

Extreme lingerie design: from 'Bizarre' fantasy to High Street

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Abstract

John Alexander Scott Coutts alias 'John Willie' was the British artist, photographer and publisher of the soft-porn cult magazine 'Bizarre'. The illustrations and photographic images he created were of heavily fetishised bondage models wearing revealing lingerie, considered racy and extreme for the period of 1946-1961. He was also the director of a mail-order-company that sold Bizarre-style intimate apparel and accessories unavailable to the general public through other retail distribution channels during this time. (*Bizarre*, 1995 (ed.) Kroll) Images of women in extreme lingerie have now become embedded into British popular culture through artists such as John Willie and Alan Jones. This enabled these fantasy designs to become more accessible to society and from 1970 sold through the high street erotic lingerie stores of Ann Summers. These illustrations of fetishised models have also become inspiration for famous fashion designers including Vivian Westwood and John Paul Gaultier pointed bra and corset dresses worn as fun outerwear. This has been instrumental in shifting the consumption of lingerie from a functional purchase to an emotional 'little treat.' (Hart & Dewsnap, 2000; Laaksonen, 1994; Laurent and Kapferet, 1985; Ross & Ranchhod, 2006) This paper explores the social/cultural paradigm shift in the production and consumption of erotic lingerie using discourse analysis of the 1995 republished *Bizarre* magazines. A case-study methodological approach will map out how these iconic images have been re-appropriated by lingerie up-scale specialist Agent Provocateur and Ann Summers retail high street stores. The conclusion will posit how and why extreme lingerie fashion has become readily accessible to both genders and different strata of post-modern society.

Keywords:
bizarre,
intimate apparel,
fetishism

Introduction

In the last few years academic interest in erotic lingerie as a retail and ethical subject has become the focus of investigation. (Barber, 2004; Kent, 2005; Kent and Berman Brown 2006; Malina and Schmidt, 1997; Ross, 2006) The notion of a post-feminist consumer that is able to explore her own sexuality and commodity fetishism for different forms of erotic lingerie, such as the corset, teddie, suspender belt, stockings and bedroom accessories has also been discussed in both text and image (Gamman & Makinen, 1994; Kunzle, 2004; Steele, 1997; Steel 2005; Wilson-Kovacs, 2001). Consequently there has been a renewed interest of the categorisation of lingerie design styles in a contemporary context. (Bressler, Newman & Proctor, 1997; Cox, 2000) Additionally the trend for burlesque, strip-tease and cabaret viewed through films such as *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and *The Notorious Bettie Page* (2005) has brought further media curiosity in erotic lingerie and the notion of 'dressing up' for sexual pleasure. (Dita Von Teese, 2006) Re-publication of the complete series of *Bizarre* magazine prompted a close analysis of the contents in relation to contemporary fashion and lingerie design. Previous research on Agent Provocateur had identified the fact that erotic lingerie is generally an under researched fashion segmentation and this became the driver for revisiting the upmarket design-led brand and conducting a comparative study with the more demographically working to lower middle-class lingerie ranges of Ann Summers. (Ross, 2006)

The paper is structured with a brief social-cultural and historical contextualised discussion of *Bizarre*, Ann Summers and Agent Provocateur covering the period 1946-1994 and the shift in social attitudes to erotic lingerie. Evidence of the blurring of boundaries within post-modern production and consumption will be drawn from a comparative case study and visual culture analysis of *Bizarre* with recent promotional material of the two lingerie brands. A hypothesis is posited that 'The western concept of binary opposites by which our understanding of moral codes in a post-industrialised world is determined is now collapsing.' Semantic descriptors listed below in table I are explored throughout the text using a similar framework model developed by the sociologist Storr in her study of Ann Summers party selling strategies (2003, pp. 191). The erotic lingerie designs will be subdivided into categories: 'Fantasy dressing up'; 'Corsets and teddies'; 'Bras, panties, suspender belts and stockings' and 'Shoes'.

