Romancing Visual Women: From Canon to Console

Roberta Sabbath

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Roberta.Sabbath@unlv.edu

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Romancing Visual Women: From Canon to Console

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature by Roberta Sterman Sabbath

December 1994

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Stephanie Hammer, Chairperson
Professor Reinhold Grimm
Professor George Slusser
The Dissertation of Roberta Sterman Sabbath is approved:

R. L.

George S. Stenmark

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside
DEDICATION

To my mother, Rosaline, who challenged me to think outside the margins
To my father, Milton, who challenged me to think
To my husband, Dennis, who challenged me
To my children, Adam, Shana, and Jonathan, who expected all of the above
I dedicate this dissertation with gratitude and love.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am completely indebted to my professors at the University of California, Riverside, who served on my dissertation committee. Their work, both pedagogical and literary, continues to guide and inspire me.

My quest began when the noted performance artist, Anna Deavere Smith, informed me that feminist theoretician, Sue Ellen Case, would be coming to the University of California, Riverside. At that moment, I decided to pursue a dream of mine to advance my education. Along the way, I met Darnetta Bell who has been a constant friend and, like my professors, a guiding light. Along with Sandra Roberson, she made certain that the miles that often separated me from the campus disappeared into thin air. My thanks to them all for the opportunity to follow my star and the wherewithal to achieve my grail.
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Romancing Visual Women: From Canon to Console

by

Roberta Sterman Sabbath

Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Program in Comparative Literature
University of California, Riverside, December, 1994
Professor Stephanie Hammer, Chairperson

This dissertation juxtaposes the romantic modal treatment of powerful, admired women which canonical male authors and feminist authors and critics construct with those constructed by contemporary women for the visual mass media of video,
broadcast television, and computer. The discourse of the former produces the figure of a fragmented woman who is rare, supernatural, marginalized, and impossible. The discourse of the latter produces the figure of a psychologized woman who is typical, natural, mainstream, and possible.

To examine the discourse of impossibility, I use three canonical works: Augustine's *Confessions*; Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval*; and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. I also survey feminist critics and artists and discover a cultural positioning by the critics and a construction of the feminine by the artists analogous to that of the canonical fathers—marginal, utopic, fragmented, and impossible.

To examine the discourse of possibility, I analyze four works by women produced for the video, television, and computer, all of which narrativize the psychologized inner life of the female hero: Candida Royalle's erotic videos, *Revelations* and *Three Daughters*; Neema Barnette's made-for-television movie, *Scattered Dreams*; and Jane Jensen's novelized computer game, *Gabriel Knight*.

All the women authors covered in this dissertation assume that women viewers and players enjoy a variety of specular pleasures traditionally considered male privilege: erotica, recognition, narrative, action, and power. Their work dismantles traditional oppositional dualities constructed around gender: motherhood/sexuality, motherhood/creativity, passion/intelligence, autonomy/faithfulness, private/public,
women/technology, women/power. It also breaches the traditional boundaries between art and politics and science and art.
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PREFACE: METACRITICAL COMMENTARIES

This dissertation juxtaposes the romantic modal treatment of powerful, admired women that canonical male authors and feminist artists and critics construct with those constructed by contemporary women for the visual mass media of video, broadcast television, and computer. The discourse of the former produces the figure of a fragmented woman who is rare, supernatural, marginalized, and impossible. The discourse of the latter produces the figure of a psychologized woman who is typical, natural, mainstream, and possible.

Today women enter the television, computer, and video entertainment industry with their sights set on every creative and economic aspect of participation. These women want to "mainstream" as producers, directors, and writers. Although women still comprise a minority,¹ they represent a growing and visible source of creativity and power which has already effected the industry to a significant degree during the last fifteen years. The hope which propels this dissertation is that an investigation of the portrayals of women by these women mainstreaming in the entertainment world would discover a new type of female figure to add to the Western lexicon of worthies.

This desire sprang from two sources. Most feminist work either critiques hegemonic cultural production or seeks to retrieve the figures of worthy women who are marginalized, demonized, and disempowered within their texts. By contrast,
this dissertation examines the women worthies who play a central role within their host narratives, whether canonical, feminist, or popular. The selection of the mode of romance ensures a literary site of trans-historical and -geographic popularity, a forum for mediating cultural practices regarding individual agency and gender formation.

I enlist the interdisciplinary approach of Cultural Studies which suggests that a variety of strategies can unearth how texts produce meaning and how these meanings narrate power relationships. While some discursive practices seem to conflict with others, Stephanie Hammer suggests that "the deployment of opposing methods is actually crucial to enabling an interpretation to transcend its own perspectival mechanics."

I begin with Northrop Frye's work on the mode of romance which helps to foreground the historical importance of narrative as a strategy for establishing the possibility of individual agency when it is challenged by social, political, and cultural obstacles. Its ability to produce a story through the narrativization of courage, ingenuity, perseverance, and fortitude marks the mode as an important cultural source of inspiration for individual achievement and success. According to Frye, the mode has traditionally sought to inspire and educate. It has until recently been considered a male privilege with a predominantly masculine set of characters. Frye's work on archetypes helps focus on the
issues of the cultural implications of gender that arise in a historical investigation of the mode of romance: the male hero, the angelic/evil figure of the woman, and the ambigendered role of the ironic characters.

