Mythic Ideals

What do we mean by image, symbol and myth?
Denote, Connote, Myth

• Denote/image is what is there and what it really is
• Connotation is what we take the meaning to be
• Myth is the deeper or secondary meaning extended outward
Myth

"Myth is thus not just a message, but a message that is political by depoliticizing. It turns history into essence, culture into Nature, and obscures the role of human beings in producing the structures they inhabit and thus their capacity to change them" (Moriarty, 1991, p. 28)
Types of Myth:

- signification the sign reflects major culturally-variable concepts underpinning a particular worldview:
- Masculinity
- Femininity
- Freedom
- Individualism
- Exotic
- Englishness
Marilyn Monroe as Myth

- Denotes a movie star
- Connotes her star qualities of glamour, sexuality and beauty
- Mythic level we see her as part of the Hollywood factory of glamour and fame, a fallen idol
James Dean

- Denotes: male 50s actor
- Connotes: cool, tough, rebelliousness
- Myth of tragedy, live fast, die hard, glamour of Hollywood
Ali in 1968

• Boxer wounded by arrows
• Passion of Muhammad Ali - Christ like, suffering for our sins (Vietnam)
• Myths of black manliness, heroism vs traitor, objecting to the war - independence, black power and civil rights
Cowboy Myth

- Denotes: a worker who herds cattle
- Connotes: toughness, individuality, manliness
- Myth: American power, man over nature, rugged hard work pays off (work ethic)
Ads’ languages
-- from *Ways of Seeing*

The romantic use of **nature** (leaves, trees, water) to create a place where innocence can be found.

- The posed taken up to denote **stereotypes of women**: serene mothers (madonna), free wheeling secretary (actress, king's mistress), perfect hostess (spectator-owner's wife), sex-object (Venus, nymph surprised), etc.

- The special sexual emphasis given to **women's legs**.
Ads’ languages
-- from Ways of Seeing (2)

The materials particularly used to indicate luxury: **engraved metal, furs, polished leather, etc.**

• The physical stance of men conveying **wealth and virility**.

• The equation of **drinking and success**.

• The man as **knight** (horseman) become **motorist**.