Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Dún Laoghaire, Faculty of Film, Art and Creative Technologies

Wild Desires

The Animal Symbolism Used To Present Gender Roles in Perfume Marketing.

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Submitted to the Department of Design and Visual Arts in candidacy for the Degree in Graphic Design, 2026

Declaration of Originality

This thesis is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment of the examination for the Graphic Design Degree. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution. Grammarly was used throughout this thesis to help with spell-checks and for rephrasing.

Signed

Sophia Leonard

I would like to thank my family and friends for their support while writing this thesis. Additionally, I would like to thank Elaine McDevitt for her guidance throughout the process.

Abstract

This thesis examines how animal symbolism in perfume advertising plays a significant role in reinforcing culturally constructed gender norms by associating masculinity and femininity with traits perceived as natural or instinctual.

Advertising plays a powerful role in shaping contemporary cultural narratives, particularly in relation to gender and identity. Rather than simply promoting products, the perfume industry takes advantage of pre-constructed systems that influence how masculinity and femininity are perceived, and resells them through the usage of animal imagery. By analysing selected fragrance campaigns, this study showcases how masculinity is often associated with strength, dominance, and control, while femininity is linked to seduction, grace, and passivity.

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Introduction

Advertising has always held power over society, but its influence has intensified in recent decades as it infiltrates nearly every aspect of everyday life. Appearing on screens, billboards, and digital platforms, advertisements do far more than promote products; they help shape cultural narratives and social beliefs today. Through persuasive imagery and symbolic language, advertising moulds how we see ourselves and others, particularly in terms of gender and identity. Jean Baudrillard (1970) argues that advertising has moved beyond its initial function of selling commodities. He explains that it now plays a big role in constructing and manipulating social realities. This thesis investigates how animal symbolism in perfume advertising functions to naturalise cultural gender roles, and argues that contemporary perfume advertising uses animal imagery to reproduce patriarchal structures by aligning men with strength, control, and authority, and women with submission, allure, and availability. This argument will be supported through close visual analysis of selected perfume advertising campaigns, containing the same animals but represented differently depending on whether the product is geared towards men or women, and the different values the animal represents depending on gender.

The first chapter examines how advertising blurs the boundary between humans and animals to construct gendered ideals of power and identity. Through perfume campaigns featuring horses and wolves, this chapter explores how animal symbolism naturalises masculinity as naturally dominant, while femininity is naturally passive. Using Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, Mulvey's theory of visual pleasure, and Connell's framework of hegemonic masculinity, the chapter analyses how men are repeatedly aligned with animals associated with strength and wildness, positioning them as active agents who master nature. In contrast, women are rendered ornamental and still, existing primarily to be looked at rather than to act, while being aligned with domesticated animals rather than wild ones. The second chapter of this thesis examines the parallel between felines and women, particularly the social connotations associated with femininity through feline traits such as softness and sensuality. Using Barthes' theory of myth, Goffman's analysis of gendered posture, and bell hooks' critique of racialised representation, this chapter explores early twentieth-century suffrage postcards and connects the

cultural context to contemporary perfume advertising, showing how cat imagery has long been used to infantilise women and aestheticise submission, leading to the naturalisation of restrictive ideals of femininity. It also examines the racialised side of feline imagery, exploring how black women are often positioned through more overtly animalistic and hypersexualised representations. Through this contrast, the chapter shows that while white femininity is aestheticised and softened, Black femininity is constructed as predatory and untameable. These visuals both reflect cultural attitudes and actively reproduce them, embedding colonial and patriarchal stereotypes into contemporary advertising and shaping how women, especially women of colour, are valued and expected to perform their femininity.

Finally, Chapter 3 examines how perfume advertising uses animal imagery to naturalise gender hierarchy by valuing masculinitys dominace over femininity's submissiveness. Drawing on Goffman's theory of gender display, Mulvey's concept of the active male gaze, and Berger's analysis of visual pleasure, the chapter analyses campaigns that demonstrate how men are framed as authoritative and controlling, while female subjects are positioned as decorative, seductive, and passive. Through the symbolic use of lions, the chapter argues that masculinity is elevated as a form of mastery and spatial dominance, whereas femininity is constructed through intimacy and visual appeal. These representations reinforce a cultural "natural order" that presents gender roles as instinctual rather than socially produced, embedding patriarchal values within contemporary perfume advertising.

Chapter 1: The Animalised Human

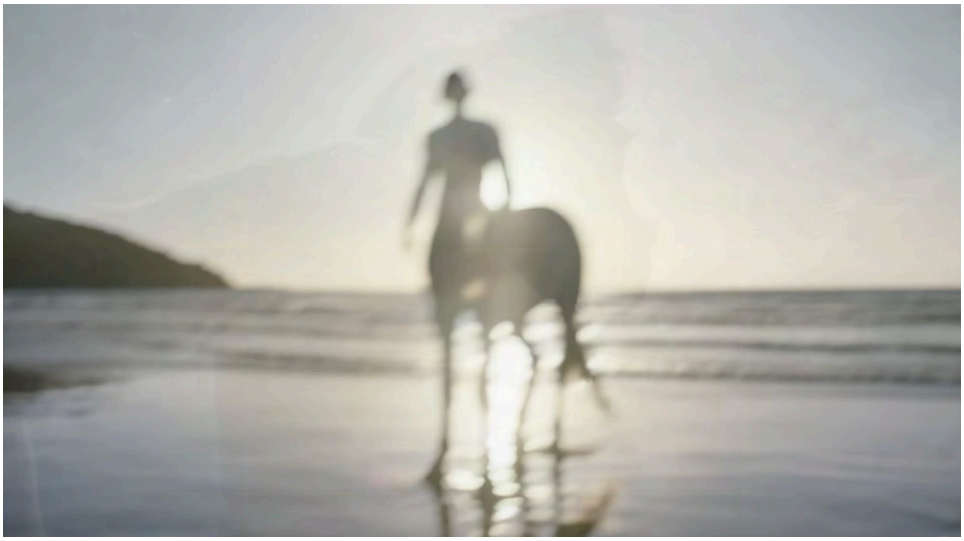
1.1 The Human–Animal Boundary in Advertising

Advertising often functions not simply to sell products, but to embed ideologies into the subconscious of viewers, shaping desires and reinforcing social norms. As Baudrillard notes, advertising operates as a "simplified operational mode, vaguely seductive, vaguely consensual" (1994, p. 87), creating symbolic meanings that appear natural rather than constructed. Through repetition, these curated images of gender begin to define what masculinity and femininity should look like, producing a hyperreal landscape in which "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal." (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 1) Within this framework, gender is not presented authentically; it is stylised and sold back to consumers as truth. This moulding of power becomes especially visible in the way advertisements use symbolic imagery to define gender norms. Advertising can pinpoint consumers' desires and alter them accordingly; it can redirect their perceptions and influence emotional responses while often bypassing logical reasoning. Baudrillard (1970) describes advertising as central to consumer culture because it does not simply sell objects; it sells systems of meaning and identity. Products become symbolic tokens of aspiration, beauty, and success. Through repetition, these ideals begin to appear natural rather than what they truly are, carefully constructed messages designed to maintain particular social hierarchies. In Simulacra and Simulation (1994), Baudrillard describes how advertising participates in a form of hyperreality where images and symbols replace lived experience. The result is a cultural landscape where advertisements no longer reflect reality; they have the ability to manipulate and create it. As he states, "Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal." (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 1). Within this hyperreality, gender in particular is not represented realistically. It is curated and manipulated before it is sold back to consumers as truth. This

process becomes especially visible in contemporary perfume advertising, where idealised images of masculinity and femininity are constructed through animal symbolism.

(Fig. 1) 'Burberry hero' advertisement

(Fig. 2) Still from 'Burberry Hero' video advertisement



(Fig. 3) Still from 'Burberry hero' video advertisement (00:55)

(Fig. 4) Still from 'Burberry hero' advertisement (00:28)

The Burberry Hero campaign was first launched on August 2nd 2021, developed by Burberry's chief creative officer Riccardo Tisci (Yates, 2021). The still image accompanied a filmed advertisement. In the Burberry advertisement is a male model, Adam driver, shirtless and running alongside a horse by the sea (Fig.2). He eventually gets into the sea with the horse as images of both man and horse overlap each other, ending in an image of both man and horse blurred together becoming one and forming a centaur-like figure (Fig. 3). His gaze is resolute and focused, his muscles sharply defined, and his posture is confident and commanding. The overall composition draws closely on classical iconography of the heroic male nude, an aesthetic that is "an idealised visual representation of the male form that originated in Ancient Greece" (Frey, 2020). The horse functions as an extension of the male subject's power, "The horse is seen as dominant with themes of power, strength and energy, strength and war, and as a companion and helper of humans in work, leisure, and prosperity" (Lloyd and Woodside, 2013, pg 18).