Advancing the theoretical work on gender juxtaposition suggested by Frye's analysis, the work of psychoanalytic, semiotician Julia Kristeva proposes that women figures represented in this tradition, such as those canonical female worthies addressed in this work--Monica, the Holy Grail, and Beatrice, serve as symbols for objectifying the psychological vagaries of the male hero. Kristeva explains that the rhetorical procedure required to achieve this literary motif voids the woman figure of subjectivity and agency. Continuing a semiotic analysis, I analyze rhetorical codes in order to highlight the gendered features of the diegetic rubric and reveal the interwoven resonances of the women figures and the host narrative.

Chapter I examines how the mode of romance develops the idea of subjectivity and the myth of the unified self. The investigation reveals how the mode came to be gendered male and how, under the influence of Augustine's Confessions, the role of women developed within the tradition. Chapter II explores two canonical works, Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval and Dante's Divine Comedy which incorporate the mode of romance. It seeks to unearth similarities between the various figures of the worthy women portrayed in these texts.
A utopic vision of worthy figures of women portrayed by canonical male authors resonates with the figures produced by the feminist theoretical and artistic traditions. Chapter III introduces the ways feminist critics and artists working outside of the hegemonic culture produce utopic, if fragmented, marginal, and oppositional, figures of women as a means to critique and subvert a hegemony that seeks the erasure of the woman's voice.

By contrast, at the heart of the figures of women produced by contemporary women for mass media is the "possible," even ordinary, woman portrayed with verisimilitude. The women producers represented in this research insist that while their figures of women accomplish extraordinary things, they are in fact representative of ordinary women and their deeds realistic portrayals of women's everyday lives. Performance studies in general and feminist performance studies in particular identify the interwoven strategies of visual, performative, cultural, and literary texts and their powerful capabilities, both individual and collective, of meaning production. Camera work, star power, network decisions, and industry standards and practices which create an environment that affects production, reception, and type of character portrayals in these works for the mass media are all investigated.

Serving as heroes in the ongoing romantic narrative (struggle) of women finding acceptance and fulfillment within
the entertainment industry, Candida Royalle (Chapter IV), Neema Barnette (Chapter V), and Jane Jensen (Chapter VI) are recognized within their respective branches of the video, television, and computer entertainment industries as among the best in the profession. While examining the cultural and professional environment in which they work, I perform a close reading of their works using a semiotic strategy like that enlisted for the analysis of the canonical works.

From the impossible women of the canonical and feminist authors emerges a portrait of the possible worthy woman figure of popular culture produced by women. Expanding the repertoire of the Western literary lexicon of figures of worthy women, these figures are not entirely new, but are sufficiently rare even to this day to render them worthy of being considered as creative accomplishments that merit recording.
NOTES

1. See Chapter VI for details.


Part I: Chapter 1: Where Are the Heroic Women?  
A Historic Overview

The Mode of Romance, Judeo-Christian Tradition, and Augustine's Confessions

The mode of romance is an attitude. It is the condition or the state of the imaginative dimension and of the creative aspects of our mental capabilities. It is the subjunctive which allows for the possible, if not the probable, for the hopeful, if not the likely, and for acceptance of self, if not full approval.¹ When translated into imaginative literature, the mode of romance tells the story of an individual. In connection with this mode, a story materializes which is told like a journey of the soul or of the inner life of a particular person.

In the words of John C. Wilson, the life journey of an individual is a "mystical journey" for the very reason that it reflects a position of power separate and different from institutional power.² Within the institutional religious and political world views, the mystical is denigrated. It is seen as heretical. The mystical allows for private paths and expressions in order to satisfy spiritual needs, without the possibility of institutional surveillance and censorship. Thus, this kind of mystical "journey of the soul . . . [is] transgressive."³ Stories created in the romantic mode speak as the individual negotiates between public institutions and private particularities. According to Emily Budick, the
premise of romance begins with "questioning how and what we know and what it means that we know the world this way."⁴

No matter how society's institutions interpellate us, using an Althusserian concept meaning "calling up" into the cultural fiber, into a prescribed subjectivity, those institutions do not give us birth nor die for us nor live our individual story. In fact, our perceptions tell us that everyday living means we make frequent choices. Our experience of being human resists the idea that our lives are entirely determined by the cultural panopticon, to use a term Foucault familiarized.⁵ In fact, the mode of romance imaginatively assumes that the individual can and will, whenever frustrated by cultural limitations, struggle against the restrictions of the norm.⁶ This mode authorizes the possibility of the individual story.

The word "possible" again underlines both the register of the mode and the degree of likelihood that the individual exists as a theoretical reality. The mode of romance assumes the theoretical existence of an individual, a tradition begun with the narratives of the Hebrew Bible. In fact, according to Northrop Frye, the biblical world and mode of romance are integrally connected. The two worlds, the one secular, the other religious, are not so much analogous as the same thing. Unlike the mythopoetic stories of contemporaneous pagan cultures, the people in the Torah seem like real people. They are born and named, live and die. They are fallible and
driven by all kinds of motives and impulses. In fact, the legacy of the Hebrew Bible is the distinction drawn between the human and the divine. One might call it the first novel with its inclusion of psychologized characters and realistic/historical action. When Northrop Frye speaks of the Scripture, he refers to the New Testament with its individual eschatological story as well as the Hebrew Bible. Impacting our culture, the symbols and meanings inscribed in Scripture permeate our everyday life—so much so, that they are largely taken for granted.

