University of Tartu

Department of Semiotics

Yuliia Tryl

SELF-INFANTILISATION OF INTERNET SEX WORKERS ON INSTAGRAM

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Mari-Liis Madisson, PhD

Tartu

2021

I have written the Master's Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

Author: ....Yuliia Tryl.............   ....
                  (*name*)   (*signature*)

                        ....17.05.2020...........................
                                              (*date*)

I permit the thesis to be defended.

Supervisor: ....Mari-Liis Madisson...
                                  (*name*)

....
          (*signature*)

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          (*date)*

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Introduction

There is a phenomenon of women creating an infantile image on their Instagram profiles and linking to their profile an another platform called Onlyfans, where they sell adult pornographic content. Instagram is a free social media platform for sharing photos and videos, while Onlyfans is a subscription-based social media site that gives content creators a way to monetize their content. Self-infantilising of sex workers has not yet been studied. In my research I want to focus on self-infantilising experiences of these women, their motivation, self-presentation. I will conduct interviews with six women who create infantilised content on Instagram and use this aesthetics to attract customers to their erotic/pornographic blog. I will combine qualitative content analysis of interviews with visual analysis of photos to achieve a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Infantilising of women in media done by large commercial entities has been studied widely and is a subject of prolific debates in feminist research, however sexual self-infantilising as a meaningful set of values consciously produced by women and its relation to feminst approach has not been explored by scholars. The aim of my work is to position this relatively new phenomenon (Instagram started functioning in 2010 and Onlyfans in 2016) within the larger framework of practices that aim at infantilising women. Onlyfans as a new platform with different affordances to make if easy for both amateur and professional independent Internet sex workers to sell pre-made adult content has not yet been discussed in scientific research. Applying methodology proposed by this paper can introduce a deeper understanding of meaning-making elements behind self-infantilised imagery and self-positioning of its creators.

To narrow the research focus I will only focus on women, although I acknowledge that on a smaller scale self-infantilising may be practised by man. I will use terms a "woman" and a "girl" interchangeably as agreed with participants of interviews. I will not focus on the perspective of consumers of the created content, but only on the creators' perspective. I will analyse women's self-presentation on Instagram, which does not allow users to post any adult content. I will not analyse their adult content posted on Onlyfans, however it will be

referenced where necessary. Instagram is used by adult content creators to build a following base, which they can further convert into paying subscribers on Onlyfans.

Self-infantilisation with sexual implications exists within a complex set of overlapping and contradictory dimensions including the ethic, the aesthetic, cultural and political. The topic of my research is positioned at an intersection between several different realms: sexualisation and infantilisation of women, sexualisation of children, childhood nostalgia, and they commingle in a very specific way. I want to outline the way they interact.

Society has strong views on child sexual abuse: it is prohibited by law. But sexualization of youth and youthfulness, which are not classified as a criminal offence, still remain a subject of ethical controversy. Yet the fantasy of the eroticised-innocent girl-child still seems prevalent in popular culture and subcultures. Infantilising women in popular media has been studied widely. In my work I want to look at the perspective of women who are not directed by a big team of photographers, videographers, script writers, etc of large multi-million dollar brands. These womens' business is based specifically on their self-presentation. But, of course, their self-infantilising practices do not exist in vacuum, they are inseparable from the broader context.

In this research the following research questions will be answered:

What are the specific markers, codes introduced by this relatively new phenomenon of self-infantilising on Instagram with the purpose to sell adult content on Onlyfans?

How do practitioners make sense of the signifying process of self-infantilisation and its sexual aspect, how is the message encoded and how is it meant to be decoded?

What elements are sexually self-infantilised photos comprised of, how is the composition constructed, what visual attributes are symbolising sexual infantilism?

How is the construct of self-infantilising of women on Instagram and Onlyfans positioned within the feminist viewpoint on infantilising women and sexualising children?

To answer these questions my work is presented as follows. The first chapter gives an overview of the practices of infantilising women in both popular media and subcultures, as well as theoretical definitions of its components such as sexual objectification and innocent

fetish. Romantic childhood as a concept of childhood as a separate entity opposing an adult world is outlined along with feminist critique of equating children and women as weaker beings. Second chapter introduces the chosen methodology of analysis: qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews, Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design and Barthes' concept of myth. The process of collecting and analysing data is described. Third chapter is focused on analysis of interviews and photos according to methods presented in the second chapter defining the meaning-making components of sexual self-infantilisation. Conclusion presents results of the analysis and answers research questions of this work.

1. Historiography

Much has been said about the hypersexualisation and objectification of women in all spheres of media and culture (e.g., Fredrickson & Roberts 1997; Kilbourne 1979, 2000; Aubrey & Frisby 2011; Grabe et al 2008; Baker 2005; Stankiewicz & Rosselli 2008; Ward 2016; Vandenbosch & Eggermont 2012). Much research has been done on hyper-sexualization of children (e.g., Goodin et al 2011; Egan 2013; Lamb & Brown 2006; Durham 2008; Lerum & Dworkin 2009; McKenney & Bigler 2016; O'Donohue et al. 1997; Quart 2008; Slater & Tiggemann 2016; Zurbriggen 2018). The concept of childhood nostalgia has been studied by scholars (Higonnet 1998; Stewart 1993; Rose 1994; Kincaid 1992). The topic of my research is located at the intersection of these three dimensions. Sexual self-infantilisation draws from each of these realms in a very specific way and forms a new blend, an extraordinary sum of different features that make a new meaningful whole.

Scholars have explored the point of intersection between childhood and femininity. Anne Higonnet in her book "Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood) traces the roots of attitude to children prevalent in the twenty-first century to the eighteenth century (Higonnet 1998). Whenever women and children are positioned together social tension arises. Shulamith Firestone in "The dialectic of sex" compares political implications of both childhood and womanhood, and concludes that they are the same, and are rooted in class conflict and serve oppresive regime (Firestone 1981). Just like women, children are subjugated, division between childhood and adulthood, just like division between sexes, serves the interest of the dominant class: adults and men. James Kincaid in "Erotic Innocence. The culture of child molesting" suggests that children are epistemologically constructed as different to adults. He acknowledges that children are fetishised and eroticised but also suggests that children are, in fact, erotic beings and we should examine more thoroughly other non-erotic forms of children abuse (Kincaid 1998). Joe Moran did a deconstructive reading of childhood nostalgia from the point of view of its critique as

regressive and as such that places restrictions on children's identity and contributes to controlling techniques (Moran 2002). Marianne Sinclair in "Hollywood Lolita. The Nymphet Syndrome in the Movies" explores the phenomenon of a woman-child in old Hollywood and raises a concern about child abuse and exploitation (Sinclair 1998). Wijaya Mulya did a research on a virgin-whore dichotomy and declared it as harmful, since it excuses violence against women who display sexually explicit behavior, because they seemingly violated the cultural demand for a women to be "pure" (Wijaya Mulya 2018). Wyman Leah and George Dionisopoulos enriched critique against pigeonholing women into categories that benefit patriarchy by suggesting that "sexuality can become a power trap through labeling women as helpless (protected virgin), worthless (powerless whore), or evil (powerful whore)" (Leah, Dionisopoulos 2000: 234). They used the classification of power proposed by Starhawk (Starhawk 1998) and proposed that gender relationships should not be based on power over one another, but on the power from within and power with one another (Leah, Dionisopoulos 2000: 234). Most scholars theorise that women are seen in a patriarchal society as powerless, lacking agency, just like children.

Effects of hypersexualisation and objectification of women in youth-oriented pornography on male's behavour have been studied (Albury 2014; Attwood 2005; Walker et al 2016; Julien et al 1998; Johnson et al 2007). My work is not focused on male's perspective, it is focused on a female's perspective. Objectification of women is theorised to have negative effects on their health, inducing eating disorders and body dysmorphia (Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Wagner, 1999).

The topic of my research is closely tied to the online environment, which serves as a platform for self-infantilising. Rosa Crepax did a study on how feminism coexists with aesthetics in the digital realm on Instagram and to what extent can feminism remain radical while engaging in mainstream creative tendencies (Crepax 2020). There has not been any research done about Onlyfans platform yet.

Infantilising of women in the media has been covered by research. Morna Laing conducted several studies on childlike femininity, representation of "woman-child" in

contemporary magazines ("Heavenly creatures in Vogue" (2012) , "Rewriting Lolita in fashion photography: candy consumption and dying flowers" (2018), "The Lula girl as 'sublime and childlike': nostalgic investments in contemporary fashion magazines" (2014), "A Wolf in Lamb's Clothing: Meadham Kirchhoff, 'kinderwhore', and parodic femininity" (2014), "The Lula girl as 'sublime and childlike': nostalgic investments in contemporary fashion magazines", "Picturing the woman-child" (2021)). In her study on the "Lula" magazine, which typically opens with a caption "Once upon a time" alluding to fairy tales, she concluded that girls in "Lula Magazine" are represented as offering a scaling up approach to adulthood, they broaden the definition of adulthood: "It contains aspects of wonder, magic and joie-de-vivre: notions that tend to be analytically excluded from contemporary definitions of rational adulthood" (Laing 2014: 288). Lula girls transcend gender inequality, escape patriarchal approach to womanhood by being "ethereal, otherworldly, whether angelic, ladybird-like or caught in a fairytale" (Laing 2014: 289).

Studies have shown that infantilisation of women in media contributes to increasing levels of neglect coming from adults towards child sexual abuse (Machia & Lamb 2009). Sexualisation of women in general is theorised to result in less sympathy towards sexual abuse victims and facilitates blaming the victim of abuse (Spaccatini et al. 2019). Carlson's social experiment showed that the majority of people are so desensitised to infantilisation of women that they do not even categorise it as infantilisation (Carlson 2010).

Although infantilisation of women in media is studied by scholars, there is not much research on self-infantilisation as a conscious lifestyle practice. However age regression as a form of sexual play has been studied. Katrin Tiidenberg did research on sexual age play. She argued against pathologizing age play and attributing mental disorder of paraphilic infantilism to practitioners of age play. She conducted qualitative interviews with age players and found out their identity is not always coherent and categorical, their experiences usually do not determine their identity and mode of being, but are complex and involve a huge spectrum of preferences, different degrees of interests. It is better to consider age players as active co-producers of the knowledge of sexual play, instead of viewing them as those who adopted

a certain pre-existing strict pigeonholed set of rules. Stigmatization is harmful to the community and to studying the transformative potential of exploring one's sexual nature (Tiidenberg 2018).

My research is focused on self-infantilising practices, which is different to infantilising of women done by the media for marketing or other purposes. There has not been any research done yet on sexual self-infantilising on Instagram and Onlyfans. The aim of my work is to trace the meaning-making processes behind self-infantilising and see how it is similar or different to ubiquitous infantilising of women.

2. Infantilisation of women in popular culture and subcultures

In this chapter I would like to look at how infantilisation of women in both popular culture and subcultures happens. By popular culture I mean a set of entertainment media objects, trends, practices and beliefs that are shared by the broad social system (Danesi 2012). By subculture I mean a set of identifiable interests, customs, ideas that belong to a self-defined group within society and that vary from interests of larger groups (Oxford dictionary).

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) theory of subculture accounted for interpreting deviance from the norm as non-pathological thus revoking any possible stigma around subcultural practice. It explains subcultures as a creative transgressing potential within societal groups that pose a positive challenge to common norms (Blackman 2014: 501). Subcultures are theorised to propose a tool set for a valid resistance towards any systemic infringements of people's identity rights, enabling people to enunciate their cultural strivings (Cohen 1972). Post-subcultural theory accentuated consumers' individual choices to collate different subcultural elements suitable for their interests and create a hybrid unique individual set of experiences (Hodkinson 2015: 2). Critics of post-subcultural theory note that its explanation of motivations is not rooted in class structure and other background attachments. British cultural theory that defined deviance from the norm as a danger and risk for the society is no longer popular among scholars nowadays (Blackman 2014: 508).

Infantilisation is understood as as explained by Goffman in "Gender Adevtisements" as the portrayal of adult women as childish by means of attributing childlike behavioural and stylistic external attributes to them (Goffman 1979). Fetishisation is understood as a fixation on a phenomenon that is psychologically necessary for inciting desire as grounded in psychoanalytic theory (Faulkner 2010).

2.1 Infantilisaiton of women in the popular culture

Infantilising women in popular media has been studied widely. In my work I want to look at the perspective of women who are not directed by photographers and videographers of large multi-million dollar brands, but who do it themselves to sell their own product. But, of course, their self-infantilizing practices do not exist in a vacuum. They are inseparable from the broader context, so I want to look more closely at the broader spread of the "Lolita effect".

Infantilisation of women is not a new phenomenon. As feminist Brianna da Silva pointed out its roots can be traced back to Greek culture that has had a profound effect on Western societies. In Ancient Greece Women were excluded from the educational system; Greeks viewed women as weak and inferior to men, while men were considered dominant and intelligent. Homosexual relationship among men between old dominant teacher and young submissive boy were common. What would be nowadays considered paedophilic, was culturally normal back then. Greeks' views on women can be compared to their views on young boys, because both were considered less developed, submissive, in need of being under the patronage of a well-educated master to whom they sexually submit (da Silva 2018).

Infantilisation of women is executed not only on a physical level, but on a linguistic level, too. Infantilising nominations, such as "girl", "young lady" are frequently applied to women. In the documentary, The Queen's Baton Relay, Mark Beaumont after being thrown to the floor by a judo champion made a remark: "I am not sure I can live that down – being beaten by a 19-year-old girl" (Loeb 2014). The BBC removed the word "girl" from a broadcast deeming it condescending, which sparked controversies. It might be sexist and derogatory when used to signify that girls are lesser than, as in phrases "whine like a girl", "cry like a girl".

In the early nineteen-nineties third wave feminists tried to re-define the implications of the word "girl". Riot Grrrl - underground punk movement, believed in girls going their own way, being involved in production of punk music instead of following male leads. "Grrr" signified the accumulated outrage. Slogan "girl power" put the word "girl" in a new dimension, enriched it with empowerment and strength (Marcus 2010).

In the twenty-first with the emergence of mainstream media portrayal of women as fragile, vulnerable, infantile, sexually available has become very easily identifiable. In movies, music videos, advertisements women are frequently depicted in childlike clothes and poses and in sexualized situations. Absence of body hair is cultivated as an important constituent of female sexuality. Body hair is a marker that separates girlhood from womanhood, symbolizes maturation just like periods. When it is rejected as "unattractive", the very idea of womanhood is rejected in favor of girlhood.

Infantilisation of women is not only spread in Western societies, but is prevalent in Asian too (Savage 2015). Research has shown that there is a difference in a way Korean and Western women are infantilised in popular media. Korean women are portrayed as smiling and pouting and in non-sexual cartoonish clothes, whereas Western women are depicted with absent gazes and in highly sexualised attire (Nam et al., 2011).

The most famous example from the Western music industry is of Britney Spears in the "Hit me baby one more time" music video, where she was dressed as a schoolgirl and wore pigtails. Britney acted like a schoolgirl, who is bored with classes and wants some real fun. In a same fashion singers Russian lesbian duo "T.A.T.U" wore schoolgirl uniforms while kissing. Singer of Spice Girls Emma Bunton (known as 'Baby Spice') posed with pigtails and a lollipop. Gregory Dark, who directed Britney Spears' video used to be a director of porn, and he thought that by the time he made her video she, as well as other teenage stars, have already been eroticized so he only supplied the demand. "The lure of jailbait now supplies the erotic energy to a popular culture desperate for what's new, what's young, what's alive.." (Junod 2007: 15).

Beauty and fashion industries also broadcast this tendency to advertisements like that of Marc Jacobs perfume "oh Lola" (child actress Dakota Fanning that just became "legal" in a baby pink polka dot dress with a giant oval shaped bottle with a blossoming flower cap between her legs), Prada perfume "Candy" (Léa Seydoux throwing a playful tantrum in the middle of a piano lesson), Calvin Klein jeans (15 years old Brooke Shields saying "nothing comes between me and my calvins"), etc create the tension between teenhood and womanhood portraying innocence warped in friskiness, naughtiness.

Morna Laing talks about the prolific echo of infantilised women in fashion photography: "as nostalgia for an idealised window of perfection: a state of being on the cusp between girlhood and womanhood" (Laing 2018: 16). She (referring to Higonnet's discourse on

Romantic childhood) theorizes that a girl's body is viewed as an ethereal entity in itself, because it is not associated with childbirth, while the maternal body is viewed as a down-to-earth vehicle for reproduction (Laing 2018: 15). In a tale about Peter Pan Peter did not admit to Neverland his childhood friend Wendy, he only took Wendy's daughter Jane, because Wendy grew up and supposedly women can not fly, only girls can. Humbert frequently makes a comparison between Charlotte Haze (mother of Dolores) and Dolores Haze, rendering the mother's mature body completely void of allure. Laing, talking about the fashion industry, describes symbolism of a mannequin - it represents a body that never loses its shape, never gets older (Laing 2018: 15). She references Chinese proverb about young girls being associated with "fresh and zesty" fruits and older women - with "stale" vegetables (Laing 2018: 13). The name of the mainstream fashion brand "forever 21" illustrates the same pattern - pressure put on women to remain forever aery mythical nymphs.

A lot of research has been done on depicting women as submissive in the media. Erving Goffman showed that advertisements of the nineteen seventies put women in subordinate positions thus constructing them as a lower class, inferior to men, just like children are dependent on adults (Goffman 1979). This subordination is portrayed by means of six methods: depicting women as smaller in size, as compared to men; making women's touch appear light and elusive, while men are gripping objects; giving women a secondary role in group activities as opposed to male portrayed as an executor; in the context of a family relationship picturing mother' bond with a daughter as more affectionate and emotional than that of father and son; portraying women in inferior positions and performing silly gestures, face expressions; portraying women as tuned out, not fully present in the scene, because they are represented by their guardian, in other words placing women under symbolical care of a male participant, who plays a role of a parent (Goffman 1979). Goffman showed that, despite women rights revolution, women were depicted in magazines as infantile, incompetent and dependent.