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| Private space | Public space |
| Deviance | Normal sexuality |
| Utility | Luxury |
| Sleaze | Respectability |
| Underwear | Outer wear |

Table I. Binary Semantics

'Bizarre' fantasy

John Coutts (alias John Willie) was born in 1902 in Singapore but grew up in England in an atmosphere of Victorian colonial discipline and moral codes. His early life experiences, which allegedly included a trip to Paris where he became fascinated by the saucy cabaret shows of the Pigalle, had a lasting impression on his art. In the 21st century he is recognised as the 'Rembrandt of Pulp' (<http://dir.salon.com/story/16/02/2007>) and 'Leonardo da Vinci of Fetish' (*Bizarre*, 1995 ed. Kroll, pp. 6 & 14) and this paper argues that he was also one of the greatest influence on erotic lingerie design. In 1940 he moved to New York and married a raven-haired beauty who was his model and muse.

Bizarre magazine started in 1946 and the first 20 issues were published in the city before he moved to Hollywood in 1957. By 1961 he had become ill and was forced to discontinue his mail-order business and even destroy his archives before returning to England. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/john_Willie 12/02/2007 p. 1) This has to be understood in the context of the times. America is generally considered a religious country with a strong Protestant moral code upheld by the Republican political party. What Willie did with *Bizarre* was considered dangerous sleazy-porn that would corrupt the nation; this was reinforced by two murders of his own models that occurred during the later Hollywood period. Nevertheless, the Hollywood film stars who were often portrayed in a semi-state of undress, and as damsels in distress (often bound and tied) must have been inspiration for Willie as these publicity photos appeared along side his own art in many issues of *Bizarre*. Willie took photographs of bondage models, which were reproduced as photographic images. Others were used as references for illustration, which he drew anatomically correctly but with exaggerated body forms accentuated by tight corsets, high heels and pointed bras. This style has influenced many later artists the most infamous being Alan Jones who was criticised by feminist writers such as Laura Mulvey for perpetuating misogynist styles of women (Mulvey, 1989).

However, in 1950-1960s England the moral attitude towards sex shops was marked by the ease in sex laws and subsequent expansion of 'bookshops' in Soho, London (an established strip-tease area) attributed to the so-called permissive society. (Malinea & Schmidt, 1997 pp. 352) But these sex shops were considered sleazy and in the main for men not women. Foucault wrote in his seminal text the *History of Sexuality* which refers to the Victorian era but remained relevant until the 1970s: "Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home...A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space...but it was a utilitarian and fertile one." (Ed Rabinow, 1984 p. 292). A cultural shift from sleaze to respectability; private space to public space and deviance to normal sexuality occurred in 1970 with the opening of Ann Summers stores.

Ann Summers

The initial concept was to create a sex supermarket which sold marital aids and exotic lingerie. At this stage the customers were mainly male buying for partners with film booths showing erotic films. Gold, the daughter of one of the owners who subsequently became Chief Executive, found these initial shops very seedy in terms of the retail environment. Later stores still sold 'sex aids,' art books and sexy lingerie as well as a 'dressing up' range, but there was a marked absence of pornography (Kent & Berman Brown, 2006 pp. 201). Gold's comments reinforce the binary shift from the notions of deviance to normal sexuality "I stock nothing kinky or offensive." (Cited in Malina & Schmidt, 1997 p. 352). The experience of shopping for erotic lingerie by women and men (46% women) and buying gifts was enhanced as lifestyle sexual consumption rather than sordid sleaze purchases and was certainly a public retail space that encouraged fantasies and dressing up experimentation, which according to Wolfe "the more taboo the better." (Cited in Malina & Schmidt, 1997 p. 352). Since the 1990's Ann Summers shops and parties have dominated the mass market in erotic lingerie and accessories, catering mostly for a white working-class consumer in price, style and design (Storr, 2003 pp. 41-42). According to Kent "by 2004 the stores had achieved High Street respectability" highlighting the binary shift from sleaze (2005 p. 433). To examine the shift from utility to luxury the discussion moves to Agent Provocateur.