In The Secular Scripture, Frye explains the interwoven connections between the Christian biblical authority and practice and the imaginative appearances of romance. He writes:

In most modern writers, from Blake on, it is the creative power in man that is returning to its original awareness. . . . Identity and self-recognition begin . . . when the great twins of divine creation and human recreation have merged into one, and we can see the same shape is upon both.7

The process assumes an encyclopedic or episodic form, i.e., a series of adventures which externally objectify an internal emotional voyage. The process seeks the integration and unification of dissonant, repressed, or undiscovered powers. In this sense, the mode of romance implies a process of remembering and re-membering. Along this pathway, compromises and choices are made in order to resolve internal conflicts which might interfere with achieving the final goal.
The process has come to be called a "quest." It appears in classical epics in the anthropomorphized level, in the Bible with Exodus at the historical level, and in medieval saints' lives at both levels. Writing about the individual empowerment with which romance is associated, Frye writes:

Translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality.

The objective projections of inner moral conflicts, reflecting attempts by the main character to achieve self-control, produce, according to Frye, the fantastic characters and adventures that fill romantic tales.

Writing about the imaginative works of early Christians, George Santayana uses almost identical words and concepts to describe the developing body of iconography and narratives which reflect the belief in the transformative capabilities of the individual common both to Christianity and to the mode of romance. The poets, he writes, "materialized the terms of their oral philosophy into existing objects and powers" and changed the religious into the secular narratives.

Religious Gender Considerations and Augustine's Confessions

Biblical scholar, Elaine Pagels, writes that, while it was outlawed in the Roman world, believers of the young Christian sect embraced the concept of personal freedom as the
liberating dynamic of their religion. They embraced a belief in "free will, liberty, autonomy, self-government." During this period, she writes, they believed, as had the Jews, that the story of Genesis revealed humanity as possessing freedom of choice and that the story of the Garden of Eden expressed, in an allegorical fashion, the challenges of being human without the belief in a predestined, sinful state.

Unlike the Greek and Roman tradition whose religions directed believers to accept fate and not to seek change, the new Christians encouraged believers not to submit to the bonds of tradition and not to believe that "destiny, fate, and necessity are actual external forces." In keeping with the Jewish tradition which sought to control not be controlled by nature, the new religion was linear, unlike the cyclical Greek and Roman traditions, and allowed for a changing, individual destiny. Implied in this analysis is agency, the ability to choose and the freedom to change individual perceptions of the outer environment by adjustments to the inner person. In the process, an individual typically searches for some idea or belief which gives meaning to life and which dissolves any unresolved self-doubt, desire, or struggle.

Rebelling against the highly controlled and restricted gender-coded behavior of Jewish domestic life, the early Christians believed in a democratic religion where every soul, whether slave or freeman, woman or man, could become worthy of
salvation. They offered a more egalitarian model than had the early Jews in their domestic lives.\textsuperscript{15, 16, 17}

According to Pagels, Christians, by their accounts and the accounts of contemporary pagans, were praised for their sexual self-restraint in the face of pagan immorality, for their habit of sharing goods with the destitute, and, in the face of Roman acquisitiveness, exploitation, and prejudice, for their proclivity for accepting people of all levels of society into the fold, even women and slaves.\textsuperscript{18}

As Pagels writes, the way was open to everyone for a more moral and thereby meaningful individual life. They believed that:

\textit{Human beings, created by God and endowed with moral freedom, received in baptism the power to live transformed lives, the power to overcome evil and death.}\textsuperscript{19}

The emphasis, even in this early Christian tradition, was that every believer had an individual journey to accomplish. The conversion from pagan or Jewish religious belief to Christianity required a transformation, a metamorphosis.

In many of these early sects, a believer could achieve religious fulfillment equally well by leading a hermetic or a socially engaged life. However, in the fifth century A.D. Christianity took a decisively ascetic turn with the broad acceptance of the doctrines of Augustine. History had an important role to play in the formulation of those doctrines. In 313 A.D., Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the
official religion of the Roman Empire. From that time forth, with progressive inexorability, except for the brief reign of the neopagan emperor Julian the Apostate, the Church/State considered non-believers to be outcasts, heretics, and traitors. When, in 410 AD, Alaric, King of the Visigoths, with his Christian Aryans, sacked Rome, the belief in Christianity and its promise of earthly salvation, idea that proud Roman citizens cherished, was shaken to its roots. Although the defeat was largely symbolic, the fall of Rome seemed a fate unimaginable to the cosmopolitan Roman citizen. Brought on by the sense of doom that pervaded the populace after the fall of the city to the barbarian tribes, anarchy threatened the stability of the Christian Church. The Church needed to explain to its followers why a nation which had converted to Christianity had not been saved from defeat. Someone had to show a path whereby both Rome and the Christian Church might benefit from historical progression and find earthly as well as heavenly salvation.

Augustine was just that apologist. In his introduction to Augustine's *City of God*, John O'Meara summarizes Augustine's message to humanity:

In short we have here the opportunity of seeing how the theme of the *City of God* is constructed from the details of his own conversion. To put it another way, the *City of God* is the application of the *Confessions* to the history of mankind. The inspiration of Augustine's themes is in his life.
Extrapolating from his own youthful experiences of libertinism and his turn to an ascetic life for solace and salvation, Augustine concluded that the downfall of his beloved Rome resulted from political and moral corruption. Augustine broke with earlier Christian thought. Assuming a marked ascetic bent, his preachings reached back to a tradition that the early fathers began. As an aging patriarch, his attacks on what had earlier been an integral part of Christian belief, i.e. free will, self-government, and so forth, became visceral.  

Although Paul had demonstrated this ascetic inclination which he expressed in Corinthians, some of his early Christian followers had considered his ascetic message too extreme. They denied the validity of asceticism and the contingent denigration of the role of women and the body in the quest for salvation. Paul had "argued for the priority of celibacy and asceticism over marriage and parenting, a preference that had significant implications for women's participation and authority." Early letters attributed to Paul, later to be discovered as forgeries, attempted to moderate his Corinthian letters, which were felt to be too extreme.

