles. In a 2016 roundtable interview hosted by Khloe Kardashian, Dita spoke of her marriage to former husband Marilyn Manson. 'I was with him for seven years. We were married for only a year. I feel like getting married was sort of like the kiss of death for us […] I felt kind of obliged to go through with the ceremony in a way.'[271] Though she offers few details of

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[270] Helen Gurley Brown, *Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money, Even If You're Starting with Nothing* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1982).
[271] Dita Von Teese, 'Dita Von Teese Reveals Why Her Marriage to Marilyn Manson Didn't Work', in 'Cocktails for Six', *Kocktails with Khloe*, FYI, 23 March 2016.

the marriage's dissolution, her willingness to share this small bit of her personal life telegraphs vulnerability. Interestingly, Manson's public persona is rather unlike Von Teese. Whereas she is the image of mid-twentieth century polish and old Hollywood glamour, his aesthetic draws on the themes of body horror or Gothic imagery. Whilst allegations of Manson's abusive behaviour toward intimate partners would later come to light, Dita denied experiencing such abuse during the course of their relationship in a 2021 statement.[272]

Pin-up style in general, from its inception to its mid-twentieth century heyday to today, is the result of careful curation. The pin-up model is an object to be consumed by the viewer. Whilst a contemporary social media influencer may share the details of their personal life, the pin-up model as an object viewed in a vacuum. That is, the consumer is not likely to consider her life beyond the image — whether she is professionally and creatively fulfilled, whether she has children or a spouse, whether her home is tidy or slovenly. The viewer's relationship to the image is generally static and meant to hail their imagination. The pin-up's image may evoke a range of feelings in the viewer, including eroticism, empowerment, envy, or aspiration.

Agentic Selfhood, Heterotopia, and Brand Loyalty

There is inherent tension between glamour for the benefit of the self and glamour for the pleasure of the consumer. As Lazar's work indicates, the various notions of femininity

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[272] Bethany Minelle, 'Dita Von Teese speaks out on ex-husband Marilyn Manson abuse allegations,' Sky News, 5 February 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/dita-von-teese-speaks-out-on-ex-husband-marilyn-manson-abuse-allegations-12209277> [Accessed 20 April 2024].

suffuse all manner of beauty praxis and there are economic and philosophical implications to these ideas. Lisa Downing addresses this tension in her work exploring the differences between what she terms *self-fulness* and acts of feminine conformity. For example, she challenges the widespread cultural dismissal of selfies — frequently relegated to mere youthful narcissism in the digital age and symptomatic of an overconnected, self-centred social media landscape — as the purview of frivolous young women. Downing makes two important assertions in this area. First, social media is fast replacing face-to-face interaction as a means of socialisation. Second, whilst social media is a contemporary experience, critiques of it as a vehicle for narcissism is rooted in the same moralisation about a 'selfish era' going back centuries.[273] In a broader sense, much cultural criticism will always be directed at the social behaviours of women, particularly those behaviours related to self-expression.

Widdows addresses the pervasive dichotomisation of empowerment versus passivity as it relates to the beauty industry. In particular, the author advocates for achieving a middle ground in the criticism of behaviours and participation.

> We are constrained, but we are not coerced, and we make agential and active choices in contexts that are extremely limited and highly prescribed. To suggest that individual's choices are highly prescribed is not, as the liberal and neoliberal model sometimes suggests, similar to saying that women have no agency, that they are victims, dupes or dopes. There is nothing contradictory about recognising these are agential, but extremely limited choices.[274]

Both Downing and Widdows argue against the oversimplification of women's motivations for participating in social media and the beauty economy. This is important because the

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[273] Downing, p. 45.
[274] Widdows, p. 226.

automatic dismissal of selfies or wearing makeup as mere trappings of narcissism invalidates any hope for agency on the part of the individual. This dismissal is an insidious way of infantilising women and minimising the impact of their choices.

Interestingly, the criteria for Vectors of Glamour honour agency whilst also recognising the nature of external forces. The promulgation of glamour as a goal should be understood as an external force impacting the individual in some way (e.g., an Instagram photo of Dita Von Teese in glamourous clothing, hair, and makeup). The interpellation to activate the imaginary should be understood as an external actor directly affecting the individual's mindset (e.g., a YouTube video of a beauty influencer sharing product recommendations and hailing the viewer to imagine themselves as a friend of the influencer). The normalisation of glamour praxis should also be understood as an external force affecting the behaviour of the individual (e.g., an individual seeing a cosmetics advertisement and then purchasing the advertised item). The unification of mechanisms of power and play should be understood as the choice made by the individual to engage with their physical appearance as a way of affirming or experimenting with their identity (e.g., trying a new hairstyle as way of portraying a different image). Lastly, the promotion of methods and venues of glamour praxis should be understood as a sort of self-renewing mechanism whereby external forces encourage behavioural changes in the individual who then further evangelises glamour to others (e.g., a beauty influencer creates a YouTube makeup tutorial that inspires the viewer to wear that look and teach others in their life how to achieve it). The concept of Vectors of Glamour accounts for agentic selfhood.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the Foucauldian notion of the mirror as heterotopia. Recall that the beauty ritual space is designated as the Magic Circle and the mirror can

be designated as the heterotopia. The individual's visage gazing back at them via the mirror creates a kind of existential otherness. As we cannot gaze at our own faces directly — only through some manner of facsimile — we can adjust the appearance of our self but not ourselves directly. This paradox of the mirror as heterotopia is further complicated by the fact that to adjust the body's appearance is to perform aesthetic labour. Consider that the beauty ritual also constitutes an entrepreneurial practice. In a general way, to undertake any sort of grooming practice to make the body appear acceptable for employment is an entrepreneurial task. In a more specific example, there exists a growing consumer market that uses social media influence to sell cosmetics via so-called *beauty gurus* — vloggers who create and curate large video repositories featuring make-up tutorials and product reviews. This is a highly lucrative form of infotainment and YouTube offers a dynamic venue for this type of content. Per Statista, 'in 2018, beauty-related content generated more than 169 billion views on the video platform. Popular YouTube beauty content includes tutorials and DIY videos, reviews, haul videos, and videos produced by beauty vloggers.'[275]

Sarah Banet-Weiser labels these vloggers and influencers as *aesthetic entrepreneurs* and warns that whilst the market is open to anyone with the will to partake, it is primarily those who portray the most conventional beauty norms who are most successful.[276] This statement aligns with the notion that the existence of a market as inherently democratising though participation may not, in fact, be democratising. Crafting

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[275] J. Clement, 'Annual Beauty-Related Content Views on Youtube from 2009 to 2018 (in Billions)', *Statista*, 2018 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/294655/youtube-monthly-beauty-content-views/> [Accessed 24 April 2023].
[276] Sarah Banet-Weiser, ''I'm Beautiful the Way I Am': Empowerment, Beauty, and Aesthetic Labour', in *Aesthetic Labour*, ed. by Ana Sofia Elias, Rosalind Gill, and Christina Scharff (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 265-82.

a popular social media presence means that the vlogger must portray themselves to the audience as a trusted friend and confidante – one whose recommendations are sincere. Again, we see evidence of Althusserian interpellation in that the viewer is invited to imagine themselves as a friend of the vlogger or as the vlogger themselves. Beauty vloggers are Vectors of Glamour because they promulgate glamour as a goal, interpellate to activate the imaginary, normalise glamour praxis, unify mechanisms of power and play, and promote methods and venues of glamour praxis. Their work makes the beauty ritual an economic practice for themselves and for their audience.

The sort of grassroots nature of marketing cosmetics through beauty influencers as Vectors of Glamour requires the impression of authenticity. A trusted confidante is more authentic and relatable than say, the multibillion-dollar cosmetic industry behemoth. The audience's trust is garnered by seemingly improvisational conversations with the camera whilst the influencer applies cosmetic products. This holds more in common with late night infomercials but take the form of video diaries. That these marketing tactics are frequently deployed stealthily — with powerful influencers being paid high sums for something as simple as tagging a brand in a social media post — is well-worn territory. Brooke Erin Duffy labels these workers as 'aspirational labourers' and suggests that the 'discourses of authenticity, community building and brand devotion that they draw on are symptomatic of a highly gendered, forward-looking and entrepreneurial enactment of creativity.'[277] Authenticity, in particular, reinforces the ease with which the viewer can imagine themselves existing as the subject or interacting with them in meaningful ways. Duffy goes

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[277] Brooke Erin Duffy, 'The Romance of Work: Gender and Aspirational Labour in the Digital Culture Industries', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 19 (2016), 441-57.

on to explain that this aspect of advertising is growing. '[The] uptick in "authenticity advertising" is especially prominent among fashion and beauty retailers that integrate so-called "real women" into their ads as public commitments to female empowerment — or perhaps, more accurately, expressions of commodity feminism.'[278] This adds a compelling dimension to the advertisement and further exemplifies the Vectors of Glamour.

The creation of emotional attachment in marketing is a science enacted by corporations wishing to develop brand loyalty. Business marketing researchers Hemant Patwardhan and Siva K Balasubramanian advance this notion of brand loyalty to what they term 'brand romance' which can be explained by the models of self-expansion and emotional attachment:

> The self-expansion model integrates two themes: (1) the central human motive to enhance the self to achieve goals; and (2) such enhancement is possible by "including others in the self". This model posits close relationships when two partners perceive in each other novel perspectives, resources, and identities (PRI) that present opportunities for self enhancement. Accessing PRI (tantamount to building close relationships) produces feelings of exhilaration, fascination, and intense longing. In the early stages of a romantic relationship, partners seek to expand their selves through constant, rapid and intense interactions that generate positive affect, arousal, and a desire to re-engage…consumers are attracted to brands because of novel PRI that offer opportunities for self-expansion.

> In contrast, attachment theory suggests that greater familiarity and responsiveness produce stronger attachments […] hence, brands that perform consistently well in times of need are valued more than inconsistent brands. Greater familiarity with the brand further cements this relationship.[279]

The resulting confluence of these two theoretical approaches dovetails with the assertion that the beauty influencer is a Vector of Glamour in their own right. Further, consider that

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[278] Ibid.

[279] Hemant Patwardhan and Siva K Balasubramanian, 'Reflections on Emotional Attachment to Brands: Brand Romance and Brand Love', *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 12 (2013), 73-79.

the self-expansion model bears more than a passing resemblance to responsibilisation, normalisation, self-esteem, and in certain cases, draws upon aspects of personal grooming and healthism. Specifically, the feelings of exhilaration, fascination, and intense longing have historically been manipulated by corporations to sell product. The beauty industry estimated to approach a value of $803 billion (USD) by 2023.[280] It should also be noted that one of the underlying themes in the pursuit of glamour is passion — passion for aesthetic beauty and the appearance of a luxurious lifestyle. It is logical, then, that extremely valuable financial prospects for this industry could be advanced by visceral appeals to emotion and sense of self.

Banet-Weiser applied the work of Sandra Lee Bartky to the aesthetic enterprise of beauty vlogging. Specifically, in demonstrating that 'the labour of the beauty vloggers is acknowledged by the viewer […] but the acknowledgement of aesthetic labour is not the same as recognising it as work, because beauty vloggers often say […] that they "love to put on makeup"' and as such, is generally undervalued and underpaid by the market standards.[281] This echoes Duffy and Hund's assertions about uncompensated passionate work. There is crossover here between the hobbyist who takes up aesthetic labour for its own enjoyment and the professional who extracts capital from this kind of labour.

I argue that this form of beauty praxis also extends to the daily use of cosmetics by non-beauty professionals in two ways. First, the act of applying cosmetics is associated with concealment or enhancement of specific physical features such that they appear to be the result of genetics rather than clever painting and powdering techniques; it implies

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[280] Whitney Hedrick, *How to Stop Buying So Much Makeup: 5 Terrible Reasons to Buy Makeup*, online video recording, YouTube, 18 July 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hiV-cKml6s> [accessed 20 August 2019].
[281] Banet-Weiser, pp. 273-74.

that the wearer possesses a kind of secret: they were born this way. This is exemplified by cosmetic maker Maybelline's famous advertising slogan: 'Maybe She's Born With It, Maybe It's Maybelline' — the most recognisable strapline of the last 150 years.[282] Second, the notion of *aesthetic labour* applies not only to the work of using cosmetics and donning particular fashions, but also to the labour undertaken to earn the money to purchase such goods. As cosmetics retailers roll out tiered shopper loyalty and store-specific credit card programs, there is now concern about going into serious debt over cosmetics. Loyalty and store-specific credit card programs present a risk to consumer welfare by encouraging overspending. 'Once consumers enter into the loyalty loop, they have incentives to spend more effort in order to achieve the goal of the reward. The closer the goal looks, the greater the efforts consumers tend to make to achieve the goal.'[283] This loop is very compelling and can easily entice consumers into buying more than they anticipated were these loyalty programs not in place.

Having examined some of the business aspects of the beauty industry from the corporate side, let us now examine the role of the beauty influencer more closely. Because this thesis is concerned with contemporary pin-up culture as viewed on social media, it is necessary to delve into elements of business that drives these social media platforms. Pin-up was already very much a business back in the 1950s, when photos were sold via post to private collectors. Depending on the situation, the pin-up model and the beauty influencer occupy the same role in the business transaction. Though the platforms for

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[282] Russell Parsons, 'Maybelline's "Maybe She's Born with It" Strapline "Most Recognisable"', *MarketingWeek*, 16 September 2013 <https://www.marketingweek.com/maybellines-maybe-shes-born-with-it-strapline-most-recognisable/> Accessed 30/07/2019.
[283] Omar Vásquez Duque, 'The Costs of Loyalty: On Loyalty Rewards and Consumer Welfare', *Economic Analysis of Law Review*, 8 (2017), 411-50.

sharing pin-up images are different today, the relationship between the seller and the buyer is still much the same.

Influencer Marketing in an Oversaturated Beauty Market

There are myriad approaches to dealing with the economic aspects of an online beauty influencer career. Some content creators are transparent about their aims, making it abundantly clear that they earn money from product recommendations and affiliate sales programs. Others may obscure this information. As beauty gurus have grown in influence and ability to command high salaries from advertisers and content sponsors, there continues to be infighting over matters of honesty and authenticity as they relate to the disclosure of financial relationships. In a 2018 row over YouTube video sponsorships, it was revealed that the highest paid beauty gurus could, at the time, command upwards of $60,000 (USD) for actions as seemingly innocuous as mentioning a brand in a social media post. This led to a debate among influencers and their fans over the insidiousness of influencer marketing:

> Influencers operate under the mantle of authenticity. Unlike prominent celebrities whose lives are far removed from the everyday person's, influencers present themselves as regular people, just like you and me. They talk openly about their mental health issues, they share funny Snapchat stories of themselves hanging out with friends, and they make you feel like you really know them — almost as if you're friends with them. It's this illusion of closeness and authenticity that makes people more inclined to trust beauty influencers. This, therefore, gives companies the perfect marketing opportunity. People are more willing to listen to beauty influencers for makeup recommendations because they assume that these are normal people who simply happen to be passionate about makeup — like your best friend or older sister.[284]

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[284] Nian Hu, 'Yes, Beauty Gurus Are Charging Companies More Than $60,000 for Sponsored Videos — but Here's Why It's Not a Big Deal', *Babe*, 6 September 2018 <https://babe.net/2018/09/06/yes-beauty-gurus-are-charging-

This is an important assertion because it makes clear the conflicts inherent to the beauty influencer career: the consumer views this social media content as the recommendations of a trusted confidante and not an advertiser. This also makes clear the embedded nature of marketing content within the seemingly mundane video journal format of YouTube videos.

Consumer behaviour researchers Michael Proksch, Ulrich R Orth, and Franziska Bethge outlined the parameters of brand attachment and its link to self-identity. 'Important to the conceptualization of attachment is its relation to cognitive and emotional antecedents. Accordingly, strong attachment goes along with positive emotions such as love, joy, security, or passion and is related to a cognitive connection of the self.'[285] In a study that controlled for gender factors, the researchers found that individuals with low attachment security to a relationship partner might develop emotional attachment to a brand as a compensatory strategy and 'that brands with high consumer identification are probably an emotional compensation strategy only for women.'[286] It can therefore be reasoned that beauty influencers — known for simulating a personal relationship with their audience via vlog and social media interactions — function not only as Vectors of Glamour but also as potential attachment targets.

Beauty influencers become brands unto themselves with some of the most well-known gurus releasing makeup collaborations with established brands or launching their

companies-more-than-60000-for-sponsored-videos-but-heres-why-its-not-a-big-deal-77915> [accessed 29 July 2019].

[285] Michael Proksch, Ulrich R Orth, and Franziska Bethge, 'Disentangling the Influence of Attachment Anxiety and Attachment Security in Consumer Formation of Attachments to Brands', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 12 (2013), 318-26.

[286] Ibid.

own companies. In 2019, Jaclyn Hill — a beauty influencer with nearly six million YouTube subscribers at the time of this writing — released her own line of lipsticks. The launch was roundly criticised as a public relations disaster as early customers reported receiving adulterated lipsticks containing contaminants such as metal and plastic fragments, animal hairs, synthetic fibres, and suspected instances of mould or bacteria. In response, irate customers and fellow beauty influencers mounted a backlash that led to Hill temporarily shuttering all social media channels and suspending sales operations.[287] Hill is one of several examples of backlash against beauty gurus whose business or personal practices have courted controversy. In 2018, a small group of popular beauty influencers were accused of publishing racist tweets in previous years that had since resurfaced. The fallout from those accusations threatened their standing in the beauty community including future product launches and paid public appearances.[288] In situations like these, fans and consumers react differently to beauty guru brands than they might to large corporations. In the former, the consumer has developed an emotional attachment not only to the brand but to the influencer themselves and the response suggests a kind of personal betrayal rather than simple buyer's remorse.

As beauty gurus have ascended in prominence, so too has the online community devoted to dissecting their private lives, public images, and business pursuits. Internet message boards including Guru Gossip and Reddit (on which the r/BeautyGuruDrama

[287] Layla Ilchi, 'Jaclyn Hill's Makeup Brand Drama: Everything You Need to Know', *Women's Wear Daily*, 2 July 2019 <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/jaclyn-hill-cosmetics-lipstick-controversy-everything-to-know-1203212382/> [accessed 30 July 2019].

[288] Alex Abad-Santos, 'Laura Lee, Jeffree Star, and the Racism Scandal Upending the Youtube Beauty Community, Explained', *Vox*, 31 August 2018 <https://www.vox.com/2018/8/28/17769996/laura-lee-jeffree-star-racism-subscriber-count> [accessed 30 July 2019].

and r/BeautyGuruChatter forums are featured) allow anyone with an account to post

discussion topics on everything influencer related. This has given rise to a toxic subculture

of hatred among fans including the much maligned 'Trash A Guru' feature of Guru

Gossip.[289] Because many beauty influencers (particularly those under age thirty-five),

have removed barriers to entry in viewing their intimate lives, the illusion of a friendship is

easy to achieve. Daily vlogs about families and romantic entanglements, constant social

media updates, and frequent public appearances are standard for success in this industry,

thus creating a false sense of intimacy with the viewer. In Chapter 3, I shall explore this

notion further in the context of parasocial relationships. Social media has enabled more

direct conversation between the celebrity beauty influencer and the consumer community

which, in some extreme cases, has led to particularly nasty rows. For example, American

beauty influencer Thomas Halbert tweeted that online beauty spaces critical of his work

'festered with the ugliest rats that can't think logically or positively.'[290] The tweet was

posted in response to criticism by r/BeautyGuruChatter commenters who took umbrage

with Halbert's frequent requests for financial assistance from his young audience after

posting pictures of his already lavish home and luxury lifestyle.

Whilst beauty influencer infighting has become de rigueur, other content creators

have become critical of the entire beauty industry — a commentary on consumerist beauty

culture. In fact, there now exists a growing trend of *anti-hauls* or *no/low-buys* — statements

of which trendy products the individual chooses not to purchase during periods where they

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[289] Roisin Kiberd, 'Beauty Vlogger Superfans Trash Their Heroes in This Online Burn Book', *Vice*, 10 October 2014 <https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/bmjdnd/beauty-vlogger-burn-book> [accessed 30 July 2019].

[290] 'in all disrespect… beautyguruchatter on reddit is festered witht he ugliest rats that can't think logically or positively in anyway possible… y'all have the ugliest souls i've ever seen and I hope you do not treat immediate people in your life the way you treat STRANGERS…', (tweet) (@ThomasBeautyy (Thomas Halbert) 2019.

choose to spend little or no money on cosmetic products. Whitney Hedrick, a professional makeup artist and YouTube creator, supplements her tutorials and product review content with longform videos discussing the insidiousness of influencer-driven beauty marketing. Despite her own partnerships with smaller beauty companies, she remains critical of cosmetic manufacturer partnerships with beauty influencers.

> Professional makeup artists feel that consumers are really being misled and encouraged to spend money on product that they don't really need, aren't worth the dollar, or that [untrained influencers] are doing techniques that aren't actually flattering […] they are dispensing false information for profit.[291]

In fact, anti-hauls can be understood as a response to beauty market saturation. Larger cosmetic brands including M.A.C., ColourPop, and Anastasia Beverly Hills may launch fifty or more collections per year. In a 2017 article on the product deluge, Margaret Eby wrote that 'Having the newest limited-edition […] palette becomes less of a question of whether it suits your taste and skin tone and more about a "gotta catch 'em all" mentality.'[292] Over time, however, this has led to consumer burnout amidst objections of poorer product quality and repeated production of the same or very similar product lines. Anti-hauls are a way to engage with other cosmetic fans in social media spaces to connect over a shared distaste for the recent trend of manufacturers flooding the market.

> One of the most visible leaders of the growing backlash against the Youtube Beauty Industrial Complex is Kimberly Clark, a New Orleans-based drag queen and performance artist, who pioneered the 'anti-haul,' her answer to the constant consumerist churn of haul videos and brand hype. "It's like a disease, you're just like 'Gotta buy, gotta buy, gotta buy…' And I don't need to be buying this stuff. And neither do you.[293]

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[291] Whitney Hedrick, *5 Things the Beauty Community Isn't Talking About*, online video recording, YouTube, 18 July 2019,. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hiV-cKml6s> [accessed 4 March 2019].
[292] Margaret Eby, 'The Latest Beauty Trend Is Not Buying More Makeup', *Racked*, 12 May 2017.<https://www.racked.com/2017/5/12/15519758/anti-haul-makeup-rehab> [accessed 7 January 2021].
[293] Ibid.

It is compelling to witness how a growing portion of cosmetic companies' target market is beginning to turn against the marketing juggernaut. I argue that this growing voice of objection is an enactment of agentic selfhood. It is a way of consciously objecting to the notions that more is better and that even the most slapdash of beauty product releases is a recipe for success. That is, making the choice not to purchase something is as formidable as making the choice to purchase said item. In fact, it may be even more powerful because it requires conscientious effort to refuse participation in an oversaturated market that has largely taken their audience for granted.