Its muscular, dynamic stance mirrors the man's physique, creating a visual continuity between the human and the animal. The horse is not acting as an independent being, but a metaphor for strength and control. Historically, equestrian imagery has been commonly used in Western constructions of masculinity, from the significance of horses in the context of eighteenth-century masculinity and English horsemanship, centring male success on horseback in battle or hunting (Bernez, 2018). Or the 'Wild West' cowboy archetype of rodeo. "Rodeo

perpetuates the values of the rugged and stoic cowboy (apart from women) and the importance of the challenge continually to bring that which is uncivilised under control" (Tom, 2018, pg 69). While there is no cowboy or 'Wild West' imagery present in the advertisement, the context still applies when analysing the cultural importance of horses being presented as masculine, or something that has masculine traits.

In the Burberry advertisement, the boundary between man and horse dissolves in a climactic sequence in which the man's body and the horse's form begin to merge, his torso becoming the horse's neck, while the horse's body remains intact (as seen in Fig 3). This transformation parallels mythological imagery, recalling figures such as the centaur. The fusion symbolises a hyperreal ideal of modern masculinity that seeks to reclaim authenticity through wildness. According to Nick (2020), "Their human half represents intelligence, reason, and civilization, while their horse half represents wildness, barbaric nature, and a primal existence." The man then embodies not only the horse's physical power and strength but also the symbolic qualities it represents: vitality, energy, and dominance.

(Fig 5) Still from 'ALLURE HOMME SPORT Cologne' video advertisement (0:04)

(Fig 6) Still from 'ALLURE HOMME SPORT Cologne' video advertisement (0:08)

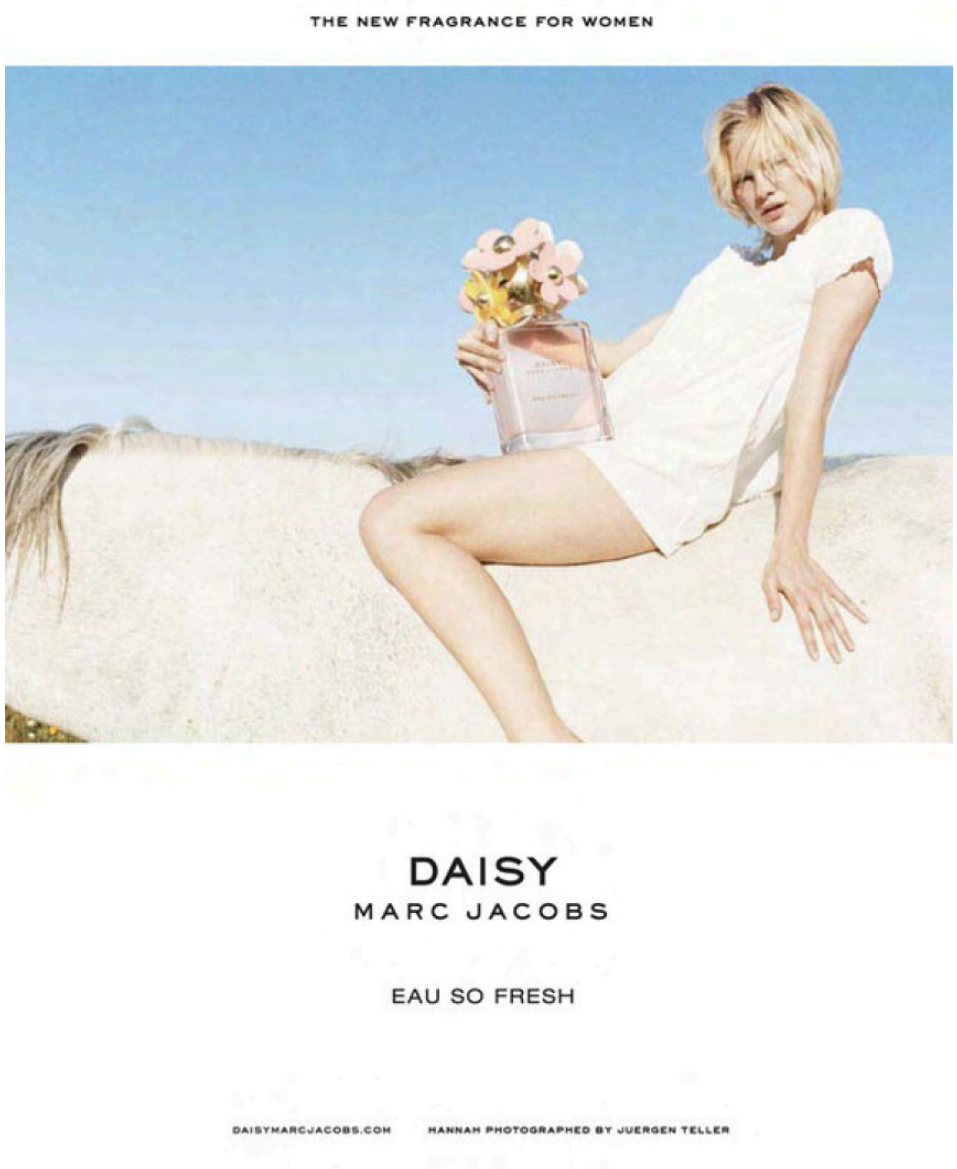
(Fig 7) Still from 'ALLURE HOMME SPORT Cologne' video advertisement (0:25)

(Fig 8) Still from 'ALLURE HOMME SPORT Cologne' video advertisement (0:28)

The Allure advertisement was first aired on June 3rd, 2016, according to (packshotmag.com). Filmed entirely in black and white, the Allure advertisement begins with a wide shot of a man, Luke Grimes, riding a horse across a desert-like landscape, with the brand name Chanel overtop. The man is first positioned face-to-face with the horse (Fig 5) before mounting and riding through the terrain (Fig 6). The soundtrack is pensive and intense, matching the drama of the imagery. The video then cuts to the man riding the horse along the shoreline, entering the water and becoming partially submerged. A slow-motion sequence (Fig 7) captures the horse bucking in the water. The advertisement then cuts to a central product shot of the perfume bottle (Fig 8), while the rider continues across the shoreline in the background. The bottle introduces the only use of colour, with the word "Sport" highlighted in red, creating a visual contrast within the black-and-white composition.

While the Burberry advertisement presents the power of masculinity, the allure homme advertisement associates male identity with sophistication and adventure over pure power. The focus of the advertisement is on adventure, conveyed through the speed at which the man rides the horse and the untamed terrain in which he is placed. However, there are elements of a 'wild sophistication' that have been introduced through the man's clothing and the horse's gear. The man is dressed in a white shirt and trousers, giving him a sense of formality and refinement; the shirt is buttoned down some still giving him a sense of wild ruggedness. The horse is equipped with reins and a saddle, signalling control and discipline through proper riding gear. Unlike the

Burberry advertisement, where the horse has no riding gear, the male model runs alongside it rather than riding on top. This visual difference suggests a more primal relationship between man and animal in the Burberry advertisement. Allure shows a controlled and sophisticated interaction with nature whilst also being appart of, and controlling it.



(Fig 9) 'Daisy Marc Jacobs' advertisement

(Fig 10) Still from 'Daisy Marc Jacobs' video advertisement (00:16)

By contrast, the Marc Jacobs Daisy advertisement (Fig 9) situates its female subject within a soft, pastoral scene. She reclines atop a white horse, dressed in a delicate, childlike dress, her bare legs exposed against the bright sky. Unlike the Burberry or Allure advertisements, this image emphasises softness, with an almost dream-like feel. The woman's posture is relaxed, her expression vacant, and the entire visual field bathed in overexposed sunlight. She cradles the advertised perfume bottle in her hand, but its unusually large size makes her appear more delicate and innocent by comparison. The name of the product and brand are below the image of her on a white background, making her the main subject of the advertisement. The horse in this advertisement is not the central focus, yet it serves an important symbolic function. Unlike the Burberry and Allure advertisements, where the horse serves as an extension of masculine power, here it symbolises purity. Its whiteness, combined with the soft overexposed palette, represents innocence and chastity, qualities that have historically aligned with femininity in Western society. As Cameron (2023, pg 170) notes, "traditionally white garments and their whiteness denote purity, innocence, virginity, youth…white has consistently signified innocence and purity, resulting in it being a popular colour to dress children."