Agent Provocateur

Joseph Corre and Serena Rees set up Agent Provocateur in 1994 and in the subsequent 23 years have seen the business grow in the UK and internationally. Corre, the son of punk designer Vivian Westwood and Sex Pistols' manager Malcolm McLaren, worked for nine years at World's End where his mother designed clothes such as 'bondage fashion for women', inspiring many women of the 1970's to reinvent sexual fetish codes in clothes made of leather and rubber (Goamman & Makinen, 1994; p 72). This experience gave him a vision of where his erotic lingerie brand should be headed, especially as Kaiser claims punk styles incorporate an eclectic approach to apparel and the body's appearance (Workman, 96 p. 6).

In an *Observer* interview Corre talks of "the preservation of the private domain within mass market capitalism." (Billen, 7/4/96, p. 6). This short statement cleverly combines Foucault's notion of sex confined to the home with Marxist economic theories of commodity fetishism. Corre's heritage means he considers a designer to be "...someone who challenges the rules" (96, p. 7) which they achieve by designing and manufacturing couture, high quality, feminine, intimate apparel that "is a personal experience rather than a mass experience" (96, p. 7) such as provided by competitor Ann Summers. Boutique lingerie owner Fine Rees credits Agent Provocateur with causing "the second sexual revolution...Lingerie turned from something worn exclusively in the bedroom to seduce your man, into a fashion statement." (Robson, *Telegraph* 11/2/06 p. 5). This is re-enforced by their celebrity customer profile which includes David Beckham buying for his wife Victoria, singer Kylie Minogue, models Claudia Schiffer and Kate Moss. Their stock includes beautifully designed "...fetishised female undergarments such as crotchless taffeta knickers, gossamer negligees, epizotic teddies, sternly-boned corsets..." (*Observer*, 7/4/06 p. 6). These are available with S&M accessories that range from bedroom jewellery nipple tassels to handcuffs and jewelled whips.

These upmarket bedroom accessories are openly promoted through published books, the website and promotional postcards which have won awards and become collector's items (Ranchhod & Ross, 2006). The book *Agent Provocateur: A Celebration of Femininity* charts the history of erotic lingerie using examples of Willies illustrations of women in

Bizarre. Their introduction statement is redolent of how all sexuality should be considered normal and even respectable:

‘...we found it necessary to open an outlet that we could use as a platform for our ideas and where we could provokingly display the sexuality of the female form without embarrassment or shame.’

(Corre & Rees, 2000, Introduction)

Bizarre’s legacy of ‘Dressing up’

Willie regularly featured illustrations of dressed up women in *Bizarre*. ‘Fantasy Dress’ (Issue 8, pp. 14-15) shows a ‘French Maid’ with stockings, suspenders and large white frilly knickers. Agent Provocateur’s postcard from 2005 ‘Cookie’ shows a contemporary version of the maid at home scrubbing the floor wearing a pink check bra and pants. The other *Bizarre* illustrations show imaginative ideas of women dressed-up such as the ‘Mistress’ who sports black garters with bows and a tightly-nipped-in waisted-dress with bow tie, she holds a whip. The Provocateur flick-book mail-order catalogue (2006) shows the ‘Marilyn’ range of black bow garters. The penultimate illustration is entitled ‘Cracker’ showing a woman completely encased in a wrapping marked ‘Merry Christmas’ with neck and ankles tied in an amusing version of bondage fetishism. The last image is of ‘Diana’ the Huntress in long black high-heeled boots and black long-sleeved body suit, she holds a butterfly net and rope to tie something or somebody up. Other fantasy dressing up images in *Bizarre* include ‘The Riding Mistress’ with spurs on extreme high heels, black tights and long gloves with which she holds the whip, Agent Provocateur stock long black gloves, whips and black high heeled shoes. *Bizarre*’s ‘The Harem Slave’ (Issue 1, pp. 43) features a beautifully executed illustration of a long-haired beauty chained by her ankles and wrists. She wears black sheer harem pants and a see-through bra, a similar bra design is available from Agent Provocateur. Caroline Evans the fashion writer restates Joan Rivieres’ theories ‘on masquerade’ in terms of “This idea of clothing being essential to gender masquerade” (Cited in Gamman & Makinen, 1994; pp. 70) but instead of this being applied to the woman alone who masquerades her femininity it also includes the male role playing in sexual games of pleasure. Some feminist criticism connects ‘fetish-fashion’ including corsets and black leather boots with oppression, stating that women manipulate their bodies in order to resemble comic books (Gammon & Makinen, 1994 pp. 60). Whether this is perceived as