To view the effects of market oversaturation on the consumer, one need only enter a chemist or department store on a Saturday afternoon to witness buyers consulting social media apps and YouTube videos for guidance on their next cosmetics purchase. YouTube, Instagram, and other social media outlets have become a kind of open-source catalogue for beauty products — endorsed by friendly beauty gurus with large followings. In response to the tremendous demand for beauty product and content, there exists a convention market aimed directly at consumers. The International Makeup Artists Trade Show (IMATS) was once exclusively attended by industry professionals but as the beauty guru social media community grew, social media influencers and hobbyists began flocking to its exposition floor and attending technique masterclasses alongside those who make their living doing makeup. In response to the growing demand from consumers, events like BeautyCon and SEPHORiA took root and IMATS returned to a primarily professional audience.[294] Tickets to these consumer-oriented conventions fetched $30 to $125 (USD)

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[294] Kristen Wiley, 'Which Makeup Convention to Attend: How to Pick the Right One', *Statusphere*, 3 June 2019 <https://brands.joinstatus.com/makeup-convention/> [accessed 30 July 2019].

per person per day and feature makeup classes, access to purchase latest releases from hundreds of brands, social media influencer parties, and even celebrity meet-and-greets. They hold more in common with pop culture fan conventions than traditional beauty industry trade shows. Of course, these events represent perfect microcosms of the Vectors of Glamour: they promulgate glamour as a goal, normalise glamour praxis, unify mechanisms of power and play, and exist as both a method and venue of glamour praxis. Consumer beauty conventions provide opportunities for the audience to directly interact with celebrity makeup artists and beauty influencers which further activates an imagined life as a beauty guru or friend of a beauty guru. Cynical though it may be, it is all driven by a deep emotional appeal and reinforces brand loyalty or brand romance as proposed by Patwardhan and Balasubramanian.

Whilst Dita Von Teese may not be commonly considered a beauty influencer in the same way that those with heavy social media presences might, she still exists within this sphere because her cultural capital and self-professed *glamour evangelism* exerts influence upon her audience. She also represents the notion of the *labour of love* engendered by beauty praxis; she has stated many times that she is deeply passionate about fashion and glamour. Here again, we see the ease with which beauty praxis is considered a passion project. In 2019, Dita announced her own highly exclusive quasi-convention: Dita Von Teese's Weekend of Glamour was a two-day event featuring talks and seminars on everything from makeup, hairstyling, clothing, even bedroom seduction techniques led by Dita and a cadre of artists and performers.[295] This event provided the

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[295] Dita Von Teese, 'Weekend of Glamour', 2019. <https://weekendofglamour.com/> [accessed 15 July 2019].

opportunity for her fans to directly interact with her and with each other. Entry cost $595.00 (USD) per day and though it was significantly more expensive and exclusive than events like BeautyCon or SEPHORiA, it functioned as a Vectors of Glamour in the same way.

YouTube beauty vloggers are not the first to act as Vectors of Glamour using popular media. Advertisements throughout history have sought to convey all manner of beauty standards. After all, we have established that beauty praxis is fully enmeshed with the beauty marketplace. To engage in beauty praxis is to engage with the market. Long before this generation of social media savvy beauty influencers rose to prominence, television programs were setting forth standards of beauty and acting as direct *Vectors of Beauty*, encouraging women to take up a specific set of self-care practices.

British Pathé — originally a mainstay in the British cinema experience and now an online archive of newsreels published between 1896 to 1978 — holds a vast repository of audio-visual materials showcasing life and culture during this period. It was a 'benchmark for cinematic journalism, blending information and entertainment with unparalleled success and influencing whole generations of Britons.'[296] Among the many topics documented in the collection, several feature the beauty practices of the time. These clips give insight into the rigors of beauty standards, particularly in mid-twentieth century Great Britain.

The archive encapsulates popular attitudes of the time toward beauty for women, and by extension, toward women in general. A black and white 1945 reel depicts young women enrolled in a beauty trade school. It opens with the question: 'Do women make

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[296] British Pathé, 'British Pathé Archive', (Reuters, 1896-1978) <https://www.britishpathe.com/pages/history> [accessed 30 July 2019].

their faces up to attract men or just to annoy other women? Whatever the answer is, it is certain that there is plenty of money to be made out of hard-working girls. Beauty culture in these hard times is a highly trained and scientific affair.'[297] Another video extols the virtues of beauty treatments used as part of a clinical healthcare schema. A black and white 1959 video depicts nurses receiving training on how to provide beauty treatments to their patients alongside standard clinical medical protocols. 'If you can persuade a mentally ill women to take interest and pride in her appearance, you may even swing the balance between despair and recovery and incidentally, make the relationship between nurse and patient easier.'[298] Whether or not such an effort continues to hold value as a bona fide medical treatment, it does speak to the importance of addressing the patient as a whole person and providing services that account for the sense of self. This is a *Vector of Glamour*.

The promulgation of standards of beauty in media imagery may also be understood as encouraging pursuit of mastery in physical appearance. Furthermore, participating in an online community such as the pin-up sphere may confer a sense of personal or social efficacy gleaned from 'mastering' one's own appearance and sharing the results with others. It is important to understand this aspect of social media because these individual and collective experiences often encourage deeper and more frequent participation.

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[297] British Pathé, *School for Beauty*, online video recording, Youtube, 13 April 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qksxXSVcQ4U> [accessed 30 July 2019].
[298] British Pathé, *Make-up and Get Well*, online video recording, Youtube, 27 August 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lA19_u6WqsU> [accessed 30 July 2019].

The Pursuit of Efficacy, Mastery, and Craftsmanship

Among the advantages of disseminating pin-up on social media is the chance to master the style's finer points by sharing examples and ideas. Much of pin-up's novelty in a contemporary context relies on the ability of the model to create a look that is as true to the era as possible. This may be achieved using vintage mid-twentieth century or reproduction clothes and styling. This benefits not only the individual social media consumer who can perfect their pin-up style, but also those other contributors who repost these images on their own accounts. This acts as a *Vector of Glamour.* Further, this represents the pursuit of efficacy and a mastery experience.

Albert Bandura analysed three forms of efficacy emerging from social cognitive theory: personal, proxy, and collective. Personal efficacy (or self-efficacy) refers to 'the agentic perspective in which individuals are producers of experiences and shapers of events.'[299] He defined one's general perceived self-efficacy as 'beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave.'[300] Proxy efficacy is a 'socially mediated mode of agency, [whereby] people try to get other people who have expertise or wield influence and power to act on their behalf to get the outcomes they desire.'[301] Finally, collective efficacy is a result of 'groups' motivational commitment to their missions, resilience to

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[299] Albert Bandura, 'Exercise of Human Agency through Collective Efficacy', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9 (2000), 75-78.

[300] Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy. Encyclopedia of Human Behavior, Cilt 4, Vs Ramachaudran* (New York: Academic Press, 1994), p. 71.

[301] Ibid.; Bandura, 'Exercise of Human Agency'.

adversity, and performance accomplishments.'[302] This thesis is concerned with how perceived personal, proxy, and collective efficacy are made manifest in the online pin-up social media community. According to Bandura, there are a number of ways to enhance perceived self-efficacy including having vicarious experiences from social models, being socially persuaded to believe in one's own efficacy, and having personal mastery experiences.[303] Participation in pin-up social media offers all three.

First, viewing an online image of someone engaged in any kind of beauty practice allows the viewer to imagine themselves having a similar experience. 'Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities required to succeed.'[304] This is also consistent with one of the proposed criteria for Vectors of Glamour: interpellating to activate the imaginary. That is, any kind of social media participation from simply viewing the image to interacting with the subject and other viewers by commenting is a vicarious experience that has the possibility of enhancing a sense of personal efficacy. Regarding online images of pin-up, if the viewer can imagine themselves as a pin-up model, it contributes to a sense of personal efficacy, particularly in cases where they can self-identify with the subject (e.g., a person of colour viewing another person of colour as a pin-up model).

Second, a social media contributor who posts a photo of themselves in pin-up attire may receive adulation from their audience which enhances the subject's sense of efficacy. 'People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given

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[302] Ibid.

[303] Ibid.; Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*.

[304] Ibid.

activities are likely to mobilise greater effort and sustain it than if they harbour self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise.'[305] Praise and reassurance from the contributor's audience can increase confidence and feelings of personal efficacy. This praise from a community is socially mediated and reflects a kind of proxy efficacy whereby the individual is encouraged. Conversely, negative comments can have deleterious effects on the contributor (e.g., cases of bullying or harassment whereby hateful comments are directed toward the image's poster).

Third, though most frequently associated with educational praxis in schools, the concept of collective efficacy can also be applied to this social project of sharing, analysing, and performing the pin-up aesthetic. Whilst the corpus of research discussed in this section was originally conducted within the framework of formal education and pedagogy, collective efficacy is also valid in the context of pin-up social media. 'People's beliefs in their collective efficacy influence what they choose to do as a group, how much effort they put into it, their endurance when collective efforts fail to produce quick results, and their likelihood of success.'[306] As a group project, pin-up enthusiasts can share and critique images of pin-up to strengthen the authenticity of the overall aesthetic. The exchange of ideas here allows for improvements not only to the individual contributor's look but also benefits the output of others styling themselves in the same manner. The social media space then transforms into a kind of classroom supporting the exchange and refinement of ideas. It is useful, for these purposes, to reframe the social media experience

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[305] Ibid.

[306] Ibid.

as a learning project characterised by many of the same aspects found in a classroom including individual and cooperative learning.

Stefani Arzonetti Hite and Jenni Donohoo are educators who researched and developed a model for generating collective efficacy among teachers rooted in Bandura's theoretical framework. Though Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo's work is focused on collective teacher efficacy as a foundation for student achievement and classroom equity, it is relevant to this analysis because social media acts a learning laboratory. It also mediates beliefs about the self and others. Those who engage with social media — as producers, consumers, or prosumers — are participants in a learning community. For the purposes of this thesis, 'teams' shall refer to the social media pin-up community at large. The authors note that efficacy beliefs are future-oriented and rooted in previous experiences. 'Results from past performances are the primary source of efficacy-shaping information for individuals and teams. Previous first-hand experiences provide teams with authentic evidence of whether or not they have what it takes to succeed.'[307] In the context of social media, I argue that these efficacy beliefs shape the quality and quantity of an individual's engagement with their online community. For example, if an individual has experienced bullying or harassment, their perceived self-efficacy is reduced which in turn affects how they interact with others on social media. They may change their level of participation, avoid social media altogether, or they could take on same the behaviours of their bullies to victimise others.

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[307] Stefani Arzonetti Hite and Jenni Donohoo, *Leading Collective Efficacy: Powerful Stories of Achievement and Equity* (Thousand Oaks, Corwin, 2020), p. 8.

Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo note that Bandura grouped previous experiences shaping efficacy beliefs into four types: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and affective states. Mastery experiences are those which test the individual's resilience. Bandura writes that 'after people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. By sticking it out through tough times, they emerge stronger from adversity.'[308] This may take different forms in the dissemination of pin-up online. For example, the mastery experience in this context may be the creation of a strong pin-up aesthetic as a way to overcome personal adversity (e.g., Jessica Kellgren-Fozard for whom vintage style is a way of coping with disability).

For the online pin-up community, sharing stories of mastery over adversity or witnessing a well-executed pin-up look offer a vicarious experience — one that interpellates the audience to activate the imaginary as a vector of glamour. 'Vicarious experiences also have incredible power in harnessing collective efficacy. Collective efficacy increases when teams learn that others, faced with similar challenges, met with success.'[309] Social media is characterised by the vicariousness of experience, whether it involves passively viewing shared images or full prosumerist engagement with an audience as an influencer. For the online pin-up community, if the audience can imagine themselves as the subject of the image or they can learn something about how to execute the pin-up aesthetic themselves, they are experiencing collective efficacy as a member of that community.

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[308] Bandura, 1994.
[309] Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo, p. 10.

These online experiences can function as spaces for social persuasion. 'This happens when teams are convinced to take risks and told that they have what it takes to accomplish their goals. Social persuasion is a form of influence that is exercised when a credible and trustworthy colleague convinces a group that they constitute an effective team.'[310] Though the act of sharing pin-up images on social media may not seem like a team event, the engagement that results from sharing such images does involve multiple people working toward a similar goal. In these cases, that goal may be a sense of community and encouraging fellow pin-up enthusiasts to feel confident about themselves. This level of engagement may also generate an affective state for members of the community.

> Affective states refer to the intensity in which individuals and teams experience feelings as they step outside their comfort zones. Risk can invoke worry, concern, anxiety, and insecurity to name a few negative feelings that teams might experience. On the other hand, when teams experience positive feelings […] it results in an increased sense of collective efficacy.[311]

Sharing one's image online can indeed invoke worry, concern, anxiety, and insecurity. This is especially true in cases where the individual has previously experienced cyberbullying or harassment. However, social persuasion and the opportunity to have an experience of mastery within a communal setting — the communal pin-up setting — offer a powerful opportunity for creative self-expression, even given the risky nature of sharing personal images online. In this way, the individual practices agentic selfhood whilst simultaneously experiencing collective efficacy with the support of the online pin-up community.

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[310] Ibid.

[311] Ibid., p. 11

Furthermore, participating in the social media pin-up landscape can also lead to mastery of the overall craft of pin-up. Some pin-up models place a high value on executing an overall look that is accurate to a specific time period — usually the 1940s-1960s. Others may take pride in the mere act of dressing up in pin-up attire and experiencing their body in a different, perhaps more playful way. I argue that pin-up in online spaces should indeed be considered a type of craftwork as the final image is produced for a consumer audience. Marina Dantas Figueiredo and Ana Sílvia Rocha Ipiranga assert that craftsmanship and mastery can be understood within the context embodiment. In this case, the body movement is what generates the craft.

> Body movement itself produces an authentic way of knowledge that is just as laden with the meanings that people need to accomplish their existences as any other form of knowledge, for example the ones that enable verbal communication. It means that people express their own selves and recognise each other's selves through the habits they accumulate in their bodies as much as with verbalising words. After all, both are ways of communicating.[312]

This sense of embodiment as it relates to craft mastery offers a novel way to consider online pin-up modelling. In this context, pin-up modelling functions as a form of knowledge and communication through the bodily movement via wardrobe curation, modelling, and sharing of images. The authors point to self-expression and the recognition of other's selves through bodily habits, which in this context, would include dressing in a mid-twentieth century pin-up style wardrobe and sharing images of such fashions in online social media spaces.

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[312] Marina Dantas Figueiredo and Ana Sílvia Rocha Ipiranga, 'How Can We Define Mastery? Reflections on Learning, Embodiment and Professional Identity', *BAR-Brazilian Administration Review*, 12 (2015), 348-64.

For Figueiredo and Ipiranga, the body is a vehicle for craftsmanship because the body is a learning instrument, as well as a producer of something that extracts capital. The authors point to various schools of thought within sociology and organisational studies in which 'formulations about movement and cognition have emerged in fields where the body is subject to the learning of a technique, such as dance, dramaturgy, and performance.'[313] Online pin-up — particularly in cases where the producer earns a wage from their social media presence — can be categorised as such. Moreover, the entire online pin-up community as experienced through social media allows for the transmission of knowledge and development of skill in the craft of pin-up.

Not only should the creation and promulgation of pin-up imagery be considered craft, but I argue that craftsmanship also extends to the creation of the communal space. In this case, it is the online pin-up community — a space of both play and commerce. Despite Huizinga's assertions that play spaces exist separately from the market, I argue that such a market can exist within a play space such as online pin-up. These groups are digital intentional communities characterised by their own rules of engagement (i.e., platform terms of service). The existence of these rules fits with Huizinga's Characteristics of Play.

Overall, online pin-up spaces are matrices wherein agentic selfhood can be achieved through personal and collective efficacy via mastery experiences. This includes craft mastery via embodied learning and commercial production practices. Though the entire social media landscape may be fraught with issues such as cyberbullying and

[313] Ibid.

harassment, it also offers the opportunity for shared social experiences, transmission of knowledge and skill, and ability to draw a wage through sharing a craft. On their own merits, these aspects can be considered Vectors of Glamour that serve to promulgate glamour as a goal, interpellate to activate the imaginary, normalise glamour praxis, unify mechanisms of power and play, and promote methods and venues of glamour praxis.

Choice and Agency

Though this chapter — and indeed this thesis as a whole — cannot be exhaustive in exploring every possible use for the Vectors of Glamour, it does raise important questions about how such vectors can be practically applied to other areas of study. The aim of extending beyond feminist, capitalist, and economic scholarship to disciplines such as education and organisational studies was intended to demonstrate the broad applications of the proposed Vectors of Glamour. Not only do they buttress the existing scholarship around beauty, social media, feminism, and sociology, but they also can serve as a bridge connecting this established work to other areas of enquiry.

In Figure 33 below, I have summarised the overarching themes of this chapter with respect to Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and the Vectors of Glamour (PIN-UP).
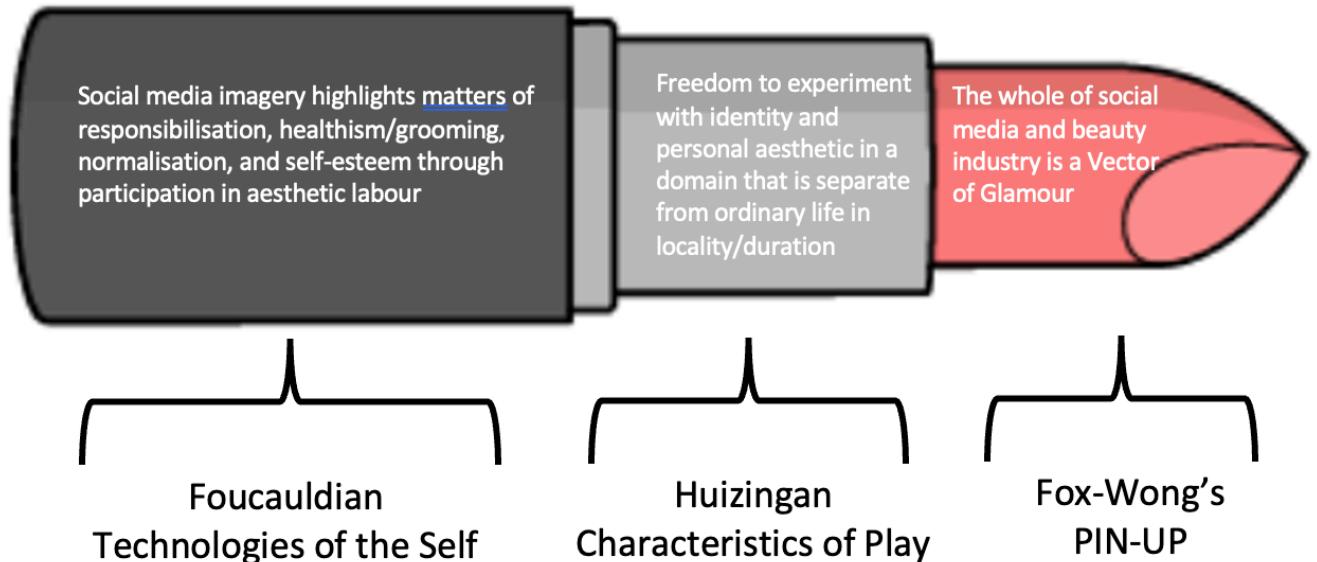
Figure 33. Methodological Summary of Case 2 – Social Media

Social media offers a wide variety of examples with which to analyse these themes. It should be noted here that the sheer vastness of social media (accounting for many platforms, users, and posts) makes it everchanging. This sense of dynamism represents constant fluctuations in meaning which is shaped by its user base. What is deemed fashionable in one moment is subject to drastic shifts in perception the next. Though early pin-up images were static and not subject to constant public commentary, contemporary pin-up via social media is dynamic. That is, the very nature of rapidly advancing technology is what allows the promulgation of mid-twentieth century style pin-up to continue.

The changing nature of social media may also be understood through the lens of choice feminism and personal agency. Broadly speaking, most adult users of social media have a general understanding that making content for public consumption comes with the risks enumerated earlier in this chapter. With that knowledge, those who share images of

themselves are making a choice to engage with others using a heavily mediated platform. Unlike the pin-up models of the 1950s whose images were disseminated on a smaller scale, those who partake in online pin-up culture subject themselves to criticism from strangers around the world.

Finally, let us return to the power of nostalgia as a capitalist tool in online dissemination of pin-up. As we saw with the example Dita Von Teese – and as we will see with in the case of Disney parks – there is a false promise that what came before is somehow better or more premium than what is commonly available today. In this chapter, the pin-up model who employs the hallmarks of so-called old school glamour exploits this idea. Mid-twentieth century style models trade on the notion that beauty standards originating in the Golden Age of Hollywood are inherently classier or rarer than what is put forth by their contemporaries. Of course, this is just one kind of glamour and it does not appeal to everyone. Yet, for those drawn to this kind of imagery, nostalgia is powerful and draws interest in a social media landscape where everyone is fighting for attention.

CHAPTER 3

THE HAPPIEST SPACE(S) ON EARTH:
DISNEY THEME PARKS AS PHYSICAL VECTORS OF GLAMOUR

Figure 34. Dita Von Teese at Disneyland Resort, Dapper Day 2017, Anaheim, California, USA, accessed 21 January 2021, <https://www.laweekly.com/dressing-up-for-dapper-day-at-disneyland-with-dita-von-teese/>

Disney Theme Parks as Physical Vectors of Glamour

In the above photograph, Dita Von Teese poses in front of the King Arthur Carousel at Southern California's Disneyland Resort during an independently organised Dapper Day event.[314] The photo embodies the connection between the three case studies presented in this thesis in that it depicts Dita Von Teese at a Disney parks social gathering that is

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[314] Star Foreman, 'Dressing up for Dapper Day at Disneyland with Dita Von Teese', *LA Weekly*, 6 November 2017 <https://www.laweekly.com/dressing-up-for-dapper-day-at-disneyland-with-dita-von-teese/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

largely engineered by social media. I am interested in how Disney parks function as physical play spaces and Vectors of Glamour, particularly via the lens of my methodological approach consisting of the Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and my proposed Vectors of Glamour.

In this chapter, I shall address the last of my three primary research questions: How do Disney parks function as loci of beauty and glamour praxis? This chapter will address a variety of smaller case studies in support of my larger argument that Disney parks are spaces where personal physical agency and play are negotiated. I shall first establish Disney theme parks as physical Vectors of Glamour and argue for Disney's designation as a luxury brand. Next, I will discuss how fashion and scarcity contribute to this sense of luxury in Disney branded goods and experiences. I shall examine how attire and impression management may be understood by park patrons, particularly with respect to images and stereotypes of the tourist body. This will lead to a discussion of body surveillance on holiday and the semiotics of elite tourism. I shall review the ways sexiness and socioeconomic privilege may be communicated and viewed in the parks, particularly regarding pin-up or vintage style. I will also argue that Disney parks are liminal zones that inhabit a space between the functional and the fantastical. Finally, I shall return to Dita Von Teese and how she represents the connection between contemporary pin-up style, social media presence, and elegant dress in Disney parks.

This chapter is concerned with how aspects of luxury, pleasure, and recreation can be understood through physical presence in the parks, including whilst sporting pin-up attire. Beyond pin-up, enthusiasts of other forms of fashion have chosen the parks as physical spaces in which to collectively enjoy their sartorial choices. Therefore, this mode

of analysis has value beyond pin-up itself. More broadly, this chapter is concerned with the physical embodiment of glamour within a physical zone of play. This encompasses everything from the attire worn to food eaten to emotions experienced whilst in this zone.

