

Self-Destructive Female Icons
My Dissertation in Three Minutes
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My dissertation is an analysis of the lives and deaths of seven 20th century born women through their images. These women had celebrity profiles, were uniquely talented and highly influential in their respective fields. They are iconic women. They are Marilyn Monroe, Edie Sedgwick, Romy Schneider, Paula Yates, Princess Diana, Whitney Houston and Amy Winehouse. Because I am interested in what unites them biographically, each of my chapters will begin with a comparative picture analysis featuring one of the above named icons with a painting from the Renaissance. The picture analysis should therefore speak for all the women. I shall describe the similarities between the two images setting up the reader for the chapter. The selected images work together allegorically according to the subject of the particular chapter in which they appear. We shall see the past and present united using iconology to bring them into a simultaneity that somehow transcends time. We shall learn from each chapter what brings the women onto the path of self-destruction.

My research is largely an art historical study, which draws on theories by Aby Warburg such as the transportation of images through time (*bilderfahrzeug*) and the migration of images (*bildwanderung*). An icon can be transported from one painting to another and through the passage of time eventually find itself in a photograph centuries later. They can be transported via canvasses or on carpets or any other portable object. The same can be said of the women in question. Their gestures, their desires, their need to be worshipped arrive similarly but through what C.G. Jung called the collective unconscious.

Allegorically and especially pertaining to antiquity, the icons I am researching have qualities which hark back to the Graeco-Roman figure Venus (or Aphrodite) who was the goddess of love and fertility. This is one aspect of my thesis. To support this further, I am looking at one or two of Sigmund Freud's theories as he also worked with mythological stories from antiquity to underpin his theories in psychoanalysis practice. He did, in the same way, transport those myths to his own time and saw how they could be useful in explaining the human mind and its motivations. His theories such as the *castration complex* and *Oedipus Complex* shall be of interest to my research. Which leads me to my research questions. They are as follows:

What is a self-destructive female icon? How and why has a self-destructive female icon become a fixture of western culture? And why is she ultimately sacrificed on the altar of popular culture?

Ultimately, the idea of time travel, simultaneity and timelessness permeates this study in my quest to uncover the enigma of a self-destructive female icon.