The horse, in this context, becomes a feminine symbol of gentleness and grace that mirrors and supports the woman's body. She is not portrayed as leading or mastering the horse, but rather as existing in quite harmony with it (as seen in Fig 10). The composition deliberately blurs the distinction between woman and horse, positioning them as passive figures who merge with the landscape rather than act upon it. As Laura Mulvey (1975) observes, in visual culture, "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" the male gaze "projects its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly" (Mulvey, 1975, pg 808). The Daisy advertisement is a good example of this; the woman's body exists to be looked at, not to act. She is laid across the back of the horse passively, her expression one of bliss and dream-like, her function is purely ornamental or aesthetic. She has become a site of visual pleasure that sustains the fantasy of femininity as beauty without agency. This aligns with Mulvey's notion of the woman as "to-be-looked-at-ness," an object of erotic contemplation that "freezes the flow of action" (Mulvey, 1975, pg 808). The woman's stillness turns her into a scene of quiet submission (Fig 10)

Therefore, there is an obvious contrast between the Burberry, Allure and Daisy advertisements. The horse, when paired with a man, magnifies male strength and wildness, while being paired with a woman showcases female fragility and passiveness. Mulvey's binary opposition of the active male and passive female gaze is enacted through the visual codes in these adverts. In Burberry, the horse represents the man's wildness and virility; it represents what masculinity stands for by becoming the mythological centaur-like being. Allure more shows the power that male masculinity can have over another, in this case, the horse. In Daisy, the horse is shown to have the opposite effect; the woman is, in a sense, merging with the horse. But it domesticates and aestheticises her, showing her as a vision of submission. These advertisements thus participate in the ideological work of gender differentiation. As Berger (1972) observes, "men act, and women appear" (Berger, 1972, pg 47). Masculinity is rendered through motion and mastery, femininity through visibility and stillness. The visuals of each campaign naturalise this division through form and tone. Fig 1 relies on dramatics and movement, the muscular tension of body and beast. Fig 10 uses colours and expressions to soften the figure, making the scene appear soft and dreamy. These compositional choices are not aesthetic accidents but ideological signifiers that reproduce the hierarchy Mulvey diagnoses: men as viewers, women as objects.

2.2 Canine Power and Male Authority

Animal imagery is often used as a visual tool to reinforce traditional ways of thinking. By linking masculinity with animals seen as "powerful," such as wolves, stallions, and lions, these representations suggest that male authority is instinctive and rooted in biology. As a result, advertisements begin to present masculinity as a natural part of the male body rather than something shaped by society and culture. These traits are not only naturalised but also idealised; strength, dominance, and leadership are elevated as desirable masculine qualities, framed as aspirational standards rather than constructed roles. Through this process, animal associations for masculinity focus on authority and control while reinforcing patriarchal hierarchies by presenting these characteristics as natural, admirable, and unavoidable expressions of manhood.

In particular, canines such as wolves take on a big symbolic role within this framework of animal imagery. Unlike domesticated animals like dogs or cats, wolves occupy a space between the wild and the social, being the more primal animal than a dog but still being social enough to exist within a pack, making them effective as signifiers of an idealised form of masculinity. In myth and cultural symbolism, wolves have long been associated with traits such as ferocity, territoriality, and dominance or natural leaders, qualities that parallel hegemonic masculine norms (Sharp 1976). The concept of hegemonic masculinity has significantly shaped gender studies and discussions surrounding masculinity, power dynamics, and social hierarchies. As Connell and Messerschmidt explain, "hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue."(Connell and Messerschmidt, 2016, p. 832)

Hegemonic masculinity suggests that the culturally dominant form of masculinity is deliberately shaped to appear as the 'natural', that men are naturally assertive, heterosexual, and dominant. Connell suggests that this ideal does not come to mind organically but is pushed through cultural practices and symbolic representations, "there is a circulation of models of admired masculine conduct, which may be exalted by churches, narrated by mass media, or celebrated by the state." (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2016, p. 838). These institutions help push the idea of hegemonic masculinity by presenting its traits as universally desirable. At the same time, this dominance depends on the marginalisation of masculinity since "the concept of

hegemonic masculinity presumes the subordination of non hegemonic masculinities, and this is a process that has now been documented in many settings, internationally." (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2016, p. 19)

The hegemonic male is frequently portrayed through wolf imagery, particularly in contemporary media that draws on the idea of the "alpha" or dominant leader. This concept originated in early studies of captive wolves conducted by L. David Mech, in which unrelated wolves were forced into groupings. In these environments, rigid dominance hierarchies emerged, "wolves formed dominance hierarchies featuring alpha, beta, omega animals" (Mech, 1999, p. 2) in which the alpha pair maintained control through force. However, Mech later discovered that wild wolf packs are family units, led by parent animals rather than dominant rulers, completely dissmining the idea of an 'alpha'. Despite this scientific correction, the cultural image of the alpha wolf as a powerful, commanding individual remains. As Mech explains, while researchers abandoned the term in the early 2000s, "The media, however, took much longer to update its language." (Comunicação). As a result, the wolf continues to function in popular culture as a symbol of masculine dominance and leadership, reinforcing hegemonic ideals even after their biological basis has been dismantled.

(Fig. 11) Still from Diesel 'Only The Brave' video advertisement (00:13)

(Fig. 12) Still from Diesel 'Only The Brave' video advertisement (00:55)

(Fig. 13) Still from Diesel 'Only The Brave' video advertisement (00:06)

'Only The Brave' is a Diesel advertisement starring Liam Hemsworth, first aired in 2016. The advertisement starts with a male model (Liam Hemsworth) looking pensively around his environment, blocked in by stone pillars. A woman circles these pillars and hides behind them while a voice narrates, "When it comes to passion, you can tell yourself, she's too beautiful for me". A wolf lunges at him aggressively, and he flinches back. The male model then breaks

through the stone barrier to get to the woman, emerging from a dust cloud with the same wolf that attacked him, now at his side obediently.

The obvious themes in this advertisement are those of 'overcoming' and being 'brave'."The film is an ode to bravery, based not only on the idea of courage, but also on the qualities of self-confidence, conviction, inner strength and determination." (McKnight) Pauline de Montferrand, Associate Creative Director, commented in an interview. The narrative in this advertisement uses the wolf (Fig. 11) as a device to represent the human subject through the animal's wildness. The wolf symbolises instinctive courage, according to Pauline de Montferrand, as well as an untamed spirit and alpha dominance. From a theoretical perspective, this aligns with Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity. As seen in Fig. 11, the animal metaphor (the wolf) further reinforces this hierarchy by visually grounding masculinity in nature, making these ideals appear biologically driven rather than socially constructed. The woman who appears (Fig. 13) functions explicitly as an object of male desire. Her being positioned behind a physical barrier and the way she enticingly moves around the man suggest she is the reward for his masculine performance. This dynamic reflects on what Connell explains, that women play a central role in constructing the hegemonic masculinities through their interactions with men as "mothers; as schoolmates; as girlfriends, sexual partners, and wives; as workers in the gender division of labor; and so forth." (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2016, p. 848) these roles are what validates men's dominance and heterosexual desirability, the woman in the advertisement is the sexual partner in this context.

The man's act of breaking through stone barriers to reach her symbolically reinforces this. His physical strength, determination, and aggression are depicted as the qualities that allow him to "win" the woman; it simulates the 'getting the girl' trope, often played out in rom-coms and perpetuated within this advertisement. The 'taming' or 'controlling' of the wolf (Fig. 12) represents him embracing these ideas or characteristics. The wolf is aggressive, with its lips curled back and mouth wide open (Fig 11), but it heels and walks alongside him passively as seen in Fig 12. It circles his feet, awaiting the man's direction. The wolf, being aggressive and standing up to the man, positions itself as the 'alpha' of its surroundings. Once the man overcomes and faces the wolf, it then stands at his heel. This signifies that the man now has power over it; he has become the 'alpha' and leader over the animal. The obstacle he destroys becomes a metaphor for

the challenges a man must overcome to claim his heterosexual prize, presenting desire as a pursuit that justifies force and assertiveness. This scene is an example of External hegemony, which "refers to the institutionalization of men's dominance over women"(Connell and Messerschmidt, 2016, p. 844). The cut to the couple kissing produces and pushes the narrative and ideological function that the man's aggressive pursuit has been successful, and he has now gotten his prize, the woman. Her consent is implied only after he asserts his dominance.