However, Augustine's thought resonates with just these extreme views of Paul.

Paul also expresses ambivalence concerning the practical implications of human equality. Discussing the public activity of women in the churches, he argues from his own--traditionally Jewish--conception of a monistic, masculine God for
a divinely ordained hierarchy of social subordination: as God has authority over Christ, he declares, citing Genesis 2-3, so man has authority over woman . . . . While Paul acknowledged women as his equals "in Christ," and allowed for them a wider range of activity than did traditional Jewish congregations, he could not bring himself to advocate their equality in social and political terms.27

The dictum hierarchizing the sexes proved extremely influential. Augustine enlisted them to correct early Christian egalitarian thought. His work inscribed for all time a tradition of asceticism and gender hierarchizing. Pagels summarizes the thrust of Augustinian thought:

Instead of the freedom of the will and humanity's original royal dignity, Augustine emphasizes humanity's enslavement to sin. Humanity is sick, suffering, and helpless, irreparably damaged by the fall, for that "original sin," Augustine insists, involved nothing else than Adam's prideful attempt to establish his own autonomous self-government.28

He determined that Genesis told a story of bondage and inborn human evil. He took the position of those who believed that the virgin state of both Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden represented a true state of paradise.29 The ascetic life or sexual abstinence was the proper life. Here he refers to the work of Jerome, an early Christian enthusiast of the ascetic life or the life which renounced the world.

Jerome declares that Jesus himself remained "a virgin in the flesh and a monogamist in the spirit," faithful to his only bride, the church, and adds that "although I know that crowds of matrons will be furious at me, . . . I will say what the apostle [Paul] has taught me. . . . indeed in view of the purity of the body of Christ, all sexual intercourse is unclean."30
He specifically connected self-government or control with "rational control over sexual impulses."\textsuperscript{31}

For a great many Christians of the first four centuries and ever since, the greatest freedom demanded the greatest renunciation--above all, celibacy. . . . Yet as Christians saw it, celibacy involved rejection of "the world" of ordinary society and its multitudinous entanglements and was thereby a way to gain control over one's own life.\textsuperscript{32}

And with Augustine's writings, this ascetic state became not one of many paths, but the path of preference, the standard to which the behavior of real people was held. Social obligations, such as marriage and public life, constituted distractions from the ideal path towards fulfillment of spiritual desire and individual salvation.

Moving this religious belief into a literary realm, Augustine conceived his \textit{Confessions} as a journey similar to the romantic, epic journey that Aeneas takes in his search for a homeland. John O'Meara points out that Augustine believed that, like Aeneas, his early sexual episodes were obstacles to his eventual purification and salvation.\textsuperscript{33} As a result, just as Dido represented an obstacle for Aeneas, so not only all lustful love for a woman but all sexual love as well was seen by Augustine as destructive--a source of madness and pain.

O'Meara also points out that Augustine looked to his mother, Monica, in the same way that Aeneas looked to Venus. She was his guiding light, a helpmate, and a sainted servant.\textsuperscript{34} By her powerful and constant insistence and
intervention, she served as his guide to an ascetic life. Augustine was not the only one to benefit from her help. She was so determined and strong-willed a woman that she turned Augustine's profligate father into a reformed man before he died. The power of this feat is hinted at by Augustine's oblique references to the levels of decadence and violence of which his father was capable. Sainted for her great works, Augustine's mother begot an entire literary progeny of selfless, powerful, and nurturing women. In her eyes as in Augustine's, and before them the Apostle Paul, only the celibate life promised salvation; women's worth was contingent on the man she served and the children she raised.

In this fashion, the Western European gendered iconography of women obtained its imaginative literary origins in the turbulent Confessions of Augustine. In his personal testimonial to the Christian God and the possibility of individual salvation, Augustine reified gender roles and imbued popular culture with gender-juxtapositioning laden with religious authority. The hierarchical model, placing women in a socio-political and religious subordinate relationship to men, marked women as man's helper, whether earthly woman or heavenly figure. In the Confessions, the metaphor for the pathway to salvation is the female angelic body, i.e., Augustine's mother. Images of food, the maternal breast, milk, the sustenance provided by the mother abound.
The figure of a woman also take on synecdochal import by setting a standard of behavior for all earthly women.

Doth not each little infant, in whom I see what of myself I remember not? What then was my sin? Was it that I hung upon the breast and cried? for should I now so do for food suitable to my age."36

Is that too innocence, when the fountain of milk is flowing in rich abundance, not to endure one to share it, though in extremist need, and whose very life as yet depends thereon?37

Thou sawest, my God . . . with what eagerness and what faith I sought, from the pious care of my mother and Thy Church, the mother of us all, the baptism of Thy Christ, my God and Lord.38

Or what am I even at the best, but an infant sucking the milk Thou givest, and feeding upon Thee, the food that perisheth not?3940

But the natural man, as it were a babe in Christ and fed on milk, until he be strengthened for solid meat and his eye be abled to behold the Sun.41

Although he referred to his mother's "slavery" in caring for him with some regret and compassion, that was the ideal role into which he hoped to place all women.42 Women were supposed to plead the case of their errant husbands to God just as had Augustine's mother who was determined to "bewail my case unto Thee."43

But yet, O my God, who madest us, what compassion is there betwixt that honour that I paid her, and her slavery for me?44

In the case where men mistreated their women, women were to be discreet and keep the domestic abuse a secret from the marketplace. In an implicit fashion, Augustine implies that his father beat his mother and that he was violent and that he
drank. He also suggests that he was violent in their sexual relationships (see quote below). He declares that his mother's meekness and submissiveness was female behavior de rigueur. Women must withstand their violent men and make the case for these men with God in order for these men to find an eternal rest after their violent, earthly existence.

