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Do Products Have Sex Appeal?
A Study in Anthropomorphism and Product Rhetoric

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Many sociologists have noticed a feminization of most occidental societies due to an increasing and ever changing role of women in both social and political life. This feminization of society may also be noticed in the evolution of diverse practices (such as food consumption for instance) but also in the evolving shape of many objects (cars, buildings, perfume bottles, etc.) which are said to have feminine shapes. This short study investigates this phenomenon by looking at anthropomorphic objects, i.e. objects which are designed using explicitly or implicitly the shape of the human body.

It is shown that this practice is a very old phenomenon linked to specific magic beliefs. It is also part of the semantization process of goods by which objects acquire and vehiculate meaning through their projection into symbolic systems so as to be desirable and consumable. The anthropomorphization of objects also involves a particular type of product rhetoric which is mainly based on two main rhetorical figures: metaphor and metonymy. One particularly interesting finding is that both metaphorical and metonymical devices use bodily features conveying quasi-exclusively a feminine image of the body. This leads us to think that such products create a particular image of women in society, and that they are very representative of the way occidental societies conceive desire and seduction.

"Almost every object has a 'sex' of its own."
Stephen Baker (1961)

"Les choses signifient-elles quelque chose?"
Roland Barthes (1962)

INTRODUCTION

In consumption culture, goods are semantized and commodified, which means they only exist through their immersion into a symbolic system. This approach, largely initiated by Thorstein Veblen (1899), was also developed by Sidney Levy (1959), Roland Barthes (1964), Henri Lefebvre (1966) and Jean Baudrillard (1968), who pointed out the semantization phenomenon, that is the ability for goods to become signs *per se* and to signify beyond their use value. This semantic approach may be considered as one dimension of a semiotic approach to objects which would include three complementary dimensions, as defined by Charles Morris in 1946, namely: (1) a *semantic* dimension based on the study of the various signifiers linked to a given object, (2) a *pragmatic* dimension based on the study of the relationships between the object and its users and, (3) a *syntactic* dimension, which considers any objects as a combination of signs, or more exactly as a signification system, governed by combinatory rules which may be observed in other
systems such as the fashion system, the language system, the food system. The objective of this communication is to suggest a brief semantic analysis of contemporary anthropomorphic objects to show that such objects convey a very particular image of women. This analysis will show that the so-called feminization of objects’ shapes illustrates a commodification of women and therefore a de-feminization of women.

THE FEMINIZATION OF SOCIETY AND THE SEMANTIZATION OF OBJECTS

Many sociologists have noticed a feminization of most occidental societies due to an increasing and ever changing role of women in both social and political life (see Douglas, 1977 for instance). In a country like France, it has been noticed that over the past fifteen years, food consumption has evolved from masculine connotations (red meat, wine, chocolates, spirits, etc.) towards feminine connotations (mineral water, fish, chicken, etc). If one accepts the symbolic connotations of food, this gives a good example of the feminization of practices in occidental societies and especially in France. Product design is another area in which a feminization of shapes may be observed: cars, buildings, perfume bottles are said to have more feminine shapes than they used to. Thus, if one accepts the idea that the shape of objects may be symbolically decoded as rather masculine or rather feminine, the design of every day objects seems to illustrate the increasing feminization of consumption practices (Coward, 1984; Barthel, 1989). Stephen Baker, in a seminal book published in 1961, analyzed the sexing of objects in advertising display. The position he defends is that objects may “naturally” be characterized as masculine, feminine, or neutral. He takes the examples of vegetables by saying “the rough texture of the potato helps make it a masculine article. A tomato, soft and pretty, has become a symbol of feminity. An apple has no sex” (Baker, 1961).

What this short quote suggests is that any object in our society is linked to a series of connotations due to an unescapable phenomenon of object semantization which is one of the main characteristic of consumer societies. Among the connotation categories, or connotators, is the feminine/masculine axis which seems to be very much used by individuals to evaluate and categorize everyday objects. An object will thus be said to have feminine connotations when all its intrinsic ingredients (shape, colors, texture, etc.) may be decoded as feminine, i.e. as what a social consensus agrees to categorize as feminine using implicit rules such as the ones mentioned by Baker. Feminity is viewed here as a particular rhetorical figure which is in fact metaphorical: a feminine object is therefore an object which represents a metaphor of the feminine body because its intrinsic characteristic intimately refer to a feminine universe. Anyhow, it is important to stress the fact that many gender associations are not universal, but rather culturally and historically anchored.