Much of the success of fancifully dressed park visitors is owed to social media communities and Dita Von Teese who have acted as their own Vectors of Glamour by promoting pin-up attire and other types of alternative fashion in the parks. Social media and news images will be included as real-world examples of this phenomenon. Due to the significant presence of Disney branded fashion (and the rise of Disney lifestyle influencers) on social media, we must again consider that images and text shared by individuals will generally be less polished when compared to images and text used to advertise the international corporate juggernaut that is the Walt Disney Company.

Disney theme parks around the world have become culturally transformative spaces. I argue that cultural transformation occurs in Disney parks because they are liminal zones which exist between the imaginary and the real, between the magical and the mundane. In writing about American theme park culture, Steve Mills differentiates between theme parks and amusement parks. 'Theme parks differ from earlier amusement parks such as Coney Island in many crucial ways, not least of which is that besides their themed areas each involves massive campuses that are not merely contained and clearly delineated, but deliberately exclude involvement with the outside world.'[315] This distinction aligns with Huizinga's assertion that domains of play exist separately from the mundanity of the outside world. In the case of Disney parks, this separation is crucial for creating an

[315] Steve Mills, 'American Theme Parks and the Landscapes of Mass Culture', *American Studies Resource Centre*, n.d. < https://americanstudiesrc.wordpress.com/american-theme-parks-and-the-landscapes-of-mass-culture/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

atmosphere that exists independently from what lay beyond its gates. By extension, this cultivates a sense of exclusivity: those who can afford to enter an artificial play world exist, at least for a time, apart from those who cannot. As we will discuss, this separation is fuelled by the attainment of luxury. That luxury owes itself, in part, to the ongoing development of the Disney parks properties and surrounding areas. Below are two maps of the property in Anaheim, California: the first, as it appeared on opening day on 17 July 1955 [316] and the second, as it appeared at the time of this writing.[317] Note the massive growth from a single theme park to a full-fledged resort destination containing two parks, three hotels, multiple restaurants, a shopping district, large car parks, and other significant property improvements. Throughout this chapter, we will return to the notion of physical boundaries and liminality as it relates to the Disney parks experience.

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[316]Disney Collector Archives, '"WELCOME TO DISNEYLAND" Main-Gate Map (1955)', *The Mouse Museum* <https://themousemuseum.com/2017/07/11/opening-day-disneyland-main-gate-map-1955/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

[317] Disneyland Resort, 'Disneyland Resort Map', 2022 <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/resorts/map/> [accessed 22 November 2022].
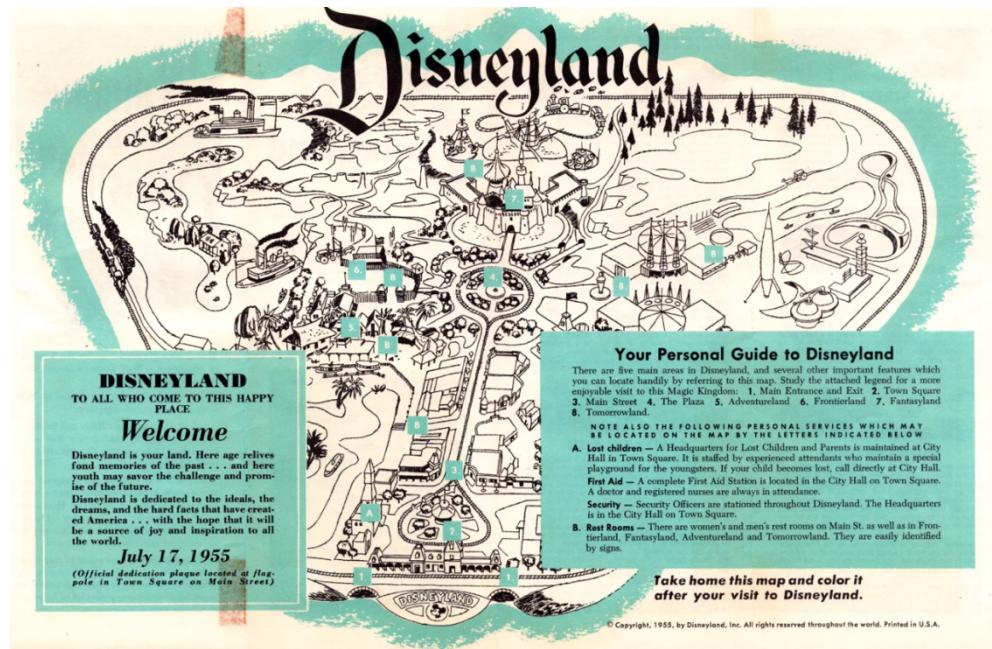
Figures 35 and 36. Top: Disneyland Opening Day Map, 17 July 1955, Anaheim, California, USA, accessed 22 November 2022, <https://themousemuseum.com/2017/07/11/opening-day-disneyland-main-gate-map-1955/>
Bottom: Present Day Disneyland Resort Map. Anaheim, California, USA, accessed 22/11/2022, <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/resorts/map/>

Mills goes on to argue that Disney parks create 'a tidy, idealised and self-contained world' which may marginalise disadvantaged populations as the Disney ethos becomes more pervasive in other public spaces.[318] I argue that the sense of exclusivity is essential to the Disney parks experience. This is especially apparent when considering the rising costs of admission, food, and lodging. In 2021, park visits averaged $6,033 (USD), with tickets costing $2,316 (USD). A family suite at one of the park's budget hotels will put people back some $2,617 (USD), with the lowest cost dining plan coming in at around $1,100 (USD).[319] As costs rise, the socioeconomic status of park visitors changes. By the end of 2022, American Disney parks saw even higher prices and reduced amenities owing to inflation, staffing shortages, and fundamental changes to attraction operations. Even loyal long-time visitors expressed outrage at the introduction of complicated app-based systems to reserve tickets and dining reservations, along with costly new methods to bypass ride queues.[320] Despite Walt Disney's famous assertion that the Disney parks are a place where all are welcome, the contemporary Disney parks experience is open only to those who can afford the increasing cost. Therefore — for the purposes of this analysis — Disney must be categorised as a luxury brand.

[318] Ibid.

[319] 'Rising Cost of Disney Theme Parks Spark Concern over Pricing Some Families Out', *CBS Los Angeles*, 20 June 2021 <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/rising-cost-of-disney-theme-parks-spark-concern-over-pricing-some-families-out/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

[320] Daryl Austin, 'Disney's New Line System Is Driving Parkgoers Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Bonkers', *Bloomberg*, 4 March 2022 <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/disney-s-new-line-system-is-driving-parkgoers-bibbidi-bobbidi-bonkers-1.1732518> [accessed 24 April 2023].

Disney as a Luxury Brand

Though not automatically recognisable as a luxury brand like Cartier, Hermès, or Givenchy, the Disney parks experience meets the criteria for extravagance. That said, I argue that the highly subjective nature of taste, refinement, and sophistication makes the luxury category somewhat permeable and open to debate. After all, what is considered good taste by some will no doubt be called into question by others. Furthermore, luxury is inextricably linked to high-brow culture whereas Disney possesses more populist appeal.

If we look deeper, however, we see that Disney parks are luxury. Eunju Ko, John P Costello, and Charles R Taylor identified five criteria when assessing whether a brand ought to be labelled 'luxury':

1) Be high quality;
2) Offer authentic value via desired benefits, whether functional or emotional;
3) Have a prestigious image within the market built on qualities such as artisanship, craftsmanship, or service quality;
4) Be worthy of commanding a premium price;
5) Be capable of inspiring a deep connection, or resonance, with the consumer. [321]

Luxury branding is often synonymous with high quality products, even in cases where the quality of the final product is dubious. That said, the experience of going to a Disney park is generally understood to be a high-quality experience because of the company's well-known dedication to excellent customer service, impeccably clean and tidy physical spaces, and the high costs associated with visiting. In the same way that the public perceives high-cost designer goods as being of high quality, the high cost of the parks

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[321] Eunju Ko, John P Costello, and Charles R Taylor, 'What Is a Luxury Brand? A New Definition and Review of the Literature', *Journal of Business Research*, 99 (2019), 405-13.

experience (admission, food, souvenirs, etc.) is connotes luxury. In this way, Disney parks meet the authors' first criteria for high quality.

Ko, Costello, and Taylor's second criterion for a luxury brand is one that telegraphs 'authentic value via desired benefits, whether functional or emotional.'[322] In Disney parks, the perceived value and benefits will vary from visitor to visitor. Parents with young children might find value in partaking in family-oriented recreation in the forms of rides, shows, parades, and shopping. Adult visitors who do not have children may appreciate those same forms of recreation without children in tow. In the case of events like Dapper Day or Pin-Up Parade in the Park, adult attendees can don luxurious, formal clothing and partake in Disney parks entertainment. This juxtaposes a refined aesthetic with what is typically viewed as a casual, family-friendly, tourist environment. Further value for all visitors may be derived from the fact that Disney parks are resort centres comprising food, lodging, shopping, and entertainment on a single property.

The third criterion is that the luxury brand must 'have a prestigious image within the market built on qualities such as: artisanship, craftsmanship, or service quality.'[323] Among amusement and theme parks around the world, Disney parks are unique. Its prestige is owed both to Disney's international renown in contemporary culture, as well as the high cost of a Disney resort vacation. Premium customer service is a hallmark of the Disney parks experience, so much so that Disney offers business developments to other companies on how to create these upmarket customer service opportunities. Furthermore, Disney's original intellectual properties (including animated films) — upon which many

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[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.

park rides and attractions are based — are the products of artisan animators and colourists.

The fourth luxury brand criterion is that the product must 'be worthy of commanding a premium price.'[324] Again, the desires and personal circumstances of the individual will dictate where and how they perceive value, though Disney parks annual earnings indicate that guests are willing to continue paying ever-increasing admission, transportation, and food costs to attend. As previously discussed, excellent customer service contributes to the premium price and perceived value. In 2021, American Disney parks introduced the Genie+ and Lightning Lane programs, both are paid services with which to purchase access to a shorter ride queue.[325] Disney's previous iteration of shortened queue access — called Fastpass — was a virtual queue and was free of charge for all park visitors. These new fee-for-use services are controversial. Paying to skip the queue is reminiscent of other luxury travel services such as first-class cabins on aeroplanes or VIP tourist access. These programs shine a light on growing disparities in socioeconomic status among visitors and it further supports my assertion that Disney parks are luxury tourism spaces.

The fifth and final luxury brand criterion is that it must 'be capable of inspiring a deep connection, or resonance, with the consumer.'[326] Among the five criteria set forth by the authors, I argue that this is the strongest in terms of defining Disney parks as a luxury brand. Disney parks represent multiple levels of resonance with the consumer including

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[324] Ibid.

[325] Brooks Barnes, 'To Skip the Line at Disney, Get Ready to Pay a Genie', *New York Times*, 18 August 2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/18/business/disney-fastpass-genie-plus.html> [accessed 23 April 2023].

[326] Ibid.; Ko, Costello, and Taylor.

generational or familial connection, a sense of an idealised childhood experience, and the chance to be physically present in a space wholly meant for play. Generational or familial connection with the Disney parks brand may be experienced as visiting the park with family members or, at minimum, engaging with Disney intellectual properties (e.g., animated films) with loved ones. One may develop a strong connection to the Disney brand because it evokes positive personal memories. Further, the individual may recall pleasant experiences visiting the parks (or engaging with Disney intellectual properties such as films or television shows) in childhood. Nostalgia is powerful and has long been leveraged as an effective marketing tool. Thus, returning to a place that evokes happy memories contributes to its perceived value. Disney parks are also aspirational. That is, one need not have ever visited a Disney property for it to evoke pleasant emotions.

Disney's changing admission options and increasing fee structure has done little to deter wealthier visitors. Those with smaller incomes are saving money for longer periods and sacrificing more to experience a Disney holiday. '"They've been aggressively raising pricing because they're looking at themselves as a premium price, a premium brand," said Scott Sanders, vice president of pricing for Disney's parks and resorts between 2004 and 2009.'[327] As time goes on, middle-income visitors are increasingly priced out. As of 2014 in the United States, *middle-income* refers to those adults 'whose annual household income is two-thirds to double the national median, about $42,000 to $126,000 annually

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[327] Drew Harwell, 'How Theme Parks Like Disney World Left the Middle Class Behind', *The Washington Post*, 12 June 2015 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/business/wp/2015/06/12/how-theme-parks-like-disney-world-left-the-middle-class-behind/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

in 2014 dollars [sic] for a household of three.'[328] It should also be noted here that in the United States, household income is generally deemed synonymous with socioeconomic class. Whereas in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, matters of class are understood to be more nuanced — encompassing matters of educational background and presumed cultural capital — the American class system is frequently, though not always, reduced to income alone. *Middle-income* and *middle class* are terms often used interchangeably in the United States and this extends to how products are marketed. It should also be acknowledged here that viewing Disney as a luxury brand is highly context dependent. In the same way that notions of social class vary by country and culture, so too does luxury. Whereas the concept of luxury is typically associated with matters of elegance, refinement, and overall taste, these are highly subjective. What is deemed good taste to one may be repulsive to another. As we will see in this chapter, this discussion is crucial to understanding how luxury is understood in the context of American fashion tastes.

Luxury and nostalgia can evoke powerful emotions. Having argued for Disney's classification as a luxury brand, let us now take a closer look at the emotional and social dynamics at play here. It is these emotional and social dynamics that are most important to understanding how Disney parks can be understood as physical Vectors of Glamour and loci of beauty and glamour praxis.

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[328] 'The American Middle Class Is Losing Ground', *Pew Research Center*, 9 December 2014 <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/12/09/the-american-middle-class-is-losing-ground/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

Parasocial Relationships, Crowded Parks, and Collective Effervescence

The importance of evoking this deep sense of connection with the consumer cannot be understated. Ko, Costello, and Taylor's fifth criterion for luxury brand is that it must inspire a deep sense of connection with the consumer. In Chapter 2, I explored the complicated dynamics surrounding social media influencers and their followers. There are similarly complicated dynamics in the relationship between Disney as a brand and its many supporters. Among the most devoted of Disney fans are those who consider the parks to be an extension of their own home.[329] This is especially common among those who visit frequently. There is an inherent oddness to the notion that a theme park operated by an international megacorporation should be seen as an extension of one's homelife, yet the sentiment is a popular one. This all suggests a kind of parasocial relationship to both the physical and intellectual properties.

In 1956, Donald Horton and R Richard Wohl offered a definition of parasocial relations. These are one-way simulacra of conversational relationships between a performer or media figure and their audience.[330] Originally conceived in the context of television performers, the same definition extends to contemporary celebrities and social media influencers. Horton and Wohl write that 'the interaction, characteristically, is one-sided, non-dialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible to mutual development.'[331] In this way, the perceived relationship that exists between the consumer and a media figure, though initiated by the presence of said media figure, is actually

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[329] Paige McClanahan, '"It's Like Coming Home to Family": Disneyland Paris Reopens', *New York Times*, 23 June 2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/23/travel/paris-disneyland-reopening.html> [accessed 23 April 2023].
[330] Donald Horton and R Richard Wohl, 'Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction', *Psychiatry*, 19 (1956), 215-29.
[331] Ibid, p. 215.

determined by the consumer. Parasocial relationships are impactful because of the action of hailing — or interpellating — the viewer. In the context of Disney, those experiences of nostalgia or joy are evoked by the corporation and then the viewer (or customer, in this case) creates a one-way relationship with Disney.

Today, for example, a viewer may watch a YouTube video where a beauty vlogger applies makeup and chats to the camera about their personal life. Though the performer — in this case, the vlogger — is choosing to share these details with their audience, it is the audience member who may experience this simulacrum of a relationship. That is, because they are experiencing the perception of social intimacy engendered by sharing personal details, there is no real exchange here. The audience member has some type of relationship to the performer, yet the performer does not have a personal relationship with the viewer. It should be noted that whilst the nature of contemporary social media allows for actual exchange between the media figure and the audience member, most parasocial interactions and relationships are held up by the audience member's belief that they are intimately acquainted with the performer, when in fact, they are not.

These parasocial relations often fulfil a psychological need. In their study of the use of narrative media to satisfy intrinsic psychological needs, Brett Sherrick, Jennifer Hoewe, and David R Ewoldsen discuss the parameters of parasocial relationships and interactions and make an important distinction between the two.

> Parasocial relationships and interactions are related concepts with distinctions regarding the overtime components of the media consumers' connections with media characters. Parasocial interactions are often used to explain a connection felt with a media character that exists primarily during the actual consumption of the media content featuring that media character. Parasocial relationships often include longer term effects that can occur

during the actual consumption of the media content featuring that media character but also may persist beyond the act of consumption.[332]

Thus, the parasocial interaction speaks to the connection experienced whilst consuming a piece of media and the parasocial relationship is what extends after the moment of consumption. I argue that these definitions can extend beyond media personalities to physical spaces like Disney parks. In this context, a park visitor will maintain a deep feeling of connection to this physical space. Frequent visitors speak of Disney parks as an extension of their living space and returning to the park after time away is akin to coming home. The relative stability of the environment, nostalgia for childhood, signature foods, and generally pleasant surroundings are some of the reasons frequent visitors might view the park as home.[333] This is evidence of Disney's success in creating such a deep and warm resonance with their audience, whilst a less charitable interpretation would be that Disney marketing is so insidious that it convinces consumers to pay a premium for the feeling of being at home. In 2022, Disney announced plans to develop a series of residential master planned communities where Disney enthusiasts can purchase homes and live fully immersed in the brand.[334]

Parasocial relationships and interactions are often subjects of derision on social media. In the image below, Twitter user @tanisthelesbiab retweets a TMZ article about the reopening of Disneyland following its yearlong closure during the COVID-19

[332] Brett Sherrick, Jennifer Hoewe, and David R Ewoldsen, 'Using Narrative Media to Satisfy Intrinsic Needs: Connecting Parasocial Relationships, Retrospective Imaginative Involvement, and Self-determination Theory', *Psychology of Popular Media*, 11 (2021), 226-74.

[333] Jenna Lew, 'Why Disneyland Is Home', in *The Odyssey,* 3 April 2017, https://www.theodysseyonline.com/disneyland-home> [accessed 26 April 2023].

[334] Will Feuer, 'Disney to Develop Residential Communities with Condos, Houses', *Wall Street Journal*, 16 February 2022 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/disney-to-develop-residential-communities-11645025886> [accessed 26 April 2023].

pandemic.[335] The photos depict Disney parks employees and guests crying at the park's

reopening, ostensibly overcome with joy or some other combination of emotions following

the trauma of the pandemic.

Figure 67. @tanisthelesbiab *the parasocial relationship people have with disney and corporations genuinely scare me and this is just proof* Twitter, accessed 1 November 2021, <https://twitter.com/tanisthelesbiab/status/1388522037119897602>

I argue that these parasocial relationships and interactions with the Disney brand are

fundamental to understanding the value of the park as a domain of play. In this way,

Disney parks function as a very large (and expensive) play home for children and adults.

The emotional attachments between the visitor and the space are the result of clever

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[335] 'the parasocial relationship people have with disney and corporations genuinely scare me and this is just proof Disneyland reopened in Californa after 13 months and people were in tears', (tweet), @tanisthelesbiab, 1 May 2021.

marketing and an inherent human desire for connection. Despite these deep emotional

bonds with the brand, some long-time Disney devotees have expressed concerns about

high costs and overcrowding in parks, particularly following extended closures related to

the COVID-19 pandemic. Others continue visiting without hesitation.

Despite the effects of global inflation and issues with supply chain and staffing,

Disney parks are at capacity nearly every day. Guests are willing to contend with longer

lines and fewer amenities obtained at a higher cost. This thesis demonstrates that Disney

parks are spaces where play and power are negotiated. This is particularly evident with

regard to how costumes and uniforms figure into the management and engagement with

crowds of visitors. The community aspect of visiting a Disney park — a sense of magic

experienced communally with rules of decorum — is fundamental to why guests are willing

to endure increasingly large crowds.

Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* explores the ways in which individual identity is

understood in relation to a crowd. Canetti offers the example of a 'crowd crystal.'

> Crowd crystals are the small, rigid groups of men, strictly delimited and of great constancy, which serve to precipitate crowds. Their structure is such that they can be comprehended and taken in at a glance. Their unity is more important than their size. Their role must be familiar; people must know what they are there for. Doubt about their function would render them meaningless. They should preferably always appear the same and it should be impossible to confound one with another; a uniform or a definite sphere of operation serves to promote this.[336]

Canetti cites soldiers and monks as examples of crowd crystals, in that their uniforms

distinguish them from others and when they are out of uniform, they occupy different

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[336] Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 73.

identities.[337] This statement echoes Foucault's thoughts about the 'bodily rhetoric of honour' (discussed in the introduction) which enables soldiers to be distinguished from afar.[338] Disney parks employees, whether in costume to portray a character or otherwise in uniform as ride operators, restaurant workers, custodians, and customer service personnel, can be deemed crowd crystals. They can be quickly identified by their Cast Member nametags and employee attire. To those with deeper knowledge of the various rides and attractions, employees can be differentiated from one another by the style of their uniforms which correspond to their assigned work area. For example, Disney employees who wear plaid uniforms (shown below) are easily identified by frequent parks visitors. Known colloquially as *Plaids*, these are tour guides and concierges who can be seen escorting celebrities and other VIPs around the property, facilitating expensive and exclusive parks experiences.[339] Those who can afford to engage the service of a plaid-clad Disney Cast Member are able to skip ride queues, get priority access to shows, and enjoy higher end dining options. Plaids are a kind of visual shorthand for luxury to the Disney connoisseur.

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[337] Ibid., p. 74.
[338] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, p. *135*
[339] Meghan Jones, 'This is What it Means If You See a Disney Cast Member in a Plaid Vest', *Reader's Digest*, 22 December 2021 <https://www.rd.com/article/disney-cast-member-plaid-vest/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

Figure 38. This Is What It Means If You See a Disney Cast Member in a Plaid Vest. Reader's Digest, 22 December 2021, accessed 2 February 2022, <https://www.rd.com/article/disney-cast-member-plaid-vest/>

The use of uniforms is not exclusive to parks employees. Some guests don uniforms of their own. Though we have already discussed Disneybounding — the act of dressing in homage to specific Disney characters using specific colour palettes and accessories – there are also visitors who carefully coordinate their ensembles to match. 'This Japanese phenomenon is called *osoroi code* (おそろいコーデ), or matching outfits, and is especially popular among young people. Friends, families, or couples will dress exactly the same to show their affection toward one another. Some reasons behind the popularity of *osoroi code* are that it makes those involved feel more connected and

strengthens the friendship.'[340] Though dressing to match is frequently seen in Disneyland Tokyo and Tokyo DisneySea, it is not exclusive to Japan. Many visitors to American Disney parks also dress to match.[341]

Figures 39 and 40. T-WINNING Disney guests are wearing identical clothing to visit the parks in new trend known as the Osoroi code, The Sun (online), 10 August 2019, accessed 2 February 2022, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/travel/9583598/disneyland-dress-identical-osoroi/>

Though coordinated ensembles featuring Disney-branded apparel is common in the act of *osoroi code*, families and other groups will often sport simple customised tee shirts to distinguish themselves from the crowd (as shown below in Figure 41).[342]

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[340] Matthew, 'Visiting Tokyo Disneyland: What You Need to Know', *Mobal*, 28 April 2017 <https://www.mobal.com/blog/japan/visiting-tokyo-disneyland-need-know/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

[341] Kara Godfrey, 'T-Winning Disney Guests Are Wearing Identical Clothing to Visit the Parks in New Trend Known as the Osoroi Code', *The Sun*, 10 August 2019 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/travel/9583598/disneyland-dress-identical-osoroi/> [accessed 23 April 2023].