negative or positive sexual freedom *Bizarre* has the most imitated images of women in comic strip form including the infamous illustrated 'Adventures of Gwendolyn' and photographs of 'Bettie Page.' Agent Provocateur named a lingerie range 'Gwendolyn' as a post-modern pastiche of Willie's art.

Ann Summers intimate apparel includes a 'Bondage' range with black corsets, bodysuits and teddies. The bondage belt is an optional extra. The fancy dress outfits that are used for 'dressing up' explore fantasies from popular culture as well as the more traditional sexual role play. They include the sexy 'French Maid', frilly knickers and apron of Willies *Bizarre* magazine as well as a 'Sister of Mercy' nurse outfit, 'Air Hostess' mile-high club fantasy, 'Hail Mary' dominatrix nun dressed in black with a veil and for the television fan a Star 'Trekkie' red and gold short dress outfit. All have matching men's 'dressing up' pants for the partner. Although this enables both women and men to indulge their sexual fantasises through what has been termed 'playwear' clearly Gold's motive is not post-feminist freedom but as Kunzle states "The once-repressed sexualisation of dress is now the object of massive and relentless commercialization." (cited in Workman, 1996 pp. 6). This may be true, but there is a linear connection with *Bizarre* magazines representation of 'dressing up' for sexual pleasure in the private domain and Ann Summers recognition of the potential which was expanded for home and disco/party wear worn in very public spaces.

Corsets From tight-lacing to modern erotic lingerie

Despite the historical debate continuing as to whether the corset was a female form of physical and psychological oppression or a body adornment that was encouraged and enjoyed by the middle-class woman and considered aspirational by the working class, Steele states "The reappearance of the fashionable corset (as both underwear and outerwear) reveals how the meaning of clothing is constantly redefined." (1996 p. 57). *Bizarre* magazine perpetuated the fetish of tight-lacing throughout all issues often showing women in corsets or wearing clothes with nipped-in waists on the front covers. An example is the black & white illustration on issue 25 which focuses just on the corset detail, suspenders and stocking tops. Many illustrations of girls in black corsets with feminine lace trim are featured often sporting black boots (the second most common fetish) and a whip. Issue 26 even

gives a potted history of the corset from steel frame to 1950s version of 'The Gibson Girl Corset' worn with French knickers. In the same issue is a Willie illustration based on the famous 1939 *Vogue* photograph by Detolle of a back view of a girl wearing a corset with her laces trailing down, his drawing also fetishises the lacing (Issue 1, p. 22.)

Agent Provocateur has a classic black 'Diva' range of satin corsets styled similarly to the 1940-1950's Hollywood corsets featured in *Bizarre*; the cropping of the images also accentuates the laces. The 'Lizzy' black lace French knickers complete the 'Gibson Girl' look featured in *Bizarre*.

Corsets come in two main colour ways black and a version of the original pink fabric which has connotations of domesticity and innocence rather than dominatrix fetishism. Black lingerie has often been used to "... suggest wantonness and availability..." (Wilson-Kovacs, 1996 p. 173) but this now also has a post-modern layered meaning of being sophisticated. Both styles of corsets are catered for at Provocateur but Ann Summers focuses on the black dominatrix range, however, the lacing and bones are all codified rather than real. This shows how lingerie has become a luxury fashion item rather than just utility underwear. As with Victoria's Secret, Provocateur's ranges have replaced the whalebone stays and rigid structures with natural fibres and materials such as Lycra and spandex, so that their luxurious designed corsets now give support and comfort (Workman, 1996; p. 62).