Another interesting phenomenon is the anthropomorphization of objects, that is, the process by which objects are personified. This personification of objects may occur through at least two phenomenons; first, objects and brands may be personified though the use of a
character which represent them, such as Bibendum (the Michelin man); second, objects may be called anthropomorphic when they take the shape of human bodies. We will now concentrate on this very particular type of anthropomorphism, which explicitly uses the human body as a model.

In most cases, the body is represented through a denotative mode. We refer to the distinction that was pointed out in 1972 by George Péninou between denotation and connotation. Denotation is an informative mode of communication which conveys some information about what is supposed to be reality. A denotative mode will tend to be explicit and to do more than just suggest a vague idea of the body in the product design. Anthropomorphic objects usually fall in this category. Connotation is a suggestive mode of communication which provides some emotion through the use of signification. If the relationship between the body and the object is for instance too vague or too distant, advertising may be used to stress the relationship between the object and a woman’s body as is illustrated in the Pepsi advertisement presented below (image 1).

In this advertisement, the parallel between the woman and the product is only based on the advertising discourse. What is fascinating is the power of advertising discoursers to make explicit the relationship between the bottle and the actress’s body. The reader is forced to perceive some similarities between two ‘objects’ which seem at first glance totally separate. The analogy is only based on the ability of the discourse to create this kind of conviction. The strategy is by essence very metaphorical in the sense that metaphor is a rhetorical figure which substitutes an order of reality to another. The process is different in the case of the new bottle of Virgin Cola (image 2), called the “Pammy” because it is designed using the body shapes of Pamela Anderson. The objects is presented as a real alter ego to the actress, because it was designed accordingly. Even though the process is also metaphoric, the power of the analogy is based on the product design, not on the advertising discourse only. Furthermore, the concept is based on a very pragmatic and ergonomic argument - the bottle seems to be easy to grasp and to hold-, whereas the main added value of this object is in fact the very strong semantization of the object because it represents an objectified version of Pamela Anderson’s body.

To start our investigation, we gathered as many different anthropomorphic objects as possible. Table 1 shows some examples of such representative objects depending on whether they use an explicit or an implicit mode of representation of the body.
Image 1
A Pepsi Ad Showing the Relationship Between the Pepsi Bottle and Cindy Crawford

THINK DIFFERENT... THINK SEXY
One particularly interesting finding is that both implicit and explicit modes of representation use bodily features conveying quasi-exclusively a feminine image of the body. Among the few contemporary objects we could find using masculine body features, most of them use the sexual parts of the male body. It is in fact possible to find many examples of products portraying a phallus, especially in the perfume and cosmetic industry. Anyhow, the only ones we could find which portray a full body or a torso are G.I. Joe and Jean Paul Gaultier’s perfume for men (‘Le Mâle’). As the aim of the article is not to focus on objects portraying exclusively sexual organs (a category which deserves a study of its own), we will now consider non-sexual representation of the human body in products.

Table 1 also points out the fact that the anthropomorphization of objects involves a particular type of product rhetoric which is mainly based on two main rhetorical figures: metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor is an implicit mode of body representation, whereas metonymy is a rhetorical figure which uses one part of an object to convey the idea of the all object. What is particularly interesting is that only some parts of women bodies, such as are used as metonymical devices. Other parts such as the head, arms or legs seem to be never used except Sonia Rikiel’s perfume which represents part of the arms\(^3\).
In all products, the head is always implicitly designed, whereas some other parts are always explicitly designed. What we want to show now is that such modes of figurativity are far from being innocent, in the sense that they portray a particular image of women in today’s society which we would like to decode. The article will now concentrate on the perfume industry in which the tendency to humanize perfume bottles is very strong.