Cinematography also did not avoid the "nymphet syndrome" (Merskin 2004: 121). Above mentioned Brooke Shields played a prostitute at the age of 12 in the movie "Pretty baby", just like 12-year-old Jody Foster played a prostitute in "Taxi Driver". Actresses Liv Tyler, Alicia Silverstone and Christina Ricci modelled in pajamas with a teddy bear for the "Jailbait" issue of the "Spy" magazine. Old Hollywood had a different tendency in movies to feature children in adult attire and doing adult things, sometimes in a sexual context (add

example). Sexualisation of girlhood is another dimension of the problem, which is inextricably bound together to infantilisation of adult females and in the next subchapter I would like to take a look at Vladimir Nabokov's book "Lolita" and its effect on the society's perception of femininity as infantile.

2.1.1 The role of Vladimir Nabokov's book "Lolita" in infantilising of women

Vladimir Nabokov's book "Lolita" gave birth to the trope Lolita, which signifies a "young girl who has a very sexual appearance or behaves in a very sexual way"[1], a "precociously seductive girl"[2]. This trope is quoted widely on social media. The synonymous word is nymphet - "a sexually precocious girl barely in her teens, also : a sexually attractive young woman"[3]. These meanings are not representative of Lolita that was originally intended by Nabokov.

Nabokov in his book tells a story about Dolores Haze (12 years old, when the story begins), who was abused by her mother's middle-aged tenant Humbert Humbert. He married her mother to be around Dolores, and then, when mother died, kidnapped a girl, took her on a road trip, where he sexually abused her during their stays in hotels. Humbert hid from Dolores the fact that her mother died, then he revealed it, but forced a girl to stay with him threatening to give her into foster care. She did not have a chance to escape and did not choose to be his lover.

Novel is narrated by Humbert, so readers do not get to see Lolita's (he calls her this way) perspective. Narrator metaphorically describes demonic power Lolita's body has over him, while she is not even conscious about it: "key to that innocence is a crucial suggestion of something sub-human, even animalistic, the special "feline" qualities, the down on her limb like the fur of lower mammals, those indices that it takes Humbert to discern" (Walter 2012:

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[1] (Camridge Dictionary) https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/lolita

[2] (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Lolita

[3] (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nymphet

145). She as a human being is buried in his poetic delusions, he turns her into a symbol of his desire, into a mythologised figure, an empty signifier.

Shortly after Lolita finally escaped Humbert and married a new partner, she died in childbirth at the age of 17. When Humbert meets her during her pregnancy he admits she is no longer attractive to him. Her death prevents her from entering womanhood, makes her remain forever a symbolical embodiment of Humbert's desire towards a young girl.

Wikipedia's article about Lolita is one of the most edited on the site being changed a few times a week. Debate primarily revolves around whether or not readers should judge Humbert, whether he should be called paedophile or hephebophile, and as to whether Lolita's age is pubescent or pre-pubescent (Morris 2011).

On Instagram I frequently witness debates that run like this: a girl quotes Lolita's visuals in her photos or says she likes this book, commentators accuse her of romanticizing child abuse, a girl justifies her choice. In the interviews I conducted I asked some girls about their stance on this controversy.

Brand "Dollskill" that is known for selling provocative edgy clothing caused public outrage by selling the "Lolita" lingerie line. It consisted of lingerie and tops in red and white lace with the word "Lolita" in a delicate italic sewed on it. Some garments were named "So precocious", "Innocence". Some shoppers expressed their frustration: "Oh ya! When a 12 year old was habitually raped by her stepfather! And now we want to perpetuate the infantilization of women for the male gaze!!! "Keep women small, hairless, and obedient!! Great message!! Really love this brand!!!!" (Griffiths 2018). I witnessed a similar controversy on Instagram around a halter top by Nikki Lipstick with a text "jailbait" and a pair of heart shaped handcuffs pictured on it. The print on the top highlighted that engaging in sexual activities with underage girl is illegal, romanticising the appeal of the forbidden.

It is important to note that visuals commonly associated with Lolita were not present in the book. The image of Lolita with red lollipop, red lipstick and red heart-shaped sunglasses was not present in a book or Stanley Kubrick's film, they were taken by a photographer Bert Stern to promote Kubrick's film, and were departing from the original character of Lolita (Laing 2018). Nabokov specifically expressed that he did not want a girl on the cover of his book, but American landscape. Duncan White, Nabokov's scholar, said: "Lolita has been repeatedly misread on the cover of Lolita, and frequently in a way to make her seem a more palatable subject of sexual desire" (Bertram, Leving 2013: 17). This quote was used in an

introduction to a book "Lolita: The Story of a Cover Girl", where it is analyzed how the cover caused misleading interpretations. Bertam, one of the co-editors of the above mentioned book, paid 80 designers and artists to create a new cover, because sexualized version of a child does not fit "a novel which has child rape at its core" (PrintMag 2012). This resulted in many interesting covers (for example, a pink bubblegum trod beneath a black male shoe), which Bertam discusses and rates in his blog (Venus Febriculosa 2009).

A shift in meaning happens, because Humbert narrates Lolita (he is writing it from prison) as if it is her body, her age, everything about her, that are guilty for his downfall. He reduces Dolores Haze herself to the collection of his fantasies, while she as a living person with agency is not present in the book. Hence viewing this teenage girl as a canny seductress means being led by Humbert's (paedophile's) manipulations.

Society's obsession with Lolita's sexuality and lack of concern for her perspective leads to the objectifying view on women's sexuality in general. Sexualisation of girlhood leads women to believe that if their sexuality differs from that of girls their femininity is cancelled. Womanhood is looked down upon in comparison to girlhood, which is in turn embodied in the figure of Lolita - willing participant of her own abuse.

2.2 Infantilising women in subcultures

In this subchapter I would like to see how "Lolita effect" is reflected in subcultures. Since the focus of my analysis is on individual applications of self-infantilising, not self-infantilising done on the level of highly monetised media, it is important to study the context of subculture and not just popular culture.

2.2.1 The phenomenon of "Lolicon"

As I noted before, infantilisation of women is not specific to Western society. In Japan there exists a phenomenon of "Lolicon" - obsession with innocent lolitas, because

supposedly "innocent girl gone wrong, and innocence is a marker for desire" (Savage 2015: 38). Loli-girls are portrayed in "Roricon" - anime or manga depicting young girls in extreme sexual situations. Roricon being purely virtual renders characters that look like literal children, and by far it is not punishable by law, because, according to Japanese legal authorities, there were not sufficient studies that have proved that it leads to the abuse of real children (Savage 2015: 41). Ciaran Varley tells about Jk cafes (standing for "joshi kōsei" - high school girl), where one can come and buy a date with a schoolgirl in a school girl uniform. Although in 2017 it was outlawed and only adults over 18 were allowed to serve in these cafes (still dressed like schoolgirls). Some cafes started to rebrand into "conversation cafes" or something else to still be able to hire actual schoolkids (Varley 2018). There are other institutions in Japan that perpetuate fetishization of youth - such as companies, that sell child sex dolls, Junior idol musical groups, whose members often wear schoolgirl uniforms and maid costumes, and whose marketing strategies are focused primarily on visual appeal (Sim 2020).

Savage points out that, unlike Nabokov's book, the genre of Lolicon focuses entirely on representing a girl, a male is censored and obscured (Savage 2015: 39). This is a common method in pornography designed to stimulate male's arousal by making the viewer feel like he, and not the other man, is participating in the scene. But the girl's perspective in Lolicon obviously is not based on her mind, focus is entirely on visual appeal and perceived subservience, submissiveness.It is peculiar, that girls who adapt Lolita fashion do not view themselves in a sexualized way, but lolicon fetishizes innocence and commonplace scenarios include rape and incest. A lot of fans of Lolicon, in fact, are reported to have strong preference towards virtual (2D) girls as opposed to real alive girls (Savage 2015: 43). It looks like real Girls' intention and perspective is lost, this is why I deem it very important in the context of my work to conduct in-depth interviews with girls, who engage in self-infantilisation.

2.2.2 Japanese Lolita subculture

There is a Japanese fashion style called Lolita, which has different variations, such as gothic, classic, sweet, and other. Style alludes to elegant Victorian, Edwardian or rococo fashion of

19th century Europe. Lolita's dress code is like this: "It starts with a dress, or dresses. Among a menagerie of rainbow variations, certain features are standard: lace and ruffle-decked blouses under jumpers, aprons, or high-waisted belled and crinolined knee-length skirts; more skin covered than bare; headwear including bonnets, miniature hats, or massive bows over ringlets and long tresses. So many ruffles; so much lace" (Carriger 2019: 15). Lolitas accentuate modesty, innocence, doll-like look.

Japanese Lolita is distinct from Nabokov's book reference (Monden 2013: 165). Browsing Lolita forums and Facebook communities, I noticed that members of the Lolita community are rather hostile towards sexualization of the style. The name similarity is reported to be coincidental. There is a sub-style of Lolita called Ero-Loli (Erotic or Sexy Lolita), which may contain some elements of eroticism, such as "bare/visible shoulders, translucent stockings and/or fishnets, corsets, vinyl and leather fabric, etc" (Thelolitaguidebook). But it should still remain demure and too much skin can not be exposed, according to the general rules of Lolita fashion (Maduro 2017). It is important to acknowledge that although practitioners of this style deny connections to sexualized connotations of Lolita, there still are males, who lust over the image of hyperfeminine girly childlike Lolita.

Motivation of Lolitas seems to be rooted in an opposition to societal expectations placed on an adult woman: "Normal things like getting married, having a child, having a household — that kind of future is something I can't completely imagine. I want to forever remain otome [a maiden]. What I consider normal is different" (Carriger 2019: 16).

Lolita style is at least partially inspired by nineteenth-century dresses, which were very restrictive, uncomfortable and downright dangerous. They contained toxic chemicals in fabrique, frequently causing women physical injuries, when, for example, a corset was laced too tight and hurt or deformed the back. Sometimes those dresses even led to the loss of life, when, for example, a woman could not quickly escape fire, because she was trapped in layers of her petticoat, or when a woman fell into the river while doing a washing up and easily drowned due to heavy weights of the dress (Lipscomb 2013). These dresses are theorised to symbolize women's oppression, their status as bedazzled trophies of a man. Man was a breadwinner in the family and paid for all the garments, so the more intricate the dress was, the wealthier the husband was. But, on the other hand, it has been suggested that large

cumbersome dresses might have made women more prominent and visible in society, giving women a degree of awareness power (Monden 2011: 167).

2.2.3 Daddy's little girl subculture

Daddy's little girl subculture represents any type of relationship with a partner where a female roleplays as the daughter of the male. For adherents of daddy's little girl subculture predilection towards infantilisation/innocence is the propensity to engage in "age play" modes of behaviour. In interviewing age players, Robin Bauer identified that "choosing a role younger than one's actual age was a way to explore inner children as partial identities" (Bauer 2017: 12). Interviewee Teresa elaborated on the appeal of her chosen "daddy's little girl" persona: "It's good to have someone powerful and masculine tell me I'm cute, tell me I'm sweet, sit me on their lap, pat my head, that kind of stuff. And feel really loved and nurtured" (Bauer 2017: 13). This description illustrates the appeal of the lg (little girl) role in ddlg (daddy dominant little girl) relationships, in which one partner 'becomes' the innocent, dependant, submissive "little to a dominant father figure; formal masculine and feminine roles can be mutable in such an arrangement, the becoming transcends formal reality to encapsulate a permeable alternate present: the land of make-believe, a dream utopia.

There are two types of ddlg relationships. Caregiver is non-sexual, platonic. The second type is sexual between the daddy dom and little. "Most littles will ask to be supervised, managed, and disciplined. There might or might not be elements of BDSM beyond the typical disciplines. Most littles are fragile and often recovering from years of self-esteem issues and many have suffered neglect, if not outright abuse and are recovering" (Harte, 2018). In choosing to inhabit an often unchosen earlier role and this time setting their own boundaries and modes of consort, the little is able to heal past trauma in a safe and controlled environment of their own conception, perhaps switch roles with the dd as the relationship progresses/regresses. The modes and norms of typical gendered interactions are reimagined to conceive a new reality removed from the harshness and conformity of regulated adulthood - the little rejects this evisceration and extends the dream of innocence in a perpetual state of becoming.

2.2 Implications and components of self-infantilisation

Sexual infantilisation and self-infantilisation is closely related to and stems from sexualisation, self-sexualisation, objectification, self-objectification. I would like to examine these phenomena more closely. Infantilism rests on the idea of Romantic childhood, I describe this idea in subchapter 2.2.5. Infantilisation of women is theorized to have negative effect on sexualisation and self-sexualisation of underage girls, I would like to take a look at those theories as well the feminist theory, which assumes that infantilisation of women is harmful to women.

2.2.1 Sexualisation of women

The 2007 Report of the American Psychology Association (APA) Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls defined sexualizatiton as 'a process, by which girls are viewed and/or treated in purely sexual terms rather than fully functioning persons' (Walkedrine, et al 2001: 73). "Sexualization occurs when [1.] a person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics; [2.] a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; [3.] a person is sexually objectified — that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; [4] and/or sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person" (APA 2007: 2).

According to Fredrickson, et al, sexualisation of women in mainstream media (advertisements, magazines, TV shows, etc.) occurs frequently and manifests as referring to women or depicting them only by virtue of their sexual appeal. Sexulization targets mostly women, as studies show that media images usually portray women with a focus solely on their bodies (often with cropped heads), while men are depicted by means of their facial expression (Fredrickson, et al 1998: 10). Studies have also shown that prejudiced judgement about

sexualized people is different depending on the gender of a person. A woman in merely revealing clothes is perceived as less competent, while a man is seen as less competent only when he is hypersexualized in a provocative way (Fasoli, et al 2018: 338). Men are affected by sexualization as well, but in a different way than women. In this work we are not inspecting those ways.

Women are the object of this research, and I will focus on the assumption that sexualization has a potential to influence women in a multitude of ways. The spectrum of potential variable impacts of sexualization on women is very wide: it ranges from humiliation to empowerment.

Over time sexualisation of women has been increasing. In the 1960s only 44% of women were represented in a sexualised way when featured on Rolling Stone magazine, while in the 2000s this number has risen to 83% (Hatton and Trautner 2011). Since the rise of the Internet and different social media platforms in the early two thousands, sexualization has been spreading throughout digital media and has started to gain more and more attention. A 2010 study from the Parents Television Council revealed that mainstream TV shows for teenagers feature teen girls depicted in a sexualized way. In percentage ratio 47% of all sexualized characters were teen girls, 29% - adult women, and the rest were males of varied age. Typically female characters were enabling their sexualization and responded positively to sexualized remarks (Tolman, et al: 465). The aforementioned APA report, commissioned by the government, was a reaction to raising public concern around the causes and effects of sexualization.

Public media discourse and mainstream psychology see sexualisation as a corporate propaganda meant to convince women that they are not good enough and need to consume more to fit in, to be satisfying for an outward gaze. Researchers, such as D.L. Tolman, C.P. Bowman, J.F. Chmielewski brings attention to the alarming fact that sexual self-expression displayed by women usually is seen just as a reaction to media being polluted with sexualised imagery and as an attempt to conform to the standards of those images (Tolman, Bowman, Chmielewski 2015).

2.2.2 Sexualisation and sexual objectification

As shown by Robbie Duschinsky, term sexualisation dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, when it meant assigning gender attributes and could be applied to both growing up kids, and inanimate objects, language entities (Duschinsky 2012: 137). 'Sexualisation' is a portmanteau word derived from 'sexual socialization'. Duschinsky points out that in the beginning of the twentieth century it signified sexual interest for the love object and was applied mainly in psychology in Freudian interpretations. In the nineteen-seventies its meaning shifted to signify an unhealthy traumatic sexual attachment to the love object as a form of a coping mechanism. It primarily concerned development of a child in such circumstances, when a child was exposed to sexual influences early on in life, mainly by family (Duschinsky 2012: 139). Medical implications of 'sexualisation' tied to deviations in child's development are still connotationaly present in the term. When sexualisation is brought up, it is viewed as something that needs to be cured.

Sexualisation and sexual objectification are very related, but different in a way that there may be different degrees of sexualization, the term is more mild and does not have as many negative implications as sexual objectification. Objectification implies being perceived and treated as a tool for others' use (instrumentality), being considered inter- changeable with others (fungibility), being inert (inertness), being violable (violability), being denied autonomy and expe- rience (denial of autonomy and of subjectivity, respectively), and being perceived as an object owned by someone (ownership)` (Fasoli, et al 2018: 339). Sexual objectification erases personal agency and reduces a person to a mere passive objecting existing for someone else`s pleasure.

Theory of objectification summarised by Barbara L. Fredrickson explains how girls learn to adapt external outlook on their body, see themselves through the eyes of those, to whom they might constitute a potential sexual interest (Fredrickson, et al 1998: 269). Sexual appeal is separated from its carrier, and is extrapolated to cover, annihilate all other qualities. A person is reduced to mere physical appeal they are capable of projecting.

By public media discourse self-sexualization is seen as one of inevitable outcomes of sexualization (the other one is maintaining innocence). Theory of objectification argues that self-sexualization does not necessarily have to be a conscious choice (Fredrickson, et al 1998:

270). It is internalized to the point, where it seems like a natural choice, the most organic effective strategy of fitting into the heteronormative entourage of society.