Brought up thus modestly and soberly . . . being bestowed upon a husband, she served him as her lord. . . . And she so endured the wronging of her bed as never to have any quarrel with her husband thereon. For she looked for Thy mercy upon him, that believing in Thee she might be chaste. But besides this, he was fervid, as in his affections, so in his anger: but she had learnt not to resist an angry husband, not in deed only, but not even in word. . . . In a word, while many matrons, who had milder husbands, yet bore even in their faces marks of shame, would in familiar talk blame their husbands' lives, she would blame their tongues, giving them, as in jest, earnest advice: 'That from the time they heard the marriage writings read to them, they should account them as indentures, whereby they were made servants; and so remembering their condition, ought not to set themselves up against their lords.'

With his mother's suffering in mind, Augustine made clear that the sexual activity of the marriage bed should be limited and controlled for the purpose of procreation alone and not for enjoyment. He hoped, one guesses, to spare other women the sexual abuse that his mother suffered or perhaps he sought his mother without paternal interference.

Augustine's own personal experiences taught him that sexual activity could only be enjoyed before the marriage bond and only by a man, never by a righteous woman. In the Confessions, Augustine discusses his "concubine," with whom he
enjoyed a close relationship over a span of years, and who mothered his child.

In those years [nineteen to twenty-eight] I had one [a companion]—not in that which is called lawful marriage, but whom I had found out in a wayward passion, void of understanding; yet but one, remaining faithful even to her; in whom I in my own case experienced what difference there is betwixt the self-restraint of the marriage-covenant, for the sake of issue, and the bargain of a lustful love, where children are born against their parents' will, although, once born, they constrain love.46

The ascetic voice of Augustine helped polarize the images of female sexuality. The sexual, living woman is equated with the fallen, transgressive woman while the desexualized, idealized woman is defined as the righteous, acceptable woman. In Platonic language, these are the two unchangeable forms that women take.

The idealized disembodied woman as it emerged from the Augustinian works is the model of the figure of the worthy woman that characterizes the following canonical analysis. When Augustine describes the role his mother played in his life, he establishes a paradigm that continues to play itself out to this day in religion, art, and culture. Monica is installed as a projection of Augustine's subjectivity which helps him to discover, express, and ultimately stabilize his identity. Like Mary she becomes an agent, who along with God, works towards the redemption of humanity. "And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.'"47 Augustine expressed an analogous thought to commemorate his mother's
role in helping to achieve his salvation, "I am Thy [the divine Jesus] servant and the son of Thy handmaid." 48

Honoring a fragmented, idealized figure of a woman had its precedence in the pagan religious practices. The Church followed Greek tradition which fragmented the psychologized woman into parts, and which assigned individual parts to separate goddesses.

Artemis, the huntress: Athena, the warrior maiden; Aphrodite, the love goddess; and Hera the mother-wife. But there was also a distinct hostility to the goddess as wife and mother. Hera, the wife of Zeus, for example, was reduced to a nagging petulant figure. 49

This tradition, with its roots in Platonic thought, extrapolates the gnostic Christian tradition wherein Eve represents "a higher principle, the spiritual self" as the only theologically acceptable figure of the worthy woman. Once fragmented she can join with Adam who never loses his wholeness or his psychological reality. The joining of the spiritual (feminine) with the psychological (masculine) produces transcendent fulfillment for the male/individual. 50

I turn to George Santayana to help explain how this gender configuration differs from the best of the Jewish rabbinic tradition. As George Santayana explains, the Christian tradition crystallized by Augustine identifies evil with matter. Various stages of earthly or material imperfection are ascribed to the grossness of bodies which smother the spark of divinity that animates them. 51
Nature was a compound of ideal purposes and inert matter. Life was a conflict between sin and grace. The environment was a battleground between a host of angels and a legion of demons. The better and the worse had actually become, as Socrates desired, the sole principles of understanding.\(^5\)

In this Christian ontological view, the real life, the everyday woman (as opposed to the idealized woman), is most often coded mythopoetically as that body which represents the vessel for the male soul, that body which sins and is responsible for the fall of M(m)an and that body which must be colonized and appropriated into the service of the patriarchy in order to achieve the salvation of individual males.

Santayana continues:

This fall, or emanation of the world from the deity was the origin of evil for the Platonists; evil consisted merely in finitude, materiality, or otherness from God.\(^5\)

What Santayana says next is of particular interest to me as a Jew who only understands the Christian epistemology and ontology as an observer. Although the quote is long, it expresses the divergence of the two religions in ways salient to the issues of the body and matter and its implications for the iconography and lives of women.

