

FAT BARBIE



I

This image is either a photograph or, most probably, a computer-generated image. There is no date or author.

D

This image is a parody or a spoof – it shows the classic image of a Barbie doll with all her accessories, except that she is obese, laying on her bed in a messy room and watching something on her laptop.

A

I think that this document has several possible aims. Firstly, it could be conveying a feminist message about unfair ideals and inadequate role models. But this seems unlikely to me. Secondly, it could be aiming to criticise the lifestyles of modern everyday women. In this case, the creator of the document probably wants to point out that the ideal woman, represented by Barbie, is actually far from the reality, as many people nowadays are overweight and inactive. However, the creator might just have wanted to make a joke by showing this gap between reality and fantasy, rather than really criticising the way people live. I think this is the most likely explanation.

H

Whatever the moral message of the document, it seems to me that the author is trying to show the difference between our cultural ideals and the way we really live. I think this because the author chose to use Barbie, who is a cultural icon and who has for many years represented the physical ideal for young girls. And she continues to represent the same thing even though obesity and the “couch-potato” lifestyle are becoming more of a problem. In this way, we can make a link between this document and the idea of the American Dream, or rather the failure of the American Dream.

O

Personally, I find the image quite funny. Although the document is linked to some quite serious ideas, such as traditional cultural values, feminism and the American dream, I do not think that the author intended to convey a very serious message. I think in fact that is just an interesting way of making fun of people’s unrealistic expectations, and also of showing people the reality of their own lives compared with Barbie’s “dream” life.

B

Although I do think this document is meant to be humorous, it highlights some more serious topics. For example, many people have criticised Barbie dolls as a toy for young girls for being too sexualised, and for representing sexist values. It is even possible that Barbie being such a popular toy has influenced young girls’ behaviour and contributed to the problem of eating disorders and body image obsession.