### Table 1

**Codes of Representation of Contemporary Objects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bodily part portrayed</th>
<th>Explicit code</th>
<th>Implicit code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full body</strong></td>
<td>Barbie (Mattel, 1959) Cindy Signal toothbrush for kids</td>
<td>Russian dolls Contrex (mineral water, 1996) Virgin Cola (soft drink, 1997) Organza (perfume, Givenchy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Torso</strong></td>
<td>“Schocking You” (Schiaparelli, perfume, 1935) Jean Paul Gaultier (perfume) Sonia Rikiel’s perfume</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Head</strong></td>
<td>“Amårige” (perfume, Givenchy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hips</strong></td>
<td>“Femme” (perfume, Rochas)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shoulders</strong></td>
<td>“Magic” (perfume, Céline)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lips and nose</strong></td>
<td>Dali’s perfume</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heart</strong></td>
<td>“C’est la vie” (perfume, Christian Lacroix)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual parts</strong></td>
<td>Donna Karan “New York” Parfum</td>
<td>Perry Ellis Flagrance “Tribu” (Benetton’s perfume) Elizabeth Arden’s “Sunflowers” “Obsession” (Calvin Klein’s body lotion)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Anthropomorphism mainly refers to the fact of shaping objects using human features. It is linked to a particular type of animism, a practice by which inanimate objects are endowed with qualities that make them "alive" or "humanlike" (Gilmore, 1919 quoted in Fournier, 1994, 15). A particular type of animism involves "the anthropomorphizing of objects in nature, and the transference to them, in thought and personality with all its qualities (Gilmore, 119, quoted in Fournier, 1994, 15). Here man, "regards the anthropopathic object as he does men, and in addition, he treats them as he does men" (Gilmore, 203 quoted in Fournier, 1994, 15). In this case, the anthropomorphized object is believed to possess emotional, volitional, and action potential of its own. In animating an object at this level, one therefore assumes feelings, will, and the "power to act according to the
prompting of these feelings and the determination of will (Gilmore, 14). With the third level of animism, the object is granted selected anthropomorphic qualities, though it is not conceived of as entirely human-like. Generally, the ongoing ability of the object to function as a thinking and feeling entity is not assumed (Fournier, 1994, 16).

The personification of objects thus goes back to very ancient practices and is present in Primitive Arts such as the artistic productions of African Dogons. It is also closely linked to a kind of magic ritual and sorcery practices according to which an action on one part of an object representing a person (or at least one part body part of the person) has a direct impact on the real person. This partly explains why metonymical devices are very much used to design anthropomorphic objects. It may be interesting to relate this magic belief to the projection and identification phenomena which are often at stake in the perfume sector. The seduction and buying decision process for the perfume illustrates a constant negotiation between the actual self and the ideal self of the consumer through the mediation of an endorser. Hence the fact that the personification of brands is so anchored in daily practices that most consumers may not even be aware of it. A personification technique which has always been widely used in the perfume industry is the use of endorsers to represent the brand. Marketers thus use existing persons to really represent (which literally means to stand for in both time and space dimensions) the brand. The personification of brands thus means a metaphorical device which is used to anchor an intangible entity into a more physical reality through the use of tangible elements (such as a famous endorser). This anchorage technique remains anyhow metaphorical in the sense it is based on a projection device which is supposed to create a desire for the product. The fact of metaphorically personifying brands is an analogical device which attempts at creating a congruity between two phenomena from very different orders. The process is basically the following: a famous endorser is used to represent the perfume brand so that the consumer may identify him/herself with this endorser. Therefore, the consumer will tend to be attracted to the brand via the endorser that best fits his/her ideal self-image. Therefore, the consumer buys more an ideal self image than a tangible product. This is consistent with self-image congruence theories which predict that products will be chosen when their attributes match some aspects of the self. These models assume a process of cognitive matching between these attributes and the consumer’s self-image. Studies also show that the ideal-self appears to be more relevant as a comparison standard for highly expressive social products such as perfume (Solomon, 1994, 298).

The identification phenomenon which may occur when an endorser is used to advertise for the perfume’s brand, is based on the belief that the product will have the same effect on the consumer as the one it had on the endorser. With anthropomorphic objects another projection phenomenon may complement the identification phenomenon mentioned previously. The perfume bottle may correspond to the ideal body the person would like to have and may thus tend to believe that by wearing the perfume (content) which is in the body-bottle (container) he or she may get the same body. This appears to be a resurgence of the sorcery mechanism described above through a projection phenomenon. This also shows that the sexualization of such objects implicitly leads to the de-sexualization of women who are expected to project themselves into objects, i.e. inert bodies.