The original Victorian corset signified respectable morality while also attracting attention to the exaggerated female shape, Wilson-Kovacs says this presented the "...female form in an erotically constructed fashion and ... become an object of fetishist enthusiasm." (2001; p. 169). The aesthetic and commodity fetishisation of the corset is popular with both genders in much of the demographic population, because it has in the last 50-60 years been associated with scandal, worn by showgirls, film stars and courtesans. Many images in *Bizarre* feature film stars and showgirls in corsets including Gina Lola Bridgadia (Issue 24).

The teddie

The teddie is a body-suit that can have a built in bra or be worn over one. This was re-popularised in the 1980s when nostalgia for feminine lingerie made a come-back worn as an 'outwear' fashion by style icon Madonna and designed by John Paul Gaultier. The teddie worn as

boudoir apparel gives a seamless and toned look and can be slipped off at the shoulders or unbuttoned at the crotch. (<http://hb.syl.com> 23.2.07) A variety are now available from lingerie shops including Victoria Secret's, Provocateur and Ann Summers made in satin, silk, cotton and Lycra trimmed with ribbons, lace and even fur. Some have matching knickers or thongs. An illustration in *Bizarre* (Issue 5) of a girl reflected in the mirror wearing a teddie with lace trim in a light colour is imitated by Agent Provocateur in the 'Stella' range promotional card. Here the girl looks at her own reflection in the digitally created bedroom; she wears a pale pink satin teddy with lace cups and silk stockings.

Bras, panties, suspender belts and stockings

From the 19th century underwear moved slowly away from the corset to separate garments and the popularity of knickers, brassieres and suspender belts to hold up your stockings gathered momentum. The suspender belt was lighter, cheaper to manufacture and sell as well as allowing more freedom of dress styles. Whereas the corset eroticises the bust and waist the suspender belt fetishised the lower erogenous zones of the body. This is particularly emphasised when a black suspender belt is contrasted against the white skin of the pelvis and the top of the leg. If worn without pants this includes the juxtaposition of the buttocks skin colour with the darkness of the suspender belt and stockings (Wilson-Kovacs, 1996; p. 171). The addition of the colour red with its connotations of sexual excitement is clearly illustrated in *Bizarre* (Issue 3). Here a woman wears black bra, stocking and suspender belt she has red hair and pale white skin which is exposed at the top of her leg, stomach and bosom. The devil is shown behind her in red holding up a page with '1946 fashions' written on the paper. The communication is that this fashion will get you into hot water. This is superbly reappropriated by Provocateur in a promotional postcard featuring the 'Lizzy' range of bra, pants and suspender belts. The white buttocks and thighs accentuate the black stockings on the blonde model as she lifts up her red and white spotted dress. The raven-haired model next to her has red stockings and a red toning bra. They are leaning against a lamp post sending connotations of prostitution or fallen women.

Stockings

Clearly the role of the stockings in erotic lingerie is important to the look of the leg and buttocks and despite the 1960s and early 70s shift to

tights because of the shortness of the mini-skirt, the stocking has made a definite come-back for many reasons. These include, comfort and hygiene as well as the sensual nature of the nylon which now can be made to feel more like the original silk stocking. Image after image occurring in *Bizarre* emphasise the leg and stocking, some are black, some light coloured some fishnet pattern or trimmed with lace. Often shown cropped without the head or complete body which increases the objectification of the female limbs. Provocateur uses the same cropping focusing on the buttocks, legs and high heeled shoes to illustrate their stocking range in the catalogue. Fishnet and real silk are available and the 'flick book' style of presentation evokes connotations of 'What the Butler Saw' emphasising the 'naughty' nature of the range.

