ciently to indicate how inequalities in the power wielded by different sectoral interests affect the prestige of art works, art workers, schools, genres, and media, and hence the aesthetic on which it rests. He does not ignore conflict and other disagreements within art worlds, but his emphasis is on the consensus-building that makes and unmakes reputations and on the cooperation without which the very concept art world would be difficult to deploy analytically.

Becker also knows that aesthetic revolution (and even aesthetic innovation) can threaten the vested interests of art world institutions and the general culture itself, but he offers no detailed account of any bitter struggles. He is willing to tell us that a new aesthetic will never make it into the art history textbooks unless it captures an existing art world or creates a new one (as some do), but he is unwilling to tell us what it is about some new aesthetics that induces unyielding opposition from existing art worlds and the obstruction of efforts to create new ones. He is willing to tell us that an art world discourages the making of sculptures too heavy for the floors of an exhibition space to support, and the composition of music (and other performance) too long for audiences to sit through. He is even willing to suggest how the discouragement can be overcome (Woodstock? *Nicholas Nickleby*? sculpture-become-architecture-or-landscaping?). But he is unwilling to show us how art worlds transform good taste into bad and ungainliness into grace against what opposition; and who gets what from the transformation, with what consequences for the structure of art worlds, the culture of the nation, and the sensibilities of citizens. I think he has the analytic frame with which to tell us, and the kinds of materials to tell us persuasively, and I regret that he chose not to.

Critics are always telling authors what they should have done or might have done. But, strangely, authors persist in writing the books *they* want to write. Becker has written the book he wanted to. It is a very good book, and everyone, including not entirely satisfiable critics like this one, should be grateful.

David Kunzle. Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body-Sculpture in the West. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982. 359 pp. $27.50.

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David Kunzle's *Fashion and Fetishism* is provocative. His heresy, self-proclaimed, is to show that "an aspect of female behavior regarded still—and afresh—as one of the more obvious and crude symptoms of the historic oppression of women"—tight-lacing—"had an expressive and dissident function tending to a kind of female sexual self-assertion, even emancipation" (pp. xvii, xviii). Kunzle would no doubt agree with a recent feminist critic of nineteenth-century tight-lacing that, in this period, men's and women's limited anatomical differences were enormously exaggerated by clothing, most "directly and graphically" for women by the corset (Roberts 1977:558). Kunzle himself repeats the feminist charge that the corset was "undeniably a symptom and symbol of female oppression." Yet, while the corset was "fashionable" (i.e., part of "the culturally dominant mode of dress expressing, as a rule, the dominance of a social class"), tight-lacing was not (p. 1). Therefore, the corset could serve as a cultural "symbol of oppression," while tight-lacing could serve as an individual "agency of protest" (p. xviii). For Kunzle, tight-lacing transformed corset-wearing from "conformity with the 'fashionable' . . . role of the socio-sexually passive, maternal woman" to protest against it (ibid.).

To demonstrate the "manner in which this symbol of oppression became an agency of protest," Kunzle employs a wide range of sources and disciplinary perspectives. From medical and philosophical treatises, novels, popular magazines, paintings, etchings, cartoons, advertisements, and correspondence, he weaves a rich tapestry on the social history of female sexuality enlivened by numerous anthropological, psychological, and sociological subthemes. Among the subthemes, the effects of technological progress and capitalist development on changes in fashion are particularly suggestive. Kunzle cites a key change in the early sixteenth century, from the continuous and flowing lines of medieval dress to the separation of skirt and bodice, with the attendant expansion of the former and tightening of the latter. The "new sartorial architecture of polarization, division, and contradiction" that followed may have corresponded, he argues, "to the new capitalist ethic, simultaneously expressing power through bulk and self-restraint

through tightness" (p. 70). The other ethic to which fashion conformed was that of the church. Kunzle speculates that clerical opposition to tight-lacing, particularly in the nineteenth century, was not only an attempt to repress Eros but also to save Christian Europe from "a growing appreciation of the primitive, the sexual, and the magical, derived from the study [and I would add, colonization] of non-European cultures" (p. 295).