(Fig. 14) 'Johnny Depp Dior Sauvage Elixir' advertisement

(Fig. 15) Still from 'Johnny Depp Dior Sauvage Elixir' video advertisement (00:03)

(Fig. 16) Still from 'Johnny Depp Dior Sauvage Elixir' video advertisement (00:17)

(Fig. 17) Still from 'Johnny Depp Dior Sauvage Elixir' video advertisement (00:28)

Dior's Sauvage campaign presents the same hegemonic masculinity seen in the Brave advertisement, but in a different context. The advertisement was produced by Jean-Baptiste Mondino and released in September 2021. The timing of the campaign, one week after Depp's high-profile defamation trial against Amber Heard, created public attention and debate, with some critics questioning the appropriateness of linking his public persona to wild, animalistic imagery with the allegations of domestic abuse being presented against him. While fans praised Dior's loyalty, using the hashtag #JusticeForJohnny (Edwards, 2022). Beyond these external factors, the visual composition reinforces Depp's dominance. It features Johnny Depp seated confidently on a rock, surrounded by wolves (Fig. 14) while the Sauvage perfume bottle occupies the foreground. The viewer's gaze is drawn to Depp, framed by wolves that rest at his feet, suggesting his control over the pack.

In the accompanying video that was released alongside the image, wolves are drawn to him as he plays an electric guitar in the middle of a desert. The wolves follow him as he walks through the terrain, visually establishing him as the strongest male of the group. His relaxed body language and composed expression further convey a sense of belonging and authority in this primal environment. This imagery again draws on hegemonic masculinity, more spastically Internal hegemony. Internal hegemony "refers to the social ascendancy of one group of men over all other men." (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2016, p. 844), in this case Depp has the

authority over the other wolves as they wait by his heel (Fig. 14) or follow behind him (Fig. 17). where as unlike in the Brave advertisement, where the man has authority over the woman, Depp is depicted as inherently commanding, with authority over the wolves. Viewed through the lens of internal hegemony, these wolves can be interpreted as representing other men, over whom Depp's character maintains dominance.

(Fig. 18) 'Gucci Flora, Gorgeous Gardenia' advertisement

While men are typically associated with wild animals such as wolves, women are more often represented with their domesticated counterparts, dogs. The Gucci 'Flora Fantasy' campaign (Fig. 18), directed and shot by artist Petra Collins, featuring Miley Cyrus, was released in 2021. Immediately, this advertisement establishes a markedly different tone compared to the Brave and Sauvage advertisements. The colours are more saturated with by soft pinks and blues, while the men's advertisements have a darker and more muted colour palette, and the environment surrounding the woman is deliberately domesticated, while again the men's are different, in Sauvage the environment is in the wilderness and Braves environment is based in a city. She is seated in a garden, accompanied by a poodle and two Siamese cats, with an oversized bottle of the perfume placed in front of her. Like the Daisy advertisement, the product's scale makes her

appear smaller, more delicate, and more vulnerable. The woman wears a purple high-neck shirt, the collar framing her neck in a way that subtly looks like a pet collar. Surrounded by domesticated animals, she appears almost as one herself, emphasising a gentle femininity. The choice of a dog instead of a wolf is deliberate. Unlike the men, she does not dominate or lead the animals. Instead, she sits peacefully among them, at the same level as the pets, reinforcing the notion that women occupy a position of equivalence or subordination rather than authority. This visual strategy contrasts with the representations of men commanding wild, powerful animals and highlights the differing values embedded in gendered imagery. This pattern of women being represented with domesticated animals continues, but rather than using dogs as the domesticated animal, women are often presented with cats.

Chapter 2: The Feline Female

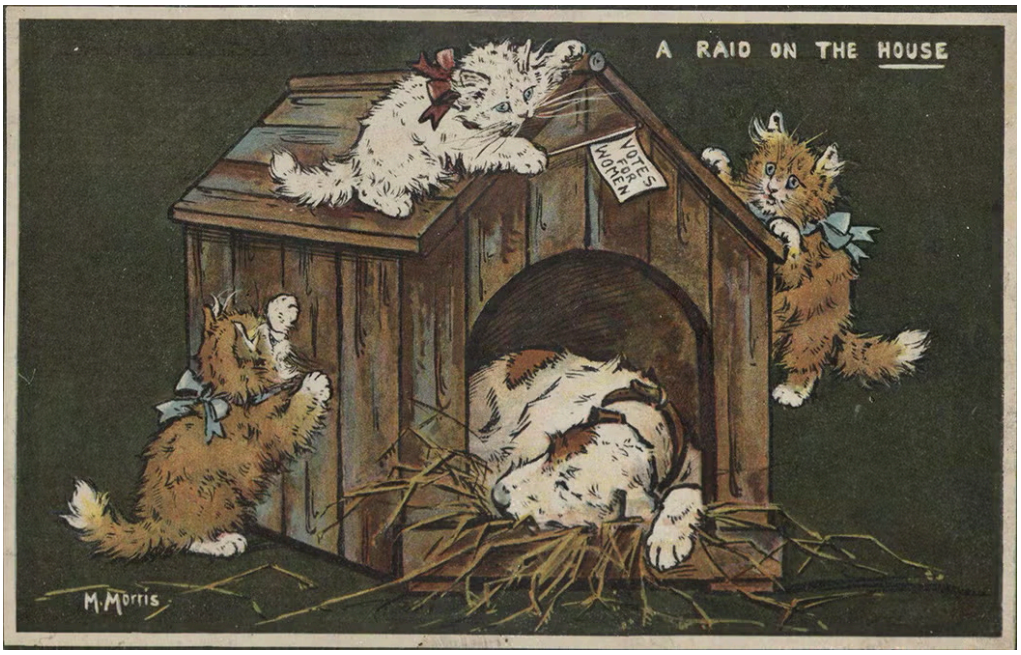
2.1 The Cat as Symbol: Submissive and Sexualised

The comparison of women to cats has long been a cultural and media trope, with phrases like "catty" being used to describe women as competitive or spiteful ."Cougar" is another phrase that dehumanises older women by sexualizing their relationships with younger men. These sayings often showcase women in a limited view, associating them with negative or hypersexualised stereotypes. According to Scerbo (2017), felines have been historically associated with femininity. A connection that goes back as far as ancient Egypt: felines were linked to the goddess Bastet, who embodied protection, fertility, and motherhood. However, these representations also reinforce a more perceived negative stereotype that frames women as mysterious or alluring without acknowledging their humanity or complexity as human beings. In more recent years, it's become somewhat of a trend to present women as cat-like in the media and push an idea of women that is both overly sexualized and innocent. Motherly but promiscuous. It disregards women's identities and personalities. This comparison of women to felines is a recurring theme in perfume advertisements for women, but it also extends to fashion advertisements.

The comparison of women to cats in the media dates back to the Victorian era. Firstly, cats weren't seen as indoor pets because of their association with witches, and were kept outdoors. They were treated poorly when kept as a pet, as they had "developed a reputation for being sly and calculating" (Ferguson, 2019). Over time, however, cats were starting to become distinctly 'feminine', being given gendered characteristics and attributes as they slowly became household pets. As Sarah Amato (Amato, p. 8, 2015) suggests in her book, cats were considered suitable pets for women because they were seen as affectionate, elegant, and domestic creatures. Aligning with the idealised image of women during the Victorian era. However, this association also led to the use of cats in gendered representations that sought to represent women's behaviour and participation in public life. Thus leading to the representation of women during the suffrage movement.

Women's suffrage was a movement started in the mid-1800s that fought for women's right to vote and be recognised as full citizens in society. For decades, women in many countries were

denied political power, could not vote, and often had limited legal rights in areas like property, employment, and education (BBC Bitesize, 2021). The suffrage movement fell into line around the 'golden age' of postcards, roughly 1907–1915. Postcards became a popular medium not only for images of cities and landscapes but also for social and political messages (udel.edu, 2020). Among these were postcards featuring cats that went against the women's suffrage movement.