**BODY COMMODIFICATION: OBJECTS AS SUBJECTS AND SUBJECTS AS OBJECTS**

There are thus two complementary phenomena linked to anthropomorphic objects. Objects are sexualized in the sense they get a body, a character, etc; this is part of the
personification process of objects and brands which is now very common. As there is a close connection between the epistemic categories of subject and object, the sexualization of objects strictly corresponds to a de-sexualization of women, by considering them as pure objects. There is undoubtedly a very close relationship between the personification of objects and the reification of individuals as Sartre already remarked in 1943. In such objects, women seem to be nothing else than objectified, that is transformed into objects (of desire?) as the advertisement for Pepsi-Cola (image 1) depicted. Let us now analyse more deeply this objectification process.

A fundamental characteristic of all objects categorized in table 1 is the absence of moving, thinking, or even sensory organs in all objects. This observation may be related to a very interesting study conducted on dolls, and especially on the differences between the Barbie doll (the feminine stereotype) and the G.I. Joe doll (the masculine stereotype). “Mass-produced objects like dolls can tell us much about the creation and significance of self-image in the context of group identities. Stereotypical definitions of gender are particularly well reflected in the design of adult dolls first produced in the United States which have since become internationally available (Attfield, 1996, 81).” One of the main differences between these two dolls refers to movement ability. Body movement is a gender-specific feature less visible than shape and attire, but one which reveals attitudes to gender identity. “The joints of dolls provide the material evidence of the ability for movement. The technical improvements added over the years to the joints in the Action Man figure embodies the increasing possibility of complex movement. Conversely, the simplicity and minimal number of joints in Barbie suggests the priority given to posing rather than acting. A consideration of mobility through a study of the joints bypasses the banality of clichéd feminity and masculinity which would result from an image analysis of Barbie and Action Man” (Attfield, 1996, 82). Charting the different types of joints incorporated into the design of Barbie and Action Man illustrates how the cliché of ‘feminine’ as passive and ‘masculine’ as active is literally embodied in the design of the toys (Attfield, 1996, 85).

This phenomenon applies very well to the perfume sector from which most of our examples are taken. None of the bodies represented has any movement ability because of the lack of both arms and legs. Woman is here depicted as a posing figure. Furthermore, another vital part of the body is quasi-never represented: the head. This clearly means than through these objects, women are depicted as posing figures with no ability to think. An interesting example of this phenomenon pushed to the limit is the Jean-Paul Gaultier perfume (image 5).

This image shows the perfume bottle which is offered in a tin. The tin is a very strong symbol because it shows a will to break the visual codes of the market by commodifying the perfume, showing that even a so to say luxury product like perfume may be sold in the same containers as peas or spinaches. But what is even more interesting is that the tin contains an object which is a woman. It means that the subject becomes the object and that the object becomes the subject. In other words, there is a confusion between the object and the subject. This phenomenon was even more exagerated recently (December 1997) when the same perfume was sold, as a promotional offer for Christmas, not in a tin but in an other box which was nothing else than a Russian doll. It means that the explicit representation of the woman (the perfume bottle) is imprisoned in the implicit representation of the woman which becomes at the same time a container.
Women are thus no longer expected to desire a subject (an endorser), but rather an object in which they may project themselves. The endorser has disappeared and has become the bottle itself, via the personification phenomenon. The seduction strategy has been altered because the subject-to-subject identification (endorsing strategy) has been replaced by a subject-into-object projection phenomenon. This gradual shift from the subject to the object may also be observed in collusion of container and content, and this at two levels. First because in the former example the woman serves as both content and container. Second because of the paradoxicality of the bottle-shape; it appears in fact quite paradoxical to contain some perfume in a body because perfume is usually spread on the body and is therefore linked to the outside universe of the body, whereas in such situation the perfume becomes imprisoned inside the body. Symbolically, it means that something which was vaporous an used by women as an exterior manifestation of their profound identity now becomes interior and even more imprisoned in a container. It is as if an essential identity sign for women was severely controled through its imprisonment in a...inx.

