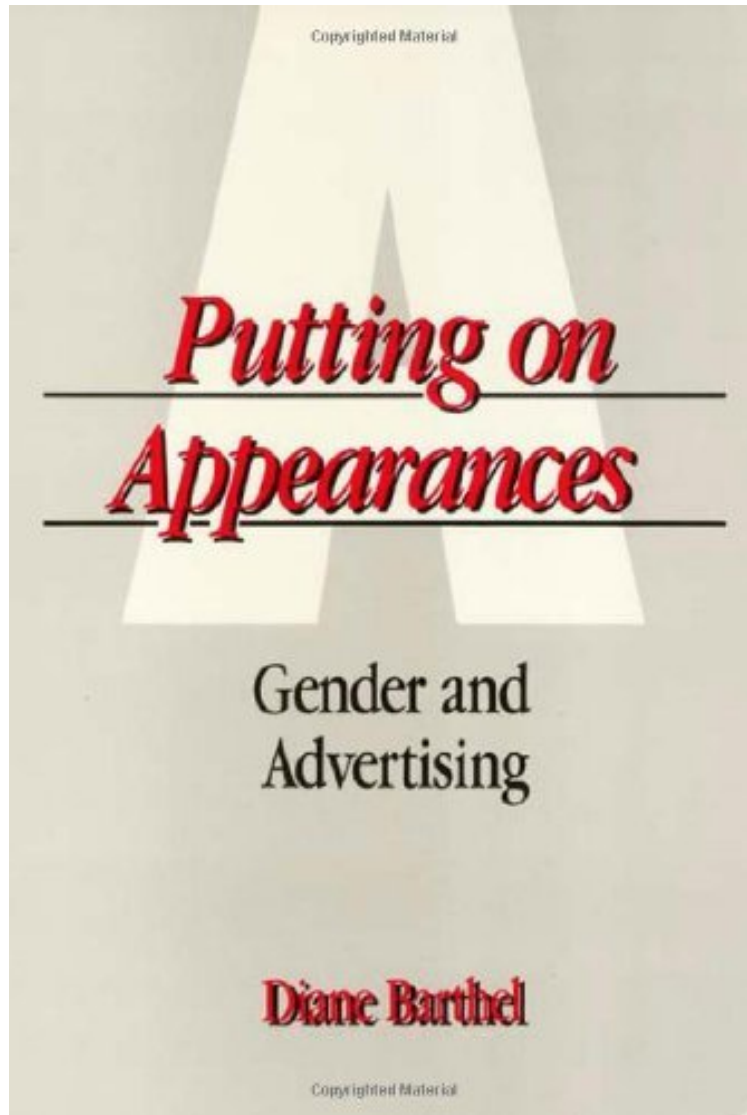


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Putting On Appearances: Gender and Advertising (Women In The Political Economy)

Diane Barthel

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Diane Barthel : Putting On Appearances: Gender and Advertising (Women In The Political Economy) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Putting On Appearances: Gender and Advertising (Women In The Political Economy):

In this lively critical analysis, Diane Barthel reveals the previously overlooked and underestimated depth of cultural

meaning behind contemporary American advertising. Focusing mainly on ads for beauty products directed at women, she demonstrates how stereotypical gender identities are emphasized and how advertising itself creates a gendered relationship with the consumer. She explores psychological, sociological, and cultural messages in advertising to show how Putting on Appearances is anything but a purely personal matter, and how the social realities in which we are forced to live are conditioned by the personal appearances we choose to create. Most advertisements are not sexually obvious, but rely instead on sexual story-telling in which seduction, deception, and passion are portrayed as acceptable means for achieving selfhood. Advertisements that proclaim, "Now is the time to paint your knees" speak with one form of authority: those that present the voice of the all-knowing scientist or the nurturing mother rely on others. Celebrities figure as professional beauties and wise older sisters, sharing their secrets with the consumer. "The Gentle Treatment Great Model Search Made Me a Star. Now it's your turn." Inseparable from the clothes we wear and the products we use are our ideas and fantasies about our bodies. Beauty products present beauty rituals as transcendent occasions, and diet products call up religious imagery of guilt and salvation. The body itself is to be anxiously manipulated and systematically worked over until the consumer "turns her body into...an advertisement for herself, a complicated sign to be read and admired." In the series *Women in the Political Economy*, edited by Ronnie J. Steinberg.

"[Barthel] carefully and meticulously traces, through a myriad of pointed examples, how advertising hooks us by manipulating women's low self-esteem and then promising to provide the means of achieving beauty, power, success." *New Directions for Women*