The Jews had never felt uncomfortable at being material; even in the other world they hoped to remain so, and their immortality was a resurrection of the flesh. It did not seem plausible to them that this excellent frame of things should be nothing but a faint, troubled, and unintended echo of the good. On the contrary, they thought this world so good, intrinsically, that they were sure God must have made it expressly, and not by an unconscious effluence of his virtue, as the Platonists had believed. Their wonder at the power
and ingenuity of the deity reached its maximum when they thought of him as the cunning contriver of nature, and of themselves. Nevertheless the work seemed to show some imperfections; indeed, its moral excellence was potential rather than actual, a suggestion of what might be, rather than an accomplished fact. 54

Unlike the Augustinian Christian resolution of the conflict between the real and ideal world, the ethos which expresses the best of Jewish thought emphasizes a negotiated settlement—the best way to both control and enjoy the real. The tradition prioritizes the sacredness of the soul and body. The image of the fulfilled married couple as the idealized norm provides an historic departure from the cultural practices of the time in both Greek, Roman, and Christian 55 cultures. Even today, the best of the Jewish religion still provides a model for future developments within the religion itself regarding the treatment of women.

[T]he theme of a sacred marriage between God and Israel became profoundly enshrined in Jewish religious consciousness. . . . Human marriages were to be modeled after this covenant of marriage between God and his beloved spouse. 56

In ancient time, the introduction of the metaphor of "God and his beloved spouse" established a cultural standard for the respectful treatment of women. But as we shall consider below, the metaphor adumbrated a double-edged sword. Literary rhetoric changing the figure of the woman from real to ideal reflected an analogous shift in cultural and religious belief and a discomfort with the competent, real woman. Honor came to be given only to the idealized, "impossible" woman. Like
their contemporary Christian theologians and scholars, the writings of many Jewish scholars in the beginning of the Christian era reflect an ascetic bent which devalues women and reifies the figure of the woman into that of the seductress and dominatrix.\textsuperscript{57}

Frye rightly acknowledges the patriarchal hegemonic intent of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.\textsuperscript{58} From the beginning, with the creation story, the Bible inscribes a subservient role for women, while the New Testament barely mentions Mary, the obvious leading female figure in the religious narrative. In Luke, Mary is given an active, if brief, appearance as the mother of God: "All generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me," (Luke 1.48-49).\textsuperscript{59} Her important act of praising and giving thanks to God with song is accompanied by her recognition that it is her very lowliness and humility which qualifies her to mother the savior (Luke 1.46-55).\textsuperscript{60} She is not mentioned by Paul.\textsuperscript{61}

Ultimately, "the dominant patriarchal Church marginalized even [the] idea of women's public ministry as members of the celibate elite."\textsuperscript{62} Women were systematically removed from important roles in the Church. By 150-200 A.D., women had been excluded from all important leading roles in the Church.\textsuperscript{63} As Christianity became entrenched in the larger culture, it appropriated the cultural ethos and the world view of the patriarchal pagan and Judaic mentality. Whether this
was a cause or effect is moot. Patriarchy became the historical winner. Sexuality and maternity were given inferior roles as the tradition entrenched itself within the Church power structure. Only the desexualized, virgin woman, unconnected to sexuality, came to be depicted in high esteem.

As a result, through the medieval centuries, debate raged about whether Mary was exempt from the original sin. Using the philosophical rational that the only good woman was a virgin woman, Church fathers denied Mary's divinity and incarnation. In the thirteenth century, the Church fathers allowed her a theological presence whereby she represented the earthly followers of the Church. With the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Church "cleansed" Mary of her sexual, desiring aspects, of her agency and her subjectivity. All that remained of Mary was her divinely executed reproductive and mothering capabilities. Representing all women, Mary became a vessel through which men could be born and nurtured until death. The tradition reified and institutionalized the figure of the "impossible" woman.

Elaine Pagels writes that "sexual imagery [was used] only to contrast actual marriage, which [the Church father considered polluted] with heavenly marriage to Christ." As though to illuminate this point, medieval scholar, Joan Ferrante, writes, "The glory of the Virgin Mary was, of
course, that she could be the mother of a living son without carnal intercourse." Ferrante notes that the devotional practices of Mariology and the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception, both of which idealize the mother of God, came with a decline in the rights of women and an increase in misogyny. If presented as psychologized, real women, they were vilified or textually marginalized. This decline represented a shift from the trend of the high Middle Ages. In the twelfth century, women had begun to enjoy a certain esteem. They were active participants at a variety of levels in medieval life. Legal rights such as the ability to inherit land, cultural rights such as the endorsement of women educators, writers, and political leaders, and religious rights such as the supremacy of the Virgin Mary in popular esteem and love produced a view of woman as real, capable, and loved. Mary was a popular symbol of womanliness and maternity. A Golden Age of women's authorship and interest in the arts flourished in Southern France and in the courts of Eleanor of Aquitaine in Normandy. But economic and political forces which probably influenced religious doctrine proved fatal to this budding liberation. By the thirteenth century, the tide had reversed itself. Not until 1950, with the papal decree ordaining the bodily assumption of Mary, did the Church reverse its denial of a feminine heavenly presence.
Pagan and Secular Literary Gender Considerations

The figure of the idealized, disembodied woman in the Western lexicon of worthy women continues to influence the imagination to this day. The impact of religious traditions on the earliest of pagan literature has been documented by scholars as has the gradual over-running of the pagan traditions by the Christian influence. Keith Douglas Azariah-Kribbs maintains that, although there were already signs of the demonization and marginalization of representations of women before pagan contacts with Christianity, the disappearance of strong, beloved female characters from central roles in the mythopoetic traditions of early pagan literature can largely be attributed to the encounter of the pagan peoples with the Christian tradition. 76

To advance his argument, he examined pre-Christian and Christian traditions of early England. He demonstrates that the pre-Christian epics and legends of the Irish Celts, the Norse, and the Anglo-Saxons boasted centralized psychological and numinous worthy female types. In Irish-Celtic England, the "supernatural was organized around a vision of the divine that conspicuously included the feminine." As a result, according to Azariah-Kribbs, active, respected women appeared in legend and epic. 77 Aodh De Blacam confirms Azariah-Kribbs conclusions when he writes about the appearance, if brief, of active, central women characters in the earliest of recorded Irish-Celtic epics, the Red Branch cycle. Typical is Maeve,
a warrior queen who possesses an "imperious spirit with a passionate ambition." De Blacam points out that these strong women characters disappear in the subsequent important Irish cycle, the Fenian tales.