Further more, this example illustrates the fact that there is a severe control exerted on these bodies due to a lack of movement ability. These bodies are fixed and seem to be imprisoned in a ‘pose’. This process resembles very much like the process of body control imposed to prisoners at the Classic Age as it was described by Foucault in *Discipline and...*
Discipline, he contends, suggests a kind of sterilization of life, because domination procedures (such as reification) attempt at impeding any initiatives or forces, and thus tend to model bodies up to a state of complete passivity. The body becomes the subject of constraints and norms (it is statified), and must obey a diffused, structured and penetrating power (see Vigarello, 1992). The normed body is a corrected body on which a sort of invisible hand is holding power to impose directions. This can be observed through the normativity of gestures, poses and attitudes. Foucault’s analysis is based on the bodily techniques and attitudes imposed to prisoners after the seventeenth century. Power was exerted on prisoners via imprisonment but also through a diffused system imposing and normalising attitudes and gestures.

This repressive ideology is implicitly visible in the Jean-Paul Gaultier example, because of the metal corset which surrounds the woman body and which looks like a prisoner garb. The imprisonment effect is even enhanced by the striped patterns which decorate the tin and which refers to the paradigm of imprisonment. This diffuse power imposed by a very masculine ideology may be seen through the objectification of women that such objects represent, but also through the structure of desire implied by such objects which undoubtedly refers to transgression. Transgression is the crossing of borders and points to the dynamics in which the order of the secular and everyday world is shattered (Bataille, 1962). Transgression is a transition to the other state, and from the point of view of corporeality, it points out to the breaking down and crossing of the borders confining and defining the body imposed by culture as an Order (Falk, 1994 : 59). Transgression may be important here to understand the objectification of bodies involved in these anthropomorphic perfume bottles. Bataille links eroticism with “death consciousness” or the awareness of the limited nature of earthly life. The enjoyment of erotic functions is related to the fear of death he says. Eroticism always includes the proximity of death hence the paradox of having an inert object playing an erotic role. This type of desire experience illustrates a momentary breaking of the bounds confining the body, and represents also an imitation of death which is characteristic of any erotic experience (Falk, 1994 : 60-1).
(or model), and the object that the self of subject desires because he or she knows, imagines, or suspects the mediator desires it. The romantic concept of a spontaneous desire is thus illusory, because desire only exists in a context of rivalry within a triangular structure. Mimesis evokes desire and desire constitutes mimesis. The function of culture is to control and channel this potential conflict over the object. The model mediates reality (world, experience, etc.) to the subject. We are thus always always interindwellers (Girard’s neologism) which refers to our inter-subjective make-up; as human beings we are not the other or model, but on the other hand, we are constituted by the other or model, and so the self is a set of mimetic relationships operative in the individual.

Our deepest desire is not for things and objects, but to be. In struggles with the model-rival, it becomes apparent from a mimetic analysis that the subject wants the being of the model-mediator. This is the source of fascination, hypnosis, idolatry, the « double », and possession. The experience of the double occurs when the model-obstacle as overpowering other is so internalized that the subject does not experience a distinction of self and the model-mediator. The subject is thus “possessed” by the other (Girard, 1996, 290). It is exactly what seems to happen in the Jean-Paul Gaultier example.

The contradiction which we mentioned above -- the de-polarization of desire -- is thus in fact only apparent for two reasons.

The first reason is that seduction is always in some part linked to feminity as Monneyron (1997) illustrated. Monneyron gives the significative examples of Mick Jagger and David Bowie whose seduction power on women is mainly based on the feminity which lies in them. It means that feminity may necessarily be re-introduced in a seduction relationship between men and women. This argument is extremely important because it raises the question of whether one tends to be seduced by complementarity and difference (seduction as a search for otherness), or whether one tends to be attracted by similarity (seduction as a search for sameness). Damak (1996) has pointed out the two types of expectations as regards perfume choice, depending on consumer’s level of satisfaction with their body image.

The second reason is more complex and refers to the theory of mimetic rivalry mentioned above. Perfume is a product which is very often bought as a gift (and not as a self-gift), hence the fact that perfume sales tend to increase tremendously during Christmas time. Then, women perfume is in fact usually bought by men as a gift; it may be deducted from this observation, that the perfume bottle has first to appeal to the gift provider, that is a man (be he a husband, a lover, a boy friend, etc.). Thus women tend to project their own image into a bottle (which is a disembodied body) to identify themselves with the body which is represented, so as to appeal -in fine- to a man. Bipolarity is thus reintroduced in the seduction relationship.