Western body-sculpture was most fully analyzed, however, not by clerics but by psychologists. Freud based his analysis of clothing fetishes on "male autoerotic practices" and concluded they were "basically a form of psychic masturbation." Kunzle sees this as "an impossibly narrow view of the phenomenon" and argues that tight-lacing at least is "normatively heterosexual" and may allow for the "transcend[ence of] sexual roles and lead to a special kind of equality between the partners" (p. 36). Kunzle then intermittently traces the process by which an individual fetish is transformed, sequentially, into heterosexual practice, group identification, social protest, persecuted cult, and marginalized subculture. Finally, he suggests the importance of the corset and tight-lacing as metaphors for technological, economic, and political crisis and division. To follow these subthemes, however, would take us, as it too often takes Kunzle, away from the central and most provocative argument of his study.

That central argument is that the "history of tight-lacing is part of the history of the struggle for sexual self-expression, male and female" (p. 2). Its centerpiece is the female tight-lacer of the nineteenth century, who is seen as both object and agent of increased sexualization in dress and, by extension, in society. "Body-sculpture," Kunzle writes, "is designed to enhance and sexualize the movements of everyday life" as well as of the human form itself (p. 17). While all corsetry had this effect, tight-lacing was the "*conscious and visible*" means by which those outside the dominant, i.e., fashionable, social class sought to "rise out of a socio-sexually subject position" (p. 2). Kunzle argues that "insofar as this kind of sexualization contributed to the breakdown of the repressive stereotype of woman as a passive, exclusively home and children oriented and indeed essentially sexless creature, it should be regarded as progressive" (p. 42).

Kunzle's thesis merges with a slowly accumulating body of scholarship that rejects traditional characterizations of the Victorian era (actually expanded to embrace 1750 to 1900) as unrelentingly repressive of female sexuality.[1] Angela Carter, for instance, reinterprets the works of the Marquis de Sade from this perspective. She poses Sade not as a feminist but as woman's "unconscious ally" because he, too, contributed to the breakdown of repressive stereotypes: he

From *La Vie Parisienne,* 1881. (Kunzle, Plate 30.)

offered "an absolutely sexualized view of the world" while refusing "to see female sexuality in relation to its reproductive function." By "claiming rights of free sexuality for women," he "install[ed] women as beings of power in his imaginary worlds" (Carter 1979:22, 27, i, 37, 36). Both Sade and tight-lacers, then, provided their contemporaries with new, highly sexualized, and therefore subversive images of women. In this way, they became part of the "discursive explosion" about sex analyzed by Michel Foucault in his brilliant study, *La Volonté de savoir* (translated as *The History of Sexuality*, 1978). According to Foucault, Victorians contributed not to the repression of sex but to its discursive elaboration, refinement, and deployment. The resulting proliferation of knowledge about sex nurtured both mechanisms of power—new medical, legal, educational, and institutional controls over the body—and a "plurality of resistances" to that power (Foucault 1978:96). This resistance often meant the positive employment of the power of sexuality to new ends. Pornography and tight-lacing, as viewed by Carter and Kunzle, are two such resistances.

Kunzle, however, adds three crucial dimensions to the above schema: he alone analyzes women's employment of their own sexualization as a weapon of resistance; he recognizes sexuality as a potential means of resisting class as well as gender oppression; and he demonstrates the specific role of visual imagery as a mechanism of both power and resistance in the battle for defining normative sexuality. He combines these concerns in his examination of transformations in the graphic depictions of corseting dur-

Currier and Ives view feminism in 1869. (From Oliver Jensen, *The Revolt of American Women,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1971, p. 43.)

ing the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the aid of numerous plates and illustrations, he traces the dominant graphic image from the Renaissance to French Realism. In the earlier period, it was the half-draped classical female figure of biblical or mythological origin who, posing in an outdoor setting, was observed from afar by a passive male spectator. In the latter, it was a grotesque old coquette who sought, in the intimacy of her boudoir, to recapture her youth through tight-lacing before the lecherous eyes of a male companion.