According to Fredrickson et al, girls try to alter their bodies, make their appearance appealing to those who are on the consumer side of sexualised images. They view their sexuality as a product subjected to market value standards. They might determine their worth based on how much their look coincides with what`s promoted as the best possible look in terms of sexual potential (Fredrickson, et al 1998: 271).

Experiments conducted on undergraduate students of American universities by Fredrickson and colleagues show that implications of theory of objection involve girls feeling ashamed if they do not meet certain criteria. This feeling results in self-deprecating thoughts, psychological damage, eating disorders. Also focusing a lot of attention on appearance, constantly monitoring the `way` your physics is presented to the viewers can reduce performance in other areas that need concentration (Fredrickson, et al 1998: 273). Several studies (Dove & Wiederman, 2000; Nelson & Purdon, 2011; Purdon & Holdaway, 2006) have shown, that when women, who adapt external gaze, dissociate from their bodies and experience less physical pleasure during sexual acts due to being constantly worried about the way their body appears to the viewer.

2.2.3 Self-sexualization of girls

According to Freud, a child is a sexual being, so sexualization of a child is natural to some degree (Freud 1905). But it may become perverse if it serves not the healthy development and well-being of a child, but an ulterior motive of someone else. The line between wholesome sexualization, and sexualization with a qualifier "hyper" is ambiguous. Particularly, the way adult women, who allude to childish aesthetics, contribute (or not) to the problem of hyper-sexualization of underage girls, seems to be a controversial question. The question "Does sexualizatiton of youthfulness by adults encourage hyper-sexualization of real young teenagers" can not be easily solved, because it rests on a complex sex of contradictory practices.

Sexualization is largely intertwined with the dichotomy between minors and adults. Sexualization of minors is considered to be the worst tier of sexualization, which is illegal. Minors are subordinate to the law power structures as far as their sexual expression comes along. There are laws that prohibit any imagery that explicitly or implicitly depicts children as sexual beings, even if a minor him or herself is the creator of that image (Janssen 2015: 24). There are also laws that require commercial websites and public libraries to prohibit access to 'harmful' content for anyone below the legal age (Kleinhans 2004: 20). The legality of adults presenting themselves as minors is a controversial ethical issue. But children are undoubtedly excluded from the sphere of adult entertainment.

Underage girls, or 'barely legal' young women are always seen by researchers as the main target of the process of sexualization. They are seen as though they have only two options. First possibility for them is to become victims to the external process of sexualisation and internalise it, try to conform to the image that is promoted to them as an ideal. Another option is to resist sexualising influences, to try to preserve purity, innocence.

Both these options disregard intrinsic natural potential of sexual development, inherent self-sexualizing, not caused by societal influences. Both approaches do not deem girls as self-sufficient, capable of choosing their own path, regardless of imposed pressure. On the contrary, they see girls only through the lens of outer perspective, through the prism of sexualisation as a phenomenon constructed by means of sexist prejudices and meant to belittle girls. Undoubtedly, to a certain extent we are all influenced by culture, society and adjacent factors, but it should not be a default setting of research to deprive a human being of a certain extent of independent self-consciousness, self-reflection, ability to make well-analyzed choices.

The fact that most critics are concerned with dangers posed by girls and not grown women engaging in self-sexualizing highlights protectionist tendencies displayed towards girls. They are viewed as potential victims of corruption, contamination by something sexual. There is a huge moral panic regarding girls self sexualizing themselves. Teenhood is reserved for innocence and making it seem otherwise is deemed morally wrong. Girls are sometimes blamed for submitting to patriarchy and undoing all the progress done by feminists (Allen, Ingram 2015: 142). Amy Adler suggests that laws on child pornography facilitate erotization of children and increase the allure of it for pedophilies. It happens because they unwittingly delineate the image of sexualized child in contrast to a 'pure' child: "the legal tool that we

designed to liberate children from sexual abuse threatens us all, by constructing a world in which we are enthralled-anguished, enticed, bombarded-by the spectacle of the sexual child" (Adler 2001: 209).

Freud has proven that sexuality manifests in childhood, contrary to the contemporary popular beliefs, that it starts evolving only since the beginning of puberty (Egan 2015: 108). He also proved that children may experience sexual fantasies, and receive ertoic feelings of pleasure from different types of sensory stimulation (mother performing care routine, children themselves playfully rubbing their earlobes, cheeks). Thus children`s sexuality is natural, and not a result of sexualization (Egan 2015: 109). Adler talks about how current discourse neglects Freudian portrayal of childhood as full of erotic instincts, which oftentimes are hostile and aggressive (Adler 2001: 229). Now we erased all the potential for erotic consciousnees and subconsciosness from a child and praise a child for a total lack of it. This creates a tense dynamic, 'a dialectic of transgression and taboo' (Adler 2001: 212). Thus the child becomes even more appealing to predators; it transforms into a blank canvas, an innocent oblivious creature, that can be manipulated and misled into the world of pleasure.

Outlook on girls as on passive recipients, creates a number of frameworks that limit research potential and further perpetuate stereotypical methodology of studying girls` sexuality. Discourse accentuates 'victimisation, protectionism and objectification' (Spilka, Kincaid 1993: 248). Also these discourse practices around girls` sexuality emphasize the trajectory of female sexuality in general as passive, receptive, non-agentic, while male sexuality is traditionally lumped into active, predatory categories (Spilka, Kincaid 1993: 248). This is a degrading outlook on girls that perpetuates sexist uneven dynamics between genders. Exploring the topic of peadophilic tendencies in popular culture, Catherine Lubmy suggests that to understand how a group of young girls is constructed as powerless victims we should examine how the members of the group perceive themselves (Lumby 1998: 50). Allen and Ingram conducted visual quizzes, individual and focus group interviews with girls from intermediate school to determine girls` own vision of their sexual agency, subjective narrative (Allen, Ingram 2015: 156). Authors refuse to classify girls as those who stay innocent and those who partake in sexualized outlook on the world. Their investigation has proven that girls have a complex cognizance and acknowledgement of different options. Some of the girls are fully aware of those polarities, and choose a position on the spectrum which suits best their feelings, aspirations and lifetime management.

Excluding minors from adult spheres does not help to raise more self-conscious kids, it prevents them from cognizing themselves and the world around. Judith Levine argues that fear of paedophilia as an excuse to over-protect minors is fueled by right-wing agenda to promote Christian family values and advocate for sex only within marriage. She suggests that we stop treating children as ignorant beings and stop promoting their abstinence, because these absurd desires to keep children asexual are not grounded in actual psychological reality and do not serve any good to children (Levine 2002). Instead, society and family should educate children to increase the quality of their lives, inform them about potential dangers.

2.2.4 Innocence fetish

Duschinsky talks about how the Report of the American Psychology Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls deems sexualization as moral decline and spreads panic around the issue (Duschinsky 2012: 145). Right-wing discourses exploit the problem to preach their values: returning to family values, taming women's sexuality (Appleyard 1998; Jones 2002; Poulter 2010; Shakinovsky 2002).

When identifying other contributing factors, such as media consumption, moderation leading to a 'forbidden fruit' effect, etc researches call early self-sexualization a 'jeopardy' (Star, Ferguson 2012: 109). They treat self-sexualization as something that should better be avoided by adequate upbringing. Starr and Ferguson, while conducting their research about what influences girls' self-sexualization, offer girls dolls and ask them a pair of differently dressed dolls and ask them which one they identify with. A doll dressed in jeans and jacket is considered non-sexualized by researchers, while a doll dressed in a skirt and a top, showing her bare midriff, legs and shoulders is considered sexualized. They conclude that self-objectifying mothers have a great influence on their daughters and advice for religious teaching (Star, Ferguson 2012: 108).

Public right-wing discourse mentioned by Levine frequently deems girls as the root of the problem. Their self-sexualization is considered as something that needs to be discouraged, moved to the margins, punished. Recognizing an 'evil force' that converts girls to overly sexual beings and simultaneously putting the blame on girls for succumbing to that force is a

controversial approach. Another possible reaction consists of protectionist tendencies, namely trying to shelter girls from destructive influences by means of restricting their use of social media or keeping them away from social gatherings. Both approaches neglect girls as self-conscious agents that can maintain their inner core values and navigate through external forces and not necessarily let those powers affect them in either negative or positive ways.

From this perspective those who resist sexualization are perceived as a rare minority. Innocence may be seen as a desirable outcome, because it shows that you are not conforming to marketing strategies, which try to make you as sexual as possible, and as a result consume as many products as possible. Duschinsky says that innocence is perceived as a `lost` object, something impossible to obtain, when from an early age girls are conditioned to self-sexualize (Duschinsky 2012: 140). But rare, unusual things tend to be sexualized even more than common things, which leads us to the nature of fetish. An outcome of this leads us to innocence as a heavily sexually connoted phenomenon. James Kincaid takes a stand of condemning moral panic around the issue, says: "Defining the child as an object of desire, we create the pedophile as the one who desires, as a complex image of projection and denial: the pedophile acts out the range of attitudes and behaviors made compulsory by the role we have given the child. Demonizing this figure we at the same time call loudly for his presence, asserting his marginality as we proclaim his importance, dissociating as we make alliance, we anoint as we execute the pedophile" (Kincaid 1998: 5). Danielle Egan and Louise Hawkes point out that there are lots of similarities between contemporary moral panic around girls displaying sexual inclinations and 'the Social Purity Movement that took place in the Anglophone west between 1850 and 1905' (Egan, Hawkes 2012: 270). Both accentuate negative outcomes and pathologize any form of 'premature' behavior displayed by girls.

Joanne Faulkner argues against constructing an image of an innocent girl child, who is so far behind an adult on the maturity scale, who should be sheltered from any adult domains (Faulkner 2010: 108). Faulkner says that such an approach renders children more vulnerable to actual harm, because they end up being not forearmed with knowledge. Thus any adult, who has malicious intentions, can persuade and manipulate them with his or her narrative, because if they hear about something for the first time, they do not possess enough input to react with valid judgement.

According to Faulkner, capitalism is based on this duality between a carefree child unbothered with labor and production and a working adult. Maturation is something that

forever destroys integrity of a person. Faulkner says that the 'culture of over-protectiveness' of children stems from the idea of 'natural child' created by the cultural movement of Romanticism (Faulkner 2010: 109). Childhood is seen as the most pure form of existence of a human being. Every time you face some minor disappointments you are separated further from your integral self. But the problem is that both idealized and perverted views on childhood have something in common - they fetishize innocence (Faulkner 2010: 108). Faulkner draws Marx, Foucault and Baudrillard to prove that innocence is fetishised by adults as a commodity. He says: "Children represent a mode of existence that is recognisably human, but unaffected by the conditions associated with adult life: obligation, compromise, work and mortality" (Faulkner 2010: 112; 9). Fantasies about carefree existence, when one did not have to worry about providing for yourself, characterize consciousness, influenced by capitalism: "Childish innocence is a state of reprieve from the perpetual, amorphous guilt adults feel by virtue of having desire, and being caught up in a network of signification (having a job, a house, authority, prestige, etc.)" (Faulkner 2010: 112; 9). We can see elusive similarities between perverts, who prey upon a child, and those who over-protect a child from everything non-childish — they are both fascinated by the dimension of childhood and how it does not intersect with the dimension of adulthood.

Women are not expected to be assertive and straightforward about their sexuality, on the contrary, they are expected to act innocently. 'Conventionally, female sexuality is constituted in opposition to the virility of male sexual desire, as muted and receptive (Holland et al., 1994). Feminists document how within normative discourses of heterosexuality, women and girls must navigate a sexual reputation requiring them to be sexually desirable yet avoid expressions of active sexual desire (Allen, Ingram 2015: 143).

There is also a prejudiced correlation between the degree of sexual freedom of females and the class to which they belong (Walkedrine, et al 2001: 74). Image of sexually uninhibited women is associated with working class patterns of behavior. Moral panic, i.e. strong reaction of concern based on one's principles of morality, around sexualization is primarily middle class prerogative. They see sexuality of working class females as potential danger to their 'civilized' society, as something that needs to be controlled, held on a leash (Egan, Hawkes 2012: 278; 7). This shows how sex is generally viewed by society as something evil and savage, that needs to be culturalized; as a threat to advanced well-mannered order of things.

Economic factors such as the welfare level of the family (if a child has a family), in which a child is raised, influence the duration of child's transition into adulthood. Spilka, when arguing with Kincaid about his supposed underestimation of a danger posed on children, in her essay 'What does Kincaid want?' raises an important question as to how class differences affect the length of the maturation period (Spilka, Kincaid 1993: 249). If a child is raised in a family, that has sufficient income to sustain its members, he or she is not forced to work and thus their relatively carefree existence is prolonged. Kincaid indirectly addresses this concern, when he says that in times before a child was 'purified' by Romanticism there were not much difference between children and adults, the only distinguishing factor was the entrance to the working force. At the age of 5 or 6 a child started working and thus was no longer a child (Kincaid 1998: 7). It seems like a child matures a lot faster, if he or she is involved in providing for themselves. Spilka points out that in Zola's 'Germinal' children of miners, poor working class people, are portrayed as engaging in heavily sexual activities (Spilka, Kincaid 1993: 250). It looks like 'work', especially blue collar one, comes along with sexuality, as if work excuses and leads to being sexual. In the interviews I will conduct I want to talk about the financial side of the job and see what role it plays in motivation to engage in the type of particular self-presentation on Instagram.

2.2.5 "Romantic childhood"

Innocence fetish is largely rooted in the concept of "Romantic childhood". The term "Romantic childhood" introduced by Anne Higonnet alludes to a definition of childhood that emerged during the Romantic period and involved viewing a child as innocent and pure (Higonnet 1998).

The idea of 'Romantic childhood' is rooted in Rousseau's work Emile, or On Education written in 1762. Rousseau in his work about the way of educating children as pure natural creatures which they inherently are suggests that adults should not restrict their expression and impose societal stereotypes and expectations on children so that children can develop to their fullest potential. He rejects Catholic idea of Original Sin and claims that children may only become sinful when contaminated by the world of adults as they grow up. Children are a

'tabula rasa', devoid of any characteristics and if they live by the uncorrupted laws of nature, they will thrive. Emile from Latin means "eager" (Rousseau 1763 (1979)).

Poets of the Romantic period (WIlliam Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge) engaged in idealizing childhood, praised it as an incarnation of pure joy, while rendering ageing as fading, moving further away from the perfect state. English poet William Wordsworth portrayed a child as "best philosopher", "mighty shepherd", as close to godlike nature as one can ever approach (Stroup 2004).

In the seventeenth century Catholic idea of a child was replaced by a Protestant one. Catholic idea suggested that a child is born into sin and that moral virtue can be attained by a child only when he or she becomes a conscious adult. While Protestant beliefs deemed a child as innocent and devoid of any sins. Child's body was portrayed ubiquitously in art in order to highlight that it is not corporeal in the traditional sense, it is different from an adult's body: it is innocent. Later on child labor was abolished, separate judicial system for children was created. Consumption and productions were separated, a child was no longer engaged in production, thus deemed as a separate entity in the economic world.

Aries argues that before seventeenth century childhood as a distinct period in human life did not exist (Aries 1962). According to Aries, during medieval times the mortality rate among infants was so high that parents developed a more indifferent attitude towards their children as a coping mechanism to help them avoid potential trauma. Moreover, mothers had a lot of other work to do besides raising a child. In pre-modern times a lot of people did not have means of calculating their exact age, hence age was judged based on their appearance and habits. Children were seen as small adults and dressed accordingly; there was not a gap between childhood and adulthood, at least not a major one, like it is nowadays. In medieval times relatives used to share a large household, dwelled together. Being always in a public space did not facilitate formation of private units, such as family (Aries 1962).

Way of living changed in modern times, the shift to more private alienated properties happened. According to Aries, childhood was discovered in the seventeenth century due to the rise of a nuclear family (Aries 1962). At the same time a separate childhood fashion was established, and it primarily comprised trends that were out of fashion for adults. In the same way entertainment practices that previously mostly adults used to engage in, like Halloween celebrations, started to be associated with kids (Ulanovicz 2005). Najafi and Higonnet suggest that childhood fashion is rooted in a feeling of nostalgia, it is averse to changes. She gives an

example of a painting "Blue Boy" by Thomas Gainsborough to illustrate that already in the eighteenth century children were dressed in an outdated way (Najafi, Higonnet 2002). "Blue Boy" is dressed in a fancy dress costume made of blue satin; such costumes were popular in the seventeenth century. Childhood fashion has been since based on adults' feeling of nostalgia, desire to get back in time.

The birth of "Romantic childhood" conception has led to a new way of perceiving children that still pertains nowadays. Feminist have argued that along with children women were viewed through the lens of this conception as well.

2.2.6 Feminist view on infantilising women

It is appropriate to contemplate how different waves of feminism differ from each other and from the original conception, and the extent to which it embodies an amorphous, ever-expanding ideology. First-wave feminism was focussed on attaining western women's fundamental right to vote and associated legal concerns during the 19th and early 20th century. It did not posit gender a social construction as is now considered fundamental, nor were roles that each gender inhabits deemed sexist (Hughes 2002: 47), likewise it did not actively fight for racial equality or for those of relatively poor status. From its inception in the USA in the early 1960s, second-wave feminism further encapsulated issues of sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights with a new focus on deconstructing the patriarchal institutions and cultural norms (Duggan, Hunter 1995: 108). Its implosion occurred in the early 1980s with intra-feminism 'wars' over issues such as sexuality and pornography, ushering in the era of third-wave feminism in the 1990s (Duggan, Hunter 1995: 109).