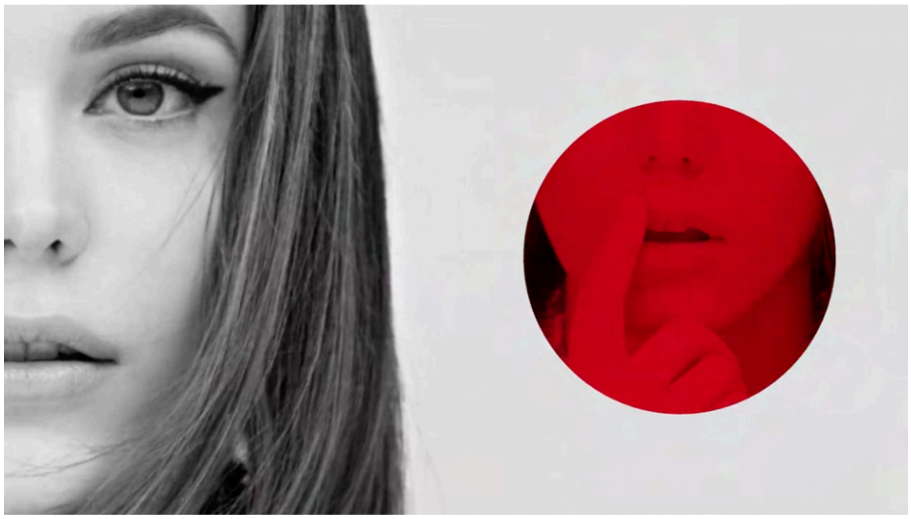
(Fig. 19) 'A Raid on the House' anti-suffrage postcard illustration

While analysing these women's suffrage images, they will primarily be examined through the lens of Roland Barthes' concept of myth. Barthes explores the concept of myth as a form of communication that transforms historical and cultural realities into naturalised, universal truths. Barthes argues that myth operates as a second-order semiological system, where existing signs are repurposed to convey ideological concepts. Barthes explains that "Ancient or not, mythology can only have a historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things" (Barthes, p. 108, 1957), meaning myths are not inherent or natural; they are created and shaped by historical and cultural contexts. These contexts come from myths that are rooted in history because they arise from human actions, societal structures, and cultural developments over time. People often mocked the women's

suffrage movement, using the image of cats to represent or satirise women taking part. A newspaper described that the women involved were "naughty kittens from a room in which they had been disporting themselves [frolicking] freely" (Pamela Marie Paxton et al., p. 48, 2021). The kittens act as symbols for suffragist women, building on the longstanding association of cats with femininity in the media. In this context, the imagery serves to infantilise the women of the movement, portraying them as playful or mischievous rather than serious political actors.

The image in Fig. 19 titled 'A Raid on the House' illustrates this usage of satire. Three kittens are climbing a doghouse, presumably trying to enter, one holding a flag with the words "VOTES FOR WOMEN" written on it. The image is captioned with "A RAID ON THE HOUSE". In the house is a sleeping dog who pays no mind to the kittens. The image parodies real-life events when suffragists carried out "raids" on the Houses of Parliament, attempting to gain entry to legislative chambers. These actions were part of their protest against political exclusion and their demand for the right to vote. (Schwartz, 2018). The cultural context surrounding this image is a time when housewives were considered the normal, natural role for women. The Cats, already historically associated with femininity, in the image is the sign, used as a symbol for women. Specifically, the suffragettes. This association between the kittens and women infantilised them, and makes the suffrage cause appear silly or innocent, undermining its seriousness and making it so they are not taken seriously. This is the myth. In contrast, the dog peacefully sleeping in the doghouse represents men, who are indifferent or dismissive of the women's efforts. In this way, the dog symbolises the men in the situation, highlighting the imbalance of power and the lack of recognition for women's political activism.

(Fig. 20) 'Miu Miu The first Fragrance' advertisement



(Fig. 21) Still from 'Miu Miu The first Fragrance' video advertisement (00:03)

(Fig. 22) Still from 'Miu Miu The first Fragrance' video advertisement (00:11)

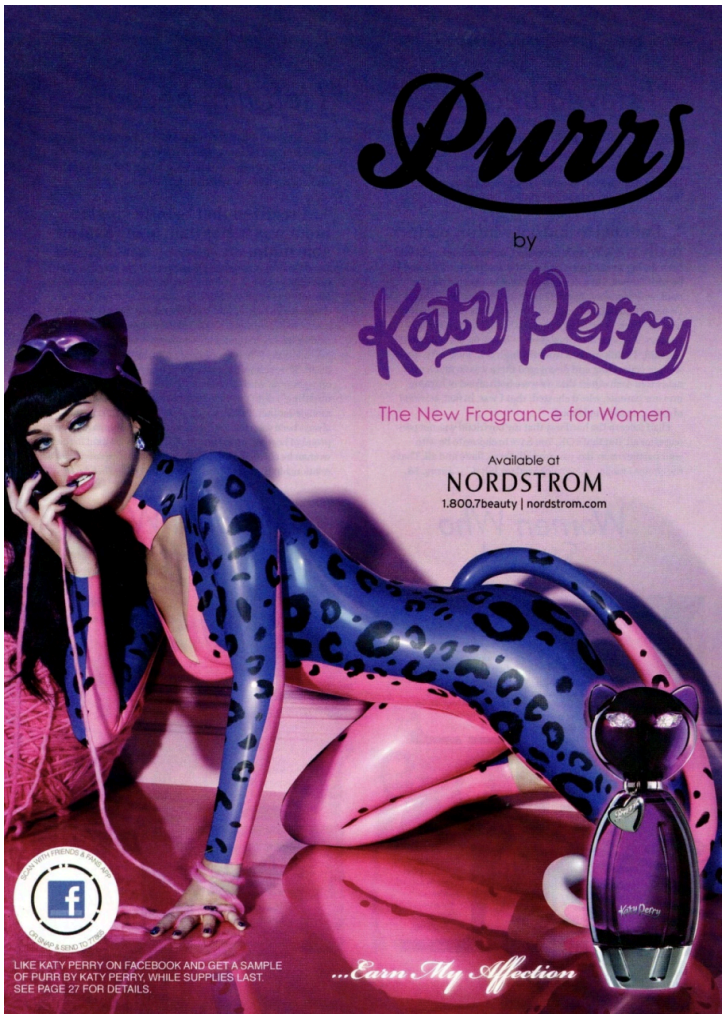
The underlying mechanism remains the same; the cat or kitten becomes a tool for constructing a culturally acceptable version of femininity. Up to this point, the analysis of the suffrage postcards has focused largely on their first-order signification, the literal surface-level meaning of an image and the message attached to those images to broaden the understanding of using cats culturally for current-day advertisement representations. At the denotation, the literal primary meaning of a sign, the advertisement shows a woman making direct eye contact with a black and white kitten. The kitten's paw rests on the perfume bottle positioned between them. Through

connotation, the secondary cultural or symbolic meanings that are added to the denotative elements, the image shapes a different tone. The woman and the cat are placed in a mirrored pose looking directly at each other; this suggests that the woman herself embodies feline qualities. Connecting back to suffragette postcards, cats or kittens were often used to represent women's softness or coyness. The kitten's paw on the perfume bottle further suggests that femininity, like the perfume itself, holds these qualities of the represented femininity. In mythic terms, the cat becomes the symbol that naturalises a particular kind of femininity.

This mythic structure does not disappear in the modern era. Instead, it changes to reflect what society now views as inherently 'feminine'. Miu Miu. The first fragrance advertisement (Fig. 20) shows how the association between femininity and feline imagery continues to shape representations of women. While suffrage-era postcards used cats to belittle women by comparing them to kittens to infantilise them, contemporary media uses similar associations to sexualise and commodify the female body. This image was accompanied by a post on the Miu Miu official Facebook page in September 2015 (as seen in Fig. 21 - Fig. 22). The advertisement draws on retro styling inspired mainly by the 1960s. The woman in the image is described as wearing a "Sixties-like pastel-colored Miu Miu dress," according to Women's Wear Daily. The song used in the advertisement, "You Don't Own Me," was released in 1963, alongside the 60s feel. The choice of this particular song is significant because it appeared during the emergence of the feminist movement. According to Pasopati et al. (2023), the feminist movement emerged as a series of socio-political movements and ideologies aimed at establishing equality between women and men and fighting for women's rights.