In the interim between the two images, the "naturally" ideally proportioned female body which required only draping was replaced by the "naturally" imperfect female body which required "addition, subtraction, multiplication, [and] division" through the manipulation of multilayered garments (p. 211). There were male viewers-voyeurs in each setting but, as the scene shifted from outdoors to indoors, intimacy of contact increased while the male's attitude shifted from distant admiration to proximate disdain. For a time, a maid servant intervened, assisting, protecting, and admiring her well-laced mistress. Gradually, this cross-class female bonding was replaced by the entrance of amorous, lecherous, henpecked, or lustful male companions, including potent-appearing male servants. Clearly, these depictions carried multivalent messages about sexual and class power and fears.

It was these images, vivid and widely dispersed, that communicated the sexual mores of the dominant social class to the broader populace. Yet the producers of such images could never assure their "proper" translation nor completely repress alternative images. For instance, those who opposed tight-lacing had to admit its sexualizing function in order to condemn it, thereby opening the door to a positive interpretation of that same function. Indeed, the ever-spiraling need to intensify the ridicule and denunciation heaped on tight-lacing suggests that the condemned act was all too visible in opponents' lives.

The two primary purveyors of alternatives to the dominant fashions were lower- and middle-class practitioners of tight-lacing and those feminists who donned turkish trousers and bloomers. The latter's protest was short-lived, always secondary to other concerns, and convergent on the issue of tight-lacing with the misogynist critiques of male physicians and philosophers. Thus, female tight-lacers and their male supporters and co-fetishists provided the only sustained critique of both fashion and the elites who defined its specific forms. The primary mid-nineteenth-century vehicle for the expression of their critique was *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine.* This was the most successful Victorian family magazine and appealed to the middling classes. Women here acknowledged the "pleasure" and "delight" experienced when tight-laced, insisting on their voluntary adherence to the practice, its benefits to good health and proper eating habits, and its contributions to equal and fulfilling heterosexual partnerships (p. 215).

Such fetishist correspondence heightened the visibility of fetishists and intensified attacks upon them. In response, some fetishists sought greater visibility, but most concentrated on strengthening bonds among themselves. Women, in particular, established "extended family" networks which embraced female rela-

tives, friends, and servants. The feminist salutation, "thine in the bonds of womanhood," was clothed with new meaning for female fetishists. While individual feminists may have felt few bonds with the fetishists, Kunzle claims it was significant that fetishists "raised their voice, if not in the language, nevertheless in the context of feminism (p. 217). The *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* and other journalistic havens for fetishist correspondents generally supported women's rights to education, vigorous exercise, and property and even discussed birth control. To the extent that tight-lacing was practiced by "the disfranchised" to manipulate "a sexuality that the patriarchy found threatening," the practice offered its own critique of women's oppression and, according to the practitioners themselves, provided a concrete means of attaining personal and social emancipation (p. 299).

Despite this recognition of the feminist context and implications of female fetishism, it is in the analysis of the linkages between the two that Kunzle's study falls short. Because of feminists' denunciations of tight-lacing, Kunzle assumes an almost complete separation of feminists and fetishists. He thus eliminates feminists from the center of his analysis, isolating fetishists' conflicts with anti-fetishists from other political and social movements of the periods under study. When Kunzle expands his study beyond tight-lacing, it is most often to elaborate other forms of fetishism, not to extend his analysis of the feminist implications or context of such practices.

It is not coincidental that the denunciation of both feminists and fetishists intensified in the late nineteenth century as their opponents increasingly feared the convergence of the two movements. The latter was represented in this period by the sexualized female who drank, smoked, and led an independent life (referred to as the "Girl of the Period" in England and the "New Woman" in the United States) and the former by the advocate of women's suffrage, female property rights, and birth control. The misogynist males who presented their peers with images of the fetishist as a vulgar coquette simultaneously presented the feminist as an asexual, blue-stockinged spinster. The two images shared two characteristics—the female characters were old and their sexuality was questionable. The difference was that the fetishist old hag sought sociosexual power through the exaggeration of her female characteristics while the feminist old hag sought sociopolitical power by covering her female characteristics with masculine attire. By failing to place images of tight-lacers in the context of images of women in general, Kunzle limits our vision of the crucial links between perceptions of women's reproductive, productive, and political roles. This is all the more unfortunate since Kunzle notes that those who sought to preserve "the traditional concept of woman as a passive, domestic, child-rearing creature. . . . detected some sinister link between female fetishistic exhibitionism and female political and cultural ambition." They recognized the quests for "narcissistic-sexual and social-political power" as mutually "subversive of the sacred domestic and maternal role" (p. 228).