Third wave of feminism introduces the idea of intersectionality, which brought attention to different sources of oppression besides gender: class and race. Third wave feminists found a wide audience on social media and expanded its agenda to fighting for rights of women from different cultural and racial backgrounds. From this new virtual melting pot, building on the ideas of previous waves and variations, came the further development of radical feminism. Radical feminists have discussed myriad issues around the sex industry; the majority who oppose the normalisation of sex work are occasionally deemed 'sex worker exclusionary

feminists' or SWERF (Ditum 2014: 15). Catharine MacKInnon suggests that the mass production of pornography entails "physical, psychological, and/or economic coercion of the women who perform and model in it" (MacKinnon 1984: 321). She further argues that pornography 'deprives women of the right to express verbal refusal of an intercourse', bringing to mind Robin Morgan's infamous statement, "pornography is the theory, and rape is the practice" (Morgan 1974: 155).

A lot of feminist studies had pointed out that infantilisation of women, aligning them with children serves a purpose of oppressing women as active agents capable of a meaningful contributing to a society. Already in the second half of eighteenth century Mary Wollstonecraft protested against categorizing woman as childlike: "My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone" (Wollstonecraft 1794 (2004)). In the first middle of the nineteenth century Simone de Beauvoir also expressed resistance to the conservsative bourgeoisie's attempt to categorize women as 'truly feminine' – that is, frivolous, infantile, irresponsible the submissive woman" (de Beauvoir 1949 (1970)). She thought this position enables to keep women out of the job market, to prevent them from revolting, thus securing men's position of power and success. She preached the emancipation of women from this passive template of a subordinate creature of a "second sex", who is ruled by men and their value system. Both Wollstonecraft and de Beauvoir see being childlike as a negative trait that perpetuates oppression. Just like children women had limited access to education and economic relationships, and society tried to justify this by equating women's mental capabilities to that of a child.

Although women now have access to education and the job market, the twenty-first century faces a similar problem as infantilised images of women are ubiquitous in the media. Morna Laing in her study about the British fashion magazine 'Lula, girl of my dreams' points out that Barthes' claim he made in 1967 that fashion portrays women as sublime and childlike is still valid in contemporary fashion discourse (Laing 2014: 272). Debra Merskin in her analysis of representation of women in contemporary media suggests that infantilized images of women radiate "the willingness, passivity, and availability", which have the potential to "fuel pedophilic desires", "fuel the ideology of girl as sexual agent" (Merskin 2004: 123). When Merskin mentions the death of pageant beauty queen, who was 6 years old when her beaten and sexually assaulted dead body was discovered in the basement, she suggests that

the glamorized dolled-up look of the little girl presented for the pageant contest might have motivated her assault (Merskin 2004: 127). She concludes her analysis by saying that infantilization serves a purpose of objectifying and controlling women, silencing their voice, devaluing their contribution to society. This negative phenomenon should be fought against: she encourages boycotting advertisement campaigns that infantilize women, showing disapproval by means of organizing protests, seeking legal protection (Merskin 2004: 126).

According to Shulamith Firestone, who represents Marxist thought, children are as oppressed as women, because, just like women, they are a submissive to external authority, excluded as active agents from economic relationships: "Children of every class are lower class, just as women have always been" (Firestone 1971: 81). Both women and children are expected to be nice and cute, which is a repressive state to be in, and a man would be outraged, if he faced such an attitude and had such expectations placed on him. Firestone talks about patting on the head as a symbol of this cunning oppression and highlights that if it wears a mask of benevolence, excludes any straight-forward rude insults, which makes it a lot more difficult to resist. It bewilders the recipient: "Imagine this man's own consternation were some stranger to approach him on the street in a similar fashion – patting, gurgling, muttering baby talk" (Firestone 1971: 101).

Some feminists do not only view infantilising as harmful to women, but fight against any forms of objectification, specifically sex work. There is a specific direction of feminism meant to deny sex workers access to the from feminist community. According to Audrey Miano, sex worker exclusionary radical feminism (SWERF)[4] was a response to an inclusive third wave feminism and its purpose is to exclude sex workers from receiving feminists' support. SWERF's main argumentation is that the industry of a sex work is harmful to women, purports objectifying and poses serious safety dangerous. But those, who are in opposition to SWERF, deem this precise argument as the very reason to support sex workers, as in many countries they are not legally supported by state and have to fight for their rights. Anti-SWERF feminists believe in the freedom of each individual to choose any profession and think that SWERF perceives women as weak victims in need of protection from their own selves, is trying to control women's autonomy over their own bodies and refusing to view women as responsible conscious individuals who deserve to choose a career depending on their personal preferences and circumstances (Miano 2017).

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[4] https://www.dictionary.com/e/acronyms/swerf/

Sandra Calvert and Melissa Richards conducted interviews with females involved in pornography production (actors, writers, stage-hands, etc) and found out that they all of them do not understand views of some feminists, who consider porn degrading for women. They pointed out the inconsistency in their views: they claim to support women, yet do not give support to one of the most marginalised groups that needs it the most (Calvert, Richards 2006). As with any other studies about people, Hearing the voice of those in question is a cornerstone in understanding their experiences. In case of my research hearing women, who are a subject of objectification and infantilisation is necessary to make sense of theoretical findings. I will proceed to analysing interviews I conducted to see how they make sense of self-infantilising.

3. Research material and method

In this chapter I will introduce a method and a process of data selection and data analysing. I combine qualitative content analysis of interviews with Kress and Van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design and Barthes' concept of myth to achieve holistic understanding of self-infantilising practices as it is manifested by means of visual self-expression. Motivations for stylistic creations are rooted in a person's psychological state, in certain inclinations, preferences and desires. This is appropriate to study on the material of self-reflections of creators, which can be attained by means of interviews. Participants of my interviews, as suggested by their Instagram profile descriptions, position themselves as content creators. Personal photos on Instagram as products of artistic intent are inseparable from the creator and his or her inner aspirations, hence it is important to study creators' perspective. However photos as a different modality of expression possess a different set of meaning-making attributes that signify self-infantilising ideas. They can be aligned with or differ from psychological determinations, however they are interconnected as executed by the same actor. Combining verbal and visual seems to embrace two important aspects - mental implications and its embodied designs. These two modes that comprise self-infantilising - conceptual notions and its embodied visual epitomes, possess different technical characteristics, which are studied by different methods by me accordingly. Since my research is centered around Internet sex work I will not focus in detail on other potential modes of self-infantilising displays, such as other external creations (modelling surrounding space, choosing clothing) or different modes of behaviour.

3.1 Introduction of Instagram and Onlyfans

Instagram is a multimodal platform that allows users to share their photos and videos along with text. This collation of different modes of presentation allow better quality of conveying the message. However one can not add a link to their photo caption, which is a constraint for advertising purposes. Links can only be added to the profile description, which is limited to 150 characters. The post allows users to use 2200 characters. One can also add hashtags (maximum 30 per post) which, when clicked on, get users to the repository of all the other posts marked with the same hashtag. This creates a sense of community (Sheldon, Bryant 2016: 91).

Instagram is an interactive platform. Users can follow each other, thus tailoring their feed according to their preferences. There are interactive buttons such as comments and likes. Users can tag each other in their photos and send personal messages to each other. Studies have shown that main motivations to use Instagram are "Surveillance/Knowledge about others," "Documentation," "Coolness," and "Creativity" (Sheldon, Bryant 2016).

Instagram's terms of service do not allow adult content, which is a constraint for those who advertise their adult services. Ban on adult content on Instagram contributed to the popularity of other platforms that allow it, such as Onlyfans.

Onlyfans is a subscription based platform that allows users to become "fans" of sex workers or other content creators and gain access to their explicit content. Onlyfans is not exclusively made for adult content, however it seems to be the most popular type of content. Subscription is valid for a month with the possibility to enable auto-renew. Adult content creators can set a subscription price ranging from three to fifty dollars, and there are possibilities to make sales and bundles.

Onlyfans is also very interactive as it gives fans the possibility to tip and send private messages to the creator for the duration of their subscription. Feed is made the same way as Instagram's feed: creators can post different media along with text captions. This multimodality allows for the more intimate feel between creators and consumers of pornographic media. Broadcasters of pornographic content may utilise affordances to appear as holistic individuals.

Jones and Hafner traces the web trend of changing the position of the viewer from passive recipient to a contributor, participant (Jones, Hafner 2012: 47). Both Instagram and Onlyfans seem to follow this trend. The interactive affordances of these platforms allow creators to create meaningful connections with the audience and to showcase multiple aspects of their personality and creative skills.

3.2 The process of data gathering

Gill Valentine in her research about lesbians in everyday spaces defined snowballing as "a method of locating interviewees via other interviewees by using multiple initial contact points" (Valentine 1993: 497). Since my research is rooted in social media I will use a hybrid version of this, namely looking for more participants via social media networking. If I see a person on Instagram who might be suitable I will message them asking if they are interested. One can always find more by seeing whom they follow and interact with. On Instagram there is an option to show similar accounts, where the algorithm does the job for the user. To find more potential participants I posted an add in Reddit community for sex workers, introduce my research and ask if anyone is interested.

It is important to let interviewees know what the interview will look like to make them more familiar and thus less nervous in the face of the unknown. When asking for consent to participate in my research I plan to outline briefly what interviews will look like, what to expect, how much time approximately it will take. Consent forms were sent to participants and signed by them. The sample of consent form is attached in Annex.

I reminded participants that they can opt out at any point without any explanation and that they have the right to withdraw any data already provided. They should not feel obliged to continue participation because they have already agreed to. To prevent such occurrences and to make participants more comfortable I told them beforehand about the goal of the research, so they do not feel like any information that may influence their decision is being withheld from them. I let participants know beforehand how long the exchange will continue

so they can manage their schedule accordingly. I will tell participants that I plan to provide them with a summary of the research after it is done.

Sample description:

In total six participants were recruited, 5 of whom responded to my message on Instagram, and one person on Reddit. Two of the girls are American, two English, one Australian and one Russian. All of them self-identified as Caucasian. Three reported to be straight, one - bisexual, one - asexual, one - undefined. Average age of the participants - 23 years old. Three out of six girls identified as liberal, three - did not have any political preferences. Five of them are atheists, while one - Catholic. Four of the girls identified as feminists.

Photos for analysis were chosen from Instagram accounts of above mentioned girls. Four of them agreed to have their photos analysed. I asked those who agreed to point out a few photos from their profiles which they would prefer to be analysed. After they suggested a few photos I discussed the choice of the photo with each of them. The idea that we agreed on was to choose the one that is the most representative of self-infantilising practices. References to self-infantilising are present throughout their profiles, however some forms of photos, such as selfies, does not contain many attributes and does not present enough empirical material to be included in this work, which is limited in the amount of data the author is capable of analysing. Thus we tried to choose the most "eloquent" photo. Photos can be accessed in the Annex of this work.

Cartoon filters from the mobile application "Snow" were applied to all photos to match privacy concerns as elaborated in the section of this work dedicated to ethical decisions. We agreed with participants that photos will not be attributed to them and will not be put alongside with their words in order to protect their privacy and identity as explained in the ethics section. I will not interview them on the topic of the analysed photos, they will not provide any commentary to supplement my analysis. These two sections of my work (interviews and photos analysis) will remain separate. I said that I would send the result of the photo analysis to each of the participants personally.

3.3 Method of conducting and analysing interviews

In the next subchapters I will explain according to which methods interviews were conducted and analysed.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews as a method

For my interviews I chose a semi-structured method, because it suits my purpose the most. Below I will elaborate on why I deem it the most fit method of conducting interviews for the specifics of my research.

First of all, semi-structured interviews entail interaction among equal contributors, each of whom is enriching a conversation. Jennifer Mason names features of semi-structured interviews she calls both interviewer and interviewee "participants" (Mason 2002: 3). This term highlights the role of both interviewer and interviewee: the former is responsible for reflecting on their own input into the interviewing process, and the latter is treated like an active agent and can draw empowerment from that. Edwards and Holland in their comprehensive study of semi-structured interviews summarize this emancipatory shift in power relationships: "Broadly they chart movement from the notion of the neutral interviewer, standardization and exclusion of bias at the heart of more positivist approaches, to ideas of reflexive construction, difference and shifting positionalities of researcher and researched that have emerged from feminist, postmodern and interpretivist stances" (Edwards 2013: 7).

Semi structured interviews maintain a narrative to prevent digressions, but also allow respondents to construct replies on their own terms. For my research this is a perfect balance between regulating a process and allowing discussion to flow freely. I do not want participants to feel restrained by excessive rules or feel like they need to put themselves into the box to answer my questions. I want them to be free to speak in whichever fashion they prefer, but at the same time I want to keep a discussion related to the topic of my research. However I had a discussion with each of the participants and we agreed that open-ended questions that do not provide any considerate direction get them confused and place a burden of carrying on a conversation and coming up with something meaningful and categorical on them. Most of

them admitted that they have a lot to say and questions like "Tell me your story" puts a weight of choice and calibration on them, while it should be a job of the researcher. All of them admitted that it is a lot easier for them to structure their reflections if a question is formulated with precision and deliberation. It does not limit their contemplations, but shapes a discussion in a thoughtful way. We agreed to keep our conversation freely flowing to commentary and any other infiltrations. Participants were given the freedom to express whatever they want to when they feel like it.

Interview in virtual space has some specifics: there is no personal contact thus lack of non-verbal cues. It is more difficult to gauge interviewee's reaction and know if they are feeling uncomfortable. But there are some positive outcomes of this. According to Edwards and Holland, online interviews are less embarrassing and less intrusive. Secondly, analysis can be done more thoroughly on a textual level without any distraction (Edwards, Holland 2013). Not interacting in real time gives participants more time to think about the replies. I discussed it with participants and they all agreed that it is easier for them to reflect on their experiences in writing since they will have time to think over and will not feel pressured to respond and react. Interviewing in online space also gives a researcher more time to calibrate responses and follow-up questions. I do not plan to send all questions at once, since one question may cause biases in replies to the other question.

3.3.2 Qualitative content analysis as a method of analysing interviews data

Qualitative content analysis is a flexible method of analysing text that lies in classifying pieces of text into categories that possess a similar meaning (Weber 1990). Categories are not determined prior to the analysis but come from the process of systematically identification of patterns with the text. Researches allow new meaningful denominations to flow from the text (Krippendorf 1980). Qualitative content analysis revolves as reading all the data and coming up with codes to group clusters of data (Morgan 1993).

Danesi defines codes as tools, which are used to put a thing into a certain socio-cultural context (Danesi 1994: 138). One of the codes` features is interpretability, i.e. only those can encode the message, who are familiar with its implication. Codes have similar meaning to people, who share similar cultural backgrounds. For example, the majority representatives of Western culture would know that mule connotes stubbornness and sheep - mindless obedience. "Cultural codes provide a connotational framework since they are organized around key oppositions and equations' each term being aligned with a cluster of symbolic attributes" (Silverman 1983).

I immersed myself in reading the obtained data word by word many times, then marked key themes in the text, highlighted concepts that I deem appropriate, made initial notes and on the basis of that derived codes. Then I grouped codes into categories of analysis based on how codes relate to each other. I interpreted the meaning of the text according to this set of labels. I analysed the results and made conclusions.

3.3.3 Ethical decisions

Interviewing marginalized groups is a very responsible task, since the repercussions for them might be worse if their identity is revealed. I will strictly follow three basic principles suggested by AoIR (Association of Internet Researchers): "confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent" (Ess 2002: 24).

In my work along with doing interviews I analysed a few images that represent the phenomena and I decided not to attribute images to the people whom I interviewed to minimise risk of their identity being revealed. Although putting interviews data alongside the photos of the interviewee could benefit the research, the priority lies with protection of personal safety of participants. Juxtaposing photos with words might make participants feel at risk. If they feel like there is a possibility of revealing their identity they might not want to be honest with a researcher, since this topic evokes so much judgement and controversy and may severely hinder their further career choices, even jeopardize their safety. I blurred faces in

images using a cartoon filter in the "Snow" application to protect participants from being backtracked by reverse image search engines.

I plan to analyze images from public Instagram pages. There is a difficulty concerning ethics of analyzing content from social media domains. Helen Snee in her work about using Web 2.0 as a tool for research discusses this topic, along with methodological issues. She talks about different views regarding whether researchers have the right to use data that was submitted by users into their account/blog. She interviewed researchers to find out their opinion on this and other matters, and found out that among them there are supporters of two different positions. Some interviewees thought that the fact that information is freely available online is not an enough indicator of uploader's consent for this information to be used in any other way than demonstrative. This approach is called deontological (Snee 2008: 24). Other interviewees said that if no harm is done to human subjects, it is ethically justifiable to conduct research without informed consent. This approach is called utilitarian and is more prevalent in the United States, while deontological - in Europe (Snee 2008: 25). Snee also points out that there is a difference between content, which was posted with the intent of it to be viewed, and content, produced by users, who had an impression that they are in a safe private space and engage in a private encounter. When users download content to public platforms, they must read terms and conditions and understand the risk (Snee 2008: 23).

AoIR Ethical Guidelines suggest that there is a distinction between authors, and "subject". Authors post content as a performative act in itself, their content is meant to be consumed by the audience, while 'subjects' have a warranted belief that their information is not intended to be viewed and shared. When researchers are dealing with authors, AoIR Guidelines suggest that "fewer obligations to protect autonomy, privacy, confidentiality, etc., will likely follow" (Ess 2002: 7). The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy suggests that if information is accessible to public views, then it should not be protected in the same way as private information, and researchers do not have to worry about any specific privacy considerations (Buchanan, Zimmer 2021). Hence I plan to analyse photos from public domains and do not attribute authorship to protect privacy.

It is important to note that, "the protection of identity is privileged over credit to the author" (Snee 2008: 25). Creators of Instagram photos obtain copyrights to their images, but crediting them within my research may lead to an unsolicited disclosure of their identity.