The song "You Don't Own Me," written by John Madara and David White and popularised by Lesley Gore, was released on December 11, 1963. It is considered an early feminist song that expressed women's emancipation and resistance to patriarchal culture during the 1960s, "This song was written to express women's emancipation through anti-patriarchal attitudes by showing women's power to fight against men's will" (Pasopati et al, 2023, pg 120). The use of this song paired with the cat imagery is a peculiar choice, as the cat is already a cultural signifier for femininity and the qualities associated with it. When combined with the song, the message becomes stripped of its original feminist meaning and repurposed as an aesthetic mood rather than a political statement. The final ideological message, or myth, becomes naturalised,

appearing obvious or "just how women are." The myth communicated by this advertisement is that femininity is naturally soft, seductive, or docile, and that a woman's identity is intertwined with the perfume. The product becomes the object that "creates" or "enhances" femininity.



(Fig. 23) 'Purr By Katy Perry' campaign advertisement

(Fig. 24) Photo included in 'Purr By Katy Perry' campaign

Continuing the mythic structure seen in the suffrage postcards and the Miu Miu fragrance campaign, the Katy Perry Purr advertisement (Fig. 23) shifts the focus toward a sexualised depiction of the feminised feline. At the level of denotation, the literal elements of the image show Katy Perry dressed in a full-body purple latex catsuit patterned with leopard spots. She is posed on all fours, looking directly at the viewer with parted lips while holding a string attached to a ball of yarn. One hand is tangled in the string. The perfume bottle is placed in the right corner of the frame. The tagline "Earn My Affection" appears beside the perfume bottle. These are relevant to cultural symbolism. The latex catsuit, the glossy surface, and the provocative pose draw on visual codes of fetish imagery and sexual display. Unlike the Miu Miu advertisement, which mixes innocence with subtle sexual undertones, Purr aims to present a sexualised image of femininity. Here, Perry is not placed beside or near a cat. Instead, she is transformed into the cat. The leopard print on the latex body suit signals a type of wildness to Perry, although she is dressed up in a wildcat costume, you would think her to be fierce or have some underlying themes of untamed. Her posture on all fours suggests otherwise. Goffman discusses ritualisation of subordination which portrays deference and submission through physical postures and spatial arrangements, he specifically mentions "A classic stereotype of deference is that of lowering oneself physically in some form or other of prostration." (Goffman, 1979, pg 40), Perry's position on all fours, particularly being on the floor as Goffman mentions "Floors are also associated with the less clean, less pure"(Goffman, 1979, pg 41), communicates a lower status as well as

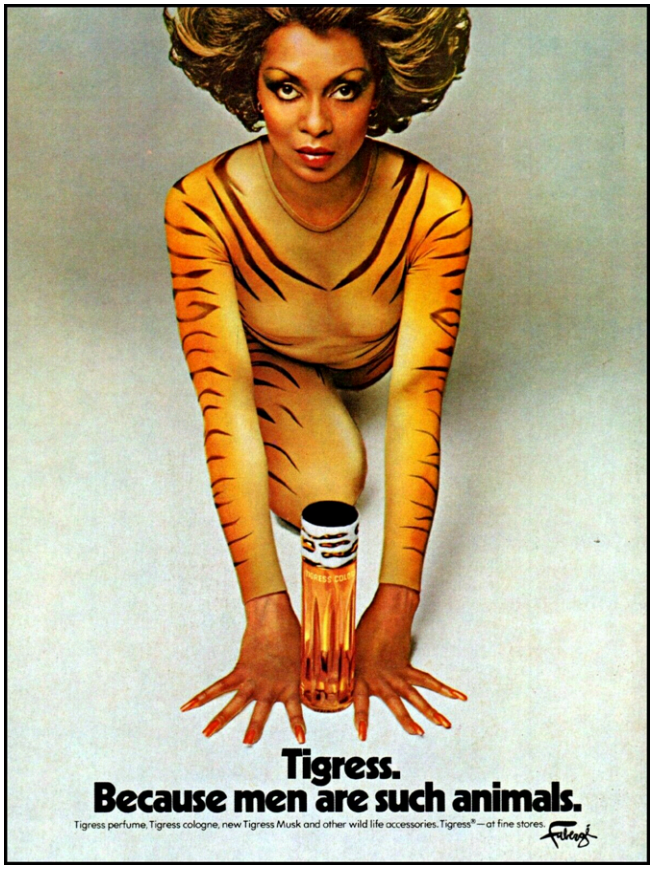
sexualisation within the image. Although she is depicted as a wild cat through her outfit and appearance, her posture and her playing with a ball of yarn suggest she has been domesticated. Yarn is commonly associated with domesticity and kitten-like qualities. Its presence softens the sexual image by framing her as both a sexually enticing figure and a playful household pet. Again the image of Perry in Fig. 24 reinforces this. She is seen on the floor in what seems to be a kitchen with a fridge above her head. The milk splashed on the ground around her is commonly associated with kittens and cats, as in the ball of yarn in (Fig. 23).

2.2. The Tame Wildness

While there are many advertisements presenting women in more domesticated or subservient roles, as already shown, there is an entirely different way women of colour are represented in advertising. Although these themes do overlap, particularly in the presentation of women as submissive or sexualised, the representation of black women is often more fetishised because of race rather than gender. As Bell Hooks examines in her book 'Black Looks", "Popular culture provides countless examples of black female appropriation and exploitation of negative stereotypes · To either assert control over the representation or at least reap the benefits of it" (Hooks, 1992, p. 65).

Hooks further comments on the animalisation of black women and the dominant sexual stereotypes that have historically been imposed on them. These harmful representations are deeply rooted in colonialism, slavery, and white supremacist ideologies, and they continue to influence how black women are perceived and treated in contemporary media and society "Nowadays, black women are included in magazines in a manner that tends to reinscribe prevailing stereotypes" (Hooks, 1992, p. 72). During slavery, black women were depicted as hypersexual and animalistic in order to rationalise their sexual exploitation by white men. This dehumanisation framed them as lacking morality and as inherently promiscuous, which was used to excuse sexual violence against them. As Hooks states, "It was this black body that was most 'desired' for its labour in slavery, and it is this body that is most represented in contemporary popular culture as the body to be watched, imitated, desired, possessed" (Hooks, 1992, p.34)

A common stereotype associated with black women is the Jezebel archetype. According to (Anderson et al., 2018), the Jezebel stereotype emerged during slavery as a way to justify the sexual exploitation of African American women. Black women were often described as alluring, seductive, highly sexualised, and valued primarily for their sexuality. As a result, the Jezebel label portrayed these women as hyper sexual and sexually aggressive or dominant. This archetype can be, and has been applied in more contemporary ways.