Ann Summers sell a range of stockings through the acquisition and relaunch of Knickerbox in 2000 (*Design Week*, 2000, p. 20). Many colours and patterns are available, some trimmed with shocking pink ribbons or matching lace tops that recall the original garter used to keep stockings up. According to Wilson-Kovacs the popular image of suspenders and stockings worn by French can-can dancers is a Hollywood myth as the garter was preferred during that period. *Bizarre* illustrates both versions of the erotic lingerie of the can-can dancer but it is the power of Hollywood cinema that "The 1950s established (as) the erotic ensemble of suspender-belt and stockings in the consumer psyche" and this is still perpetuated by erotic lingerie shops (1996; pp. 161 & 172).

Bra and panties

The bra clearly has a key role to play in supporting and shaping the bosom especially as girls become older, but this is not just about support. Both men and women like the look and feel of well designed erotic bras and pants as the prelude to a sexual encounter. If made in sensual fabrics such as silk, satin or fine cotton this increases the seductiveness. As Hamlyn writes "It restricts direct access to the naked object, but it also has the ability to suggest, enhance, and draw attention to what it covers over and adorns." (2003, p. 11). Both female and male fetishes for fabrics such as velvet and fur can be understood by Freud's theory that "pieces of underclothing, which are so often chosen as a fetish, crystallize the moment of undressing, the last moment in which the woman could not be regarded as phallic." (Freud, 1977; p. 355).

Bizarre codifies Freud's Oedipal theory with images of ladies wearing fur, frilly pants and sheer see-through garments that expose underwear. One interesting example is in issue 25 which shows an image of a woman in a corset, stockings and fur hat from the past contrasted with a woman in pants and bra with matching stockings trimmed with lace, she looking happy in a relaxed pose. Agent Provocateur offers a 'Pearl' range that is designed and styled similarly to this photograph. Another example from *Bizarre* shows a model wearing black sheer tights and a fur cape. A Provocateur card promoting the 'Frenchy' range uses fur trim and sheer black lingerie to create the same sensual effect. Freud considers fur to be symbolic of female genitalia hair, so as commodity fetishism and retail psychology become more sophisticated in their understanding of sex selling, this form of conspicuous consumption trim on erotic lingerie continues to be popular.

The knowledge that certain fabrics excite the senses, touch, sight and even smell is again documented by Freud in his discussion on fetishism (Freud, 1977; p. 354) and this is also true of the fully clothed women shown in *Bizarre* (Issue 19, p. 30) and Provocateur's 'Desireé' range of sleepwear. Both show photographs of dark-haired girls who pose in black silk clothes which drape seductively over their bodies. "What lies beneath-the 'reality' that fabric brushes up against-is female genital difference" (Hamlyn, 2003; p. 14) thus making Willie and Joseph Corre contemporary exponents of Freudian theories on sexuality and clothing.

Shoes as a fetish

Among the many fetishes Willie communicated to his readers in the magazine was the common frequency of the shoe fetish. *Bizarre* featured illustrations, photographs and advertisements for shoes that could be purchased by mail-order all with a minimum 6" heel, many with higher heels that seemed impossible to stand or walk in. The footwear included boots, buckles, laces, shoes with manacles and many other fetish styles. Steele considers that this fetish may have come from the Eastern custom of foot-binding which encouraged both real and psychological foot fetishes in the man. "There is some evidence that the introduction of Western high-heeled shoes, which give the visual illusion of smaller feet and produces a swaying walk, may have eased the erotic passage way from the bound-foot ideal." (Steele, 1996; p. 95). What ever the origin high heels definitely make legs look slimmer and longer but exceptionally high

shoes “do inhibit the wearer’s movements, a form of ‘bondage’ that some people find erotic.” (Steele, 1996; p. 98) Some feminists consider high heels to be a form of repression such as the corset but many women enjoy the wearing of them for aesthetic and sexual reasons.