Ethical guidelines require researchers to protect subjects from harm; disclosure of an individual's identity represents potential harm, and measures such as anonymity should be employed to avoid this (SRA 2003: 38-9). Hookway proved this measure effective in his research about morality in everyday life, where he argued that not attributing authorship in this case is a reasonable exclusion from Australian copyright law (Hookway 2008: 106).

I deal with a sensitive topic that may affect people's reputation and it is my responsibility to take all necessary measures to protect the identity of participants. ""Even if research subjects do not perceive any danger to themselves of data disclosure, nevertheless it is the task of the researcher to maintain principles of confidentiality as far as possible so that the interests of subjects are protected"" (SRA 2003: 25). While examining Instagram photos I plan to analyze, I will check if the account is set to private or public. I will only analyze photos from public accounts. I will ask for creator's consent before using an image. Photos saved from the Internet can be easily traced back to its original source if put into a search engine. When analysing photos, to protect the anonymity of creators I will blur their faces and other significant details. If I use photo captions I will paraphrase textual components instead of using direct quotations to make it untraceable.

3.3 Method of analysing photos

I will combine Barthes' concept of myth and Kress and Van Leuuwen grammar of visual design to achieve holistic understanding of the way photos are constructed.

3.3.3 Barthes' concept of myth

In order to analyse the connotative level of meaning in photos I will use Roland Barthes` notion of myth, elaborated by him in his works "Mythologies", "Rhetoric of the image", in short articles on semiotics of culture, etc. Myth in its traditional sense means folkloric

narratives, which are created to explain certain natural or social phenomena and aim to build a special worldview and create a set of behavioral rules and practices. For Barthes myth is a special kind of information, where connotation seems to be denotation, connotation and denotation are falsely identical, language seems to be diaphanous. Myth is an intricate sign system rooted in cultural references with specific relationship between its components (Barthes 2010: 120).

Goffman's statement that advertisements construct pseudo-reality by means of particular visual methods can be applied to self-representation practices too (Goffman 1979). By selecting specific representational techniques Instagram users create an idealized version of reality. They carefully choose clothes, angles, etc to create photos, and then meticulously choose the best photos among those taken, and the best suitable captions to post. Barthes calls textual level "the linguistic and the mythical", having in mind that the former carries direct referential sense, while the latter is about "rhetorical" implicit meaning (Barthes 2010: 125).

Barthes writes about myths that it is a metalanguage, which makes the formal system of initial referents become a signifier of some other referent. Myth is an intricate sign system rooted in cultural references with specific relationship between its components. As a result of the first system signifier is called "sense" by Barthes; as a primary element of the second system it is called "form". Form uses sense as a hideout, parasitises upon it; form is sated by sense's naturalness. Therefore myth as a communicative system is ambivalent and tricky; its meaning "flickers", it can be both denotative and connotative depending on the angle we choose. Myth deforms reality; actual reality freezes, loses its sense, becomes an obedient form (Barthes 2010: 120).

"Myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (Barthes 2010: 121). When we become aware of myth, it changes. We can look at an example of two moments that shift between watching a play and watching someone in the audience engaged in reading the play. The play constructs an internal narrative, but watching the reader shifts attention away from the story content to the form of play and its relationship to its audience. According to Barthes, when we read a newspaper, go to the cinema or quickly examine the packing of some goods it can be confidently said that we receive and perceive entirely connotative messages. So, if we do not address the question, whether connotation is an

anthropological phenomenon, intrinsic to all epoques and societies, we can claim that we live in the age of connotative reality (Barthes 2010: 412).

Myth as a communicative system is flexible, ambivalent and tricky; its meaning "flickers", it can be both denotative and connotative depending on the angle we choose. Myth is characterized by syntactic indeterminacy: sign systems are constantly changing and evolving, the arbitrariness of the relationship between signifier and signified creates a kind of wriggle for meaning to change and evolve within context.

3.3.3 Kress and Van Leeuwen's grammar of visual

Kress and Van Leeuwen created a visual semiotic model for analysing of images. They classified the image into three different dimensions. It will help me identify different resources as they are interpreted in the visual mode of the photos within the given semiotic landscape.

Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual theory is closely related to the semiotics of language. The first representational dimension in Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory relates to the ideational function of language as outlined by Michael Halliday in "Language as social semiotic". Ideational function of language is supposed to represent how speakers experience the world around (Halliday 1978). The second relational dimension corresponds to the interpersonal function of language, that creates connections between different carriers of language. The third compositional dimension relates to the textual function of language, that is responsible for gathering different elements into coherent whole.

Kress and Van Leeuwen write that the first dimension of the image is the representational dimension. It can be divided into narrative processes and conceptual processes, the former ones representing what is happening in the image and the latter representing ideas instilled into the image. Narrative processes are represented by actions and reactions of figures depicted in the photo. There are different kinds of participants in each image: those who are depicted on the image, those who create it, and the viewers. Represented participants are connected to each other or to the actions that are happening by means of vectors. Vectors are specific lines, such as gestures or gazes, that depict the direction

of the intended narrative. Participant who creates the vector is called "actor", while the one who receives it - "goal". However, if the vector is formed by means of gaze and there is no action rather than reaction, the participant who is making eye contact is called a "reactor", while the one who is supposed to receive it is called "phenomenon" (Kress; Van Leeuwen 1996: 60). "Phenomenon" might not always be present in the image.

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, representational visual dimension can be classified as conceptual when represented participants have symbolic meaning. Symbolic meaning is usually highlighted, or, in contrast, is achieved by masking certain elements. Symbolism can also be achieved through evident classification of represented visual elements, when they are part of the hierarchy. Analytical structure may be defined as consisting of "the carrier" (the whole) and "possessive attributes" (parts of the whole). The bearer of symbolic meaning is called "the carrier" too, while symbolic parts are called "symbolic attributes" (Kress; Van Leeuwen 1996: 62). Conceptual processes are usually static and represent characteristics that are not changing within the framework of the image, such as class, etc, while narrative processes are dynamic (Kress; Van Leeuwen 1996: 59). Conceptual processes are concerned with ideas and meaning-making mechanisms within the image.

Kress and Van Leeuwen define the second dimension as represented by the relation between the viewer of the image and participants of the image. It is also called "metafunction". Interactions between viewers and participants can be structured by vectors of participants' gaze and angle from which they appear (where do they look in relation to the viewer's position, do they look at the camera or not, where are they located on both horizontal and vertical axes). Frontal angle may indicate involvement of the viewer with represented participants, while any other angle - detachment. Vertical axis can signify power relationship: if participants in the image are to be observed from the upper angle they might be deemed as inferior; if, in contrast, they look at the viewer from upper angle, the viewer might feel as less powerful; if their eyes are at equal level, the power differences are eliminated (Kress; Van Leeuwen 1996: 70).

Kress and Van Leeuwen say that images make "demands" if participants look directly at the viewer, because this way they invite the viewer to participate in a particular social situation with them. The kind of social situation may be determined by facial expression of the participant: "They may smile, in which case the viewer is asked to enter into a relation of

social affinity with them; they may stare at the viewer with cold disdain, in which case the viewer is asked to relate to them, perhaps, as an inferior relates to a superior; they may seductively pout at the viewer, in which case the viewer is asked to desire them" (Kress; Van Leeuwen 1996: 122-123). If participants look away from the viewer, they make "offers" (Kress; Van Leeuwen 1996: 124). When it happens, the viewer is supposed to interact with the image not as an active participant in a social situation, but as a silent inactive observer, as if the viewer came into the museum.

Distance between participants and the viewer is another important factor in representational metafunction. Kress and Van Leeuwen adapt Edward T. Hall's classification of distances in everyday social life. Different distances between people allow different levels of bodily interactions, and these distances can be defined by means of visual cues. There are four types of distances: intimate (when we only see the face of the person); personal (is divided into two categories: close personal distance (when we see face and shoulders), far personal distance (when we can see other person from waist to the head), social (likewise is divided into two categories: close social distance (when we see the whole body), and far (when we see the whole body and what is around it), and public (when we can see a lot of people around) (Kress; Van Leeuwen 1996: 131). These types of interpersonal distance help calibrate the dynamics of the social situation that the image is presenting to us.

Another aspect of representational metafunction is modality - the degree to which the image appears realistic. Modality is represented by depicted colors, shades, depth of the perspective, detalisation, light, etc. Depending on how these factors are tuned, the image appears more or less realistic. If above mentioned indicators are at minimum, image becomes more abstract. If it is amplified, it becomes "more than real", it triggers sensory perception to the maximum (Kress; Van Leeuwen 1996: 256). Modality can vary from high, medium to low, where high modality represents naturalistic image, and low represents an abstract image.

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, another dimension is composition of the image. The way different elements are placed in the image signifies their value within the composition. Elements that are depicted in the top half of the image represent the ideal situation, something to strive for, while those at the bottom represent down-to-earth elements that serve more as a means to an end goal. What is positioned in the left half of the image is

implied to be already known, while elements in the right half are newly added, something that is not obvious to the viewer (Kress; Van Leeuwen 1996: 260).

4. Analysis of self-infantilising self-presentations: on the materials of interviews and photos

In this chapter I will analyse data obtained from interviews.

4.1 Construction of self-infantilising

In the first part of the analysis I want to use qualitative content analysis and look at how participants relate to self-infantilising, how do they make sense of this practice, what components constitute self-infantilising for them, what tools do they utilise to create infantile images. I outlined 4 categories of codes, and will present analysis results according to these categories, pointing out codes of which each category consists.

4.1.1 The concept of "Romantic childhood" as reflected in self-infantilising

> *Not in entire forgetfulness,*
> *And not in utter nakedness,*
> *But trailing clouds of glory*
> *do we come From God, who is our home:*
> *Heaven lies about us in our infancy!*
> *Shades of the prison-house begin to close*
> *Upon the growing Boy,*
> *But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,*
> *He sees it in his joy;*
> *The Youth, who daily farther from the east*

Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.[5]

The first category of analysis is nostalgia for childhood that was a repeated pattern in all six of the interviews. In the first chapter of my work I described "Romantic childhood" as a concept of innocent time in a person's life when they are free from obligations and are not subject to the laws of the adult world. I pointed out that many feminists are in opposition to the application of the Romantic childhood framework to constructing the image of women in the media, because it makes them inferior and is meant to exclude them from the economic relationship. When analysing interviews I conducted I found out that all six participants have quite homogeneous views regarding the role of childhood in their lives. They all seem to associate the period of their childhood with the concept of "Romantic childhood". Most importantly, they explicitly express the desire to prolong this period for the rest of their lives. They embrace "Romantic childhood" as a dream, something to strive for.

Although they all adhere to the concept of "Romantic childhood" as a manifestation of idealisation of childhood, it does not mean that everything in their real childhood was unproblematic. Their experiences are not homogenous. However, even those who recalled some unpleasant memories, did not make any connection between those memories as a particular instance and the concept of childhood as a whole. It looks like those separate cases do not represent and do not influence the very idea of childhood. They position negative experiences as something situational, local, that took place due to some exceptional unfavorable circumstances, which are inevitable in the process of life.

I identified these codes within the participant's talk on childhood nostalgia: "feeling carefree", "desire to feel secure".

Kira, Jessie and Claire explicitly state that childhood is the best period of their lives, which they would like to prolong. They seem to make fetishization of childhood a vital part of their personality. Jessie uses sexual age play as a tool, a kind of a time machine, to make her feel as a child again. She identifies childhood with feeling free and safe, with submitting to

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[5] (Wordsworth 1807 (1998))

parents, who look after you. Jessie engages in DDLG practices in a role of a little girl, and she believes that submitting to "daddy", letting control go gives her an intense feeling of freedom, which she compares to "floating on air". Her partner brushes her teeth and clips her toenails, so she can be free from chores and indulge in the feeling of happiness and nonchalance. Jessie explicitly rejects adult world and responsibilities that come with it: "That feeling of being looked after, having to make no decisions, it's like there's no outside world, bullshit adult world, I'm in my own little bubble and I can be like I was before school, it was just pure happiness, no competition, no judgement…". She finds joy in the feeling of being taken care of, having her basic needs met, feeling secure, because, when she does not have to worry about unimportant things, her creative potential is fully unleashed, her emotional side is unravelled.

For Jessie her childhood is a time before traumatizing adult experiences happened. She alludes to being unhappy at school, this is why she wants to be frozen in pre-school time. Her little age is 3^6. Unlike Jessie, Claire recalls traumatizing experiences that happened during her childhood, but she still would like to stay mentally in that period. The reason for that is because the adult world is much worse, than dealing with conflicts inside the family. Even though there were some unpleasant moments, she still did not have to earn money, worry about sustaining herself, about food and the roof over her head. Both Claire and Jessie associate adulthood with profanity, while childhood - with creativity.

Claire had a difficult time since she turned eighteen, because at that age her mother forced her to move out and refused to support her financially. She had to work three jobs to afford food and rent. She says that when she discovered childlike aesthetics, it made her feel secure again. Claire uses phrases like "space away from the daily grind", "escape from reality", "refuge", "a fantasy world that's real to me" to characterize her Instagram and Onlyfans. Her adult life is not easy, but innocent aesthetics gives her an opportunity to feel like "a girl again before things started to get serious".

Kira feels the same way about her childhood - a time, when she could be carefree, because she had everything for granted and did not have to work it. She tries to reach that state now by having sugar daddy[7] take care of her financial needs. Kira thinks that being supported by

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[6] Little age is an age with which age players identify as opposed to their official age
[7] Sugar daddy is an older male who provides financial support to a younger girl in exchange for sexual or romantic favors

sugar daddy embodies her dream of universal basic income: "I believe that I am entitled to food, rent, clothes, everything. I am a sucker for having monetary rights by virtue of being born". She grew up in a poor working class family in Russia, and believes that capitalism distributes opportunities unfairly, as she was disadvantaged compared to those who were born in the working class family in the United States or those who were born in a middle class family in Russia. Although her childhood was not very well-off due to the financial situation in her family, in the similar fashion as Claire, she recalls only the best moments.

Kira's most vivid memory is watching the "Sailor Moon" cartoon on TV and her mother serving cacao to her bed. Claire also recalls a simplistic moment from her childhood when she was swinging in the backyard and looking at clouds' shapes. Although Yasmine does not directly refer much to her childhood, she describes her current life as full of the same beautiful carefree moments: "I like just chilling... on the swing in my garden in my favourite loli dress". "Romantic childhood" embodies for these girls a time when small things mattered and evoked excitement, and they want to make this time infinite, not tied to an age, but to the state of mind; and they plan to maintain this state of mind throughout their lives, hence opening the boundaries of childhood and letting it flow through the whole timeline.

It appears that Onlyfans workers whom I interviewed embrace "Romantic childhood". They all said in one way or the other that they do not want to be a part of difficult adult production mechanisms. Childhood is a time when basic needs of a child were taken care of (ideally) and a child could use his or her free time to play. These girls use what they already have - their body, and whom they already are to sustain themselves, so they do not have to compromise their physical or mental labour. Childhood means freedom from burdening obligations and conflicts. A figure of a child seems to embody for them a happy blissful creature, who does not have to deal with unnecessary complications, expectations, stereotypes.

4.1.2 Sexual component of self-infantilisation

The next category of participant's reflections is sexuality. Since I am analysing sex-workers, it is important to note how the romantization of childhood corresponds to the sexual side of their personality. They all utilise self-infantilisation to construct their sexual image, which they advertise for monetary gain. Results of the interviews showed that all girls are self-conscious about the usage of their innocent look as a sexual trap for men. The difference is that the majority rejects sexual innocence on a personal level, and feels distant from it, like Claire, Kira, Hannah and Ruby, while the minority - Yasmine and Jessie, relates to it.

I identified these codes within girls' talk about their sexuality as related to infantilism: "holistic image", "connectedness" vs "feeling disconnected", "surprise that it is sexually attractive for men".

It looks like most girls did not know men would react favourably to the infantile look. "I had no idea that the innocent aesthetic is a major fetish for men. It came as a shock", - says Claire, who explains that she always preferred to dress in a revealing way. But it brought a lot of negative attention into her life, so she assumed if she would change her attire from "figure-hugging bodycon dresses" to something more innocent, the attention would stop. But to her surprise it did not happen, attention only amplified. Jessie confesses to having felt unattractive and rejected by peers at school, she was surprised with how much money and attention she can get with her body type among adult men: "I never even realised guys liked small girls so much, I don't have much of an ass and my breasts are average".

Claire believes that that value lies in her image as a whole, she spends a lot of time on choosing her outfits, color coordinating them, creating her photos. Sexual part is just a part of her appeal: "it's like a jigsaw and trying to say it's just one thing and labelling it is pretty lame really". Although she acknowledges that the sexual part is an important part of her personality for her subscriber, she feels distant from it: "The only thing that bothers me is when people make comments saying they're masturbating to me. I know this is happening but to me it's not what I think when I'm posting something".

Ruby, although, wholeheartedly relates to the sexual part of her appeal, rejects the innocent part of it. She is deeply concerned about sexual liberation of women, and inspires her female followers to embrace their sexuality like she does. But, when asked about how she feels knowing that her Onlyfans subscribers are attracted to her youthful look and style, she

responds with just one eloquent word: "slime". For Ruby the infantile part is just a natural part of her personality, and, like Claire, she would like people to perceive her as a whole, and not just extract the part that they like the most: "I choose clothes that reflect my personality, which I've been told is like 5 personalities, so there a bit of everything... punk, goth, loli, dyke…". She said that men showed interest in her schoolgirl outfits, in the fact, that she first had sex at the age of 12, but she feels uncomfortable talking about it. She pointed out that she does not take custom requests on Onlyfans, because she wants to be herself and not cater to others' needs and fetishes.