While accepting these links on the level of abstract concepts, Kunzle fails to examine concrete linkages between the two groups and their depictions in the larger society. The primary barrier for him is his assumption that feminists and fetishists resided in distinctly different class locations. This assumption is based on shaky evidence at best. At several points Kunzle uses the claim by tight-lacing's opponents that the practice was the "very badge of vulgarity" as evidence of tight-lacers' class origins, rather than as a comment on their sexual practices or as an effective means of frightening more respectable women away from the practice. Even his other sources of evidence force him to use the term "lower classes" to refer to everything from the "bourgeois aspiring to aristocratic rank" to "lower-middle and working-class elements" aspiring to bourgeois rank (p. 299). His claims for feminists derive from existing literature on the subject which is now being revised to demonstrate the middle- and even lower-middle-class backgrounds of mid-nineteenth-century feminism as well as the multiple points of contact between upper-middle- and middle-class female reformers and their lower-class female clients (Hersch: 1978; Hewitt: forthcoming). There is clearly room here to argue that fetishists and feminists shared certain forms of gender and class oppression, even if their responses to it were substantially different and if they were successfully kept from recognizing their mutual concerns.

When the fundamental feminist premise is that the personal is the political, we should work toward recovering those crucial linkages in the past. David Kunzle has contributed to that recovery by resurrecting the sexual politics of tight-lacing and other forms of female fetishism. Yet the successful liberation of women from the multiple forms of gender and class oppression requires a conjunction of this "narcissistic-sexual" quest for power with "social-political" quests. Otherwise, the images of the former will continue to be distorted by those who have the authority to define fashions in gender and class relations as well as in dress. Kunzle's study will no doubt provoke vociferous feminist critiques. Let us hope it will also provoke feminists to new analyses of power and resistance to it that will replicate Kunzle's sensitivity to the personal meanings of minority sexual practices, their subversive social potential, and the distorted images they will generate if disconnected from a larger political context.

Note

1 Kunzle does not place himself in this context and cites neither Angela Carter's nor Michel Foucault's work in his extensive bibliography.

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Reviewed by Paul Messaris
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Students of the visual media have often found it necessary to point out that "Western" systems of "realistic" pictorial representation are no less conventional than the systems developed in other picture-making traditions. In other words, in the former case no less than in the latter, the development of representational rules has been a matter of social validation and transmission. However, many writers have also taken the further step of equating "conventional" with "arbitrary" and, consequently, insisting that even the most "realistic" product of "Western" picture-making (e.g., an ordinary photograph) must be incomprehensible to a viewer who is unfamiliar with pictures of this sort. Despite the existence of numerous anthropological anecdotes and some systematic studies that have been taken to be supportive of this position, there are compelling theoretical reasons for accepting the contrary claim, namely, that certain aspects of the interpretation of "Western"-style pictures should not be influenced appreciably by the viewer's degree of familiarity with such pictures. In particular, J. J. Gibson has demonstrated that "Western"-style pictures typically reproduce many of the kinds of information which "non-pictorial" visual perception makes use of (e.g., see Gibson 1971), while Hochberg (1972) has shown that the inevitable absence of some of these kinds of information from pictures is no impediment to the analogical use of "real-life" perceptual mechanisms in pictorial interpretation. Strong support for this position has come not only from cross-cultural research but also from several other kinds of studies (e.g., with animals; see Kennedy 1974 for an excellent summary of this material). Nevertheless, the issue is still controversial, and many of its details remain completely unexplored. Bruce Cook's work on pictorial interpretation in Papua New Guinea is a useful contribution toward untangling the controversy and probing some of these details.

Cook's book describes the results of a series of interviews with 423 villagers from several locations in Papua New Guinea. Most of the informants had "traditional" occupations (e.g., farming), and half of them were literate. Their previous experience (if any) with pictures is not described in as much detail as one would wish, but it can be inferred that this experience was limited. The interviews were based primarily on several sets of picture-stories produced specifically for this study and dealing with local subjects (e.g., a