[342] Peterson Family Reunion, 'Best Day Ever ', *Custom Ink*, 8 June 2019 <https://www.customink.com/photos/best-day-ever-1> [accessed 24 April 2023].

Figure 41. Best Day Ever – Peterson Family Reunion. Custom Ink website, accessed 2 February 2022. <https://www.customink.com/photos/best-day-ever-1>

Canetti would likely view these examples as crowd crystals: they are identifiable as part of a common group even when they step away from each other and are absorbed into larger crowds. When they shed their uniform or matching attire, they resume their previous identity.

Each of these crowd crystals and all who visit Disney parks are participating in what Emile Durkheim described as *Collective Effervescence*: a feeling of joy or energy experienced in a group engaging in the same ritual or purpose.[343] Attending a parade, going on a ride, eating specific foods, dressing in Disney-inspired attire, or watching

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[343] Emile Durkheim and Joseph Ward Swain, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (North Chelmsford, MA: Courier Corporation, 2008).

fireworks before the park closes are some of the many ways visitors engage in *Collective Effervescence*. In these cases, the parks are powerful spaces of cultural ceremony. There is a quasi-religious aspect of visiting the park as suggested by Chris Newcomb and this *Collective Effervescence* takes on a sort of spiritual or sacralised tone. Durkheim discussed the role of the religious totem as a symbol for the faithful.[344] In Disney parks, the totem is the iconic Mickey Mouse image and the faithful are those who travel from afar to experience the *magic* together. It should be noted here that there is totemic value in Mickey Mouse. The iconic symbol of three interlocked circles representing his head and ears is shorthand for the Disney experience in all its manifestations. From jewellery to foodstuffs to apparel, Mickey's iconicity is everywhere in Disney parks. There are even hundreds of so-called 'Hidden Mickeys' camouflaged throughout the various rides and attractions.

Recall the notion of the Foucauldian heterotopia: a world within a world; a place that may be disturbing or transformative. 'Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures.'[345] Rites and purifications here may refer to religious proceedings but in the case of Disney, it may be the act of submitting to security screenings or willingness to remain under the surveillance of for the duration of the visit. It could also mean the choice to don

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[344] Ibid.
[345] Ibid., p. 7.

Disney-themed attire alone or as part of a group. In any case, Disney parks as heterotopias are spaces that have been deeply imbued with meaning, both by those who create and maintain the space (the Disney Corporation) and those who visit (the guests). Depending on the visitor's aims and past experiences, Disney parks are rich play spaces which may possess quasi-religious undertones or connote a luxury travel experience. They are more than just spaces for simple recreation.

Fashion, Luxury, and Scarcity in the Magic Kingdom

Disney parks are luxury play spaces. Consider again Huizinga's Characteristics of Play: freedom, inherent separation from the mundane in locality/duration, distinction from *real* or *ordinary* life, methods of keeping order, and a separation from a market/drawing of profit. Disney parks represent freedom to play. These spaces are indeed separate from the mundane in their locality (they exist within the confines of Disney gates) and duration (visits are short-term as it is not possible to permanently reside inside a Disney theme park). The fantastical attractions and parades offered daily are distinct from the mundanity of daily life. The company strictly enforces rules of conduct for visitors and employees. The final condition for play — separation from market or drawing of profit — is inapplicable to this analysis. Disney parks' ability to draw significant profits from their properties does not diminish their recreational capacity.

As I have argued throughout this work, Huizinga's final characteristic – the absence of a market component – should not preclude Disney parks from being viewed as play spaces in the basis of three justifications. First, Disney parks are purpose-made to be spaces of play, despite the associated cost of admission. Their entire existence is

predicated on the human desire for imaginative play and suspension of disbelief. Without that desire, there is no reason for any play domain to exist. Second, it is possible for some visitors to enter the park without paying admission, such as those participating in charitable programs such as the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Because this possibility exists, it gives credence to the notion that Disney parks can be accessed and enjoyed without participating in a market. Of course, in this example, the costs of admission are underwritten by the Disney corporation or the Make-A-Wish Foundation, however that cost is not passed onto the visitor. Third, the concept of luxury is also one of play. No one needs to spend thousands on a handbag nor an exclusive overseas holiday, yet one might choose to do so because it allows them to indulge in something extraordinary and apart from their daily routine. Despite its massive profit generating power, Disney parks are domains of play and luxurious domains, at that.

Though it seems counterintuitive to assert that Disney parks are luxury zones whilst also existing outside a defined market, there is nuance to be found. Let us consider the physical parks separately from the for-profit company that owns them. Experiencing play (as articulated by Huizinga) inside Disney parks can be viewed in much the same way as experiencing play in public parks. Both are domains of leisure. In the case of public parks, those spaces are made accessible to the population yet there is significant cost associated with building and maintaining these areas. Taxes or charitable organisations subsidise the development and maintenance of these areas, but financial capital is required. Despite this, children and adults partake in a variety of leisure experiences which meet the criteria for play, per Huizinga. In the case of Disney, it is the typically the visitor who pays the cost of admission, yet they still experience leisure within the physical domain of the

parks.[346] In both kinds of parks, money is required to address operating costs, but the ability to engage in leisure activities within these zones is much the same. Later in this chapter, I shall discuss this in the context of Disney parks as liminal spaces.

To view Disney parks as a luxury play spaces is to understand the nature of conspicuous consumption on the properties. Thorstein Veblen's seminal work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class,* explored the cultural significance of the consumer purchasing expensive goods to indicate wealth or power.[347] Furthermore, Veblen asserted that conspicuous leisure — the ability to take time away from labour to experience a holiday — is another way to announce one's wealth. In the case of Disney parks, the phenomena of both conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure are on full display. The fact that someone can be witnessed enjoying a Disney parks visit is evidence of their financial ability to go on holiday. Moreover, if the individual takes time to photograph (and perhaps edit the image) and post it to social media, it indicates not only the individual's ability to take time away from labour but also their desire to broadcast it to others beyond the park's boundaries. That social media post exists as evidence of leisure which can be viewed by anyone, even long after the holiday has concluded, and the subject has returned home to the mundanities of daily life. This documentation of time on holiday via social media is conspicuous leisure.

Social media is flooded with posts showing visitors clad in Mickey Mouse ear hats, holding Mickey Mouse-shaped pretzels, and posing next to Mickey Mouse himself (or at least his costumed human facsimile). Recall here that, in the quasi-spiritual relationship

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[346] The visitor (or their agent) pays their own admission cost except in cases where charitable visits are underwritten by the Disney corporation itself.

[347] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899).

many have with Disney parks, Mickey Mouse serves as a kind of totem. In other words, the logo works by evoking and strengthening an emotional link between the viewer and the Disney brand. It may remind the viewer of childlike innocence, happy family memories, or just a pleasant time spent with friends. Whatever the connection, the Mickey Mouse icon is a powerful symbol for those with positive feelings toward Disney parks and the Disney brand in general. As such, the logo is a symbol conspicuous consumption.

Heribert Gierl and Verena Huettl define three types of goods used for conspicuous consumption: 'Products used as status symbols, products used to express uniqueness compared to friends and colleagues, products used to express conformity with exclusive social groups.'[348] Disney parks experiences, as well as merchandise purchased at the parks, are examples of these types of goods and experiences. Purchasing Disney-branded merchandise to use in the park further enhances the subject's social status.

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[348] Heribert Gierl and Verena Huettl, 'Are Scarce Products Always More Attractive? The Interaction of Different Types of Scarcity Signals with Products' Suitability for Conspicuous Consumption', *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 27 (2010), 225-35.

Figure 42. Cindy Mendez. *What better than to start October with the cutest collection from @loungefly.* Anaheim, California, USA. Instagram, accessed 2 October 2021. https://www.instagram.com/p/CUgVMJaPLva/

In the photograph above (Figure 42), Instagram user Cindy Mendez (@barbiieedoll20) poses in Disneyland sporting a Loungefly brand Mickey Mouse Jack O'Lantern Crossbody bag (retails for $65 USD)[349], Loungefly Mickey & Minnie Pumpkin Ears Headband (retails for $30 USD)[350], and a Mickey Mouse Icon Silhouette Pendant Necklace by CRISLU

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[349] Toys N Fun eCommerce, 'Lf Disney Mickey-O-Lantern Crossbody' (2021) https://toyznfun.com/lf-disney-mickey-o-lantern-crossbody/?utm_source=paid&utm_channel=google&utm_campaign=12704800065&utm_medium=cpc&utm_term=123518832867&utm_content=513150204127&gclid=CjwKCAjwhuCKBhADEiwA1HegOVfRvsOXUa8NjKeFn71Vtk6uF4dtrrGdXgsOEtTxqnKN53M0lT1_sBoCAuEQAvD_BwE [accessed 1 November 2021].

[350] Unique Vintage eCommerce, 'Loungefly Mickey & Minnie Pumpkin Ears Headband' (2021) https://www.unique-vintage.com/products/loungefly-mickey-minnie-pumpkin-ears-headband?variant=39433318465638#glCountry=US [accessed 26 April 2023].

(retails for $100 USD).[351] The manufacturers of the products showcased in this post have been tagged by the user which means that this photograph also functions as an advertisement. Whether the poster was paid for this product placement is unclear, though many social media influencers use Instagram and other platforms to act as paid spokespeople for a brand.

Gierl and Huettl's second category for luxury are those products 'used to express uniqueness compared to friends and colleagues.'[352] The product should be a source of admiration and desire by friends and colleagues — something that possesses aesthetic, social, or monetary value that sets the owner apart from others. Social media posts of park guests clad in hard-to-find clothing and accessories whilst enjoying a seemingly magical holiday make them the source of envy or admiration to their peers. This is especially true among adult visitors. Adult parkgoers — particularly those who attend without children in tow — represent a lucrative market segment for Disney. This is evidenced by the growing number of adult-oriented experiences on offer at the parks, as well as the Disneybound trend of sporting character-inspired ensembles. Some adults in Disney parks report greater ease and pleasure when visiting without children.[353] Moreover, a luxury experience is generally understood to be an adult one. The image of poorly behaved, screaming children runs counter to the polish and seriousness inherent

[351] shopDisney eCommerce, 'Mickey Mouse Icon Silhouette Pendant Necklace by Crislu – Rose Gold' (2021) https://www.shopdisney.com/mickey-mouse-icon-silhouette-pendant-necklace-by-crislu-rose-gold--400009079678.html [accessed 23 April 2023].

[352] Ibid.

[353] Penny Walker, 'Why Are So Many Adults Obsessed with Disney Theme Parks?', *The Telegraph*, 29 August 2019 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/north-america/united-states/florida/orlando/articles/why-grownups-go-to-disney/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

to the notion of luxury. In the context of Disney, products and experiences enjoyed without children can be perceived as a luxurious experience.

The third type of product the authors categorise as luxury are those 'used to express conformity with exclusive social groups.'[354] In this case, the exclusive social group comprises other Disney fans, many of whom may be competing to purchase the collectible branded goods. Taken together, the impression of luxury in Disney parks is conferred upon attendees who are able to take a holiday from their usual labour and have the disposable income to purchase limited quantities of highly desirable products.

As previously mentioned, a sense of scarcity is fundamental to the luxury experience. For example, the Loungefly Mickey Mouse Jack O'Lantern Crossbody pictured above retails for $65 (USD) but sold out almost immediately and appeared in online resale markets such as eBay, Mercari, and Poshmark for $100 - $300 (USD). Though these are relatively low prices when compared to the cost of most luxury designer goods, the scarcity of these Disney products contributes to their desirability among collectors. Many of these products are marketed as limited-edition goods that often sell out quickly.

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[354] Ibid.

Figure 43. Dooney & Bourke Fantasia 80th Anniversary Shoppers Tote. Disney Dooney, accessed 2 October 2021. https://disneydooney.com/fantasia-80th-anniversary/

The Disney Parks Dooney & Bourke Fantasia 80th Anniversary Shopper Tote Bag retailed for $268 (USD) when it debuted in 2020.[355] The bag sold out quickly and can now be found on resale sites listed for over $1000 (USD). The scarcity of these limited-edition Disney fashion accessories and other goods has given rise to a cottage industry of 'Disney flippers' — individuals who purchase a product onsite and resell — or flip — it on websites like eBay at much higher prices. This confers scarcity upon the product which gives it an air of luxury and exclusivity. The resale market is so lucrative that the Disney corporation has worked to crack down on flippers, particularly those who use annual pass discounts to purchase goods at even lower prices, thereby increasing their profit margin. That risk may not deter all flippers, especially when the item can be purchased and immediately resold online via smartphone before the reseller even leaves the park property. 'But as

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[355] 'Fantasia 80th Anniversary', *Disney Dooney* <https://disneydooney.com/fantasia-80th-anniversary/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

long as Disney continues to be the iconic brand it is — and continues to create highly desired, limited-edition merchandise — there will be people who will want to buy these limited-edition items, even if it means they have to wait to find them on eBay.'[356] It should be noted that the artificial scarcity created by flippers in this cottage industry changes the affordability of what are meant to be middle brow items. That is, a handbag retailing for $65 (USD) which is then flipped and sold for several hundred dollars makes it less accessible to its target market. This market manipulation fundamentally shifts the nature of the product as it lacks the quality and craftsmanship of traditional luxury designer goods but, as a resale item, will fetch a similar price to its upmarket counterpart.

Even though many visitor groups dress in coordinated attire, there is a difference between sporting relatively inexpensive matching shirts and sporting Disney branded goods from luxury fashion houses. Though mass-produced fashion accessories emblazoned with licenced Disney images are desirable on both the retail and resale market, they lack the supposed artisanal quality of goods from luxury brands. Beyond middle brow American fashion retailers like Loungefly or Dooney & Bourke, Disney has allied itself with a number of luxury goods houses including Gucci and Givenchy. This affords multiple benefits for Disney and its corporate partners. For Disney, partnerships with distinguished fashion brands help to enhance their image among adults. For the fashion brands, the use of iconic images creates a larger customer base and attracts fans who are already willing to spend large sums on Disney products.

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[356] Bailee Abell, 'The World of Resellers: Disney Fights Back against Ebay Flippers', 20 December 2020 <https://insidethemagic.net/2020/12/disney-parks-resellers-ba1/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

The Disney x Gucci Donald Duck collection spans a variety of apparel and accessories. The Donald Duck sweatshirt pictured below retails for $1450 (USD).[357] Givenchy licensed the image of Bambi to be combined with an image of a bathing woman and emblazoned the final product on cotton tee shirts and tote bags.[358] The former fetches $790 (USD) directly from Givenchy, whilst the latter can now only be purchased on the luxury resale market. Though these are true designer goods from storied fashion houses, they represent the same desire for exclusivity, scarcity, and leisure as their mass market counterparts. Furthermore, there exists a paradox: the desirability of niche luxury goods is predicated upon their exclusivity, yet the popularity of these products means that many people will visit the parks sporting the same apparel.

Figure 44 and 45. Left Disney x Gucci Donald Duck Sweatshirt. Gucci, accessed 2 October 2021. https://www.gucci.com/us/en/pr/men/ready-to-wear-for-men/sweatshirts-and-hoodies-for-

[357] Gucci, 'Disney X Gucci Donald Duck Sweatshirt' https://www.gucci.com/us/en/pr/men/ready-to-wear-for-men/sweatshirts-and-hoodies-for-men/sweatshirts-for-men/disney-x-gucci-donald-duck-sweatshirt-p-617964XJDC16429 [accessed 2 October 2021].
[358] Givenchy, 'Bambi Printed T-Shirt' https://www.givenchy.com/us/en-US/bambi-printed-t-shirt/BW700D304U-001.html#q=bambi&lang=en&start=1 [accessed 2 October 2021].

Luxury brands automatically function as Vectors of Glamour in and of themselves. Whether a mass market handbag or an exclusive designer product finished by hand, the Disney imagery emblazoned upon it confers desirability, scarcity, the desire to show oneself at leisure. These are all modes of doing conspicuous consumption. As a luxury brand, events like Dapper Day (and Dita Von Teese's presence at their events) make logical sense as domains of play for adults.

Beyond the matters of scarcity and luxury in Disney branded goods and experiences, there exists a vital social aspect. As previously mentioned with respect to the ideas of *Collective Efficacy* or parasocial relationships, Disney is adept at inculcating rich social and emotional connections in its customers and fans. Much of this is related to the exclusivity of the parks experience but it can also be found within the number of subcultures that exist among visitors.

Subcultures and Social Signifiers

One need not be a social media influencer displaying expensive limited-edition apparel and accessories to benefit from exclusivity in this environment. The miniature and idealised themed lands existing within the gates of Disney parks have become a backdrop for a variety of venue-specific subcultures to emerge. In the last decade, social clubs have sprung up in American Disney parks. Comprising roving crowds of adults sporting Disney character-themed denim battle jackets and tattoos, the social clubs are exclusive. Some require aspiring members to follow strict rules of conduct in the park to be considered for

admission to a club. Attired in what appears to be a blend of 1950s greaser gang attire and Disney patches and pins, these social clubs have been mistaken for actual gangs — an image fuelled by the rare scuffle between rival clubs on park property.[359]

Figure 46. Neverlanders Social Club members at Disneyland, Anaheim, California, USA, accessed 21 January 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/8gdqy5/the-punks-of-the-magic-kingdom>

Several other groups with common interests have emerged to celebrate non-Disney organised events. Though not officially organised by the parks, events such as Bats Day (a gathering of those who enjoy the goth aesthetic) and Gay Days have grown over the years to bring together thousands of visitors convening on the same weekend to celebrate their common interests and love of Disney. Furthermore, the growing segment of park visitors who deem themselves die-hard adult Disney fans encompasses these subcultures but also exists as a subculture apart from the mainstream. Sometimes

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[359] Crissy Van Meter, 'The Young, Tattooed, Obsessive Fans Roaming Disneyland', *Vice Online*, 11 March 2014 <https://www.vice.com/en/article/8gdqy5/the-punks-of-the-magic-kingdom> [accessed 24 April 2023].

referred to as 'Disney Adults,' this group comprises those who travel from afar and spend great amounts to visit the parks as frequently as possible. Their homes are often festooned with Disney merchandise and they take time to curate Disney-fied outfits to wear on the property.

Though they represent a robust market for Disney, they can also be a derided fandom, often criticised as uncultured, poorly travelled, or experiencing a kind of arrested social development. Jessie, a millennial American tech worker got engaged in a Disney park and spends as much time as possible visiting her favourite place.

> 'Many of the best memories of my life were spent at Disney World,' she said. Her sister corroborated this with a story. 'I remember Jessie was in [Zimbabwe] on a trip, and I remember her saying to me, 'It's amazing, and it's incredible in so many ways, but I really, really miss Animal Kingdom right now in Disney,' Missy said.[360]

Jessie and Missy represent a growing trend among Disney Adults who put significant amounts of disposable income into their love of Disney. 'Between the two of them, the sisters estimate they have spent at least $60,000 to $75,000 dollars per person going on trips to Disney, though they suspect it's probably more.'[361] This begs the question: what does Disney (as a brand) and the parks (as a physical experience) represent for adults? Jessie says that 'Disney […] represents a safe, magical space where the weight of the world and its problems disappear.'[362]

Beyond a sense of escapism from the workaday challenges of adulthood, Disney represents a sense of self-image congruency. 'According to consumer behaviour

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[360] Michael Blackmon, 'Disney Adults Don't Care If You Hate Them. They're Having Fun Anyway', *BuzzFeed News*, 7 July 2021 <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/michaelblackmon/disney-adults-are-having-a-magical-time-whether-you-like-it> [accessed 24 April 2023].
[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid.

research, consumers normally act in the way[s] that maintain their self-concept, which can be achieved by the purchase of a product or a brand that is congruent with their self-concept.'[363] In the context of Disney Adults, this self-image congruency can be interpreted as a way of expressing one's desired identity as carefree, beautiful, fun-loving, or even magical. Whether or not they are physically on the property, the Disney Adult can easily access this part of their identity by watching a Disney film, purchasing and using branded merchandise, or interacting with Disney social media. In a Foucauldian sense, constantly interacting with Disney products acts as a sort of Technology of the Self because it reifies the Disney Adult's identity as a member of this subculture and supports a sense of agentic selfhood. In a Huizingan sense, it is a way to engage in a near-constant state of play. As a *Vector of Glamour*, it unifies these mechanisms of personal agency and play. The same argument can be made of any of the Disney subcultures mentioned herein.

Dapper Day enthusiasts are among these Disney subcultures. Attendees also generally tend to be Disney adults. Started by designer Justin Jorgensen in 2011, Dapper Day has grown from a small handful to attendees to tens of thousands who don varying degrees of vintage-style formalwear and gather in Disneyland California, Walt Disney World Florida, or Disneyland Paris.[364] Eschewing the typical American trappings of casual holiday wear such as denim blue jeans or stretchy athleisure wear, Dapper Day attendees choose carefully curated and rather refined outfits, often in the style of 1940s–1960s

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[363] Wanwisa Charoennan and Kai-Ping Huang, 'The Antecedents and Consequences of Conspicuous Consumption of Luxury Fashion Goods in a Social Media Platform', *International Journal of Organizational Innovation (Online),* 11 (2018), 1-12.

[364] Rick Rojas, 'On Dapper Day at Disneyland, It's Cool Not to Be Casual', *Los Angeles Times*, 26 March 2013 <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-dapper-20130326-dto-htmlstory.html> [accessed 24 April 2024].

formalwear. The event's founder, Justin Jorgensen, who at the time was working as a theme park attractions designer, found inspiration from Disney's early days:

> [I was looking at] early concept illustrations of Disney's parks featured guests who appeared dressed to the nines […] it seemed the parks' designers were aiming to position a visit to these amusement venues as being on par with a night at the opera, or some other haughty cultural affair. And I thought, wouldn't it be great to bring those illustrations to life, and fill the parks with dapper guests just as the original designers imagined they might be?[365]

Dapper Days events are not only held on Disney properties but have grown to include well-dressed group outings at museums, parks, and other cultural venues. Dapper Day shares many traits in common with fan conventions which see attendees paying for admission, cosplay options, merchandise, autographs, and photo opportunities. Interestingly, this phenomenon of smartly attired social gatherings seems to be a response to the increasingly casual dress and demeanour of the average visitor. Recall this chapter's central research question: How do Disney parks function as loci of beauty and glamour praxis? Dapper Days and associated events are strong examples of how the parks function in this way. Stereotypical tourist attire can be controversial, particularly when it is a signifier for unbecoming behaviour in those traveling abroad. Jorgensen refers to casual or even sloppy attire as *tourist drag.* Let us now parse the semiotics of attire and personal grooming choices in Disney parks.

