

A world made sexy: Freud to Madonna by Paul Rutherford. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. 360pp., Hb. \$64.00/£40.00, ISBN-13: 9780802092564; Pb. 31.95/£17.95, ISBN-13: 9780802094667.

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How does sexual and erotic identity become a trade mark? In this book, Paul Rutherford proposes an historical account of the development of contemporary sexual identity. Drawing on Freudian and other psychology he argues that eroticized identity evolved from a moralistic image (the motherland or father-land) into an illusory world of fantasies and dreams. During the times of the Second World War the erotic image shifted to an image of power which strengthened the myth of the body as an ideal and liberation. Finally the image moved from the power of politics to the power of commerce, where it became an icon shaping the viewers into accommodating consumers. As the erotic image evolved throughout the last century into an almost mythical image, it undermined and at the same time dominates modern life. As such it drifted away from its natural biological function.

The author explains that the commercial approach directly affects the education of young generations who are conditioned by distorted sexual images. Commodities, amongst which is Barbie, exaggerate voyeuristic tendencies that are developed by the media through pop music (Madonna) and art imagery (Dali, pop-art) as well as films (James Bond). The author sees in such instances as Barbie, Madonna and Bond, role models of commodities that sell an image of being young, slim, fashionable and most importantly, being accepted by society, and therefore worthy of being sought after. The media, Rutherford argues, teaches the upper middle classes how to look and behave, by producing images that can be easily copied. However, the problem is that these iconic sexual identities are left shallow, since they must be widely open to appeal to the wider audience.

The great irony is that while the erotic image becomes a norm to strive for in order to achieve liberation, it also serves as a tool of commercial control over the masses.

Altogether, this book offers a fresh outlook on a previously widely debated topic.