Hannah is the only girl, who admitted to feel asexual. She reports to be fully distant from what she does, and her main goal is to earn money. She noticed a trend and decided to try it out and see how much she can make it by adopting the infantile imagery. Recently Hannah created a separate Instagram account to be her real self on there, and she was surprised that despite posting normal everyday pictures, sexual attention did not stop: "I kept getting v sexual comments even on fairly innocuous pics. There was one I posted last week of me eating sushi in my dressing gown and some random guy said he wanted to 'stuff it up my anus then suck it back out' ". Kira pointed out the very same phenomenon that even if she did not deliberately sell sexual pictures in infantile attire, she would still be "ridiculously sexualised". Just like Ruby and Claire, Kira sees nothing sexual in infantile style itself, but deems it an organic part of her personality. She wants to remain forever colorful, curious, sincere, whimsical as a child, and it does not have any direct link to sexual fetish for her.

Jessie, on the contrary, finds meaning in the sexual side of self-infantilisation. Engaging in daddy's little girl relationship helps her feel more connected to her body, to her sexuality. She finds both comfort in innocence and sexual pleasure. She feels completely at ease when being taken care of like a child: "I had never actually properly cum before this so called kink, even on my own. So I could when I had my first ddlg experience with (name), cos I felt relaxed sexually like never before". Jessie believes that there is nothing morally wrong with the sexual side of the daddy's little girl relationship, because feeling "safe and warm", like a child provides a better background for any kind of activity, including sexual. She thinks that children are not asexual beings and alludes to Freudianism: "If you think a 12 year old girl doesn't have feelings for her daddy then you have obviously never been a 12 year old girl".

Yasmine also relates to the sexual side of her youthful innocence, but unlike Jessie, she sees her youthful innocence as a valid object for someone else's sexual enjoyment, not that

much of her own. Yasmine is in a mutually beneficial relationship with a sugar daddy, where he gets to enjoy the perks of her youthfulness, while she gets financial support. She believes that there is nothing morally wrong with men being fond of innocence, she is happy to provide that to them. Kira is also in a relationship with sugar daddy, but does not feel that satisfied with sugar daddy hanging up to her infantile image, she sees it as an inevitable nuisance. Kira would much rather prefer to be innocently infantile, while Yasmine is proud of being sexually infantile. Yasmine believes that the age of consent is the relic of patriarchy, another stereotype meant to police women's sexuality.

Although not all girls feel connected to the sexual side of infantilism, they all acknowledge that it constitutes a strong part of their appeal for viewers. Some are unhappy with it, like Claire, Ruby and Kira, some are more neutral like Hannah, and some proud of it like Jessie and Yasmine.

4.1.3 Implications in social life

In this subchapter I analyse how this construction of infantile world interacts with the real world they inhabit. I identified several codes: "transgressive fantastic safe reality", "revolutionary potential", "receiving support from the outside world". It looks like all of the girls see a huge transformative power in self-infantilising, each in their own way they use it to transgress the boundaries of society. For most girls I interviewed self-infantilisation seems to be a means of creating a better world, a dream world, which they would like to implement in reality

Claire treats her infantile world as a place to hide from the real world: "It's a blissful and innocent world, a safe fantasy realm. I think it's magical". She also invites her fans to enter this world: "And I think most of my audience like the feeling I project, of being a sweet girl, I think it makes them feel in a good place too". She confesses that her boyfriend felt insecure and jealous because of the sexual side of what she does, so she had to break up with him. Her mother was against her Onlyfans business, so Claire stopped talking to her. There is no place in this world for those who bring conflicts. This world is supposed to be "safe" and "blissful".

Yasmine also uses fantasy, fairy terms to talk about her self-infantilising practices. Throughout our conversation she used names like "Alice in Wonderland", "Wonderland", "Disney phantasmagoria", "feminist utopia" to characterize her ideal world. She lives out this idea of an ideal world, it merges with her real life. She fully embraces self-infantilisation and sees a revolutionary potential in it, just like Jessie and Kira. All of them believe that what they do can help change the world for the better. Yasmine talks about Lolita a lot. She sees her as a symbol of her aspirations, characterizes herself as a "modern Lolita". It looks like she wants the world to become what it looks like through Lolita's heart-shaped rose-colored glasses. Lolita for her embodies a figure of a girl who has a power over men and can harness this power not only to her benefit, but also to the benefit of the society.

Jessie is also concerned about the transformative effect of what she does on the society: "We're challenging that, we don't see being childlike as a negative thing, to us it's freedom, people will look back one day and see us as pioneers. I really mean it!". Kira believes in the same thing - in challenging the world's order, which she deems deeply unfair. She thinks that everyone deserves to be happy and carefree as a child, and to have rights that enable it. Although Jessie and Kira did not mention any particular issues they support, they seem to want the same thing - to make people's lives easier and happier, to change society's attitude to childlike mentality.

Social activism is an important part of some of Yasmine's and Ruby's lives. Yasmine supports Black Lives Matter movement and talks about it a lot, Ruby takes a stance in the battle for LGBT rights. They both use their platforms and sexual attention they get to draw attention to something different than sexuality, to advocate for their social justice concerns. Ruby says: "I'm an artist and activist combined. I encourage others with my captions about climate change, veganism, with me it isn't just sexual, you get a whole philosophy". Yasmine positions herself as post-feminist, while Ruby as a feminist. Ruby does not focus much on the infantile aspect, for her the main theme is sexual liberation of women. But they both believe in "pussy power", its transformative strength, which Yasmine summarizes: "This isn't Female Eunuch any more. This is nuclear pussy".

Kira has the most utopian image of her ideal world. She takes it further than other girls and dreams of the world, where she does not have to age and die. She acknowledges that it is unfortunately impossible, but she dreams everyday of remaining a child forever. She believes she is entitled to life on this planet and views the natural process of decaying as unfair:

"When I was a little kid I was the happiest, my skin was naturally moisturised and glowing, I didn't have to buy collagen supplements, I had so many years of freshness ahead of me". Kira references Baddie Winkle - 92 year old Instagrammer, who still dresses in a youthful way, as her role model.

Iris Apfel, 93 year old fashion designer, known for her whimsy style, distinguishes between "childish" and "childlike", where "childish" involves being spoiled, dependent, naughty, throwing temper tantrums, while "childlike" entails maintaining a sense of wonder, curiosity, willingness to experiment. Just like Claire, Kira, Yasmine and Jessie she says that she wants to remain a child forever in the best sense of the word: "I still have a vivid imagination, and I like to try a lot of new things. The world is always full of promise. I guess maybe today, teenagers are not so open to things; they just press buttons. It's not like when I was growing up. I just never want to completely grow up" (Kelsey, Apfel 2015).

All girls seem to have friends who support them. Everyone except Claire has also a supportive partner. Claire, Jessie and Ruby tried to recruit their friends to do the same thing, Jessie even asked her mother: "She had me quite young so she's only 36, I'm encouraging her to do an OF too, she's little still". Ruby is the only one who actually succeeded in recruiting her girlfriend, and now they make videos together. She talks a lot about her influence on her friends and fans. She sees herself as a visionary, who can change her friends' lives.

Hannah is different from the other girls in a way that she does not see infantilisation as her worldview. She feels neutral about it and utilizes it for monetary gain. But even she admitted to having discovered transformative power in it. She opened up about a trauma that she experienced as a child, and now she was surprised that her Onlyfans job helped her relieve those moments in a therapeutic way. To her surprise Hannah also found comfort in feeling as a child again. She is the only one of the girls who is married. Her partner is fully supportive, only her coworkers do not know, as she is the only one among the girls who still holds a regular job.

None of the girls I interviewed actually mentioned the negative sides of childhood, they did not talk about what Iris Apfel called "childish". All of them focused on positive aspects, and if I did a second interview, I would ask about how they feel about some traits of children that do not fit the picture of joy and happiness. For now they portrayed infantile world as a mythical utopian fantasy world. And this special world seems to commingle with the real world for them in a way that it almost fully absorbs all aspects of their reality, relationship and

business, and they aspire to spread its reign to the rest of the world, too. They would like to make an impact on society.

4.1.4 Self-positioning within the feminist framework

There were several codes that signalled for self-positioning of the girls within feminist framework: "freedom, power to be yourself", "monetisation", "non-adherence to stereotypes and conservative morality", "exploring oneself". A difference between feminist perspective on infantilising women and self-infantilising lies in the particle "self", as, when done by women, it automatically turns them into active agents instead of passive recipients. The girls I interviewed are united in their opposition to patriarchy. They feel in complete control of the reality they created. They charge people for letting them into their world. They feel liberated from societal expectations, since they do not succumb to a pressure to fit into the capitalistic framework of a serious busy respectable adult.

Girls who self-infantilise themselves also feel no coercion from men to do so, on the contrary, they exploit men's interest in such imagery to their own benefit. Men enable them to live in their dream world, while demanding nothing in return besides being able to gaze at their exquisitely stylised bodies on screen as objects of art. Those who reported to be in a consensual relationship with a sugar daddy also did not point out any pestering or intimidation.

All of the girls I interviewed denied feeling objectified, and all of them with no exception admitted to feel empowered. They all seem to be proud of their sense of agency, all of them feel in charge and confident, because they are active creators of their own self-infantilisation. Four of the girls (Jessie, Ruby, Yasmine and Kira) answered "yes" to the question "Do you feel like what you are doing is revolutionary, ground-breaking in some way?".

Jessie thinks of what she does as a form of art: "It's not art like old fashioned shit in a museum, it's almost like virtual, with the facetune and costumes". She likes to be perceived as an object, because an object can be a fascinating creation of art: "an object can be a beautiful vase not just some utilitarian plaything". She feels liberated and in control, because she

creates her own world, where she can shift reality and time according to her wishes: "If I make real again the life I'm nostalgic for, then it's no longer nostalgia, it's happening now, I made it happen".

Ruby sees herself as an embodiment of women's freedom: "a strong woman unafraid to express her sexuality". She is a role model to her followers and sees them as "the new suffragettes", who "are not chaining themselves to railings anymore". Ruby has a tattoo of Boadicea*[8] on her thighs and frequently wears headdresses in her photos. She associates herself with Xena, the Warrior Princess[9], because she feels like "leading the way - battling against the patriarchy". She inspires her followers to be unapologetically themselves and not pay attention to what society is telling them to do. She is polyamorous and thinks that monogamy is a "hangover from patriarchy" and is repressing to a woman since it subdues natural instincts. She does not see anything anti-feminist in being objectified, she does not view it as objectification, because she is in control.

Yasmine is very passionate about feeling in charge of what she does and denying being objectified: "I CHOOSE to be objectified, I'm the object objectifying the observer. I take their plastic object and turn it into money for BLM. That's MY object". Just like ruby she is in opposition to the patriarchy and its norms. When asked would she consider herself an age regressor she replies: "I'm an age progressor. I flip the bird at patriarchal commentary, these are dying terms for a dying order", - she wishes to quit the existing system of values on age. There are some warrior references as in case of Ruby: "Infantilisation is weaponisation. I stick my hairless pussy in the face of the patriarchy". Interestingly, in case of these girls innocence transforms into something not-innocent - a war with the world order.

Kira thinks there is nothing wrong or threatening to her independence in having a constant supply of money without having to work for it in a traditional sense. She believes that having a man providing for her puts her in a superior position: "I feel like an idle queen surrounded by slaves". She does not see a threat in man demanding her to obey him in order to receive money, because she does not have to do anything extra besides being herself: "I am beautiful and interesting, a delight to be around". Both Yasmine and Kira have an interesting

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[8] Boadicea is the Roman version of spelling Boudicca - a queen of British Celtic tried who led a war against Roman Empire in the first century AD (Fraser 1990).

[9] Xena: the Warrior Princess is an Emmy Award-winning TV show about ex-warlord Xena with a dark past, who decided to redeem herself and fight for a greater good. She travels through ancient world helping people (Hercules and Xena Wiki).

position regarding sugar daddy-baby dynamics: they both seem to view themselves as dominant in that type of relationship, while traditionally it is expected that both in a real nuclear family, and in adult adaptation of family terminology daddy has power over the baby. They seem to redefine traditional representations.

Kira admits that she likes when women are represented as forever young and beautiful in the media, it inspires her to daydream about a perfect world. Kira She notes that she cares about it not because of imposed ideas of feminine beauty, but because ageing is biologically harmful to the organism and she finds it unattractive. This is important in the context of feminist tradition of viewing women as passive victims of beauty industry.

Although none of the participants are interested in Japanese Lolita fashion, there is a similarity in the incentive to dress in a childlike way between them and those, who adopt Lolita fashion, which I talked about in the first chapter. Just like adepts of Lolita fashion girls I interviewed play with what was once considered oppressive, re-define it, put a new layer of meaning to what was once a symbol of subjection.

It is important to note that all participants of the interviews I conducted agreed to be referred to as a "girl" instead of a woman. The word "girl" is controversial, because it might be used both purely descriptively and also it might be used to belittle, show that a female is lacking adult qualities. These negative connotations may entail that a woman is silly or weak, as in case of a

At the same time some women like to be referred to as girls because it makes them feel younger, while "a woman" implies something maternal. Sometimes it stems from patriarchal implication that the value of a woman decreases as she ages. There is no official convention as to when a girl becomes a woman. Internationally people under the age of 18 are considered children.

Participants of my interviews agreed that the word "girl" represents their worldview better, as they do not want to grow up and it is a conscious choice, they embrace all the potential negative implications and turn into positive.

Five out of six girls do not infanilise themselves for money. This is an unexpected finding in the context of sums of money some of them named as their monthly income. Onlyfans brings them quite a lot of money, yet they do not deem it as an important motivational factor of self-infantilisation. Hannah is the only girl who opted infantile aesthetics to be successful on Onlyfans. She found out men are attracted to infantile images

when she did a profound research about making money on Onlyfans. She started Onlyfans solely for monetary gain and having a precise strategy in mind. She adhered to what would facilitate her earnings: "It became apparent quite quickly that younger appearing girls were most of the top 10 percent. I wasnt going to miss out because of any hang ups about that. There's a million girls just waiting to take my place if I do". She also does not feel any downsides to being infantilized and objectified, since she is in complete control. She is following her financial plan securing the future of her and her husband.

Among all girls Claire has felt the most significant shift in her life due to income from Onlyfans. She was able to quit her retail job three month ago. Before she was forced to work to pay rent, which was very upsetting to her as she was forced to wear a uniform at work she was not able to express herself. Then she witnessed how other females who had similar style to hers earned money on Onlyfans by showcasing a sexual side of their image, and decided to try it too. Now she is able to afford to spend a whole day immersed in her fantasy world, meticulously choosing outfits and other details for her shootings. Claire is thankful to Onlyfans for allowing her to dwell in "a fantasy world, one of innocence and playfulness, blissful and innocent world". But even she admits that money is not the reason she does this for. She wants to invite people into her world, just like Jessie, who says: "It didn't start off about money. I feel like I'm part of something, I found my niche and it's something I feel natural doing".

For most girls money is a pleasant surprise, a side product of their normal activity. Ruby says: "I was always anti capitalist so money was never a motivator for me, it was about sharing myself and inspiring others with my look and attitude. But during the pandemic like 200,000 people a day were subbing to OF, so obviously it was booming". Ruby started an Onlyfans because she admits to have an enormous sex drive, and if showing it on screen can bring her money and attention, then it is a great opportunity to combine life and work. As discussed before, like Yasmine, she uses attention she gets to promote her ideological views. Same can be said about Yasmine, whose sugar daddy is rich enough to make her existence carefree, but she chooses to support sex workers by being one of them and advocating for their rights: "HH is a millionaire, so I don't need the money. But I'm doing it to push the agenda, oppose the FOSTA-SESTA hypocrisy - and if I can do that while looking as hot as fuck, then suck my dildo haters!"

I asked all of the girls how they react to comments on their Instagram accounts that accuse them of sexualising children, demoralising society.

Claire thinks that cute aesthetic has nothing to do with promoting harm to underage girls, and there is nothing she can do, if people see her through a perverted length. She believes that problem lies within those people who see innocence as sexual: "I think it's magical. If some people look at it differently then that's their interpretation. It has nothing to do with me". Innocence should not be tied to a narrow age framework: "playfulness… doesn't have to stop as soon as you turn 18". She notes that mostly women make hateful comments on her page and accuse her of sexualising children. Just like Jessie she feels uncomfortable at the thought of real paedophiles watching her photos.

Jessie highlights that daddy's little girl type of relationship is just a roleplay, although sexual, it is executed among consenting adults. She is scared of paedophiles, but also is reflecting on possible positive sides to providing a safe outlet to paedophiles: "Like they can fantasise and let off steam that way instead of doing something to a child irl. I don't know".

Hannah, who is the opposite of Jessie in a way that she the most distant from the sexual side of infantilisation, thinks that precisely because of her side position she can adopt a broader perspective. She believes it is not morally wrong as it may have a positive effect on the mental health of adults. It is a safe play that may help each participant forget their problems, resolve doubts, help them come to terms with possible traumatic experiences.

Ruby and Yasmine raise an important question about the authority, which is competent enough to police people's sexuality in regards to age or gender. Ruby believes posting photos in infantile attire brings into question an important moral and legal controversy: "Who decides when and where sexuality begins?". She lost her virginity when she was 12 to another girl and she believes policing adolescent girls' sexuality is a product of patriarchy. She openly admits that she had sexual experiences with herself even before the age of 12. Yasmine asks the same question: "Underage according to who?". She points out that those who made those laws do not follow them themselves: "Donald Trump signs FOSTA-SESTA and fucks underage girls on Jeffrey Epstein's pedophile island. I stand against hypocrisy and for symbiotic exchange between consenting humans". Both Yasmine and Ruby view sexuality as something that can be comprehended and defined only by individuals themselves and all the rules that try to govern it are inherently relative and dependent on questionable stereotypes.

