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Artwork: Sex, Gender, and Corporate Fashion

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Notes and Queries:
Some Questions About Reading, Representation and Paris is Burning

By Amy Weismann
Bryn Mawr College

"Chain of many mirrors, the cinema is at once a weak and a robust mechanism: like the human body, like a precision tool, like a social institution..."
-Christian Metz, Imaginary Signifier

"Every representation of truth involves elements of fiction, and the difference between so-called documentary and fiction in their depiction of reality is a question of degrees of fictitiousness. The more one tries to clarify the line dividing the two, the deeper one gets entangled in the artifice of boundaries."
-Trinh T. Minh-ha

"Can this writing, can any writing, refuse the terms by which it is appropriated even as, to some extent, that very colonizing discourse enables or produces this stumbling block, this resistance? How do I relate the paradoxical situation of this dependency and refusal?"
-Judith Butler
"Imitation and Gender Insubordination" in Deeking Out: Performing Identities

Boundaries. Representation. Sexuality is an intersection, a site upon which race and class intersect. Jennie Livingston's construction of the gay, Ball subculture of New York City is a cultural product which entangles all its consumers in the artifice of hegemonic culture. And the double vision of marginality. It entangles me in a web of self-reflexivity which sticks to my identity as a white, economically privileged, heterosexual woman in both a subversive understanding of representation as it engenders sexuality, body-as-spectacle, and as a reiteration of my positionality as spectator. Realness. Passing. I am moving, unreal, passing- forgetting my truths. Speaking about myself, I am speaking an exclusionary "truth". Speaking about this culture of hidden dreams and far away bodies, a group of people I have never known, I am representing. Can I then speak at all outside of myself? No, I cannot, I do not. I perceive the Ball world as an intersection of my spectatorship, my identifica-