**POSTMODERN WOMEN AS SIMULACRAE?**

As a conclusion we would like to show that the anthropomorphization process described above results from an hyper-semantization of goods which lead to the creation and circulation of simulacrae, a phenomenon very characteristic of postmodernity. Because of the ever more rapid circulation of commodities linked to an over-manipulation of signs, distinction becomes rapidly thin between images and reality. It becomes harder for the consumer to distinguish between what the commodities stand for and the way they are symbolically decoded as commodity signs. In other words, signs are able to "float free
from objects", hence a sort of "depthless culture" which characterizes the postmodern era and which leads to a loss of stable meaning in the commodity system. As signs have essentially become "simulacrae", consumption goods can no longer be permanently linked to a stable set of associations in the sense that these symbolic association may be permanently renegotiated. Objects in contemporary societies have gradually become emptied-out of both symbolic and material content because what is increasingly produced are more and more signs rather than material products (Lash & Urry, 1994: 15). The tendency towards an ever changing flow of commodities, which characterizes contemporary Western societies raises the problem of the ability of goods to play their anthropological role of markers and for instance to help read the status of the commodity bearer. Thus the thesis of the postmodern political economy is one of the ever more rapid circulation of both subjects and objects linked to a subsequent "emptying-out" of subjects (Lash & Urry, 1994: 13). A phenomenon of time and space distance-isation gradually lead to the fact that individuals have become disembedded from concrete time and space which have themselves become more abstract. This essential process of spatio-temporal disembedding had been analysed by both Durkheim and Mauss as the main difference between tribal and modern societies. For them modernization goes together with an emptying-out of the categories by which people inhabit the world by classifying it (see Lash & Urry, 1994, 13-5). As pointed out by Baudrillard, a postmodern societies hence explodes the epistemology by creating a situation in which subjects lose contact with the real and themselves fragment and dissolve (Kellner, 1994/ 9).

This tendency which represents the postmodern era is also linked to the blurring of genres and a deconstruction of symbolic hierarchies. The best example is the advertisement for Jean-Paul Gaultier perfume which illustrates these various contradictions (Image 6).

There is an obvious continuity between the real woman and the woman-object. The woman really serves as a prothesis for the object, whereas the contrary relationship would be expected. The tin's cover is used as a hat for the woman but also to create a hide and seek effect. The real star is the object and the woman just plays a second rôle; she is here just to provide what is missing in the object to become a complete body? Also the fetishist phenomenon is very present here because the woman is only viewed through extremely coded and fetishised items such as gloves, colored lips, nails. The woman body is destructured (it is reduced to a sum of various elements) whereas the image of the object is fully constructed. The construction of the object (which thus attains completion) is closely related to the deconstruction of the woman. The woman only exists in disseminated fragments, whereas the object gets more consistency, solidity and identity. Also, it can be remarked that the jagged top can top seems to be decapitulating the head of the bottle torso...
Image 6
An Advertisement for Jean-Paul Gaultier’s Perfume For Women
CONCLUSION

This short study illustrates the ideology that hides beyond anthropomorphic objects, especially in the perfume industry. Apparently based on a feminization of society through a feminization of practices and objects' shapes, the anthropomorphization of objects, once decoded, reveals exactly the opposite phenomenon. Most anthropomorphic objects distorts the subject-object relationship, as well as the desire structure which underlies the mythical and seductive power of perfumes. By providing a product with a body -- which means personality, identity, and maybe humanity --, one does also at the same time objectify consumers by dissolving their identity. What is given to the object (personification phenomenon) is withdrew from the subjects (objectification phenomenon). The subject becomes an object, and even more: a simulacra. This issue is very central to our postmodern condition which questions the ability of consumption to really become a way for the individual to construct a self by ingesting products and rebuilding signs of identity. In this perspective, consumption becomes an a flow of dream-like perceptions, sensory overload and a permanent aesthetic immersion experienced by decentered subjects who may have lost a sense of identity (Shields, 1992:6).

END NOTES

1) The author wishes to thank the two anonymous reviewers who provided insightful comments and examples as well as many interesting bibliographical references.

2) The sexing of vegetables was also discussed in Hennig's quite provocative Erotic Dictionary of fruits and vegetables (1994).

3) It could be argued that this perfume bottle represents a non-gendered or even masculine torso.

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