Agent Provocateur features the ‘Francoise’ range with models in thigh high black PVC fetish stockings with high heeled pink mule slippers decorated with pink pom-poms. Both this representation and Willie illustration of a woman in knee high fetish boots with gloves and skin-tight dress turns women into an eroticised object that in Freudian terms is a substitute phallus. Freud in 1910 claimed that “The shoe or slipper is a corresponding symbol of the female genitals.” (*On Sexuality* footnote p. 67). Although Ann Summer features models with high heels in their catalogue and online they do not actually sell shoes. However, Agent Provocateur has ranges with names such as ‘Marilyn’ and ‘Pom Pom.’ These are boudoir shoes to accessorise their erotic lingerie. They also sell more classic high heeled black and red day court shoes named ‘Katy’.

Many women have a commodity shoe or boot fetish – they can not stop buying them. Whether this is attributed to the leather, other shiny material, high heels, ankle straps, buckles and bows or the Freudian notion of fetish as substitute phallus or virginal, dependent on whether the foot is in or out of the shoe is unknown. What is known is that Willie’s illustrations of shoes and boots which were considered sexually deviant are now seen as part of normal sexuality.

Conclusion

The time and cultural context when Willie was producing *Bizarre* magazine meant he was considered a deviant and ostracized from respectable American society. Much has changed since he ceased publication in 1961 and he retrospectively (like many great artists) has become a cultural hero deserving his title of ‘Leonardo da Vinci of Fetish.’ But not only was he a good artist he was also very influential in inspiring contemporary fashion designers to create outer fashion and erotic lingerie for both mass and niche markets. His understanding of the sexual psychology of ‘dressing up’ was ahead of the times but now a post-feminist consumer can indulge both her commodity fetishism and her sexual fantasies on the high street, as easily as if she wanted to purchase a domestic cooking utensil and apron. Additionally men can

now confidently buy quality erotic lingerie and bedroom accessories without having to go to sleazy sex shops.

Returning to the hypothesis that “The western concept of binary opposites by which our understanding of moral codes in a post-industrialised world is determined is now collapsing” this study illustrates that if they are not collapsing they are at least blurring the semantic descriptors model discussed in this paper. The Foucault concept of sex being confined to the home and the words not dared to be spoken (Rabinow, 1991; pp. 292) is deemed outmoded in terms of the English Ann Summers retail emporium and Agent Provocateurs niche erotic lingerie business. ‘Underwear’ is now also being worn as fashionable ‘Outer wear’ which affirms that ‘Private spaces’ and ‘Public spaces’ are converging. As these items are readily available in pleasing retail environments the notion of ‘Sleaze’ has also blurred with ‘Respectability’ (Kent, 2005 pp. 433). The concept of ‘dressing up’ for sexual pleasure has become normalised so ‘Deviance’ is considered just ‘Normal sexuality’ not perversion. The last binary descriptor is the notion of lingerie as ‘Utility’ apparel; this has collapsed. This study along with previous research has evidenced that erotic lingerie is now considered a ‘Luxury’ consumption treat (Hart & Dewsnap, 2000; Laaksonen, 1994; Laurent and Kapferet, 1985; Ross & Ranchhod, 2006.)

However, it should not be claimed that Joseph Corre and Jackie Gold, with their designers and merchandisers have created this shift in post-industrial moral codes for a post-feminist or ‘new man’ consumer, or even altruistic reasons. But their design vision has and will continue to revitalise the erotic retail lingerie industry and sustain profitability for their businesses. It could be claimed that Gold’s sex shop heritage and Joseph Corre’s genetic fashion footprint as son of Vivian Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, may well have enabled them to foresee that the subcultural fashions of *Bizarre* magazine could now be subsumed into the mid-market and high end of erotic lingerie. The final words come from Hebdige on the transition from subcultural fashion to mainstream, this holds particular resonance with the subtitle of the paper ‘From Bizarre fantasy to high street:’

‘...at the same time as the ‘secret’ objects of subcultural style are put on display in every high street... shop and chain store-boutique. Stripped of its unwholesome connotations, the style becomes fit for public consumption.’

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