Attire Choice, Personal Grooming, and Impression Management

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[365] Justin Jorgensen, 'The Dapper Day Story' https://dapperday.com/pages/the-dapper-day-story [accessed 24 April 2023].

Over the years, cultural commentators and fashion critics have bemoaned the increasing trend toward very casual dress in public spaces. The *tourist drag* to which Jorgensen refers is often lampooned, portraying tourists as boorish, wasteful, entitled, and distastefully dressed. Whilst tourists can be stigmatised regardless of their country of origin, it is American tourists who are most frequently associated with this stereotype in American Disney parks.[366]

This stigma may be rooted in the literary archetype of the *Ugly American* — the individual whose behaviour is so vulgar, ignorant, and/or disrespectful that it is offensive to members of other nations. The phrase has become shorthand in political contexts when referring to the untoward effects of American exceptionalism or ignorance of the customs of other nations. Some American primary and secondary schools even host an annual Tacky Tourist day encouraging staff and students to dress up in stereotypical tourist garb including cargo shorts, waist bags, sunglasses, loud print shirts, and noses covered in thick, white sunscreen.[367] These garments and accessories have become so pervasive among American tourists that it can be difficult to determine which are worn ironically and which are worn in earnest (as seen below).

Though Dapper Day events are also celebrated at Disneyland Paris, it originated in the United States as a response to the unrefined or tasteless nature of casual tourist dress. Paradoxically, Dapper Day is a social event that draws visitors from afar: tourists. They now exhibit the hallmarks of many beloved tourist institutions including branded

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[366] Unknown, 'Tourists at Disneyland'
<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/0f/40/fd/0f40fdc28a5ef244ff3760d7af0cc996.jpg> [accessed 24 April 2023].
[367] Gulf High School, 'Tacky Tourist Day at Gulf High School', 2021 <https://ghs.pasco.k12.fl.us/tacky-tourist-day/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

merchandise available for purchase, discounted group hotel rates, and even an event-specific marketplace on the Disney property. It is interesting then, to consider that Dapper Day exists as both a rejection of so-called *tourist drag* and also as a reflection of the tourist experience.

Figures 47 and 48. Top. Tacky Tourist Day at Gulf High School, New Port Richey, Texas, USA, accessed 12 October 2021, <https://ghs.pasco.k12.fl.us/tacky-tourist-day/> Bottom. Disneyland Visitors, Anaheim, California, USA, Date unknown, accessed 12 October 2021, <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/0f/40/fd/0f40fdc28a5ef244ff3760d7af0cc996.jpg>

Attire and personal grooming choices in Disney parks have broad implications. They may telegraph information about wealth, physical health, and social class. Impression management is deeply interwoven with attire and personal grooming choices in public spaces. Erving Goffman's work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* discussed the concept of impression management. For Goffman, these are the techniques employed by the individual to convey a specific image to others and in doing so, attempt to control the behaviour of others. 'Regardless of the particular objective which the individual has in mind and of his motive for having this objective, it will be in his interests to control the conduct of the others, especially their responsive treatment of him.'[368] Impression management offers a valuable framework when considering attire and grooming choices in Disney parks. These choices speak to the highly coded nature of fan attire and may project one's love of the brand, the amount of money they spend on apparel and other merchandise, and even their personal health and hygiene. It should also be noted that the concept of impression management forms the bedrock upon which social media is constructed.

Impression management also contributes to the idea that Disney is a luxury brand. However, I argue that it is wholly context dependent. For example, the casually dressed park visitor pictured below in Figure 49 (Instagram user @magically.chic) is wearing a Minnie Mouse Ear headband, a Chanel necklace layered with mid-range CRISLU Mickey icon necklace, cut-off Mickey Mouse logo denim shorts, and a Prada handbag, whilst holding a Mickey Mouse ice cream bar.[369]

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[368] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Harmondsworth, 1978).

[369] 'I'm Just Here for the Treats 🍦❤️' (Instagram) Kristina Jovanovska (@magically.chic), 10 September 2021. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CTpe9FAL1Hr/> [accessed 13 October 2021].

Figure 49. Kristina Jovanovska. @magically.chic *I'm just here for the treats.*
Orlando, Florida, USA. Instagram, accessed 13 October 2021.
https://www.instagram.com/p/CTpe9FAL1Hr/

This Instagram post represents thousands of dollars of designer and mid-range goods before factoring in cost of admission to the Disney parks property. It is paradoxical, then, that even whilst dressed quite casually, the individual may be wearing and consuming hundreds or even thousands of dollars of Disney branded goods. In the case of Disney parks, the perception of the individual is coloured by knowledge of the brand. In other words, someone with insider knowledge of the costs of these goods will perceive the subject as having significant disposable income, whereas someone without this insider knowledge of the Disney brand is not likely to perceive the same. In this way, the cost of branded goods automatically codes the subject within the in-group of fans who can afford such items.

Figures 50 and 51. Top: Young adults visit Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom on 30 July 2019, Orlando, Florida, USA, accessed 11 October 2021, <*https://www.tampabay.com/fun/should-adults-go-to-disney-without-kids-the-internet-rages-20190731/*> Bottom: Dapper Day Participants at Disneyland, Anaheim, California, United States, accessed 12 October 2021, <*https://www.themeparkinsider.com/flume/201704/5546/*>

Above (Figure 50), three young adults pose near the Autopia attraction in Walt

Disney World's Magic Kingdom.[370] Sporting mouse ear headbands, cut-off denim, and tee

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[370] Sharon Kennedy Wynne, 'Should Adults Go to Disney without Kids? The Internet Rages', *Tampa Bay Times*, 31 July 2019 <https://www.tampabay.com/fun/should-adults-go-to-disney-without-kids-the-internet-rages-20190731/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

shirts, they represent the most common type of Disney parks attire in recent years: extremely casual. In the next image (Figure 51), two Dapper Days attendees pose in Disneyland near Walt Disney's Enchanted Tiki Room.[371] The latter is certainly more elegant than the former and there is an undeniable contrast of visitors wearing tailored dresses, suits, and various other finery against a sea of casually attired visitors. This points to a perennial debate about society becoming increasingly more casual through the generations, not only in attire but also in all areas of life. I argue that this long-running debate is more a commentary on changing social mores than actual attire choices. Dressing casually, or even slovenly, as some might label the attire choices of those visiting Disney parks, is a personal choice and that is also an enactment of agentic selfhood. What is deemed unkempt to one person might be deemed liberating to another. Depending on the socio-cultural context, overly casual or slovenly dress may be coded as transgressive.

The difference between these two groups comes down to the concept of soigné: the pursuit of appearing well-groomed and elegantly dressed. Dapper Days participants take pains to dress elegantly, often purchasing vintage or antique goods to complete their look. These individuals may be perceived as overdressed or fussy. The Dapper Day weekend of events has now grown to include an on-site market where participants may purchase curated fashions. By contrast, dressing very casually (even in cases where the individual is wearing costly Disney branded items) may be perceived as laziness.

Let us now consider personal grooming and eating in these spaces through the frameworks of Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play,

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[371] Rob McCullough, 'Dapper Day Brings Thousands of Well-Dressed Fans to Disneyland', 24 April 2017 <https://www.themeparkinsider.com/flume/201704/5546/> [accessed 24 April 2023].

and the Vectors of Glamour. In a Foucauldian sense, dressing in frayed clothing whilst eating cheaply produced, sugar-laden snack foods may communicate a lack of responsibilisation and self-care. This behaviour subverts contemporary norms around dress, self-presentation, and general comportment that may be understood as a Foucauldian technology of responsibilisation or self-care. Again, these standards are context dependent. There also exists a cultural component to this: Americans tend to dress more casually in daily life when compared to their counterparts elsewhere in the world. Americans also tend to consume more processed foods when compared to citizens of other countries. Taken together, someone who wears unfussy clothing and consumes highly processed Disney-branded foods may be perceived by others to be lazy or from a lower socioeconomic group. In the context of Disney parks, however, that same person has spent a significant amount to dress and eat this way. In a Huizingan sense, all those dress and food choices made on the property fall neatly within the domain of play (except of course, for the market aspect, which I have already addressed). Even a Disney Adult who visits the park without children can fully immerse themselves in a domain of play that exists separately from the real world. As a *Vector of Glamour*, we can understand that this whole process works by promoting visitation of Disney parks as a goal and interpellating the individual to imagine themselves enjoying a luxurious Disney holiday experience.

Vulgarity and the Coding of the (American) Tourist Body

To fully understand what a social phenomenon such as Dapper Day represents as a touristic activity, we must also consider the role of the physical body as it exists in the Disney parks. The scholarly work within the realm of Critical Tourism offers a lens through

which to consider the presence of the body in tourist spaces and activities. Critical Tourism specifically analyses how bodies from marginalised groups are made visible, catered to, ignored, or dismissed outright both by the tourism industry and tourism scholarship itself. These marginalised groups may include travellers who identify as queer, disabled, elderly, women, people of colour, or obese.

Jennie Small and Candice Harris view these tourist spaces and experiences as both cognitive and corporeal.[372] Disney parks are, by design, highly sensorial spaces. From the moment guests enter the park property, they are greeted by a variety of sensory inputs which have been carefully engineered to evoke pleasurable responses from the guest. In turn, the guest is more likely to exhibit desired consumer behaviours including increased purchases, return visits, and promoting the brand to others. Disney famously deploys the Smellitizer, a device that projects natural and artificial scents over and around guests as they experience the rides and attractions. For example, Smellitizers in the Main Street USA section of the property work by projecting the scent of vanilla and fresh baked cookies, whilst the Soarin' Around the World ride projects the scents of oranges or salty ocean air to match on-screen views of scenic locations.[373] The scent of popcorn is wafted near popcorn stands around the parks to encourage purchase. Scent is so deeply embedded in the experience that multiple companies now sell scented candles and fragrance oils which simulate those in the parks.[374] Beyond scent, the visual impact of a Disney property is significant. From the forced perspective of building facades to the

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[372] Jennie Small and Candice Harris, 'Obesity and Tourism: Rights and Responsibilities', *Annals of Tourism Research,* 39 (2012), 686-707.

[373] Sarah (PhD Princess), 'Science of Disney: Smellitizers', *PhD Princess* https://phdprincess.com/blog/disney-smells [accessed 25 April 2023].

[374] Magic Candle Company https://magiccandlecompany.com/ [accessed 25 April 2023].

colourful night-time fireworks displays, every detail is carefully engineered. This all contributes to the development of strong, positive associations with the property and the Disney brand in the hopes of ensuring repeat patronage for years to come. And, as previously argued, these effects may create deeply felt parasocial relationships between the guest and the park itself.

Small and Harris further assert that tourist spaces are the domains of beautiful people. Holiday advertisement materials typically feature lithe, conventionally attractive, able bodies at leisure. Thinness tends to be the hallmark of the holiday advert model. 'The message is clear – there is no place for the overweight or obese body in holiday images; this body should be tackled and defeated before public exposure especially at the beach.'[375] This is evidenced in such ongoing battles as airline seat sizes and accessibility to theme park attractions. The nature of body surveillance in tourist spaces has changed in recent years, particularly with the rise of the Fat Activism movement.

Online communities such as *Fat Girls Traveling* aim to increase fat acceptance and accessibility whilst showing these bodies at leisure in glossy holiday locales.[376] In the context of Disney parks, many resources are now available to assist obese visitors in their trip planning. Plus-size bloggers discuss ride weight limits and provide suggestions for hygiene practices, comfortable clothing, and use of mobility aids. Blogger Hilary Erickson writes that she is most frequently asked if it is possible to be too fat to go to Disneyland. 'I know that being a fat person can make things awkward. BUT, there is no reason to feel

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[375] Ibid.

[376] Parker Diakite, 'How 'Fat Girls Traveling' Is Making Plus-Sized Women Feel Safe and Seen', *Travel Noire*, 29 April 2021 <https://travelnoire.com/the-black-woman-behind-the-fat-girls-traveling-movement> [accessed 25 April 2023].

like you can't go to Disneyland and REALLY enjoy it! As long as you're pretty mobile, I

don't think you're too fat for Disneyland, not at all!'[377] Mobility, then, becomes a central

differentiator in how plus-size bodies experience Disney parks, particularly if they require

the use of mobility aids such as motorised scooters or wheelchairs. In those cases, they

may have to avail themselves of attraction modifications designed for disabled visitors.

The changing body composition of the average park visitor has led to ride malfunction

necessitating major modifications, including water rides like *It's a Small World* and *Pirates*

of the Caribbean in which boats were sinking or stalling from overweight passengers.

When coupled with the stereotype of the poorly dressed American tourist, obesity to the

point of breaking ride carriages reinforces the notion of body surveillance whilst on holiday.

 The body of the so-called *Ugly American* or *Tacky Tourist* is coded as slovenly and

often, obese. In combination with the perception of American tourists as unrefined and

vulgar, fatness may be viewed through a lens of humour or even contempt. In other words,

the fatness of the American tourist is perceived as a manifestation of carelessness and

self-indulgence. Even food consumption on park property has become part of the so-

called Disney Magic. Large roasted turkey legs, Dole brand pineapple whipped dessert,

Mickey-shaped ice cream bars, and Mickey-shaped pretzels are highly sought-after

gustatory experiences. Foods produced for Disney parks have become so iconic that

apparel and other merchandise has been created in their image.[378] Though cheaply

produced, these snack foods are becoming more expensive and when combined with

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[377] Hilary Erickson, 'Overweight at Disneyland: Is It Fat Friendly?', *Pulling Curls*, 13 June 2022 <https://www.pullingcurls.com/overweight-at-disneyland-tips/> [accessed 25 April 2023].
[378] liloshopco Etsy Store, 'Mickey Head Disney Snacks Shirt', <https://www.etsy.com/listing/845751557/mickey-head-disney-snacks-shirt-disney> [accessed 25 April 2023].

other products purchased at sit-down restaurants on the property, visitors must allot a significant portion of their holiday budget to park dining. This iconicity of these foods represents type of food tourism in itself. What then, does it mean, when a visitor to Disney parks is shabbily dressed, obese, and consuming junk food? What value judgments are placed on them by other park visitors and how do those value judgments relate to the concepts of body surveillance and personal grooming?

Figure 52. Mickey Head Disney Snacks Shirt, liloshopco Etsy Store, accessed 20 October 2021, <https://www.etsy.com/listing/845751557/mickey-head-disney-snacks-shirt-disney>

Even as the movement for fat acceptance in tourist spaces grows, it is confronted by prevailing cultural sentiment about body weight. The trope of the overweight tourist is so pervasive that it has become fodder for films and other forms of entertainment. The 2002 Disney animated film *Lilo and Stitch* takes place in Hawaii and depicts a child protagonist who is both awed and amused by the fatness of visitors from the mainland. She collects photographs of these vacationers. Their fatness is a running joke throughout

the duration of the film.[379] In addition to fat tourist tropes being used as literary devices, Halloween costumes are available for purchase which depict the American tourist as morbidly obese and in search of American-style fast food even when abroad.

Figure 53. Still image from *Lilo and Stitch.* 2002. Disney, accessed 18 October 2021.

Horror-Shop.com is a purveyor of Halloween costumes and sells what they call a 'Typical Tourist' costume featuring a fat suit beneath a tropical leisure wear ensemble and a tee shirt that reads 'Which Way to the Buffet.'[380] When body size is factored into the American tourist stereotype, it is often perceived on a spectrum: everything from a sign of happy abundance and rejection of self-denial to gluttony and reckless self-indulgence. Often, however, the fat American tourist stereotype is one that is associated with vulgarity and a lack of self-control.

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[379] *Lilo and Stitch*, dir. by Chris Sanders and Dean DeBlois (Disney, 2002).
[380] Horror Shop Online, 'Typical Tourist Costume' <https://www.horror-shop.com/en/p/typical-tourist-costume.html> [accessed 25 April 2023].

Figure 54. *Typical Tourist Costume*, Horror-Shop Online, accessed 18 October 2021, <https://www.horror-shop.com/en/p/typical-tourist-costume.html>

Dapper Day can be viewed as a response to American tourist vulgarity in dress and in body type. Though many event participants are plus-sized, Dapper Day's original intent was to recreate the polish and gentility of Disneyland's mid-twentieth century roots. That is, attendees are essentially cosplaying a time in history when obesity was not viewed as an epidemic. At the time, plus sized bodies were true rarities.

Pleasure and Body Surveillance on Holiday

In both a Foucauldian and Huizingan sense, it is helpful to consider how the fat tourist trope compares to the image of a neat, well cared-for, and well-groomed body on holiday. The well-groomed body is centre stage at Dapper Day, regardless of its size. Hair is coiffed, clothing is pressed, shoes are shined. Beyond the mere contrast between formally attired guests and casually dressed ones, we must also consider what their behaviours telegraph about their interior lives.

In *The New Politics of Leisure and Pleasure*, tourism scholars Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan write that the body 'is constructed as both a site of freedom and of control, subject to discourses of hedonism and sensuality and of self-discipline and management.'[381] Citing Foucault and queer theory, the authors assert that embodiment in domains of leisure ought to be understood as a complex and interlocking set of social discourses. Pritchard and Morgan are particularly concerned with the body as a type of project which may be modified (as in dieting) before going on holiday and then used as a vehicle to experience sensual gratification (as in the case of indulging in iconic Disney snack foods in the park).

It is interesting to note the discursive themes surrounding pre-holiday body management and the experience of pleasure whilst on holiday. As Small and Harris state, tourist spaces are marketed as domains of beautiful people. Fiona Jordan explores pre-holiday body modification practices such as dieting and its relationship to embodiment whilst on holiday, particularly with respect to the *beach-ready* or *bikini* body. Jordan refers

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[381] Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan, 'Tourist Bodies, Transformation and Sensuality', in *The New Politics of Leisure and Pleasure*, ed. by Peter Bramham and Stephen Wagg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 153-68.

to Foucault's work on the managed body and societal collective gaze in the context of tourism in places where the body will be seen and evaluated by others, such as beaches or swimming pools. 'This body symbolises "correct attitude" according to socially and culturally ascribed norms.'[382] Though Jordan is referring specifically to the so-called bikini body, the same logic can be applied to Dapper Day whereby a well-dressed body is one that is presented tidily. Here, we see Technologies of the Self (in the form of self-care and responsibilisation) at work. Despite being on holiday, the body is still subject to the watchful gaze (and subsequent judgment) of the public. By modifying behaviour and physicality in anticipation of external validation, the individual is engaged in impression management.

If we apply a Huizingan framework to this analysis, what can be said about the body at play? Must the body at play need be subject to the same rigour as the disciplined body? If we accept that to visit to a Disney park is to step into a kind of Magic Circle, what then is expected of the physical body in this domain? In *Homo Ludens,* much of Huizinga's discussion of the physical body is focussed on various athletic pursuits, whether competitive or not. Does maintaining the body in such a way that it can partake in athletics as leisure engender work or play? I argue that the work of maintaining the body and presenting it for public consumption never ceases. As suggested by the work of Critical Tourism scholars, the body is constantly scrutinised by the public even whilst on holiday, perhaps even especially whilst on holiday. Even though Disney parks visitors are enjoying

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[382] Fiona Jordan, 'Life's a Beach and Then We Diet: Discourses of Tourism and the "Beach Body" in Uk Women's Lifestyle Magazines', *Tourism and gender: Embodiment, sensuality and experience* (2007).

time in a clearly delineated domain of play — a Magic Circle — their bodies are still subject to surveillance by others.

It should be noted here that plus-sized fashion is well-represented at Dapper Day events. Interestingly, whilst the fashions of yesteryear are being celebrated, they are being worn on body shapes which would have been far less common in those times. Whether the result of societal changes in diet or attitudes toward physical activity, the body shapes at Dapper Day function as a sort of anachronistic facsimile of the bodies donning similar fashion during their heyday. For example, American fashion retailers Pin-Up Girl Clothing and Tatyana sell reproductions of vintage designs and are commonly sought by Dapper Day participants.[383] Both companies have also collaborated with the Dapper Day organisation to release official co-branded merchandise designed for the event. Both brands also offer clothing up to size 4X (size 30 US; size 34 UK). These garment sizes would not have been widely available during the times these styles were most popular. In this way, we can say that the very existence of plus size clothing options for Dapper Day events functions as a sort of *Vector of Glamour* on its own. This is because the availability of garments in a variety of sizes allows a would-be wearer to envisage their own body in said garment before even making the purchase; the garment has effectively hailed them and activated their imagination. Had the item not been available in a variety of sizes, those who are plus sized might be less likely to identify with the marketed image. Regardless of apparel size, however, one cannot adequately analyse the semiotics of Dapper Day

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[383] Pin-Up Girl Clothing https://pinupgirlclothing.com/ [accessed 25 April 2023]; Tatyana Clothing <https://www.tatyana.com/> [accessed 25 April 2023].

without considering how elitism and perceptions of social class factor into the choice to dress so formally in a widely casual space.

As previously discussed, impression management and general judgments about the appearance of others are components of experiencing leisure at Disney parks. Dapper Day participants are subject to their own set of judgments by other parkgoers. Accusations of elitism are likely to follow a group of impeccably attired individuals when compared to their more casual counterparts.

Semiotics of Elite Tourism at Dapper Day

There is an argument to be made here that partaking in Dapper Days is elitist in nature. After all, it was founded on the pretence that tourists — particularly American tourists — are unrefined and badly attired. By rejecting the premise that all Disney parks visitors are slovenly and boorish, Dapper Day participants purposefully set themselves apart. Dapper Day participants are highly visible in Disney parks, and they stand in stark relief against their counterparts in casualwear.

To ignore the economic and semiotic implications of this event is to ignore its broader social implications. I argue that the performance of elitism at this event (and the notion that participants are in some way better than their casually dressed counterparts) is fundamental to its success. Though we have already established that Disney branded merchandise can be expensive even in cases where the items are aimed at the mass market, formal attire is often assumed to be luxury attire. Simply put, very casual attire appears cheap when compared to the more formal sartorial choices.

In their multiple analyses of luxury tourism, Crispin Thurlow and Adam Jaworski explore the aspirational nature of those who wish to distinguish themselves from others whilst on holiday. 'Elitism is more than simply a material or economic reality; it is also an aspirational ideal in relation to which all consumer-citizens, regardless of their wealth or power, are constantly persuaded and taught to position themselves.'[384] This aspirational elitism also aligns with Goffman's concept of impression management. Dapper Day represents this aspirational ideal. In other words, by dressing in an elite manner, participants distinguish themselves from the rabble of the casually dressed tourist. Though the outfits sported by many Dapper Day participants appear expensive (and many are indeed costly), one need not be a member of a super-elite socioeconomic class to appear as such. This speaks to the nature of visibility in this kind of tourist experience. Being highly visible is a way to telegraph apparent wealth and that is a secondary benefit of dressing formally in a casual space.