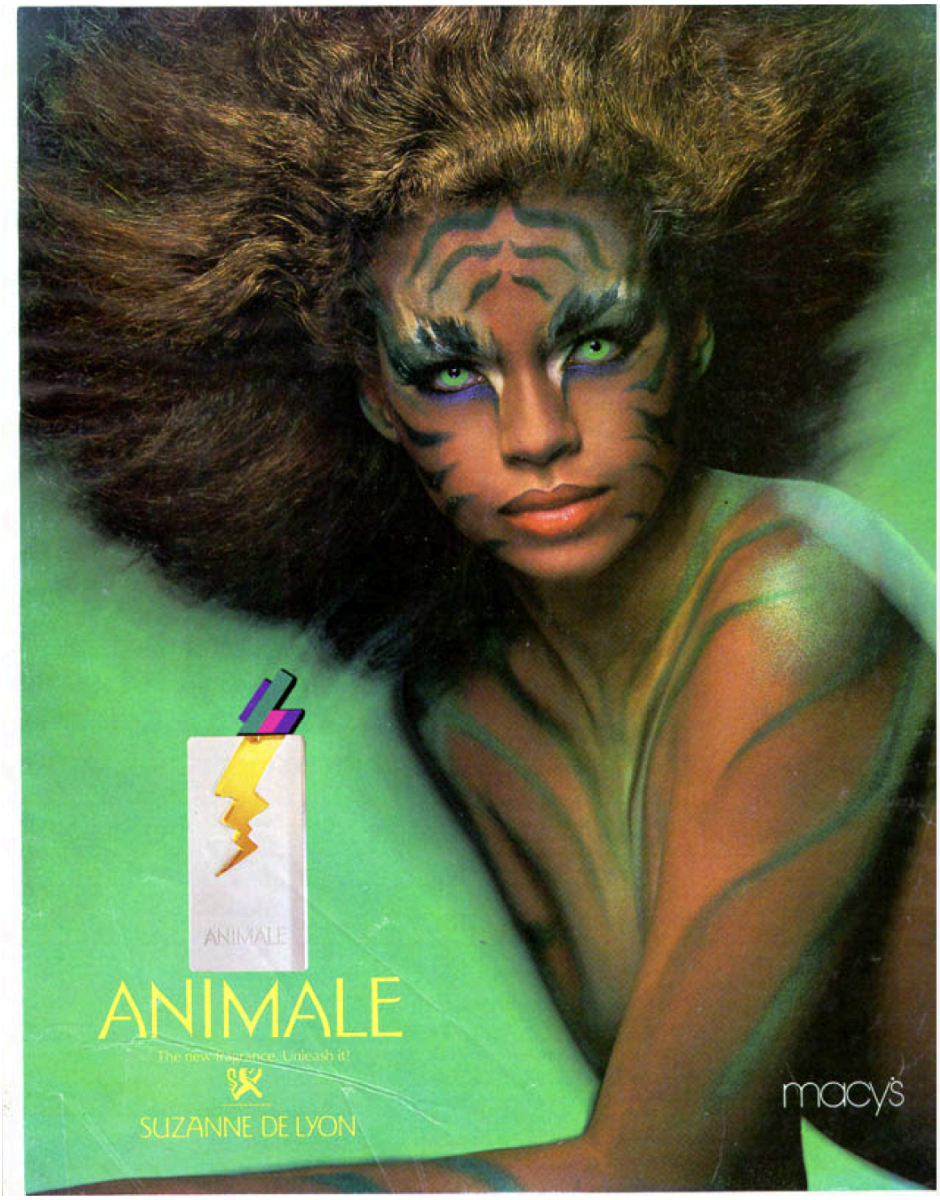
(Fig. 25) Tigress by Fabergé, 1975

(Fig. 26) Tigress by Fabergé, 1966

The image in Fig. 25 comes from the perfume line Fabergé Tigress, advertised in 1975 according to the Fabergé website. The image shows a black woman dressed in a skin-tight body suit with tiger stripes, she is posed on her hands and knees like a stalking animal. She frames a tall perfume bottle at the image's centre with a tagline that reads, "Tigress. Because men are such animals." The advertisement actively uses animal symbolism as a tool to sexualise the woman in

the advertisement, taking certain ideologies from the Jezebel stereotype. Visually, she herself is the tiger, in contrast to Katy Perry (Fig 23) where she is also in a skin-tight body suit, the woman in this advertisement is a more realistic depiction. Katy Perry is dressed in bright playful colours, pink and purple, while the woman in Tigress uses the actual colours of a tiger, black and orange. The woman's realistic tiger stripes, crouched posture and claw-like nails visually display her as a predatory animal, while the centred perfume bottle acts as something she is attracted to or almost guarding. The tagline, "Because men are such animals." adds an ironic twist to the image that simultaneously pushes male desire as something naturally inherent and situates the woman as the embodied object of that desire, drawing on the Jezebel stereotype.

As Hooks argues, black women's inclusion in popular visual media often "tends to reinscribe prevailing stereotypes" (hooks, 1992, p. 72). The model is framed as almost stalking or hunting her prey, because of this framing and the text, it invokes the trope once again, that associate black femininity with wildness and exoticism. Shown in Fig. 26 is an advertisement from the same brand and perfume line, but the model in this image happens to be white. The animal print keeps the theme of tiger stripes, but instead of the stripes painted directly on the model, the stripes are projected onto her. Unlike the model in Fig. 25 the sexualisation isn't embodied or physically on the model, here animality functions as a symbolic and aesthetic device rather than a literal transformation. The model's posture is more relaxed and composed, although she remains associated with animal imagery, her body is not positioned as predatory. Whereas the black woman is depicted in a crouched, stalking pose, the white model performs a controlled and stylised version of "wildness," one that aligns more with elegance and human autonomy. Beyond the immediate visual impact, perfume advertisements such as 'Tigress' and 'Animale' participate in a broader cultural process, they racialise and gender ideologies that are then normalised and internalised by consumers. When these advertisements repeatedly present women of colour through animalistic or hypersexualised imagery, these representations do not remain to just be normal advertisements with nonsensical imagery. Instead they circulate, shaping how bodies and people are read, and represented in everyday life. Black woman bodies are then consistently seen as "synonymous with accessibility, availability," gaining visibility only when framed as "sexually deviant" or excessive (hooks, 1992, p. 66). In this sense, advertising does not just reflect existing stereotypes. But in actuality, it actively reproduces and legitimises them.



(Fig. 27) Animale 'The new fragrance. Unleashed!'

"Darker-skinned models are most likely to appear in photographs where their features are distorted" (hooks, 1992, p. 72). The image shown in Fig. 27 is perhaps the most explicit example of animalisation shown in this thesis. The advertisement was produced around 1987–1989 according to (dobes, 2018). The image presents a black female model whose body has been physically transformed into an animal through paint, posing and styling. The model lays naked on her stomach while propped up on her elbows. Tiger stripes have been painted directly onto her skin. Her face and body are further altered through makeup to exaggerate animalistic traits, her

eyebrows are drawn fuller and bushier, her tiger stripes extend back into her hairline, and her hair is blown back to appear wild and untamed. Coloured contact lenses make her eyes an unnatural bright green, drawing on the same bright green in the background of the image. Positioned in the lower corner of the frame is the perfume bottle and brand name 'Animale'. The intense green backdrop and the model's gaze accentuate the painted stripes and exaggerate her physical form. Hooks critiques an ongoing fascination with black women's bodies in contemporary media, particularly focusing on their buttocks. She comments that the images are "inviting the gaze to mutilate black female bodies yet again." (Hooks, 1992, p. 64). She highlights how this fascination perpetuates the stereotype of black women as primitive and hyper sexual beings, like this advertisement is drawing on. While there is no focus on specifically the buttocks of the model, the viewer is still encouraged to look at the model like a spectacle. To sexualise and animalise her.

Hooks notes that black women are "bombarded with images representing black female bodies as expendable," (hooks, 1992, p. 65) It results either in the passive absorption of these narratives or in attempts to reclaim. In both cases, the stereotype remains intact. This process of internalisation is not limited to how women of colour are viewed by others; it also shapes how they are expected to perform themselves within public culture. Mikki Kendall highlights how even ostensibly positive labels such as "fierce" function as double-edged tropes: "The women most likely to be called fierce are also those most likely to be facing the greatest social risks. The same tired tropes always end up being trotted out." (Kendall, 2020, p. 99). Such labels continue to position women of colour as wild or sexually dominant by default, reinforcing the historical framing of black femininity as excessive or untameable.

Chapter 3: The Naturalised Ideal

3.1 Our Natural Places

Perfume advertising frequently draws on animal imagery to frame gender difference as instinctual and inevitable, as shown throughout this thesis. These representations have constructed a sense of 'natural order,' suggesting that male authority and female submission are biological rather than culturally produced. It reinforces this structure by glorifying masculinity through this animal symbolism, while diminishing femininity through submissiveness and sexual availability. Goffman's assertion that gender displays are socially learned performances rather than expressions of innate behaviour helps clarify how such imagery operates. As he notes, "we are socialised to confirm our own hypotheses about our natures" (Goffman, 1985, p. vii), explaining that gender roles are constructed through social expectations rather than biological instinct. Men are more often than not depicted in advertisements as active participants, being depicted as dominant or in control, while women are shown in subordinate or passive roles, reinforcing and glorifying male dominance and female subordination.

(Fig. 28) UrbanGabru 'Beast Perfume For Men'

The image in Fig. 28 appears alongside an advertising video released in 2020. While the exact publication date of the print advertisement is not documented, it was likely produced with the video campaign. The advertisement depicts a man seated on a throne at the centre of a cavern-like castle. He looks directly into the camera, his expression is controlled and resolute, looking authoritative. In the mans right hand is a chain that connects him to a male lion positioned beside him. The lion, just like the man, looks directly at the camera. At the bottom of the image, the tagline "HE IS A BEAST" appears, the lion's shadow overlapping the text. What is interesting about this particular advertisement is that it does not obvertly show off the perfume bottle, like the other examples shown in this thesis, but is cast into the left corner, the perfume bottle and package sit on a side table. As discussed previously, women have been mostly

compared to or presented as felines. Domesticated and wild. But the exception for men is the lion, male lions specifically. UrbanGabru is an Indian brand based in Delhi (Tracxn, 2025), and the cultural symbolism of lions in India closely aligns with Western interpretations. As Ekanayaka (2025) notes, "the lion has been associated with strength, protection, and divine power." Similarly, Ainembabazi (2025) explains that in Western culture lions are "synonymous with nobility, honour, and military prowess," citing the English monarchy's long-standing use of the lion on royal coats of arms as a symbol of strength and dominance. Against this shared cultural backdrop, the pairing of the male figure with a lion in UrbanGabru's branding appears deliberate. It draws on long-established visual and cultural associations between masculinity, power, and dominance.

