There is nothing more demoralizing and dehumanizing to the more meaningful feminine personality, than to see herself on many of these commercial messages, depicted as a passive sexual robot whose only physical presence is a plastically portrayed sex image devoid of any real mental capabilities:

...Even when the face and body of a woman are there, one feels a strange vagueness and emptiness, an absence of human identity, a missing sexual aliveness - is it a woman if it doesn't think, or act, or talk, or move or love like a person?

Why does this plastic image of the female sex persist in the advertising media, when other societal institutions are accepting the contemporary and more competitive image of women in society as being both capable, intelligent and productive? Marya Mannes notes that "...women exist by the hundreds in the arts, the sciences, on the political scene, and above all in literature," but she asks, "Who sees them on television, not as panelists, but in their own right as voices of authority...?" by which she means as being able to act, react, and interpret pertinent social, political and economic events in their own individual style as "...catalysts of thought" without expressing the opinions of others.

Perhaps not enough men and women have deviated from traditional social norms and socio-cultural conditioning to accept the new sex roles that are evolving. Despite personal preferences this would
seem to be the case in the majority of TV commercials—as one executive producer pointed out "...it's housewives we're appealing to, and marriage is their whole life... For a woman to make decisions, to triumph over anything, would be unpleasant, dominant, masculine". So say the experts, and with considerable success. Alberto Culver experienced a rise in sales from 1.5 million in 1956 to $80 million in 1964, gained, almost exclusively, by TV advertising. In the case of Lestoil, their sales rocketed from $150,000 to $100 million in three years. It is little wonder that sponsors and 'ad agencies' are not prepared to change their male 'maschismo' image.

The advantages of television commercials as a selling tool, are not only the psycho-social impact and influence of the message, but also in the variety of the technological dimensions that can be applied to audio-visual techniques. Radical and sophisticated lighting enhanced by the use of "gobos" (pattern creating light and shadow usually placed over spot-lights etc), montages, zoom effects which give sense of the dramatic and powerful, soaring pan shots using wide angles, dramatic psychedelic color work, the list goes on. The use of music to convey the mood of the commercial is almost a staple—jazz, rock, jingles, the ballad theme with their catchy melody line have become the hallmark of the swinging commercial. The ads for Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Contac with the "Cold Diggers" or the luxury ads for cars, cosmetics, airline travel etc., make the use of elaborate settings, imaginative choreography and expensive 'props'. Dancing and singing commercials, because they need extra rehearsal time special choreographic effects, experienced cameramen and sound men and feature film musical personnel are expensive, because this kind of talent, particularly in the States is all freelance and costly.
An instance of such commercials is the Contac "Cold Diggers" ad which cost the sponsor $230,000 (Galanoy p. 167). The auto and oil industry also rely heavily on what they term the 'quality commercial'. Each car or each petroleum product has to have some unique property that the other competing cars and oil products do not have, so ad agencies and writers have to produce (or induce) the creation of an ad with some effective gimmick. This worked particularly well with Volkswagon commercials, one of which depicted the Volkswagon floating on water—a gimmick that was quite authentic and managed to upset the sales of American cars that they tried to get in on the act, but to no avail—every car just quietly sank to the bottom of swimming pools and lakes with unrelenting speed and regularity! (Galanoy pp. 171-173).

Today, viewers and potential consumers expect to see the costly and sophisticated TV commercial. They tend to resent repetitive and poorly presented ads, particularly during prime time viewing. This is why the day of the low priced commercial is well nigh extinct. In the 1969-70 season:

Sixty seconds of time during "Laugh-In", Mission Impossible, and Mayberry RFD were priced at $65,000 before the season began, while a minute in the Doris Day Show, Dean Martin Show, FBI and Bewitched was priced $63,000. In all, eighteen shows had a price tag of at least $60,000. ... Even CBS News Hour/60 minutes, the cheapest prime-time network series, was priced at $30,000 per minute. 14

This of course is only the cost of air time, based upon the projected audience capture. The sponsor then has to pay the advertising agency for the overall cost of packaging and presentation of the commodity commercial. In 1970 Mattel Inc., spent approx-
imately $25,000 for a commercial, and makes roughly 50 commercials a year (Galanoy p. 91). United and Braniff Airlines spent $100,000 and $200,000 respectively, on one single sixty second commercial (Galanoy pp. 164-167). Chanel Inc., the luxury cosmetic corporation spent $200,000 on a quality commercial to promote their pre-Christmas commodities.

The list of wealthy commercial advertisers seems endless, but one discovers that so many of these advertised commodities are owned or controlled by perhaps fifty big corporations and conglomerates. The more commodities these corporate giants can push into the already limited network frequencies, the greater they believe, will be their share of the consumer market. That is why finding the magical commodity formula and a suitable prime time slot are becoming the luxury, while monetary expenditure becomes merely the means to that end. If an ad is successful, the rewards are great, resulting in vast profits for the advertiser and gives him the necessary capital to expand his business and his range of commodities.

The kind of success stories such as Alberto Culver, Lestoil and Coca Cola have created a psychological 'myth' over what constitutes the overnight success of some TV commercials and the sky rocketing sales of their commodities. This has induced big corporate enterprises to spend millions of dollars studying consumer habits, tastes, attitudes and behaviour. They now employ psychologists and other behavioural scientists who delve into human psycho-sexual and psycho-social patterns of human behaviour in order to determine how we will think, feel, act and react to a new commodity. All this data is passed on to the advertising agency to incorporate into the packaging and presentation of that new commodity commercial.

Nothing seems to be left sacred or inviolable in
terms of the pursuit of capital gains. The subtle psycho-social message of the commodity commercial is the objective character of the commodity form. It has the power to transform any object that can be seen to have made value, into a consumable form by its ability to change quantity into quality and quality into quantity. The success of perpetuating this tautological condition upon the psyche of the average consumer depends upon a lot of talent and ingenuity on the part of perceptive ad writers, directors and producers who are backed by those with technical 'know how'. This makes the good quality commercial, that viewers have come to expect, increasingly complex and costly, so making it prohibitive to any other than a consortium of the economic elite.

Thus, the liberal democratic ethic of pluralism and diversity among private business enterprises who can afford to advertise and reach the maximum number of potential consumers, has virtually disappeared. These advertising benefits naturally favour the few large corporate sponsors who have the capital outlay to buy into prime time programming, and because of the advertising revenue they bring into the networks, can bring great pressure to bear upon the type of programming they prefer. Consequently, they wield enormous and essentially non-democratic power, particularly in the US, despite the FCC, over information services and programme content.

Perhaps the picture I have just outlined is a rather pessimistic overview. What this picture does wish to project are the inherent dangers of monopoly. That in contemporary capitalist society, the advertising media tend to be concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. Newspapers are becoming fewer in number and bigger in size - this is particularly true in North
America, Great Britain and France. In radio and television, concentration is necessary because of the finite number of wavelengths available to each country. However, there are counterbalancing influences to capitalist monopoly that are being developed, particularly in Great Britain and Canada, particularly by the Public Service Television Media incorporated into the BBC and CBC respectively. These departments do a remarkable amount of work in educating citizens on social political and economic issues, so reinforcing our democratic rights and public awareness; giving us the chance to watch and hear different conflicting arguments between politicians, journalists, economists etc. It is only through such services that pluralism and diversity are really achieved. This kind of socialist information system is the only counterbalance that we have to counteract the capitalist oriented commercial media which otherwise tend to monopolize television information and programming.

12. Ibid., pp. 276-277
13. Ibid., p. 273
14. Ibid., p. 236

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