> Indeed, the spaces of luxury travel are invariably populated not so much by the super-rich as they are by wannabes and trip-of-a-lifetime tourists. (The truly elite – the so called 1%-ers – have already moved on and are sequestered in privately owned, tightly managed, rigorously policed locations beyond our reach.) Herein lies the symbolic power of luxury marketing: it not only sells visions of super-elite travel but re-envisions markers of social status and class privilege that trickle down into other modes of travel and that bleed into other domains of life.[385]

As previously stated, personal grooming choices may be used to confer information about social class and privilege. Dapper Day participants simply stand out among throngs of tourists in frayed denim or athleisure wear. In the context of this thesis, the trip-of-a-lifetime

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[384] Crispin Thurlow and Adam Jaworski, 'Visible-Invisible: The Social Semiotics of Labour in Luxury Tourism', *Elite mobilities* (2014), 176-93.
[385] Ibid.

may very well be a visit to a Disney park. And, as evidenced by the rapidly increasing cost of such visits, Disney holidays constitute luxury travel. It is interesting to note that many Dapper Day participants are repeat visitors to these properties. As such, they already exist in a separate domain from tourists who save funds over time to make such a holiday possible for their family. Regular visitors and annual passholders — many of whom can be found at Dapper Day events — already occupy a luxury niche by virtue of their ability to visit the parks frequently. Add that to seemingly expensive fashion ensembles and what results is a group of tourists who are highly differentiated from their fellow park attendees on a variety of metrics.

Thurlow and Jaworski's work can be understood in a social media context, as well. 'It is privileged people who can afford to travel for pleasure, and it is these same people who are able to perform their privilege by talking about their travels.'[386] Social media accounts for a large part of Dapper Day's success since its inception. Dapper Day has its own social media accounts where moderators repost photos of event participants as well as documenting styles from other luxury events including fashion shows and awards galas. In this way, the Dapper Day brand aligns itself with luxury, even beyond the confines of its scheduled events. Those Dapper Day participants who can take time away from labour to display their fashionable attire are partaking in both conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure, as envisaged by Thorstein Veblen. In the Instagram post below, Dapper Day participant Christian Nitu and his family are photographed in Disneyland's

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[386] Ibid.

Main Street USA district in front of one of the many facades designed in the style of an early twentieth century business.[387]

Figure 55. Christian Nitu and family, *And a star is born at our Spring 2019 Disneyland outing!* Anaheim, California, USA, 7 April 2020. Instagram, accessed 18 October 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-szqvvJhQg/>

This is an image of a well-dressed family at leisure. Were this a non-Dapper Day event, they would perhaps be attired much more casually in the style of other park visitors.

Beyond formal dress, there is a category of attire that is controversial enough to warrant ejection from the park: clothing that is perceived as too sexy to be family-friendly. This category merits examination because, as we will see in the coming pages, there is overlap between mid-

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[387], 'And a Star Is Born at Our Spring 2019 Disneyland Outing!' (Instagram) (@DapperDay, 8 April 2020) [accessed 18 October 2021].

twentieth century style pin-up attire as part of a Disney parks holiday and overtly sexy or revealing garments.

Sexy at Disney

Though the properties maintain a strictly enforced dress code for which violations can result in expulsion, Disney employees are not instructed to act as arbiters of taste. However, there have been cases where guests have been verbally warned by park personnel or even ejected from the property for wearing clothes deemed too sexy for a family-oriented environment. In May of 2021, two women visiting Walt Disney World took to social media to report being instructed by park personnel to cover their revealing outfits and then being a given a free shirt valued at $75 (USD) to dress more modestly. This then led to an online debate on the policing of women's bodies in public spaces.[388] This also begs the question: what happens when someone dresses in such a way as to evoke the erotic imaginary but does so in a family-oriented or child-oriented space?

Interestingly, this question would come up on Disneyland's opening day in 1955 when undergarment manufacturer Hollywood Maxwell opened a lingerie store right on the park's Main Street. Guests could purchase bras from a store decorated in the style of an 1890s sitting room whilst watching the 'Wizard of Bras, a mechanical figure who waved his "magic wand" at guests and rattled off a pre-taped spiel about the history of intimate

[388] Anabelle Doliner, 'Disney Guest Forced to Change 'Inappropriate' Outfit Adds Fuel to 'Free Shirt' Theory', *Newsweek*, 24 June 2021 <https://www.newsweek.com/disney-guest-forced-change-inappropriate-outfit-adds-fuel-free-shirt-theory-1603964> [accessed 25 April 2023].

apparel.'[389] Though it would remain on the premises for only six months, the existence of a lingerie store inside the park contradicted the socially conservative atmosphere of Disneyland in the 1950s. Perhaps this is because the store was designed to sell clothing items meant to be functional, rather than titillating. Despite its bizarre nature, the presence of a carnival barker-like automaton recounting the history of underwear could be understood as a type of playfulness.

Though relatively rare across the canon of Disney intellectual properties, there are some characters who represent overt sexiness. Clarice the Chipmunk (shown below in a promotional poster in Figure 56), is a nightclub singer character who first appears in the 1952 cartoon *Two Chips and a Miss.*[390] Striking typical bombshell poses in a tight cocktail dress, Clarice was originally created as a love interest for fellow chipmunks Chip and Dale. Clarice can occasionally be seen as a live walk-around character, usually in the Japanese parks. Fellow lounge singer, Jessica Rabbit (shown below in a still from 1998's *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* in Figure 57) was created in homage to classic Hollywood icons including Veronica Lake, Lauren Bacall, and Rita Hayworth.[391] Jessica Rabbit appears as a live character in Disneyland Paris and in maquette form in the dark ride *Roger Rabbit's Car Toon Spin.*

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[389] Katie Dowd, 'The Bra Store That Was Too Racy for Disneyland Guests', *SFGate*, 4 September 2021 <https://www.sfgate.com/disneyland/article/wizard-of-bras-main-street-old-stores-palm-reader-16431168.php> [accessed 25 April 2023].

[390] 'Two Chips and Miss ', *The Disney Wiki*, <https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Two_Chips_and_a_Miss> [accessed 25 April 2023].

[391] 'Jessica Rabbit', *The Disney Wiki*, <https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Jessica_Rabbit?so=search> [accessed 25 April 2023].
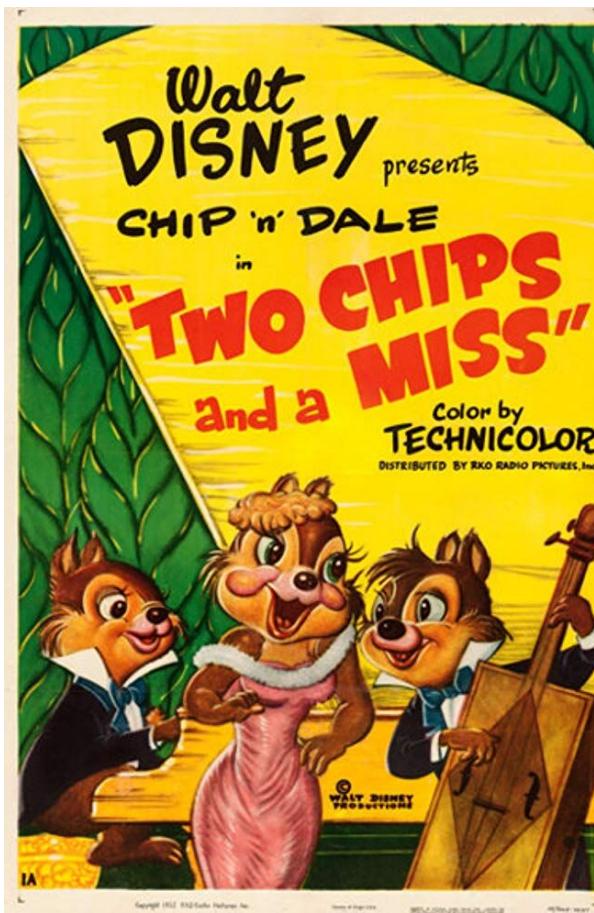
Figures 56 and 57. (Left) Promotional poster for *Two Chips and a Miss*, RKO Radio Pictures/Disney, 1952, The Disney Wiki, accessed 3 February 2022, <https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Two_Chips_and_a_Miss>
(Right) Still photo from *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Disney/Touchstone Pictures, 1988, The Disney Wiki, accessed 3 February 2022, <https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Jessica_Rabbit?so=search>

These characters, the 2021 guest attire incidents, and the presence of an undergarment store on Disneyland Main Street on opening day represent two sides of the same coin: controlling a narrative around women's bodies. In the former example, guests in revealing clothing were immediately told to cover up and given free goods with which to do so. In the latter example, the functional aspects of lingerie are touted as a sort of curiosity presented in the style of an elaborately decorated Disneyland attraction. These incidents serve as responses to a woman's body in society. Even the inherent silliness of

the Wizard of Bras does not celebrate a woman's body – it treats it as grotesquery. This is the body being controlled by outside forces.

Pin-Up Parade in the Park, a recurring meetup event on Disney property, represents the opposite: donning pin-up styles to celebrate fashion and sport sexy, yet family-friendly attire in Disney parks. The event is independently organised and hosted by Pin-Up Girl Clothing, a retailer of mid-twentieth century -inspired women's clothing in Southern California.[392] During this event, the store sponsors gift bags and photo opportunities for participants to display their finery. Like Dapper Day, the event is an occasion to eschew casual clothing, though it is primarily focussed on women and mid-twentieth century bombshell pin-up attire.

Figures 58 and 59. Pin-Up Parade participants, *Everything you need to know about the Pinup Parade at Disneyland hosted by Pinup Girl Clothing,* Anaheim, California, USA, 27 April 2015, Babes in Disneyland, accessed 18 October 2021, <http://babesindisneylandblog.com/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-pinup-parade-at-disneyland-hosted-by-pinup-girl-clothing/>

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[392] Lisa Robertson, 'Everything You Need to Know About the Pinup Parade at Disneyland Hosted by Pinup Girl Clothing', *Babes in Disneyland Blog*, 27 April 2015, <http://babesindisneylandblog.com/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-pinup-parade-at-disneyland-hosted-by-pinup-girl-clothing/> [accessed 25 April 2023].

In Figures 58 and 59 above, participants at the 2015 Pin-Up Parade are shown in typical bombshell pin-up attire. In addition to standard vintage and vintage-inspired wear, attendees often choose Disneybound-style ensembles fusing classic pin-up sensibilities and homage to beloved characters. Though these wardrobe choices technically conform to the Disney parks dress code, they are usually more provocative than most present-day casualwear. These participants are clearly engaging in a form of play, yet this is complicated by two factors. First, the play element exists inside a domain requiring paid admission. Second, the play element is a show of sexiness in a family-oriented space.

Women's clothing, specifically, has long been a domain of play and self-expression despite changing taste and social mores. Huizinga speaks directly to this in *Homo Ludens:*

> The aesthetic factor and sex-appeal are so primary here that they put the evolution of women's clothes on a different level […] This is what, up to a point, one would expect: the codes of decency and the consequent avoidance of fashions too loose, or too short, or too low, precluded gross modifications in the basic structure of female attire: a skirt reaching to the feet, and a bodice. Only towards the turn of the 18th century do ladies' fashions really begin to "play". While towering coiffures sprout up in the Rococo period, the spirit of Romanticism breathes in the quasi-negligee, the languishing looks, the streaming hair, the bare arms and the revelation of ankles and more. Oddly enough, the décolleté was in full swing centuries before bare arms, as we know from the fulminations of mediaeval moralists.[393]

Here we have evidence directly from Huizinga's work that dressing in a sexualised manner can be deemed a form of play. Pin-up itself, at its core, is meant to evoke the erotic imaginary. Titillation is the purpose of pin-up. mid-twentieth century pin-up styles are performances of sexuality, often meant to evoke notions of playful sexuality, as opposed

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[393] Ibid.; Huizinga, p. 159.

to the calculated brazenness of pornography. For the purposes of this analysis, sporting pin-up style is an act of play and Huizinga's work supports this assertion.

Susanna Paasonen's work explores both Huizingan and Foucauldian notions of sexuality. Though this work specifically analyses the physical act of sex via mechanisms of play and bodily power, it asserts that 'like play, sex is pleasurable activity practised for pleasure's sake…there need not be any functional aim, goal, or pursuit beyond the autotelic activity itself.'[394] Whilst the physical act of sex is not on display in the parks, I argue that the act of dressing sexy for pleasure is an autotelic activity. Like most aspects of recreation inside Disney parks, sporting pin-up attire in these spaces is a way of experiencing pleasure for its own sake. Paasonen also cites Foucault's statements about sexual activity occurring within the context of rules, boundaries, and a power structure.[395] Though these statements were made specifically about the sex act, I argue that their utility extends to the suggestion of sexuality in this context. Despite the sense of childlike wonder inherent to the Disney parks, such wonder is developed against the background of prescribed rules and social boundaries. These boundaries take the form of the parks dress code, as well as guest codes of conduct set forth by the company. In a Huizingan framework, it is those boundaries that help to define a space of play. These boundaries confer a sense of safety. That is, even if dressing provocatively is deemed controversial in a family setting, it may be easier to don this attire in a domain sheltered from the rest of the world.

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[394] Susanna Paasonen, 'Many Splendored Things: Sexuality, Playfulness and Play', *Sexualities,* 21 (2018), 537-51.
[395] Ibid., p. 543.

Furthermore, the mere act of dressing to evoke the erotic imaginary whilst in a family-oriented space is a transgressive one. This sense of transgression undertaken in a controlled and straitlaced environment is a way to interrogate, destabilise, and renegotiate social norms. In this example, those norms represent patriarchal pressures and standards of modesty for women and other marginalised bodies. Of course, the Pin-Up in the Park celebration engenders a kind of autotelic pleasure — one that need not be transgressive to be fulfilling for the individual. Beth Montemurro and Meghan Gillen explore the relationship between clothing and perceptions of female sexuality using a feminist interactionist lens. The authors recapitulate Audre Lorde's assertions on the power of the erotic: 'there is power in feeling connected to the sensual aspects of self and freedom in expressing and embodying sexuality in ways that counter hegemonic norms.'[396] For Montemurro and Gillen, sexualised women's attire may indeed cater to a traditionally heterosexual male gaze but dressing in this way may also confer a sense of belonging among subcultures. This sense of belonging can be seen with events such as Pin-Up Parade in the Park. The authors assert that older women, married woman, or mothers are inherently desexualised in contemporary Western society and that women who fall into these categories are deemed as less-than if they choose to dress in sexy attire. Further, women who dress provocatively may be dismissed as simply feeding into the heterosexual male gaze to court social capital:

> Those who label women who wear short skirts or low-cut shirts as merely mirroring the dominant culture deny the possibility that such women may actually feel good about themselves and their bodies. This could be their aesthetic or means of showing their sexuality. Though this style may be inspired by the male gaze, evaluating women as moral or immoral based

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[396] Beth Montemurro and Meghan M. Gillen, 'How Clothes Make the Woman Immoral:Impressions Given Off by Sexualized Clothing', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal,* 31 (2013), 167-81.

primarily on their clothes — particularly unknown or abstract women—says much about cultural fears of women's bodies and sexuality. Dressing to show sexuality in a culture that labels women who do so as promiscuous needs to be considered as an act of resistance and an articulation of subjectivity.[397]

The notion of dressing to evoke the erotic imagination as an act of resistance harks back to discourses surrounding choice feminism and patriarchal bargaining, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. What is compelling in the above passage is that cultural commentary which decries a woman's choice to sport these fashions is really a bellwether for societal anxiety about sexually empowered women. Indeed, wearing bombshell pin-up attire in a family-oriented environment like a theme park is transgressive and a way to engage with one's own sense of subjectivity.

More broadly, there are several parallels between attitudes toward provocatively dressed individuals and stereotypical tourists. Having enumerated the debates that surround these two groups as they exist in domains of play catering to families on holiday, let us now explore what these similarities reveal about personal agency and embodiment in Disney parks.

The Vixen, The Tourist, and The Broker

Mae La Roux (shown below in Figures 60 and 61) is a pin-up and fetish model, as well as a prolific tattoo artist specialising in Disney-themed tattoos.[398] Though her work is highly sought after and she also maintains a public persona as a fetish model, she refuses to

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[397] Ibid., p. 169.
[398] Shannon Brooke, 'Miss Mae, Tattoist', *Mae La Roux Emproium,* <https://maelarouxemporium.com/collections/exotic-prints/products/miss-mae-tattooist> [accessed 1 February 2022].

sexualise Disney characters in her artwork.[399] In addition to photos of her tattoo work, La Roux's social media frequently depicts her in mid-twentieth century bombshell garb whilst visiting Disney parks. As a frequent Disney parks patron whose visits are well-documented on her social media accounts, she embodies both of these categories.

Figures 60 and 61. (Left) Miss Mae, Tattooist. Photograph by Shannon Brooke; accessed 1 February 2022, <https://maelarouxemporium.com/collections/exotic-prints/products/miss-mae-tattooist> (Right) @missmaelaroux. *Reclaiming Myself.* Instagram; accessed 1 February 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGBM6G7gD0a/>

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[399] Mae La Roux, 'Reclaiming myself Also, sorry Mom) I was born into a life in which I would be sexualized by my father from an early age, robbing me of my innocence and purity, damning me to a lifelong battle with my own self image and worth and I was destructively ridden with a flawed sense of what my role was as a woman. This will lead to a harmful misconception that if I was to be loved and valued I needed to be available sexually to a man. My ethos as a woman became centralized around what I had to offer physically, and partnered with emotional neglect, I allowed myself to be taken advantage of by the power of the male influence. By boys, as I was very young, who were not worthy of me, who did not value me for who I was. Who had not yet come to understand what it means to be a REAL MAN. Following came manic behavior in my 20s, unsettled and unaware of how that would leave a path of destruction in its own right, causing grief in the hearts of men who probably deserved me, who knew what my purpose really was and only wanted to give way to that. Slowly, my inner self withered away into a frail, broken woman, filled with self loathing, guilt, agony and hopelessness. Unable to take control of my trauma that took the joy of healthy painless sex away from me, turn the wheel of change and grasp tightly to my moral compass. Did I even have a moral compass? No one taught me to read it. It's a massive reason why I am so passionately tied to Disney and maintaining its purity, and will not bastardize it or make it sexual in any way. It wasn't until my mid to late 20s that I finally came home to Disneyland. That all my suppressed memories from childhood came flooding back into my heart, and I was given the most precious gift back; my purity. I was set free. Walt is my spiritual father, the one I never had. I owe him my soul. I have a moral compass. I will not be controlled by my trauma and I am reclaiming myself. I pray that someone out there who needs to hear this is reading my words right now. You KNOW your worth. Do the fucking work. Be powerful.' (Instagram) @missmaelaroux, 6 October 2020) [accessed 1 February 2022].

In addition to her catalogue of more mainstream Disney body art, her portfolio of BDSM-themed photographs is also available to the public. In this way, Mae La Roux represents the juxtaposition between sexy attire and Disney fandom. La Roux's Instagram account comprises multiple aspects of her public-facing identity. In 2023, she began sharing images depicting her recent baptism and expressions of her newfound Christianity. Aside from images featuring her tattoo work, her Instagram captions clearly state that pin-up, Disney, and Christianity represent coping mechanisms for previous personal trauma.

There are a few arguments to be made here. In one respect, Mae La Roux's social media persona represents an intersectional kind of feminism: multi-layered and presented without self-criticism. Her decision to keep her adult oriented images available – even after publicly declaring a kind of religiosity often associated with modesty – suggests acceptance of her previous choices. On the other hand, the presentation of stark sexuality alongside images associated with childhood and religiosity suggests a kind of hypocrisy. Some might view that her refusal to sexualise Disney imagery is rendered moot by featuring those more wholesome figures alongside explicit photographs within the same social media channel. This tension is emblematic of a problem faced by women whose public persona leads with sexuality: how to navigate non-sexualised spaces whilst holding the erotic gaze.

Montemurro and Gillen speak to the moralising that often surrounds discussion of dressing in sexy fashions: women who dress in this way are deemed promiscuous, cheap, or crass. I argue that prevailing opinions about the character of women who dress provocatively are rather similar to the way tourists are judged: both are viewed as unrefined, vulgar, boorish, obnoxious. In both the cases of the sexily attired woman and

the unfashionably dressed tourist, there is a value judgment conferred upon them by others. In other words: the vixen in a tight, low-cut dress and the tourist in sweatpants, socks, and sandals occupy a similar role in the cultural imagination: both take up space in domains where they are undesired.
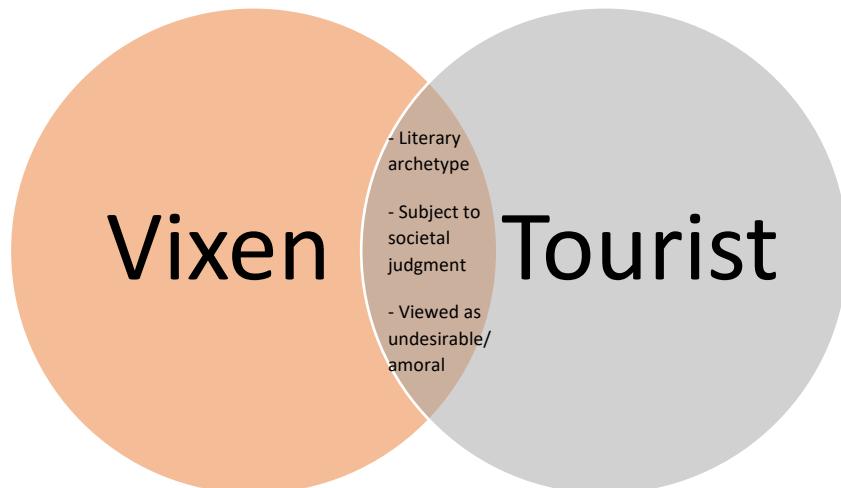

Figure 62. Venn diagram displaying relationship between the vixen and the tourist

Though not identical, there are commonalities between these two groups. They both represent literary archetypes. They are both subject to the judgment of the rest of society. Their presence is often subject to moralistic discussion. In Disney parks, dressing too sexily may warrant intervention from park personnel, though dressing unfashionably will not. However, the tourist is just as likely to be negatively judged by their peers depending on their behaviour. How, then, should we view the vixen who is also a tourist? Pin-Up Parade in the Park — and Dapper Day, to some extent — represent an overlap in these two groups.

To add further nuance, consider these two groups in a Foucauldian sense whereby both are subject to the collective gaze of the rest of society. In their analysis of tourism and power, So-Min Cheong and Marc L. Miller apply four Foucauldian principles of power

tourism: 'omnipresence of power in tourism, power in tourism networks, the touristic gaze, repressive and productive touristic power.'[400] For the purposes of this analysis, let us focus specifically on the concept of power in tourism networks. In particular, the authors refer to a sociological model whereby power in tourism is divided among three groups: tourists, locals, and middlemen or brokers. 'In this framework, the new category of brokers is employed to denote those who derive a living (receive monetary remuneration) for an involvement with tourism production.'[401] By this definition, productive touristic power can be enacted by brokers such as parks personnel, professional travel planners, and bloggers or influencers who earn money by advertising Disney branded goods and services. In the Pin-Up Parade example, the brokers are event organisers (retailer Pinup Girl Clothing), Disney parks employees, and influencers documenting the event on social media. Those brokers mediate and profit from pin-up as a form of play within the setting of a Disney holiday. In the latter case of social media influencers who attend and document the event, the broker is actually the tourist and vice versa.