The man occupies a clearly defined three-dimensional space that he commands both physically and visually. His direct gaze and composed posture are an example of what Mulvey describes as the "active male figure", whose authority demands spatial depth and control. As Mulvey argues, "The active male figure (the ego ideal of the identification process) demands a three-dimensional space corresponding to that of the mirror-recognition in which the alienated subject internalized his own representation of this imaginary existence." (Mulvey, 1975, pg 810). The mans dominance over space also aligns with his dominance over the animal beside him, projecting the fantasy of masculine mastery. The male model is positioned as central to the image, with the perfume bottle deliberately positioned to the side of the frame, shrunken in size to almost unnoticeable. This compositional choice directs the viewer's attention away from the product and toward the male model, who acts as a masculine identity being sold. The consumer's view is almost exclusively focused on the man, who is portrayed as an active subject rather than a passive object of display. He appears to control the scene, navigating a three-dimensional spatial illusion that mimics natural human perception and reinforces his authority.

As Mulvey notes, the male figure operates within a "spatial illusion in which he articulates the looks and creates the action" (Mulvey, 1975, pg 810). Within this context, the lion functions as a visual that glorifies masculine power. The "male protagonist", as Mulvey explains, is "free to command the stage" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 810). This "command" is made very clear through the chain held in the model's right hand. The chain signifies control and mastery, situating the man as dominant over both space and animal. While the male lion occupies the role of leader within a

pride, this hierarchy is changed and reimagined in the advertisement. The man controls the lion; therefore, he is above even the animal's embodiment of power. Through this way of representation, the advertisement glorifies masculinity, making it look like the highest level of authority.

(Fig. 29) 'Bvlgari Mon Jasmin Noir' advertisement campaign

(Fig. 30) Still from 'Bvlgari Mon Jasmin Noir' video advertisement (01:02)

The advertisement shown in Fig. 29 is part of the Bvlgari Mon Jasmin Noir campaign featuring actress Kirsten Dunst alongside a lion. According to the website (Art8amby), the campaign was released in early 2011. The print images were accompanied by a video advertisement (Fig. 30). The advertisement opens on a black screen showing the 'Bvlgari' brand name, which then fades into a shot of a lakeside villa on a sunny day. The surrounding environment is lush with greenery in a jungle-like landscape. There is a brief shot of a lion before cutting to a woman running her hand through the foliage, though not the jungle-like plants, a landscaped shrub. The music in the background is soft, almost wistful. The lion appears to follow the woman as she moves through the villa's gardens. The advertisement then cuts to a close-up shot of the woman caressing her thigh while gazing directly into the camera; her body is shown to be among furs and silks. She strokes the lion's fur before the camera pans to a full-body shot of the woman lying beside the lion; her facial expression is one of ecstasy as she leans into the animal. She is also shown caressing an oversized version of the perfume bottle (Fig. 30). The advertisement concludes with a final product shot of the perfume placed on a stone ledge, before fading to a black screen displaying the campaign text "Noir, Mon Jasmin, The Essence of Jewellery."

The advertisement again uses a lion to push a message, like in the UrbanGabru advertisement. However, in this instance, the animal does not act as a symbol of male dominance

or physical power. The woman is shown to be alluring; she is drawing the lion to follow her rather than physically dominating it. This dynamic is reinforced by the dreamlike music that plays with the visuals; it softens the interaction and frames it as seductive rather than a power struggle. The value placed on femininity is primarily in the woman's grace and capacity to allure. Berger says, "the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male, and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him" (Berger, 1972, p. 64). This perspective helps explain how the woman's body and movements are not expressions of agency or power, like in the male counterpart (Fig. 28), but as visual pleasures intended for the male gaze. The positioning of the woman's hand on the lion (Fig. 29) reinforces this interpretation. Goffman notes that women in advertisements are often "pictured using their fingers and hands to trace the outlines of an object," a gesture that is supposed to convey, in this case, a woman's "delicacy" (Goffman, 1985, p. 29). This form of touch can create what Goffman describes as an "electrically charged" interaction between bodies, emphasising intimacy rather than control.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that advertising operates as a powerful cultural tool that has the power to construct and naturalise social hierarchies around gender. Examining the role of animal symbolism in contemporary and historical visual culture allowed this study to show how perfume advertisements tend to encode ideological messages shaping perceptions of identity and social order. The wide analysis of campaigns is used to highlight a persistent binary that pushes the representation of men as active, powerful, and dominant, while women are portrayed as passive, ornamental, or hyper sexualised. These visuals present socially constructed norms as if they were natural. They push that each gender is inherently akin to a particular characteristic. Looking through the lens of Jean Baudrillard, advertising exists in a hyperreal space where images no longer reflect reality, but have the power to construct it. The merging of human and animal forms in male-focused advertisements, such as the centaur-like figure in the Burberry and Allure advertisements, produces an idealised and mythologised form of masculinity, while in the Marc Jacobs Daisy advertisement, the woman is an object of beauty, and that is her only function. This ideal is framed as both aspirational and inherent, naturalising hegemonic masculinity and reinforcing male authority as an inherent social norm. Erving Goffman's observations on gender performance further show how these advertisements subtly create behavioural expectations of gender through repetition and visual convention. In the Brave advertisement, it again showcases an instance where male power is valued over everything else. It presents that idealised and mythologised version of masculinity, taking from Connell's hegemonic male concept, the male model then is dominant over the wolf, getting the woman in the end. Once again, the woman is being pacified and becoming something the man can claim. This also shows the idea of the top male, or natural leader through the sauvage advertisement, showing male dominance over other males, through the usage of the wolves in the advertisement. While in the Flora advertisement, the woman is being almost akin to the domesticated dog she is seen with, being on the ground with the animals, she is then being put in a position of submission, solidifying her natural place.

This thesis identifies that the female figure is repeatedly associated with feline imagery, which historically has linked women to qualities of softness, sexual allure, and domesticity. Through Roland Barthes' text about myth, the symbolic association between women and cats conveys a naturalised, universally recognisable version of femininity that obscures its cultural construction. Feminist theorists such as bell hooks and Mikki Kendall highlight the racialised dimensions of animal symbolism. Women of colour, particularly Black women, are more likely to be portrayed as hypersexualised, predatory, or exotic, drawing on historical stereotypes like the Jezebel archetype. Visually, they maintain the same feline representation, but instead of domesticated cats, they use wild cats, or 'Big cats'. These representations reinforce both patriarchal and colonial hierarchies, shaping societal expectations while normalising systemic inequalities.

The comparison between male and female representations in perfume advertising shows a clear and ongoing pattern: the glorification of male power and mastery versus the objectification and commodification of female bodies. These views are then reinforced through narrative framing and aesthetic choices, normalising these views within consumer consciousness and normalising hierarchies that appear "natural" or inevitable. As an example, the Burberry Hero advertisement presents masculinity as wild and primal, while Allure Homme Sport presents a more refined, adventurous version. Although these images are different and present different representations of masculinity, they both promote the same idea of male dominance and authority. Similarly, representations of women may shift between innocence, sensuality, and exoticism, but they consistently position women as objects to be looked at rather than as active participants, as seen in the Bvlgari Mon Jasmin Noir advertisement. Advertising, therefore, adapts to changing styles and trends, but continues to reinforce the same underlying power structures.

In summary, the use of animal imagery in advertising plays a role in reinforcing social hierarchies through visual culture. By linking or displaying men with animals that culturally are linked to strength, control, and dominance, and women to animals that are presented as passivity, sexualisation, or domesticated. These advertisements create a version of reality where gender and racial stereotypes seem natural and unavoidable. By recognising and questioning these visual strategies, consumers can better understand how media spreads myths and reinforces

norms. These norms help with maintaining inequality and ultimately normalise gender roles and characteristics as natural.

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