Among the differences between the two is the fact that the older cycle depicted three of the most splendid women characters of fiction--Deirdre, Emer, and Maeve--beside whom there are no comparable figures in the Fenian tales.78

In an analogous example, Azariah-Kribbs further points out that the pre-Christian Germanic religions honored a numinous feminine presence as documented by the Roman historian, Tacitus.79

However, in a process that took centuries and was characterized by great migrations, conflict, and intermingling of cultures, these worthy female types were either marginalized or demonized. Eventually, the strong woman character disappeared to be replaced by a dominant male presence. The possibility of a worthy, central female figure disappeared. She was marginalized, fragmented, and, if worthy, served the idealized role of angelic, unconditional love.

If love within the tradition of the mode of romance (as understood by the male canonical authors) is "upward, the worthy woman is already there from beginning to end.80 If the female figure is not virginal and angelic but psychologized and numinous, her powers are terrible; if not virginal and motherly but psychologized and earthly, she is transgressive.81 In this tradition, witches, hags,
giantesses, and troll-wives comprise a menagerie of powerful forces which serve as narrative obstacles to the male questor of legend and folklore. Wealtheow, and Morgan Le Fay are typical of those early and middle medieval women characters who suggest a powerful, magical feminine presence which has been marginalized and coded as monstrous or suspect.

Chaucer's independent women, i.e., the Prioress, the Wife of Bath, Criseyde, who typically display autonomous secular power, are framed as problematic or morally transgressive.

Azariah-Kribbs attributes the advent of courtly love which honors the absent woman in the form of the Grail to the absence of a beloved and powerful female figure within the Church traditions. He notes that the absence of a divine feminine icon in the early medieval period reflects a rejection by the religion of the (positive) feminine divine presence. The obvious icon, Mary, was not encouraged.

Mary was not so conspicuously and publicly divine in Anglo-Saxon England that the Christian worshipper might feel comfortable that his desire to find the feminine as well as the masculine in the iconography of the Godhead was satisfied. Agreeing with Azariah-Dribbs' conclusions that the miraculous figure reflected a devaluated reality, semiotic theoretician, Julia Kristeva, conjectures that the idealization of women in the form of the cult of the Lady created a structural site of center or site of exchange in a male dominated market place. Kristeva expands on the principal:
[This] devalorizing valorization prepared the terrain for, and cannot be fundamentally distinguished from, the explicit devalorization of women beginning with the fourteenth-century bourgeois literature (in fabliaux, soties, and farces).86

The result was the construction of women as "Other" to the male "Normal."

Another biblical text contributed to the rubric which produced a devalorized valorization of women in symbolic form and which retains the male hero as a psychologized character. According to Frye, it is the gendered tradition introduced with the biblical Song of Songs.87 Earlier I noted the Judaic gender considerations of the marriage bond between a man and his bride as a metaphor for the marriage of God and Israel. One result of this rubric within the Jewish tradition was a validation of the subjectivity and agency of the Bride. When enlisted to serve as a symbol, whether for the Judaic or Christian text, the "voice" or agency of the figure of the woman is removed as is her bodily expressiveness.88

In his chart of Apocalyptic Imagery, Northrop Frye uses two terms, "Individual" and "Class," to head two columns. Under Individual, which is coded male, comes the bridegroom. The psychologized male replaces God of the metaphor established by the Song of Songs. Under Class, which is coded female, is the bride who stands for "The People of Israel."89 Instead of assuming a psychologized literary presence in this rubric as does her male counterpart, the female continues to
be coded as a universal. Frye explains that this metaphor which has provided the prevailing imagery regarding women in Western literature until well into the twentieth century.

Israel itself is symbolically the chosen bride of God, and is also frequently unfaithful to him. This infidelity comes into Ezekiel 16 and the story of Aholah and Aholibah in Ezekiel 23, as well as into the story in Hosea 1 of that prophet's marriage to two unfaithful women, symbolically north and south Israel. Thus the forgiven harlot, who is taken back eventually into favor despite her sins, is an intermediate bridal figure between the demonic Whore and the apocalyptic Bride, and represents the redemption of man from sin.  

For Ruether, the worthy feminine symbols describe three kinds of relationships with God: (1) the believing community is seen as God's feminine companion; (2) an aspect of God at work in his creation--his Spirit, Presence, or Wisdom--can be perceived as feminine; and (3) the feminine can symbolize the soul's openness and receptivity to God's initiatives.

Conflating the sensual meaning of the Songs of Songs for the male figure, the allegorization of the female body, and the pastoral romance tradition, the Romance of the Rose, written in the thirteenth century, metamorphizes the literary body of the woman into a garden, an object to be conquered. Her genitalia becomes the rose, the much sought after object of male erotic and hegemonic desire. The biblical "she" of the literal reading of the Song of Songs has lost her erotic agency, or for that matter, agency of any kind, in this rubric.
Contributing to the removal of the psychologized woman from literature, Petrarch, in the sixteenth century, represents an important part of this genealogy of the miraculous woman. The sexual is considered equally demonic for both male and female. Although he is not examined in this dissertation, Petrarch's lyrical tributes to his beloved Laura reflect the tradition of idealizing the woman as a projection of the needs of the male author. The psychologized woman is absent.