Having reviewed the ways that suggestive attire, elitism, and body surveillance manifest in events such as Dapper Day or Pin-Up Parade in the Park, it is also important to consider the overarching theme of privilege. Privilege is a through-line that underscores much of this chapter and indeed, this entire thesis. The topic of privilege in contemporary society is broad with myriad social implications but let us now specifically examine how consumption of pin-up and/or vintage fashion is shaped by a sense of privilege.

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[400] So-Min Cheong and Marc L. Miller, 'Power and Tourism: A Foucauldian Observation', *Annals of tourism research,* 27 (2000), 371-90.
[401] Ibid., p. 379.

Vintage Clothing and Privilege

In many ways, Dapper Day and Pin-Up Parade are shows of social privilege. These events exemplify how fashion and style are deeply entrenched with notions of social class. Not only does participation mean that the individual can afford to spend time away from labour for this kind of leisure activity, but it also means that they can afford to purchase the apparel items needed to complete their chosen look. Sometimes these items are simply reproductions of vintage styles, other times they are actual vintage goods. Vintage shopping has even become part of Dapper Day weekend with a dedicated expo marketplace on the Disney property. This expo features vintage apparel vendors. Today, the procurement and donning of vintage clothing raises questions about the wearer's sense of privilege. It also raises debate about fashion ethics, social justice, and environmental impact.

Much like the cottage industry of Disney flippers who purchase and later resell branded merchandise at a markup, the vintage clothing world contains a secondary resale market. The thrift stores and charity shops that once catered to lower- and middle-income families are increasingly popular destinations for flippers who buy preowned goods with the intent of reselling at a much higher price.[402] Unlike the lower- and middle-income consumer, the flipper is not purchasing items for their own use but is instead stocking their own business inventory. Those who advocate for responsible thrifting warn against buying too much which then reduces the choices for those whose budget requires buying second

[402] Kiera Riley, 'The Thrift Economy', *The Arizona State Press*, 18 March 2020, <www.statepress.com/article/2020/03/spmagazine-the-thrift-economy> [accessed 26 April 2023].

hand.[403] Whereas the lower- and middle-income consumer is compelled by to purchase second hand goods, the bourgeoisie class treats such goods as one of many attire options or as saleable inventory.

Jennifer Le Zotte argues that even early adopters of vintage clothing, including post-war bohemian youth and rock stars, were motivated by privilege. 'Often, carefully crafted personas stemmed from and appealed to those who could afford to stand out, to not conform to common standards of appearance; such dress exemplified a modern-day version of Veblenian conspicuous consumption and leisure.'[404] In the context of Dapper Day or Pin-Up Parade in the Park, the conspicuousness of consuming vintage garments (or reproductions) is exactly the point. To be seen in these looks at these events and to be in the company of others in similar styles is a way to experience autotelic pleasure. I argue that sporting these garments serves two purposes in the context of these events. First, those who can afford to dress this way are communicating some form of wealth or privilege. Second, the choice to dress this way represents a conscious rejection of contemporary tourist garb. Taken together, the impression is one of monied rebellion from the casually dressed masses. This confers cultural capital upon the wearer.

Much of the early European desire to buy used clothing was deemed *nostalgie de la boue* (nostalgia for the mud), or the bourgeois delight in taking on the trappings of the lower class.[405] Le Zotte labels this desire 'elective poverty, the voluntary denunciation of

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[403] Julie Kuenneke, 'The Ethics of Resale: Recognizing Privilege in the Second-Hand Market'*, re/Make*, 25 October 2020 <https://remake.world/stories/style/the-ethics-of-resale-recognizing-privilege-in-the-second-hand-market/> [accessed 26 April 2023].
[404] Jennifer Le Zotte, *From Goodwill to Grunge: A History of Secondhand Styles and Alternative Economies*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press Books, 2017), p. 125.
[405] Ibid., p. 155.

visible middle- or upper-class status.'[406] Whereas the lower- and middle-income consumer is compelled by to purchase second-hand goods by virtue of a limited budget, the bourgeoisie can elect to do so without financial worry. I argue that in taking on the appearance of a lower class, the bourgeoisie are partaking in play in a Huizingan sense. The desire for true vintage clothing — not reproductions — presents an apparent dichotomy: buying second-hand goods used to be a way for low-income individuals to access high quality goods previously attained by the middle and upper-class, yet now when middle and upper-class individuals buy second-hand goods, they are, in a sense, play acting the experiences of from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

This is all complicated by the fact that buying true vintage — particularly those pieces which are highly sought-after designer goods — is rather more expensive than obtaining new, mass-produced fashion. Though some quality vintage pieces can be obtained in a thrift or charity shop, most desirable vintage apparel passes through the hands of vintage clothing experts who are skilled at identifying, acquiring, cleaning, repairing, and reselling these items at a markup.[407] In the context of events like Dapper Day or Pin-Up Parade in the Park, we are faced with yet another paradox: the rejection of a cheap, casual tourist aesthetic in favour of finery, yet said finery is bought second-hand at high cost. How interesting that some second-hand clothing — once the purview of low-income earners — is now accessible only to the wealthy who can afford such carefully curated vintage goods. It should be noted that the curation of vintage goods by expert resellers is a form of significant additional labour. In this way, the reseller provides a

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[406] Ibid., p. 123.
[407] Dominique de Merteuil, 'The Value of Vintage Clothing: Demystifying Modern Cost of Vintage!', *It's Beyond My Control*, <https://www.itsbeyondmycontrol.com/> [accessed 12 December 2022].

valuable service to the consumer, and this adds cost. Though it is true that a desirable vintage garment could be sourced more cheaply directly from a charity or thrift shop, the reseller has added value by cleaning it and repairing flaws.

In the framework of the Vectors of Glamour, vintage clothing handily meets the criteria. First, the highly sought-after nature of true vintage clothing promulgates glamour as a goal. Second, the garments hail the consumer in such a way as to activate the imaginary — the viewer envisages wearing said clothing item. Third, wearing vintage is a way of normalising glamour praxis because sporting well-made pieces that stand the test of time is deemed classy and even environmentally conscious. Fourth, wearing vintage unifies mechanisms of power and play in that those with the financial capital to acquire it can playact at living in another time or as part of a different social class. Fifth, vintage clothing promotes methods and venues of glamour praxis such as partaking in events like Dapper Day or Pin-Up Parade in the Park where one can enjoy socialising with fellow vintage style enthusiasts.

Despite the allure of vintage clothing, those who attend Dapper Day and Pin-Up Parade in the Park may eschew true vintage altogether in favour of more affordable mass-produced reproductions. Vintage-inspired garments provide a facsimile of the desired look at a lesser cost. Only those with a discerning eye for vintage fashion would know the difference in quality. In the images below, a 1950s Mr. Blackwell yellow wiggle dress is listed online by a vintage clothing reseller for $895 (USD). whilst a similarly tailored mass-produced reproduction retails for $19.99 (USD) on Amazon. Though the materials and detailing are different, the silhouette, hem, neckline, and colour family are similar. The original Mr. Blackwell piece was created in 1958 in raw shantung silk and is now sold

online through luxury resale market 1st Dibs.[408] The 1950s style reproduction MUXXN

brand piece is made of rayon, cotton, and spandex and is available on Amazon.[409]

Figures 63 and 64. (Left) *1950s Mr. Blackwell Current Size 10 / 12 Mustard Yellow Silk Vintage 50s Dress*. 1stDibs, accessed 1 February 2022, <https://www.1stdibs.com/fashion/clothing/evening-dresses/1950s-mr-blackwell-current-size-10-12-mustard-yellow-silk-vintage-50s-dress/id-v_4270283/>
(Right) *MUXXN Women's 1950s Vintage Short Sleeve Pleated Pencil Dress,* Amazon, accessed 1 February 2022, <https://www.amazon.com/MUXXN-Womens-Sleeve-Sheath-Bridesmaid/dp/B01LX3HNXK/ref=sr_1_41?crid=21O0K8K5JFL0Z&keywords=yellow+sheath+dress&qid=1643735791&sprefix=yellow+sheath+dress%2Caps%2C133&sr=8-41>

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[408] '1950s Mr. Blackwell Current Size 10 / 12 Mustard Yellow Silk Vintage 50s Dress', 1stDibs, <https://www.1stdibs.com/fashion/clothing/evening-dresses/1950s-mr-blackwell-current-size-10-12-mustard-yellow-silk-vintage-50s-dress/id-v_4270283/> [accessed 26 April 2023].
[409] 'Muxxn Women's 1950s Vintage Short Sleeve Pleated Pencil Dress', *Amazon*, <https://www.amazon.com/MUXXN-Womens-Sleeve-Sheath-Bridesmaid/dp/B01LX3HNXK/ref=sr_1_41?crid=21O0K8K5JFL0Z&keywords=yellow+sheath+dress&qid=1643735791&sprefix=yellow+sheath+dress%2Caps%2C133&sr=8-41> [Accessed 26 April 2023].

Though the reproduced style is made of cheaper materials, it may be a close enough facsimile to satisfy the wearer's sartorial desires. These suggest two distinct markets: true vintage of higher quality design and materials for the connoisseur, and a synecdoche which gives only a passing imitation of the real thing for those who wish to spend less. Let us then return to the paradoxical nature of buying second-hand to save money. In this case, buying second-hand is the far more expensive option though it yields a higher quality product, whilst buying new yields a cheaper item of lesser material quality. On balance, there is a flipped paradigm: the bourgeoisie buy used clothing whilst those of lower income buy new. To buy the cheaper version still allows the wearer to play and exercise agency over their own body despite the difference in economic circumstances. In this regard, I argue that it is this act of play which has a democratising effect despite the financial disparities between the two populations.

Figure 65. *New Disney Parks Dress Shop Disneyland Park Life Icons Women's Dress 2XL.* @eshopandgo, eBay; accessed 1 February 2022. <https://www.ebay.com/itm/174837376161?hash=item28b51ea4a1:g:0i8AAOSwZ1RhMCaZ>

In many cases, Dapper Day and Pin-Up Parade in the Park attendees elect to sport Disney-themed vintage-styled looks, as seen above. This Disneyfied vintage-inspired clothing comprises reproductions of vintage silhouettes featuring the brand's iconic images. In the example above, the Disney Dress shop created a mid-twentieth century halter dress silhouette in fabric depicting iconic parks attractions.[410] Other entities, from small private dressmakers to Pin-Up Girl Clothing (organiser of Pin-Up Parade in the Park)

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[410] eshopandgo, 'New Disney Parks Dress Shop Disneyland Park Life Icons Women's Dress 2xl', *Ebay*, <https://www.ebay.com/itm/174837376161?hash=item28b51ea4a1:g:0i8AAOSwZ1RhMCaZ> [accessed 1 February 2022].

create similar styles. Like those who buy and resell branded merchandise, these retailers are part of a vast secondary market for Disney goods.

One interesting aspect of wearing Disney branded clothing or participating in events like Dapper Day is the way physically being on the park premises has the power to transform the visitor. Even if they are dressed casually in non-Disney branded attire, the individual exists, for a time, in a highly controlled domain of play. It is revelatory to consider how Disney parks may act as liminal spaces in which to experience nostalgia, joy, or luxuriousness. The act of wearing special garments in the parks takes on special significance in the context of Disney parks as liminal spaces.

Disney Parks as Liminal Spaces

In considering Disney parks as zones where personal agency and a sense of play are negotiated, I suggest that they function as liminal spaces. The term is derived from the Latin word *limen.* 'The limen is defined as the transitional threshold between two fixed states in cultural rites of passage or between two dissimilar spaces in architecture.'[411] The concept of liminality is found in multiple disciplines including architecture, psychology, and anthropology. In architecture, for example, office corridors, hospital waiting areas, and train station lifts represent liminality as they are transitional zones. In Disney parks, ride queues and pathways between attractions are liminal spaces. General interest in liminal spaces has grown with particular focus on the aesthetic nature of these areas, particularly

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[411] Patrick Troy Zimmerman, *'Liminal Space in Architecture: Threshold and* Transition' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Tennessee – Knoxville, 2008).

in cases where the spaces appear eerie, dreamlike, or nostalgic.[412] I argue that, in concert with Huizinga's concepts of play and Foucault's work on bodily power, the whole of a Disney park ought to be considered a liminal space.

In an anthropological sense, Arthur Moore asserts that to visit a Disney property is to partake in a kind of ritualised pilgrimage to be entered into via a series of limens — or ritual thresholds — which exist in spaces between and separate from other domains.[413] It is compelling to consider how liminality manifests itself in Disney parks, particularly with regard to ritual.

> To visit the Magic Kingdom visitors must come from afar; the amusement park is deliberately located miles away from the nearest settlement, and buffered from them by Disney-owned land. Visitors either leave their cars (symbol of the identity of their masculine owners) behind in the parking lot, or leave a tour bus, frequently chartered by a group, to approach the Magic Kingdom by steamboat or monorail. They are starting a "magical," hence playful or make-believe, journey in space and time. They enter a giant limen, a replica of a baroque capital, whose central avenue is the symbol of the dominant culture form of nineteenth century America, Main Street. Passage through each attraction takes the form of mini-phases of separation, transition, and reincorporation as the passenger journeys past electronically manipulated symbols evoking well known myths.[414]

This dovetails with Huizinga's assertions about the Magic Circle and how such a domain of play exists separately from the mundane.

During events like Dapper Day — and by extension, other events like Pin-Up Parade in the Park or Bats Day — the park represents an even more ritualised space because these independently organised happenings involve ritualised garments. Moore

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[412] 'Liminal Space', *Aesthetics Wiki*, <https://aesthetics.fandom.com/wiki/Liminal_Space> [accessed 26 April 2023].

[413] Alexander Moore, 'Walt Disney World: Bounded Ritual Space and the Playful Pilgrimage Center', *Anthropological Quarterly*, (1980), 207-18.

[414] Ibid., p. 214.

says visitors enter 'without social identity, neither what they once were, nor what they are about to become. Consequently, one of the most common activities in rites of passage is stripping, as old clothing and insignia of rank and status are divested. Such stripped initiates then commonly experience a fellowship with other ritualists who are, like themselves, reduced to a human common denominator in perfect equality.'[415] This suggests a democratising power in entering the Disney physical domain. That said, visiting Disney parks is an increasingly costly endeavour and, as we have already discussed, obtaining vintage style clothing to partake in events like Dapper Day represents significant expense. In cases where a park visitor only partakes in a standard Disney holiday (not an event marked by special attire), the cost to acquire Disney-branded clothing is high. Even the popular ritual of purchasing a Mickey Mouse ears hat to wear in the park is out of financial reach for some visitors. What then, ought we to make of this essential conflict between the democratising power of this ritual and high cost to enter this limen? I argue that despite the unequal access to such events, there is value in framing Disney parks as liminal spaces containing ritualised processes.

Chris Newcomb identifies the crossing of the threshold into Disney parks as a ritualised and sacralised act for visitors.[416] In this way, entering these spaces bears a quasi-religious undertone, though the parks lack actual religious iconography or domains of worship. To participate in such sacralised acts in the context of the theme park is to participate in its inherent consumerism. Newcomb further argues that Disney parks

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[415] Ibid., p. 210.
[416] Chris Newcomb, *Crossing the Berm: The Disney Theme Park as Sacralized Space* (Tallahassee: The Florida State University, 2003).

represent 'an ordered, organised space for the thoughtful, selective construction of social meaning and the mutual exercise of symbolic power.'[417] This framing is important because it emphasises the importance of order in the creation of meaning and power. As previously discussed, Disney parks are known for their cleanliness and sense of order. The attraction queues are cleverly designed to maintain social order among visitors waiting to board rides. Parades and other events on property are meticulously timed and embedded with crowd control practices. There is power being enacted by the park operators, as well as mutually agreed upon symbolic power being created by the visitors. That is, the operators welcome and manage the crowds, extract financial capital, and then dismiss the crowds at closing time, whilst the crowds partake in the ritual of visiting the parks. In a Foucauldian sense, power is enacted upon the bodies of visitors by Disney employees, whilst in a Huizingan sense, power comes from meaning created and agreed upon by the visitors themselves within the ritualised Magic Circle. Therefore, I argue that Disney parks represent a microcosm in which power and play are in constant negotiation with one another and it is the liminal spaces wherein this negotiation is most apparent.

Foucault's work on Jeremy Bentham's concept of the panopticon is helpful for understanding power enacted upon docile bodies in Disney parks. In an analysis of such a panopticon at Disneyland, Graf Orlok observes that power is enacted upon visitors from the moment they enter the property and are constantly, but invisibly surveilled throughout the visit. 'This practice of maximising the docility of multiplicities through tranquilisation, in tandem with the appearance of constant surveillance in an enclosed, sequestered

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[417] Ibid., p. 21.

environment, results in this formulation of the ultimate disciplinary environment.'[418] Visitors willingly submit to constant monitoring in order to enter this sacralised space.

Furthermore, backstage areas where parks personnel convene but are not open to the public exist as liminal spaces. Whilst the individual retains their employee status as such in all spaces on parks property, the backstage areas exist away from public view where employees can discard a cheerful façade. Though employees can behave in a more natural manner without the need to play act as a Disney character or other cast member responsible for keeping up a sense of magic, they are still attired in their uniform. In this way, they may be dressed as a fairy tale princess or a talking mouse but they are simultaneously, a version of themselves. This sense of being clad in employee attire whilst occupying their usual identity in a space away from park visitors is a type of liminality.

I argue that play in Disney parks is transformative for the individual because it exists within a liminal space. It is not quite the real world but rather a facsimile of a fantasy world made manifest for the purposes of doing ritual imbued with meaning by the individual. In a discussion of the dynamics of play, Jonas Holst addresses this sense of liminality. 'Play unfolds itself in an in-between space and once the players start exploring this space and its limits, either alone or in relation to each other, they become ever more aware of the challenge which the play poses.'[419] This in-between space is crucial, I believe, for the ways play and power are in constant negotiation in the parks. The visitor willingly cedes some

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[418] Graf Orlok, 'Panoptic Playground: How Disneyland Functions as the Ultimate Disciplinary Environment', *See Judd Write*, 4 January 2013, <https://seejuddwrite.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/panoptic-playground/> [accessed 20 April 2020].

[419] Jonas Holst, 'The Dynamics of Play–Back to the Basics of Playing', *International Journal of Play*, 6 (2017), 85-95 (p. 93).

of their power (e.g., submits to security screenings and all-day surveillance) in exchange for the chance to partake in a space of play.

Vectors of Glamour are also found in liminal spaces, such as those in Disney parks. Vectors of Glamour promulgate glamour as a goal. In backstage areas where, for example, an employee portraying a Disney princess dons the costume and makeup and gets into character out of view of patrons. She occupies a liminal space in which becoming a glamorous princess character is the goal. Glamour hails the viewer to activate the imaginary. In Disney parks, children and adults are enticed to buy merchandise or partake in experiences which allow them to imagine themselves in a magical world. It may take the form of a princess or pirate or hero from a space opera, but all of these may be considered glamorous to the viewer. In this example, liminality is found in the space between the visitor's everyday identity and the imaginary character they wish to take on. Disney parks normalise glamour praxis by encouraging engagement with Disney intellectual property, as in the case of Disney character meet and greets where guests can have their photo taken with Mickey Mouse, Cinderella, or any number of figures in the Disney canon.

The liminal space here is the queue in which the guest waits their turn to *experience the magic*. The perfunctory nature of waiting in a queue seems at odds with a sense of magic. However, it is this crowd control mechanism which leads to the next *Vector of Glamour*: unifying mechanisms of power and play. Though Disney parks are Magic Circles (as per Huizinga), they are also spaces where power is enacted upon the human body (as per Foucault) in the form of crowd control and surveillance. Finally, Disney parks promote methods of and venues of glamour praxis in liminal spaces by providing said methods and

venues of glamour praxis. For example, the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique is a salon and boutique where children can transform into their favourite Disney characters whilst visiting the park.[420] In the image below, a young visitor is dressed as Cinderella with the help of the cast member to the right. These are costly packaged experiences that fetch up to $299.95 (USD) for a makeover, merchandise, and commemorative photos. The space wherein transformation and pretend are facilitated is also a liminal zone.

Figure 66. *Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique – Magic Kingdom,* Disney Parks website, accessed 1 February 2022, <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/shops/magic-kingdom/bibbidi-bobbidi-boutique-park/>

In essence, glamour is infused into nearly every facet of the Disney parks experience, whether in the form of a pin-up wannabe taking part in Pin-Up Parade in the Park or a young child whose guardians pay for her to be outfitted in a Cinderella costume. These are both ways of experiencing the liminal space between childhood and adulthood. This is an early inculcation of the importance of glamour praxis in the mind of a child.

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[420] 'Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique – Magic Kingdom', *Walt Disney World*, <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/shops/magic-kingdom/bibbidi-bobbidi-boutique-park/> [accessed 26 April 2023].

Beyond mere princess culture, the act of grooming and styling the self to experience the liminality and ritualistic effects of Disney parks can be revelatory. Another example of glamour and beauty praxis in this environment is Dita Von Teese herself, whose image and persona have guided the case studies presented in this thesis.

Disney Von Teese

Disney parks and Dita Von Teese represent similar ideas: a desire to exist apart from the mundane, a devotion to glamour (classic old Hollywood glamour in Dita's case and fairy tale magic glamour in Disney's case), and a commitment to curating exciting experiences for others. In fact, it was images of Dita at Dapper Day that inspired the questions posed in this thesis. Sexualised glamour and family-friendly entertainment do not often occupy the same space, yet events like Pin-Up Parade in the Park bring these elements together.

Both Dita and Disney parks are committed to luxury, though in different ways. In Dita's case, appearing in the trappings of refinement at all times is central to her brand. Attending her touring burlesque stage shows or purchasing her branded merchandise can be costly. Dita's image connotes classic representations of luxury. Disney parks, on the other hand, represent a different kind of luxury — one associated with a significant financial cost and desire to partake in the experience in spite of large crowds. Below on the left (Figure 67), Dita is pictured at Dapper Day posing with the Evil Queen character.[421]

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[421] Dita Von Teese, '@Dapperday Memories 🔥🔥Looking forward to this Sunday, I'll be at the @dapperdayexpo from noon to 1pm, and then I'm hitting the park! Dapperday.com @ Disneyland'. (Facebook) (1 November 2017).