They do not believe in morality as it stands as something objective can not be applied to subjective human experiences.

4.2 Visual analysis

In this subchapter I will analyse girls' reflections on their visual aesthetics, method of making, editing photos, and conduct a visual analysis of three photos taken from Instagram accounts of Onlyfans workers to see how self-infantilisation manifests through the construction of the photos. Then I will discuss the results of the analysis.

4.2.1 Visual tools for self-infantilisation

Self-infantilisation has different dimensions, and unlike visual application is quite often almost immediately visible to the external observer, psychological relation to it is not obvious. All of the girls I interviewed, except Hannah, relate to visual infantile attributes they use in photos (and some of them in real life) on a psychological level. Hannah does this for monetary purposes, while for all the other girls visual self-representation is a reflection of their personality. Ruby elaborated a lot on how she used visual self-expression to make her feel successful and established as a person: "At school I was known as a problematic kid, had bad grades. I wanted to show with my clothes that I am different, that I have a personality and interests, that my worth isn't based on my grades. So my look is a natural expression of who I am, a free spirit who doesn't fit in with the norm". She told a story about how she did first piercing with a safety pin and then kept it as a mascot. Jessie explained how discovering a little space aesthetics led her to connecting with her true self.

Claire told me how discovering the kawaii community had a soothing, therapeutic effect and made her feel like she belongs. For Yasmine and Kira visual representation in an infantilising manner is almost ideological.

In the majority of cases infantilisation is not done on the level of the body. None of the girls purposefully try to alter their body to be more childlike. Two of the girls (Jessie and Kira) admitted to utilise what they already possess - petite physics, to enhance the infantile look. Claire said her body is the opposite of infantile, as she has a curvy figure and big breasts, but says: "I think they make me look special. Most girls in the niche got itty bitty boobs". Other girls did not talk about their body in relation to self-infantilising at all. As I said before, four of them do not relate to the sexual side of self-infantilisation. Jessie, one of the girls, who admitted to utilising her naturally petite body to look more infantile, engages in sexual age regression, so it makes sense for her to view the body in tandem with mind settings. Kira, the other girl, who utilises petite physics, does this to be appealing to buyers, but feels uncomfortable with it. Thus it is important to note that the body in the majority of cases is excluded from visual self-infantilising discourse as sexual and irrelevant to psychological implications. Visual discourse of self-infantilisation revolves around styling.

It is safe to assume that attributes mentioned by girls can be seen as "codes" of infantility in the context of Western culture that is prone to the concept of Romantic childhood. As shown before, Romantic childhood symbolizes the opposite of professional officialdom. Successful interpretation of the images created by these girls for Instagram depends on viewers' ability to feel connection with the arsenal of codes included in the picture.

This leads us to another important point: digital photo manipulations. Airbrushing, which has always been popular in fashion photography, does not require Photoshop or other cumbersome software anymore. There are multiple applications for a mobile phone, where one can not only brush the skin, remove wrinkles or any other perceived "imperfections", but also quite literally perform a plastic surgery on their photo or video: alter the shape and size of any facial or bodily features. It is possible to make your face, nose, chin smaller, eyes - bigger, waist and hips - tinier, - anything one can wish for. On the forum Reddit there is a "subreddit" called "Instagram/Reality", where people compare the edited photos posted by someone to their Instagram with an unedited photos of them posted by someone else (i.e. a friend of that Instagrammer). One of the most popular instances is when a woman edits herself to look a lot younger and to have a "baby face" (big eyes, small nose, narrow chin, rosy cheeks, smooth skin), but "real" photo exposes her signs of ageing. Usually they are ridiculed for not embracing natural processes, for trying to be who they are not. Members of

forums dedicated to discussing Internet celebrities, like "Lolcow", "PrettyUglyLittleLiar" are obsessed with nitpicking every single detail that was supposedly edited in attempts to put down those women, who chase the "ideal". But it is understandable why those women edit themselves in such a way: in fashion magazines and advertisements we see ubiquitous images of "forever young" models, as if they live in a different realm, where time does not touch their physics. I want to ask women I interview about their take on editing: whether they do it, if yes, then what motivates them personally.

On both Instagram and Onlyfans unless they are doing a live show girls do not have to expose themselves to their audience directly in real time, which also means they can enhance images and videos, add effects, stickers, filters and even change their facial or bodily features. Changes can be applied to both pre-made photos and videos, and to on-spot capturing or recording. One can either customise features or use pre-made filters. Only two participants (Jessie and Kira) of interviews admitted to utilising these affordances. As I mentioned before, Jessie is the only girl out of six for whom self-infantilising is among everything else a completely corporeal practice. Jessie is the only girl who mentioned that shaving intimate is an essential part of her routine. Some of the other girls may engage in sexual submissive power dynamic, but they do not see infantilisation a part of that dynamic. Kira acknowledges to be obsessed with the idea of eternal youthfulness and hence she feels the need to manipulate photos. Just like Jessie, Kira uses Facetune to enlarge her eyes and lips, make her face smaller and remove any wrinkles, pimples or fine lines. Other girls said that they do not in any way make their faces or bodies more young or childlike. It is important to state that self-infantilisation visual discourse for them does not touch the realm of physical body.

However four of the girls admitted to be using editing software to enhance photos with add-ons like frames, stickers or to make collages. One of the girls kindly provided access to her collection of PicsArt stickers. Those stickers combine childish elements like Hello Kitty characters, chalk writing with highly sexualized expressions like "Cum swallower", thus creating a tension between two worlds: the world of innocent children and that of sexual adults. Most of the stickers (like "dumb girl", "insecure angel", "property of master", "hurt me im adorable", "call me your kitty", "pet me", "bratty and pouty", "fragile kitten", "you're the boss daddy") play around the submissive-dominant power dynamic suggesting that the girl on the photo to which a sticker is attached is ready to confide her body, trust it to be owned by the viewer of the photo. A girl, who provided access to her stickers collection said

that she frequently uses sticker "Click to fuck" on her Instagram photos to suggest redirection to her Onlyfans, inviting them to click the link in her bio. Sticker "Click to fuck" like the previous stickers suggests that body is entrusted with no resistance, as if we are dealing with computer character, which is available at any time. Claire, Hannah, Jessie and Yasmine admitted to associate self-infantilisation with a submissive role in relationship, but, as shown in previous subchapters, paradoxically submission for them more resembles dominance. As the state of being taken care of allows them to be in complete control of their creative desires.

4.2.2 Kress and Van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design applied to the analysis of photos

In this subchapter I analyse few photos taken from Instagram account of sex workers to see by means of what codes they are constructed. Photos are composed of many elements, all of which contribute to creating a certain impression: interior, clothing, additional props, make-up, editing, angles, color scheme, etc. I want to see how all these factors act on a symbolic connotative level.

I will identify three dimensions of visual design in selected photos and interpret their meaning. I want to analyse all three levels in order to trace how a message is formed on each of them, to illustrate how self-infantilisation is created on all three levels of the meaning making process.

Image number 1 (see annex) is taken from an Instagram account of a user, whose name is composed of words "bubblegum" and "baby". Both words are associated with childhood, innocence, carefree existence. Profile description of user says the year of her birth (1997) framed with pink flower emojis. In this case displaying the year of birth could mean two things:

1. Emphasising young age
2. Letting customers know that she can legally engage in adult activities.

Pink flower emojis also supporting the idea of youthfulness, as flowers are traditionally associated with life, beauty, but given emoji (🌷) - tulip blossoms in spring, and spring

evokes associations of newness, birth, growth, juvenility, in contrast to fall and winter (decay, oldness, death).

In the photo we see a young woman, lying on the bed writing in her notebook. The vector of her hand holding a pen directed at the notebook represents a narrative process of writing. Vectors of her legs crossed behind her back while she is lying on her stomach depicts relaxation mode, emphasizing that the activity of writing is recreational, not professional. Her pose is carefree, comfortable, supposedly innocent.

Conceptual processes are represented by the girl's outfit: she is wearing schoolgirl attire (white thigh high stockings, white polo with a collar, navy pleated skirt with white horizontal stripes at the bottom, oxford shoes), hence she can be classified as a schoolgirl in the context of this photo. Her hair is combed in small pigtails that prevent hair from falling onto her face and obstructing her vision while she is writing.

Girl is looking directly at the camera with a perplexed gaze, as if she is making a demand for us to take part in her writing process, to help her figure out the right thing to write down. Viewers can conclude that they see a schoolgirl that came home from school and now is doing her homework assignment. In her textbook it is written:

<p style="text-align:center">"I did not</p>

<p style="text-align:center">My cat</p>

<p style="text-align:center">I did not cum</p>

<p style="text-align:center">On my cat"</p>

The notebook is cropped on the photo, and what was supposed to be "I did not cum on my cat" - a whole phrase, appears as just "I did not" and (in the new row) "my cat". Thus it looks like she is learning to write basic simple words and grammar, which are usually learnt in childhood. But then these words are connected into a phrase "I did not cum on my cat", which is highly sexualized, but at the same time still maintains a childlike attitude. The phrase does not make much sense, besides being playful, not serious, funny. Things, which are meant to be innocent attributes of a kid, now belong to adult sexual flirtation.

The angle shows her from an upper perspective. This represents a certain power dynamic. It creates an impression of a submissive dependent little girl, who is ready to listen to what adults tell her to do. Viewers see her from a close social distance, which gives us a warning that we can not step too close into her personal space.

This image has a medium modality: colors are muted, pastel. This creates an impression of something ethereal, of a borderline fantasy. Bed, where she is lying, is decorated with cute toys and posters in different shades of pastel pink and violet. This type of design makes us think of something sweet, girly.

This photo creates a tension between innocence and sexuality. Narrative and conceptual processes, interaction with a viewer, composition of the photo create an impression of a childlike context. The whole situation is the carrier of a symbolic meaning, and all possessive attributes (clothes, hairstyle, toys, colors) seem to contribute to this image of innocence, besides one single detail - writing in the notebook. This symbolic attribute goes against all the other attributes, thus confusing a viewer, creating a duality, spark between the two opposing tendencies - innocence and sexuality. Girl's actions and outfit signify a concept of "learning how to write", which is usually being done in elementary school. But from the writing in the notebook we already know that this image is not as innocent as it may seem.

Image number 2 is taken from an Instagram account of a user whose username is composed of the words "legal" and "lolita". This already signifies that the girl is reconciling two rival notions - sweet innocent underage imagery with sexual availability, which is possible by her official age being legally above the threshold. She lets users know that is officially allowed to engage in sexual activities, contrary to what her photos might suggest.

There are no narrative processes per se, as the model is not engaging in any active endeavours. Viewers see a girl sitting in the box, she is not a "doer", her behaviour is passively suggesting. She shows her intentions in a non-transactional manner. Viewers see a phrase written on the box: "adopt me" with a heart-shaped exclamation mark and cat paws painted near it. These are symbolic attributes that construct an image of a cute little pet. Girl is wearing cat ears with bells attached to them. Girl is conceptually represented as an embodiment of a little cat needing adoption. Her hands are hidden in the sleeves of a sweater, which might signify that she feels cold and lost, her hands are clenched into fists resembling cat's paws. Her whole body can fit into the small box emphasising the size of the petite size of the model without showing the body itself. This way with her body not on display she might resemble more an intended image of a cat. The body is hidden in the box, but the concept of it as dainty is formed. Color palette of the image is the same as in the previous image: shades of pastel pink, symbolising the "cute", "sweet" scenario.

Girl is looking directly into the camera with a pouting face, thus making a demand for the viewer to virtually adopt her. As well as in the previous image we see her from the upper angle, which signifies the model's disempowerment. She is sitting either on her knees or squatting in the box, making her appear even smaller to the viewer; her position represents helplessness, absence of agency. However viewers see her from the frontal agnel, thus the image encourages a lot of involvement. Like in the previous image, the model is depicted from far social distances, contributing to the portrayal of the possible reality of the situation: the viewer came across the box with a cat that was abandoned while wandering somewhere. However the modality of the image is medium again: image is rather blurred, colors are not bright. This commingling of reality and fantasy creates a tension in the viewer's mind.

Box with the girl in it is in the center of the composition since it is the main element. Positioned in the middle of the rather empty room emphasises the reality of the abandonment that we encounter. To the right we see the assembled doll house as well other kids toys and stationary on the table. Kress and Van Leeuwen suggested that elements on the right bring some newness to the composition. This way viewers can add another layer of meaning to the image - a girl might not only be a little cat, but also a little human baby, that needs adoption.

Symbolisation is achieved by emphasising elements that contribute to the ambiguity of the image. Viewers see the bells on girl's cat ears but they are not making a sound since this is a static mode of presentation. Viewers are not sure: is she a girl, is she a cat, is she a little baby. This fantastic scenario demands us to enter into the world of the image and wonder what is happening.

Girl's body is deemphasised, however its small size is highlighted. The photo is not sexually suggestive per se, but portrayed submissiveness, need of a rescue may appeal to those with daddy's little girl or a catgirl fetish. Unlike photos of innocent-looking girls cosplaying as cats, where we can see a tail hanging from under their skirts (suggesting that it is a sexual element - butt plug), this image does not have any direct sexual references. However the power dynamic itself outlined by this image might be interpreted as sexually suggestive.

Image number 3 was taken from an Instagram account of a user whose username is composed of the words "kitty" and "kiss". This creates an impression of cute, carefree, flirty imagery.

In the photo we see a girl lying on the bed with her face down. She is not concretely represented, but rather conceptually. She expresses her situation in an indirect way, she "behaves" instead of "doing". Conceptual processes are depicted by means of her position - she is lying on her stomach with her face buried into the bed linen, as if she is exhausted. Since the model is so far from the camera, her size and body are deemphasised. Viewers can not see any shapes of her body just like in the second image, but we can tell that it is petite. She is wearing a schoolgirl pleated skirt and white top much like the girl in the first photo. We see a similar scenario to the first image but with a different twist.

Girl is surrounded by stationary - colorful pencils and two papers from the notebook. As in the case of the first image, pages from her notebook are in the foreground while she is depicted further from it. Kress and Van Leeuwen suggested that the bottom half of the image represent the tools, while the top half - idealised image. Both the first and third images accentuate the writings in the bottom half, while models appear in the top half as more abstract, less detailed.

In the girl's notebooks we can see this message written: "... is crazy !!!… is keeping me and… guy inside her… help!!!". The paper is cropped so we can not see what is suggested by the gaps, but the message is rather clear: the model allegedly is keeping someone hostage, she is having a manic episode. This implies that the girl depicted in the photo is naughty and mischievous, she is not behaving herself, she is throwing tantrums and fits. On the other paper it is written: "I love daddy". This other note adds sexual suggestiveness to the concept since "daddy" is a nickname for a sexual partner. Written with red and pink pencils in peculiar fonts it looks like it was written by a child playing around learning how to draw.

Girl is seen from an oblique angle, she is not looking at the camera. The image does not make any demands, instead it makes an offer for a viewer to contemplate the situation. The viewer is not asked to help to release those alleged captives. Viewers see a girl from a far social distance. Unlike in the second image, which was inviting the viewer to participate, this image invites us to behold symbolic attributes rather than react to them.

Girl is wearing cat ears like the girl in the second image. Like in the second image in the right half we can see plush toys. This adds to the childlike entourage. Like all the previous images this one is executed in shades of pink and has a medium modality. It distorts reality, rather than representing reality.

Image number 4 is taken from the Instagram account of a user that has "dolly" and "barbie" in her username.

Narrative processes are represented by the vector of the model's hand putting a bunch of lollipops in her mouth - she is trying to eat a lot of candies at once. This action signifies that the model is acting in a non-rational way. She is surrounded by a lot of candies on the floor that create a concept of playful disorderly fun. We can see the empty packaging from the whipped cream laying on the floor, and a white writing on a model's thigh "slut" suggests that she did it with the whipped cream. Viewers can guess that she was supposed to decorate candies that were probably baked by her, but instead she is fooling around like a child.

There are several meaning-making attributes that create an undermining layer to the regular pattern. She is wearing childish socks and pink glittery shoes, and a revealing bikini swimsuit. These pieces of clothes contrast with each other, straining the picture. It is an unusual combination in itself - festive platform shoes and a beach bikini. Viewers can not see the front half of her top, since she is covering her breasts with the hand. They only see a thin string from her top, which suggests that it might be very small, thus uncovering breasts. Girl is wearing lace decorations in her hair which along with the pink decorated candies create the concept of sweetness and cuteness. However the line inside her cheek created by the candy is her mouth is sexually suggestive. Candies begin to symbolise male's sexual organ. Shape of the candies that lie on the floor is oval and round, which contrast with each other adding to the voltage of the image. However the candies that she put into her mouth are lollipops on sticks, which were not present on the floor. The unknown to the viewer origin of this alien element highlights the subversive nature of it. The most obvious possessive attribute of the carrier of sexuality is the word "slut" written with the whipped cream on her upper leg. It becomes clear that sexuality is implied, even though previously described attributes might leave the benefit of the doubt.

Like in the previous photos the image is structured among the vertical axis and we - viewers - are looking down at the model. She is at close social distance from us, but her wearing only a bikini suggests otherwise - it creates a more intimate situation. Girl is looking at the viewer making a demand to play this confectionery game with her. Her gaze is not directly seductive, it is neutral, but can be left to interpretations of each individual viewer.

4.2.3 Lolita as a myth

As we saw above, some girls create photos, which are both "childish" and "sexual" at same time. The line, the threshold of what is "sexual" and what is "childlike" is vague. They exploit this ambiguity and create an image that includes both sides, but not definitely, not explicitly. They create a mystery, which lures potential customers to explore more, to buy more. I would like to use the concept of myth to explain the "Lolita effect" phenomenon in photos. Semiotic approach can help us reveal how the switch between denotative and connotative meaning happens, how message is encoded and meant to be decoded, how the signifying process evolves.