Note the similar stance, facial expression, and makeup. Below (Figure 68), Dita is pictured

during a Dapper Day photoshoot for Paper Magazine.[422]

Figure 67 and 68. (left) *Dita Von Teese - @dapperday memories,* Facebook, accessed 18 February 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/login/?next=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FDitaVonTeese%2Fposts%2Fdapperday-memories-looking-forward-to-this-sunday-ill-be-at-the-dapperdayexpo-fr%2F1702591209773092%2F>
(right) *Dita Von Teese shoots a look in Chanel at "DAPPER DAY at The Parks" at the Disneyland Resort Sun Feb 23 2014, shot by Albert Sanchez and Pedro Zalba for PAPER MAGAZINE,* Tumblr, accessed 18 February 2022, <https://dapperday.tumblr.com/post/78775895049/dita-von-teese-shoots-a-look-in-chanel-at-dapper>

It is interesting to note here that Dita appears to eschew Disney insignia when attending

Dapper Day, preferring instead to sport highly polished couture. Seen below posing with

Dapper Day founder Justin Jorgenson (Figure 69), Dita wears a black dress with rose and

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[422] dapperday, 'Dita Von Teese Shoots a Look in Chanel at "Dapper Day at the Parks" at the Disneyland Resort Sun Feb 23 2014, Shot by Albert Sanchez and Pedro Zalba for Paper Magazine.'*,* (Tumblr) 23 February 2014.

feather fascinator.[423] Whilst many Dapper Day attendees may dress elegantly in homage to their favourite Disney characters (as in Disneybounding), Dita curates a Dapper Day appearance that is wholly separate from Disney, yet she appears as an enthusiastic attendee.

Figure 69. *Dapper Day Expo 2018 ANAHEIM, CA - APRIL 22: Justin Jorgensen, founder of Dapper Day (L) and Dita Von Teese attend Dapper Day Expo 2018 at Disneyland Hotel on April 22, 2018 in Anaheim, California, (Photo by Angela Papuga/Getty Images);* accessed 18 February 2022, <https://www.gettyimages.no/detail/news-photo/justin-jorgensen-founder-of-dapper-day-and-dita-von-teese-news-photo/950202404>

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[423] Angela Papuga, 'Dapper Day Expo 2018', *Getty Images*, 22 April 2018 <https://www.gettyimages.no/detail/news-photo/justin-jorgensen-founder-of-dapper-day-and-dita-von-teese-news-photo/950202404> [accessed 18 February 2022].

Figure 70. *The Tightrope Girl. Inspired by the infamous concept and painting by artist Marc Davis , this haunting "stretching portrait" depicts the classic carnival lore of the tightrope walker, unaware of her doom below, Fully photographic image, modelled by Dita Von Teese,* Photograph by Franz Szony; accessed 18 February 2022, <http://www.franzszony.com/shop/the-tightrope-girl>

Though she does not usually wear Disney branded attire, she is occasionally depicted as

a Disney character in artwork. In the Franz Szony work above (Figure 70), Dita portrays

the Tightrope Walker from the Haunted Mansion ride.[424] This image has since been used in promotional materials advertising Dita's appearance at the Dapper Day Expo and is also sold by the artist as a limited edition print.

Both Dita Von Teese and Disney parks profit from their fans' sense of nostalgia and their desire to exist in a space apart from workaday mundanity. Further, attending Dita's stage show or spending the day in a Disney park each offer the chance to be in the presence of others and celebrate collectively. Whether it means buying a front row ticket to see Dita's *Glamonatrix* stage show in London or purchasing a one-day ticket to Disneyland, *Collective Effervescence* is a lucrative business.

Physical Agency in a Space of Play

Disney parks act as a space where play and physical agency are in conversation. From the quasi-religious fervour that some guests experience during their visit, to the sociological complexities of commercial tourism in the parks, every aspect is infused with some type of glamour. In this way, the Disney parks themselves are physical Vectors of Glamour. Below is the methodological summary with respect to Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and the Vectors of Glamour (PIN-UP).

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[424] Franz Szony, *The Tightrope Girl*, 2021, photograph, <http://www.franzszony.com/shop/the-tightrope-girl> [accessed 26 April 2023].
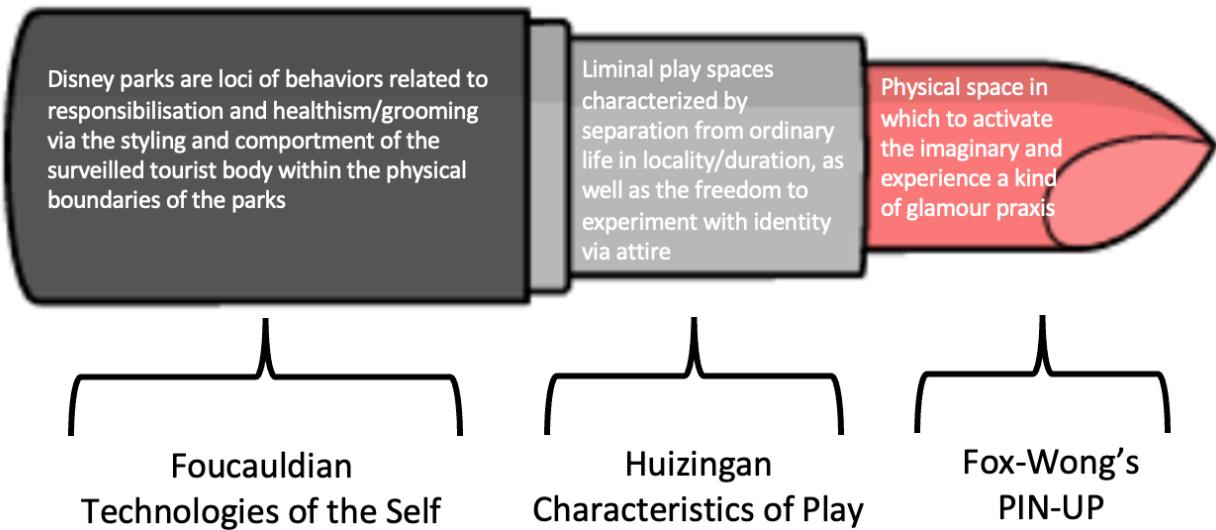
Figure 71. Methodological Summary of Case 3 – Disney Parks

Compared to the first two case studies (Dita Von Teese and social media), this chapter is perhaps the broadest in its approach because it encompasses a variety of topics whose unifying theme is the role of the body at play within a physical space.

This chapter — and indeed the thesis as a whole — has explored questions about embodied experiences in domains of play. These concepts serve to connect Dita Von Teese, social media, and Disney parks. These are matters of public imagecraft (as with Dita herself), touristic and leisure experiences, and luxury. Disney parks provide a facsimile of various environments from the fantastical (Fantasyland) to the historical (Main Street USA) and in doing so, immerse visitors in a deeply sensorial experience. Certainly, a visit to a fairy tale land is to experience a simulacrum but it can still yield authentic emotional experiences for those who partake. In this way, Disney creates fond memories that ensure future patronage.

Further, the conversations around luxury, tourism, and ritual raise important questions in the post-structuralist moment. Disney parks can function as a living laboratory

in which to test the limits of individual cynicism. No matter how much joy one may get from visiting the parks, they are doing so within a carefully crafted capitalist framework. In this way, their emotional experiences are actually the result of a calculated effort to make a sale. Beyond this thesis, Disney parks, have great potential for analysis by social scientists as they represent the coalescing of multiple aspects of popular culture, sociology, art, and commerce.

CONCLUSION

Figure 72. *US burlesque artist Dita Von Teese presents a creation by Damat Tween at the Istanbul Fashion Week on February 4, 2011, in Istanbul.* (BULENT KILIC/AFP via Getty Images). Accessed on 23 November 2022. https://www.flickr.com/photos/bof352000/5473430010

Curtain Call

In the image above (Figure 72), Dita tips her top hat and bids us farewell.[425] Just as the cabaret emcee or stage vedette guides their audience through a performance, she has been our guide through a variety of cultural products, all united by the application of a novel analytical framework comprising Foucauldian Technologies of the Self, Huizingan Characteristics of Play, and my Vectors of Glamour. Aspects of performance are embedded across pin-up, social media, and Disney parks. This thesis examined how beauty praxis exists within these domains.

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[425] Bulent Kilic, 'US burlesque artist Dita Von Teese', *Getty Images*, 4 February 2011, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bof352000/5473430010> [accessed 23 November 2022].

The complex nature of beauty praxis — particularly within the context of feminist scholarship — requires an intricate lens with which to examine its characteristics. By anchoring my thesis in the work of Foucault and Huizinga, I deployed well-established modes of analysis in a new way: to explore beauty and glamour praxis in contemporary culture. In developing my own criteria for understanding glamour and its relationship to the consumer, I provided a fresh approach to how beauty praxis can be understood. These elements bring together the established and the novel. My proposed Vectors of Glamour offer a systematised and consistent model with which to consider various forms of beauty culture. This is a unique critical tool because it prioritises the application of specific characteristics of beauty and glamour praxis over subjective opinions about said praxis. The case studies I have presented are examples of the stylistic and performative (Dita Von Teese), technological (social media), and physical (Disney Parks) Vectors of Glamour. In evaluating each case study using this framework, three major themes emerged: normative femininity, affective empowerment, and the semiotics of luxury. These themes provide the scaffolding for a broader analysis of the female body both at leisure and at labour.

Normative Femininity and Dita Von Teese as a Performative Vector of Glamour

Throughout the thesis, and especially in Chapter 1, I explored mid-twentieth century pin-up style and Dita Von Teese's role in bringing this aesthetic into contemporary pop culture. That chapter was specifically concerned with what contemporary pin-up culture — and Dita herself — tells us about the female body and domains of play in terms of physical appearance. Therefore, it is useful to consider an existentialist explanation for extracting

economic and social value from a woman's physical appearance: whilst she believes she is acting autonomously, her choices are the result of ideologies imposed by a long-standing patriarchal power structure.[426] There exists a fundamental conflict between Dita's seemingly transgressive display of sexual freedom and her portrayal of a polished, mid-twentieth century American, white, slim, heterosexual feminine aesthetic. Despite promoting herself as a fashion eccentric, she performs commonly held Western beauty standards, as evidenced by her burlesque stage shows, pictorials, and goods for sale bearing her name and/or image. She extracts economic and social capital from her appearance and benefits from promoting this physical ideal.

Though she may inspire other contemporary pin-up models and enthusiasts, Dita's physical body exemplifies the rule, rather than the exception. By promoting and portraying many of the hallmarks of normative femininity, she perpetuates hegemonic beauty standards. Many of today's pin-ups feature and celebrate bodies that run counter to prevailing beauty norms. In an analysis of the neo-burlesque movement, Sherril Dodds describes a style of performance characterised by contemporary feminist sensibilities and showcasing bodies that have been traditionally marginalised. Dodds points to neo-burlesque as a tool to 'embrace, destabilise, and renegotiate normative representations of the female body.'[427] The same can be said of pin-up images of bodies which do not align with societal beauty standards. That is, their existence controverts hegemonic feminine physical ideals and interrogates the value of said hegemony.

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[426] Lamb, p. 301.

[427] Sherril Dodds, 'Embodied Transformations in Neo-Burlesque Striptease', *Dance Research Journal*, 45 (2013), 75-90.

Dita Von Teese's method of self-creation and transformation via intense beauty and fitness practices, as well as the pursuit of all-consuming glamour as a daily lifestyle — rather than as an indulgence — represents the Foucauldian Technologies of the Self. Her conscious imagecraft of eccentric glamour suggests a kind of freedom and separation from mundanity as understood via Huizingan Characteristics of Play. Dita's public image and corpus of work normalises and promotes glamour praxis through the message that glamourous beauty can be experienced in all aspects of life. Her motif of normative femininity unites these themes.

Affective Empowerment and Social Media as a Technological Vector of Glamour

Throughout the research process, I was repeatedly struck by the notion of the performing feminine body as engendering a kind of power. Yet the term *power* is vague and this is especially concerning in a post-feminist context. As Angela McRobbie writes, post-feminism refers to the current processes that undermine the gains of the feminist movement.[428] Broadly speaking, the words *power* and *empowerment* in post-feminism have become watered down, nebulous colloquialisms that do little to describe the social and political mechanisms at play in images of femininity across the three case studies presented herein.

Stephen Barnard confronts this by delimiting forms of empowerment among women who disseminate their own images on social media. 'In short, affective empowerment can be felt and measured on an individual level, whereas material forms of

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[428] Angela McRobbie, 'Post-Feminism and Popular Culture', *Feminist Media Studies*, 4 (2004), 225-64.

empowerment require more collective and historical frameworks.'[429] Both categories were evidenced throughout this thesis, and I am particularly interested in how affective empowerment is used to stave off criticism that profiting from aesthetic labour reifies hegemonic values. That is, feelings of individual empowerment do not constitute a rejection of patriarchal values.

Individual feelings do not offer concrete proof of being an empowered individual in the world because of their inscrutability and subjective nature. As Barnard writes, material forms offer more objective evidence of empowerment in a societal context.[430] Though a desire for affective empowerment may encourage participation in the wider cultural conversation surrounding women's agentic selfhood, material evidence (e.g., financial status, academic achievement, professional accomplishments) is an objective indicator of empowerment. This is particularly true with respect to the economic results derived from aesthetic labour. Monetised social media engagement metrics (e.g., number of likes and comments; time spent viewing content) are one category of objective measurement. These indicators have been exploited by marketers seeking revenue and individuals seeking popularity online.

Furthermore, I am concerned with the false promise of social media as a tool for women's affective empowerment. In Chapter 2, I discussed women as prosumers (those who both produce and consume) of social media and how they may be monetised via sexualised or emotional labour.[431] I posit that despite the subject matter, social media

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[429] Stephen R. Barnard, 'Spectacles of Self(ie) Empowerment? Networked Individualism and the Logic of the (Post)Feminist Selfie', *Communication and Information Technologies Annual* 11 (2016), 63-88.
[430] Ibid., p. 88.
[431] Ibid.; Drenten, Gurrieri, and Tyler.

engineers and exploits this kind of labour in women with the promise that they will *feel* empowered by sharing images of themselves or their loved ones. One consequence, however, is that this participation exposes them to public critique. I also discussed matters of online harassment with which the content creator must contend. In an analysis of mommy bloggers, Katariina Mäkinen questions the resilience required to face cyberbullying. Such resilience 'demands notable affective capacities, as it means that emotional insecurities and real-life hazards are translated into questions of individual performance and opportunities for learning.'[432] In my view, this required resilience controverts the possibility of affective empowerment for its own sake. Social media participation for women and those of marginalised identities represents significant personal labour in the form of managing against harm.

Social media imagery highlights responsibilisation, healthism/grooming, normalisation, and self-esteem through participation in aesthetic labour. These factors represent Foucauldian Technologies of the Self. It offers freedom to experiment with identity and personal aesthetic in a domain that is separate from ordinary life in locality and/or duration echoing Huizingan Characteristics of Play. The whole of social media and the beauty industry can be understood as a *Vector of Glamour.*

The Semiotics of Luxury and Disney Parks as a Physical Vector of Glamour

In Chapter 3, I analysed Disney parks as loci of beauty and glamour praxis. The first and second case studies were concerned with the performative and the technological, whilst

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[432] Katariina Mäkinen, 'Resilience and Vulnerability: Emotional and Affective Labour in Mom Blogging', *new media & society*, 23 (2021), 2964-78.

Disney parks constitute a physical domain. Physical spaces for embodying glamour praxis are crucial because they transform the performative and the technological into lived experience. Whilst the performative and the technological domains can evoke the imaginary, it is the physical *Vector of Glamour* which concretises one's engagement with glamour or beauty praxis. These Magic Circles, or heterotopias, have specific boundaries that connote time and place. Delineating specific zones connotes an in-group (those inside the boundary) and an out-group (those outside the boundary). It is for this reason that I argued that Disney is a luxury brand.

The rising cost of admission to Disney parks constitutes a kind of boundary maintenance project. It functions to permit some and exclude others. As those prices increase, park attendance will represent a narrowing swath of the populace: those with greater wealth and disposable income. I have argued that Disney parks are culturally transformative; they are liminal spaces existing between the magical and the mundane. They can be entered and exited, but only by those who work there or can afford the ticket. Thibaut Clément examined the locus of control in Disney Parks, as well as showing how meaning is created and understood by visitors. This locus of control was once viewed as the realm of those in charge of running the parks, but the locus of control is now generally understood to be the patron's purview, at least in part. Those patrons 'actively reconstruct available meanings to elaborate strategies and pursue motives of their own.'[433] In this way, it is the visitor who shapes and controls the meaning of the boundaries between the parks and the rest of the world. Negotiating these boundaries can prove challenging,

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[433] Thibaut Clément, ''Locus of Control': A Selective Review of Disney Theme Parks', *InMedia. The French Journal of Media Studies*, 2 (2012), 1-13.

particularly in places where the borders are not easily delineated. This is very evident at non-park tourist properties, including the Disney Cruise ships and the Aulani Disney Resort in Hawaii. In the former example, the entire Disney property is mobile — a floating city — that enters and exits municipalities around the world. In the latter example, the Disney property is fixed but located within the domain of indigenous land and culture.

Despite this variety of environments, every Disney property contains within it many social signifiers related to elite tourism, including expensive souvenirs, high-cost dining, additional fees to avoid lengthy queues or get priority seating, and experiences designed only for VIPs. The tourist body is also subject to surveillance whilst on holiday and everything from the foods consumed to clothes worn to the physical space the body takes up can be assigned a kind of meaning in the context of the Disney brand.

In a Foucauldian sense, Disney parks are loci of behaviours related to responsibilisation and healthism/grooming via the styling and comportment of the surveilled tourist body within the physical boundaries of the parks. In a Huizingan sense, the parks are liminal play spaces characterised by separation from ordinary life in locality and/or duration, as well as the freedom to experiment with identity via attire. With respect to my Vectors of Glamour, they are physical spaces in which to activate the imaginary and the experience of beauty and glamour praxis.

Positionality and Potential Limitations

I would be remiss in failing to acknowledge my own positionality in the creation of this thesis. As a feminist with an interest in the intersection of beauty praxis and popular culture, I am concerned with how comportment and personal grooming choices serve as

commentary on broader social matters. Though I am critical of an overemphasis on feelings and individual perceptions to assess beauty culture, it could also be argued that my own assertions are subject to the very same affective issues I have criticised in this work. Throughout the research process, I became increasingly frustrated with the opaqueness of affect as a metric for individual success. I was surprised to find myself relying heavily on affective words and phrases in early drafts of this thesis including *I believe* or *I feel.* Upon reflection, this is something of a metanarrative about how affective language is often gendered, used to forestall objections, and softens critical impact. That said, it is not the aim of this work to fully disqualify affect from consideration, but rather to problematise it and suggest that material evidence and objective metrics are needed when evaluating beauty and glamour praxis. As previously stated, the ideas of *power* or *empowerment* are imprecise and though I have striven for clarity, I acknowledge that these terms cannot be used as an analytical panacea.

Whilst this body of work represents an earnest effort within the scope of case studies on Dita Von Teese, social media, and Disney parks, it is by necessity partial rather than exhaustive in its sources. Social media is dynamic, and the corpus of written text and imagery shared on its many online platforms is rapidly changing. It is impossible to be fully comprehensive in cataloguing all of pin-up social media. Therefore, what is presented in this thesis should be considered a snapshot, rather than a cumulative review of all social media posts to this point.

Though every effort was made to accurately transcribe the contents of the social media posts, blogs, and other web content cited in this thesis, it is possible that the account owner altered or removed them altogether post hoc. The examples herein reflect

the content of the media as they appeared on the listed access date. Social media is also subject to context collapse and the temporal nature of memes and internet slang. Social media content is, at its core, ephemeral in nature. The images selected for use in this thesis were available for public viewing online as late as 2024.

Utility in Other Areas of Scholarship

Perhaps what is most exciting about this work is the fact it offers a novel approach to understanding and analysing glamour and beauty praxis. The methodological approach combining the work of Foucault, Huizinga, and my Vectors of Glamour — and the paradigm of the Vectors of Glamour itself — are unique contributions to feminist academic discourse. Though somewhat complex, this system of analysis offers a rich basis upon which to construct further work. The Vectors of Glamour problematise the use of affect in understanding beauty media and culture. That is, employing a systematic mode of analysis reduces subjectivity. Taken separately, the three case studies also lend themselves to further exploration.

Dita Von Teese's roles as vedette, model, and social media personality could be further parsed in any number of ways. Feminist scholars may find that Dita's use of normative femininity to gain prominence and financial capital represents a kind of 'choice feminism'. Scholars of performance art or the history of pin-up and burlesque would be remiss if they did not include her in their analyses, given that she is arguably the most famous pin-up/burlesque performer of our time. Those who study glamour praxis and the beauty industry might further evaluate her role in the beauty economy.

Social media is a topic with a vast and growing scholarship and there is much more to explore. Media scholars might use this work as a basis for further evaluating the visible and invisible labour of women who earn their living as influencers. Those who are interested in brand marketing could find useful information herein related to beauty advertising through social media channels. Organisational scholars may wish to apply this thesis' novel approach to the study of efficacy, mastery, and craftsmanship.

Scholars of the history and societal impact of the Disney corporation would find a variety of study topics in this work. The notion that Disney is a luxury brand is compelling and deserves further examination. Critical Travel scholars might be interested in the semiotics of tourism and leisure as described herein. There are options to further pursue feminist scholarship with respect to the act of dressing provocatively in the Disney parks. Though some work on Disney parks as liminal spaces already exists, there is more that can be understood, particularly with respect to parasocial relationships between the consumer and the physical space of the parks. I would be particularly interested in further work on aesthetic labour in the context of Disney lifestyle influencers and the concept of *women's work* in the promulgation of the beauty economy.

Looking Forward and Glancing Back

Much like a Janus head which simultaneously looks forward and glances backward, so too does contemporary pin-up culture because it employs today's communication media to disseminate images of yesterday's fashion sensibilities. Gypsy Rose Lee, the famous striptease artist and personal hero to Dita Von Teese, was known for her humour and use of rather academic recitations in her stage performances. She combined the low-brow act

of stripping with high-brow intellect. In much the same way, this thesis has taken accessible social phenomena as its case material but applied a complex and generative analytical framework. There is much to be gained by the combination of what might be deemed low-brow or common culture with the richness of academic discourse. Contemporary pin-up culture, social media, and Disney parks are three such examples.

Let us now return to the three major themes that emerged from this thesis' exploration of beauty praxis: normative femininity, affective empowerment, and the semiotics of luxury. Firstly, normative femininity is perpetuated by the very existence of pin-up culture. Despite a robust alternative pin-up community which centres marginalised bodies, figures like Dita Von Teese are evidence of the continued primacy of the Western, white, thin, cisgender female body. Secondly, affective empowerment does not expiate the problems of patriarchy and may, in fact, perpetuate said problems by relying on gendered and emotive language. Thirdly, the semiotics of luxury are embedded in the experience of Disney parks tourism. Those signifiers work by establishing liminal spaces which are characterised by in-groups/out-groups and delineated zones of play.

Earlier, I suggested that these three themes form critical scaffolding for analysing the female body at leisure and at labour. Following on from this thesis, I remain interested in women's embodied experiences of leisure and labour, as well as in how those experiences can be further understood using the Vectors of Glamour. In summation, this thesis has forwarded an understanding of pin-up within the discursive contexts of feminist thought, media studies, and critical tourism. In doing so, I have explicated the relationship between bodily power, play, and glamour praxis by examining a variety of cultural products ranging from pin-up photographs to lipsticks to Donald Duck Gucci sweatshirts. These

exemplify the inextricable link between self-expression and consumerism. They are all Vectors of Glamour and all are available for purchase.

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