I assume lolita aesthetics (sexual infantility) is a myth of attractiveness, from one point of view it is just an innocent aesthetics without anything vulgar or obscene, but from the other it is sexualised. Myth of Lolita builds a meta-layer over a preliminary image; turns primary descriptive signs, created by the image, into a signifier of something else in the cultural coordinate system. Thus photos inextricably bind the image in the mind of the viewer with its unique, specific, incomparable attractiveness, to make this image iconic. Sexually infantile images of girls create the myth of unattainable sexuality, which viewers can slightly approach, if they buy access to pornographic profiles of these girls.

It is worth mentioning that photography itself is a codification of reality: two dimensions stand in for three, movement is frozen, time stands still. Photography is a perceptual code, but we are so familiar with it that we tend to forget it is a code and a set of signs. This credibility of the photograph can be utilized - its power to look like pure denotation - in order to pass off as merely denoted a message which is in reality heavily connoted.

In case of self-infantilised photos on the level of unbiased reality we have ordinary young women posting updates to their social media, but through the mythological point of view we have these girls as embodiment of childish submissiveness, kinky sex symbols, created as such by their youthful appeal.

Barthes' concept of myth implies this schema:

<div align="center">Denotative level:</div>

Signifier + Signified = (Sign = Sense)   ↓

Connotative level: becomes a (Form = Signifier) + Signified = Myth

If we apply this schema to the photos, we end up with the following. On the denotative level we have sign, composed of these components:

- Signifier – photo of young women;
- Signified – she posts her photos on social media.

On connotative level we have a myth, which consists of the following:

- Signifier – girl depicted on photo has sexual appeal by being young and vulnerable;
- Signified – we should buy her 18+ content to have full access to her sexual appeal, youthfulness and vulnerability.

The myth of Lolita as a sexually attractive infantile nymphet that functions for viewers of photos as a sexual trap is largely rooted in "virgin-whore" contrast pair. Depiction of women in patriarchy very often is a subject to a binary dichotomy "virgin-whore". "Virgins" are those women who are pure, chaste, demure, motherly and nurturing, who express their sexuality within strict boundaries of marriage, "whores" are women who fail to do so, who are morally corrupt, unethical, dangerously erotic (Gotschall 2010). Studies have shown that this opposition was sometimes used to justify violence towards "whores", because supposedly it is their own fault that they provoke violence (Asencio 1999; García 2006). Madonna-whore dichotomy was originally introduced by Freud, who suggested that men experience the same sentimental feelings they once had for their mothers towards women whom they sexually desire (Freud 1905). Since they can not combine these feelings together, they categorise women into two categories: women whom they love and respect, and women, whom they desire and despise.

Despite the fact that some of the girls do not relate to it, all of them acknowledge that the contrast between the virginal look and sexual side lures men to pay for the pornographic content. Virgin-whore trope plays an interesting trick in case of sexual self-infantilisation. Men seem to be fond of finding both a virgin and a whore in one person. All of the girls acknowledge that they amplify the contrast between the two to attract more potential subscribers to their Onlyfans. They play on the dissimilarity of the "virgin" and "whore", thus making it hard to believe that they can actually be present simultaneously. This generates

interest: "is it really possible that such an innocent girl can post pornographic content?". They reveal either side, making followers question: "can these polar opposite sides be really sides of one coin". This shift of meaning creates a tension, meaning is flickering.

Paradoxically, the analysed photo proves that despite decades of feminism, women choose to represent themselves as care-seeking and infantile.

This tension is attractive to potential buyers of pornographic content. However, as analysis of interviews has shown girls do not relate to the myth of Lolita as a sexually attractive object that is longing to be sexually exploited. For them infantile imagery functions as a symbol of the opposite - of having control over their sexuality, liberation, empowerment, striving to build a perfect non-problematic world.

Conclusion

This work has presented a study of sexual self-infantilisation on Instagram and Onlyfans. Infantilisation of women in media is theorised to be ubiquitous and have a demeaning effect on women's position in society. However self-infantilisation as a conscious choice made by sex-workers has not been explored by researches yet. This work studies it as a set of codes and values that form a symbolic whole. Different methods were combined to achieve holistic understanding of the meaning-making process of this phenomenon as it is manifested by means of different modalities - psychological aspirations and visual presentations. Having conducted qualitative content analysis of the interviews and visual analysis of the photos I can now summarise the results of my analysis and answer research questions.

What are the specific markers, codes of the new layer of meaning introduced by this relatively new phenomenon of self-infantilising on Instagram with the purpose to sell adult content on Onlyfans?

Conducting interviews I marked down repeated circulating key-elements, attributes that form visual representation of self-infantilising. Four out of six girls mentioned color pink , three of them own a lot of plushies, three of them wear schoolgirl outfits, three of them wear braces, three wear lolita/princess style dresses, two wear bows, two wear pigtails or braids , two incorporate Japanese anime imagery, two like doing moaning "ahegao" face, two draw freckles on their faces. Five informants see themselves as not belonging to any pre-set subcultures and value freedom of self-expression from any templates, one informant belongs to daddy's little girl subculture.

Visual imagery goes beyond decorative purposes and creates a new meaning - infantilism as manifestation of desire to remain free from wage slavery, production mechanisms and other burdens of the adult social world. As the uniform of infantilisation is visual representation of the rejection of staid adulthood, inhabiting such costumery provides a

psychological gateway to return to the more carefree, playful being that is the child. In such fantasies the participant can choose their desired age and mental state as an act of pure will, enabling a shift in psychological perspective. Childhood is a symbol of freedom from burdening obligations and expectations, child embodies a happy blissful creature that does not need to face any physical or mental labor in to the detriment of his or her hedonistic volitions

Youthfulness and beauty are seen not as a demand of the male gaze, but as an opposition to an inevitable decay. Fantastic utopia is the desired space, which can not be achieved in reality, but can be brought closer by childlike paraphernalia. "Romantic childhood" symbolises a hedonistic land of eternal insouciance where one can indulge in what brings them pleasure.

How do practitioners of self-infantilising make sense of the signifying process of self-infantilisation and its sexual aspect, how is the message encoded and how is it meant to be decoded?

Girls' infantilised image is created as a holistic set of values and is psychological in the first place. However they recognise that their message is not always perceived like this, and for some audiences they are just a mere body decorated with fetishished garments. Although not all of them see themselves as sexual beings, sexuality is seen as an organic part of human existence. Sexual innocence is not interpreted as a lost state that is desired to be brought back. For some participants sexual feelings stem from power dynamics experiences, but for none from bodily aesthetics. Infantilism is not sexual per se, it is a complex set of psychological longings that can be displayed through different channels.

Participants recognised that their aesthetics has a demand at the pornographic market, that for some people infantile visual cues are a source of a sexual satisfaction, that youth-oriented imagery is fatishised by some. This interpretation of their infantilising practices is a mere by-product, for some it brings pleasant psychological gratification, for some - just in monetary benefits. They all recognise that childlike imagery is an unimportant selling point and they amplify it to profit.

They feel empowered in a sense that they have power and control over themselves and feel authorised to make an impact. They see childlike attributes manifested through clothing, demeanor, possessions as a way to transcend burdens of adult life. The carefree past comes to

existence again through their stylistic representations. They mediate this experience, which is not real in the common sense of the word, but it is real ideologically. They long for utopia and resolve this thriving through repetition of childlike patterns, thus creating a satisfactory closure for this thriving for unproblematic stability.

What elements are sexually self-infantilised photos comprised of, how is the composition constructed, what visual attributes are symbolising sexual infantilism?

The analysed photos create a peculiar image of the submissiveness in extraordinary playful situations. Most of them depict a girl from the upper angle creating a special power dynamic between the intended viewer and the model on the image. The girl is supposed to signify a creative, nonchalant, mischievous, vulnerable girl in need of a dominant supervisor. Images create a tension between innocence of the above mentioned girl and sexual connotations leaving the viewer to wonder how these two can coexist.

Most images did not have any evident narrative processes going on, instead girls were depicted in a conceptual way, engaged in symbolic processes. They are more likely to covertly express their intentions with symbolic attributes, rather than directly tell a viewer by means of unambiguous vectors. Girls are depicted in a non-transactional way.

All images offered the viewer a high angle shot, thus disempowering the model. However intimate distance was not created. Girls remained on either far or close social distance from the viewer. The purpose of the images is to invite the viewer to gain access to more content on adult platforms, thus it makes sense that they empower the viewer just enough to make him or her interested in getting closer to the model. All images were encouraging the viewer to take part in conceptual processes that are going on either as a participant in the activities or as the observer.

Medium modality of images creates an almost phantasmagoric ethereal dimension where innocence and sexual suggestiveness coexist, subverting the ordinary stereotyped reality.

Images create a tension between denotative innocence and connotative sexuality, constructing Lolita as a myth of sexual attractiveness. Girls who created analysed photos purposely amplified the stereotypical image of a passive naive girl, who is at the crossroads, unsure of what type of influence to choose — to repress sexual desires or dare to be sexually open. They created a tension between 'purity' and 'sexual perversion', combined both

extremes of what is expected of a young girl — they are paradoxically both very sexual and very non-sexual. A product, which they produced, appears to embody both "virgin" and "whore" in a mythological synthetic image of a Lolita - sexual icon.

How is the construct of self-infantilising of women on Instagram and Onlyfans positioned within the feminist viewpoint on infantilising women and sexualising children?

It is theorised that ubiquitous infantilisation of women in media undermines women's worth in patriarchal society, constructs an image of women as powerless, naive, dependent. According to feminist theory infantilisation of women is detrimental to womanhood, we should regonise its patterns and dismantle its influence.

Girls that I interviewed flip the table at what was theorised to be taken from them by the ubiquitous objectifying females' bodies, they get back the sense of agency. They do not see themselves as manipulated sex objects and do not intentionally try to be pleasing to men. Onlyfans allows those whose bodies are displayed in pornographic content to be in charge, to get profit from what they are doing. They monetise objectification and innocence fetish, thus annulling feminist concern about females being victims of above mentioned phenomena. They are not guileless victims of patriarchy, they are cunning business women, who see the existence of hidden, repressed and denied desires and monetise it. These girls use what they already have - their body, and whom they already are to sustain themselves, they do not have to compromise their freedom to earn a living.

Unlike feminists, who try to unlink femininity from infantilism, participants of my interviews draw ideological inspiration from infantilism. The image of women as submissive and vulnerable changes its nature and turns into its opposite in case of women that I interviewed. Their vulnerability becomes their strength. Their need for care and protection makes them not weak, but entitled, self-confident, knowing their worth. Childishness is deemed in society as worthless, unintelligent inference, but the girls that I interviewed reclaim childhood as a manifestation of complete freedom, of blossoming bliss as an antipode to ageing and death. Jessie said: "Being little is the biggest I can be".

Further research can be done on the concepts of "Romantic childhood" and utopia as possible meaning-making components for imagining the better future of women in society. The outlined longing for the state of eternal suspension between adulthood and childhood can inform the study on identity formation processes. In-depth study about the way sketched in

this thesis form of self-presentation can inform and enrich the feminist and gender theory. The way male consumers of such adult imagery perceive the agency behind it and to what extent they see self-objectified and self-infantilised women as conscious actors with an agenda can be explored. Another possible direction of research is to study the way the yearning for unattainable, for everlasting carefreeness and beauty can influence the fashion industry that is meant to satisfy buyer's needs by selling the idea of attainability of the fantasy.

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Resümee

Magistritöös **"Internetis töötavate seksitöötajate enesinfantiliseerimine Instagramis"** uuritakse seksuaalset lapsemeelset eneseesitluste teemat. Naiste infantilisatsiooni meedias on teadlased palju uurinud. Eneseinfantilisatsiooni kui tähendust loovate tavade ja väärtuste kogumit pole siiski uuritud. Keskendutakse kahele platvormile - Onlyfans ja Instagram. Täisealised neiud postitavad täiskasvanutele mõeldud infantiliseeritud pilte oma Instagrami lehtedele tasuta ja paluvad jälgijatel tellida nende tasuline profiil teenuses Onlyfans, kuhu nad postitavad täiskasvanutele mõeldud sisu. Onlyfans asutati 2016. aastal, tutvustades täiskasvanutele loodud piltide müümisel uusi eeliseid.

Selle uurimistöö eesmärk on välja selgitada seksuaalse eneseinfantiliseerimise taga olevad konkreetsed tähised, selgitada välja elemendid, millest selline kujutis on üles ehitatud, positsioneerida see nähtus feministlikus diskursuses naiste objektiveerimise ja infantiliseerimise kohta. Kombineeritakse kahte meetodit: seksitöötajatega tehtud intervjuude kvalitatiivne sisuanalüüs ja nende fotode visuaalne analüüs. Võeti ja analüüsiti kuus kvalitatiivset poolstruktureeritud intervjuud; tähistamise protsessidest signaale andvad koodid märgistati. Fotosid analüüsiti vastavalt Kressi ja van Leeuweni visuaalse kujunduse grammatikale ja Barthes'i müüdikontseptsioonile.

Intervjuude analüüs on näidanud, et eneseinfantiliseerimine tuleneb terviklikust psühholoogilisest seisundist, mille juured on romantilise lapsepõlve nostalgias. Igatsus muretu utoopia järele avaldub lapselike omaduste kaudu. Fotode analüüs on näidanud, et need on loodud süütuse ja seksuaalsuse fantasmagoorilise eeterliku seose tunde edastamiseks, luues seeläbi Lolita mütoloogilise kuju. Nagu intervjuud on näidanud, ei ole infantiilsuse seksuaalne aspekt infantiilsuse orgaaniline tagajärg ja mõned osalejad tunnevad end sellest lahti olevatena, kuid kõik nad tunnistasid, et see on müügiargument ja võimendavad konstrueerimisel dihhotoomiat tajutud puhtuse ja kaudsete seksuaalsete vihjete vahel.

Interneti-seksitöötajate eneseinfantiliseerivad tavad ei ühti feministlike vaadetega infantiliseerimisest kui naise väärtuse alandamisest. Loojad kontrollivad oma tegemisi

täielikult, teevad selle rahaks ja tunnevad, et on oma lapsemeelses naiselikkuses võimestunud ja ennast teostanud. Nostalgia ja utoopia mõisteid kui võimalikke tähendust loovaid komponente, et kujutleda naiste paremat tulevikku ühiskonnas, saab edasi uurida. Põhjalik täiendav uurimine selles väitekirja vormis esitatud uue lähenemise kohta võib rikastada feministlikku ja sooteooriat. See, kuidas taoliste täiskasvanute piltide meessoost tarbijad tajuvad seostatust selle taga ja kuivõrd nad näevad ennast objektiseerinud ja infantiliseerinud naisi teadlike tegijatena, kellel on oma agenda. Teise võimaliku uurimissuuna saab luua teemal, kuidas igatsus kättesaamatuse järele vastab moele ja turundusele, mis on mõeldud ostja vajaduste rahuldamiseks, müües fantaasia saavutatavuse ideed.

Annex 1

Image number 1

Image number 2

Image number 3

Image number 4

Annex 2

Map of interview questions

What adjectives would you use to describe your Instagram aesthetics?

Does your Instagram aesthetics match your real life aesthetics?

Has this always been your style in fashion/photos? Is there some discrepancy between your previous style and this one?

Was there a specific moment when you decided to choose this kind of representation or rather was it a result of a natural continuous evolvement?

What specific attributes do you use to make you look more infantile?

Do you maintain the same aesthetics on your paid Onlyfans?

Do you relate to these infantile elements on a psychological level or would you call it a mere decoration?

Would you call yourself an age regressor?

What is your sexuality?

Would you call yourself dominant, submissive or vanilla?

Are you into ddlg mdlb ddlb mdlg (daddy dom little girl etc)?

Are you in a relationship?

Does your online image has any good or bad influence on your relationship?

Did you initially start building your brand with the plan to sell pictures or did this idea come to you later on?

What is the gender balance of your audience? Do you have access to Instagram statistics or have your own observations?

When you choose composition and outfits for photos, do you think of how it will be perceived by your audience?

How much role monetary benefits play in creation of your photos? Are you trying to make photos that will generate more clicks to your private page?

How exactly are you trying to achieve this? Are there any tricks?

Do you edit your photos? How?

Would you post these photos to Instagram this if there was no commercial interest (let's say if people were not buying subscription to your Onlyfans or if you were a billionaire and did not need any more money)?

Would you call what you are doing "art"?

I read some comments on your page. It looks like people mostly compliment your looks in a sexual way. Do you have any good or bad feelings about being objectified on Instagram?

Have you ever had men approaching you on Interntet that were in some ways outing themselves as paedophiles?

How would you feel if you knew that paedophiles use your content because you remind them of a child?

Do you like to be called lolita?

How long do you plan to continue posting content to Instagram and Onlyfans for?

Annex 3

Consent Form – Interviews (individuals**)**

You have been invited to take part in a research study about self-infantilisation of online sex-workers on Instagram.

This study will be conducted by Yuliia Tryl, department of Semiotics, University of Tartu.

Risks associated with your participation in this research: psychological effects (anxiety) due to sensitive nature of the topic. To avoid any social risks (labelling a subject in a way that is disadvantageous to him or her, embarrassment) strong principles of confidentiality will be applied.

Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by assigning pseudonyms to you as well as by obscuring specific identifying details associated with you.

Your textual answers will be saved into one single document. This document will be stored on my computer and will be only accessible to me (Yuliia Tryl).

Subject's Name:

Subject's Signature:

Date:

License