Feminist Commentary on the Canon

Gilbert and Gubar point to the literary descent from the eternal type of female purity represented by the Madonna to a variety of secular literary traditions.

[T]here is a clear line of literary descent from divine Virgin to domestic angel, passing through (among many others) Dante, Milton, and Goethe. Like most Renaissance neo-Platonists, Dante claimed to "know God and His Virgin handmaid by knowing the Virgin's virgin attendant, Beatrice. . . ."

[In the same manner,] the famous vision of the "Eternal Feminine" (Das Ewig-Weiblich) with which Goethe's Faust concludes presents women from penitent prostitutes to angelic virgins in just this role of interpreters or intermediaries between the divine Father and his human sons.

In many ways, this kind of ideal woman, the nurturing woman or the maternal woman fits the description of woman suggested by Carol Gilligan in a Different Voice. Described by Gilligan's essentialist voice, woman is interdependent, not independent;
nurturing, not selfish; circular, not linear; and spiritual, not materialistic.\textsuperscript{98}

Simon De Beauvoir sums up the images of women in the literary canon when she writes about the mythopoetic treatment of women by five male authors.

It is to be seen from these examples that each separate writer reflects the great collective myths: we have seen woman as flesh; the flesh of the male is produced in the mother's body and re-created in the embraces of the woman in love. Thus woman is related to nature, she incarnates it: vale of blood, open rose, siren, the curve of a hill, she represents to man the fertile soil, the sap, the material beauty and the soul of the world. She can be mediatrix between this world and the beyond: grace or oracle, star or sorceress, she opens the door to the supernatural, the surreal. She is doomed to immanence; and through her passivity she bestows peace and harmony--but if she declines this role, she is seen forthwith as a praying mantis, an ogress. In any case she appears as the privileged Other, through whom the subject fulfills himself: one of the measures of man, his counterbalance, his salvation, his adventure, his happiness.\textsuperscript{99}

Like De Beauvoir, Gilbert and Gubar reflect upon the role of women in that literary tradition:

The psychic mode associated with women seems to stand at both the bottom and the top of the scale of human modes of relating . . . . the subversive feminine symbols (witches, evil eye, menstrual pollution, castrating mothers) and the feminine symbols of transcendence (mother goddesses, merciful dispensers of salvation, female symbols of Justice) [prove that women] can appear from certain points of view to stand both under and over (but really simply outside of) the sphere of culture's hegemony."\textsuperscript{100}

With analogous logic, other scholars confirm the paradigm of the figure of the miraculous woman as representative of a universal ideal. According to David C. Fowler, the over-
The riding theme of *Perceval* is the struggle and the ultimate choice of Christian Charity, represented by the female icon of the Holy Grail, over knightly "Prowess." Ricardo J. Quinones suggests that, for Dante, *virtù*, personified by Beatrice, represents the single most important contribution that Christianity made to the classical ethos. An analysis of these figures representing the discourse of the impossible woman follows. A discussion comparing this discourse to the figure of the worthy, possible woman will appear in the introduction to the second section.


6. Frye 186.


16. Plaskow writes that, in Judaism, woman is considered "other," requiring control and is held to a strict code of behavior subordinating herself to either her husband or her father. 172.


21. O'Meara intro., Concerning The City of God against the Pagans x.

22. O'Meara intro. City of God, ix.

23. O'Meara intro. City of God, xvii.


29. Pagels Gnostic Gospels 94.


32. Pagels Gnostic Gospels 78.

34. O'Meara *Studies in Augustine* 55.


38. Augustine 14.
39. Augustine 54.

40. As Hammer notes, Augustine performs gender-bending here by metamorphizing God into the ultimate mother.

41. Augustine 316.
42. Augustine 191.
43. Augustine 51.
44. Augustine 191.
45. Augustine 184-5.
46. Augustine 54.
47. Ruether Mary 33.
48. Augustine 169.
49. Ruether Mary 16.
51. Santayana 78.
52. Santayana 80.
53. Santayana 80.
54. Santayana 80.
55. Ruether Mary 17.
56. Ruether Mary 23.
57. Sharma 193.

59. Ruether Mary 33.


61. Ruether Mary 31.


64. Interview with June O'Connor, Professor and Chair, Department of Religious Studies, UCR, on January 10, 1994. I am grateful for the many insights Professor O'Connor shared with me regarding the Judeo-Christian attitude towards women.

65. Ruether Mary 17.

66. Ruether Mary 66.


68. Ruether Mary 54.

69. Pagels *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* 70.


71. Ferrante *Woman as Image* 20.


73. Ferrante *Woman as Image* 9-11.


32
75. Reuther Mary 62 "The idea of Mary's assumption has considerable religious importance.... Mary takes [Christ's] place as the symbol of the hope of the human race for final salvation."


77. Azariah-Kribbs 43.


79. Azariah-Kribbs 64-5.


81. Azariah-Kribbs 71.

82. Helen Damico, Beowulf's Wealtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition (Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1984) 27. Wealtheow, Hrothgar's queen, retains only a hint of her legendary, regal power.


84. Azariah-Kribbs 45.

85. Azariah-Kribbs 43.


87. "Song of Songs," Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 15 Sm-Un: 146. The discussion of the Song of Songs confirms Frye's commentary on its allegorical use. "Interpretations of the Song of Songs necessarily begins with its interpretation as an allegory in which the love of God for His people was expressed. By this means a mystical message of comfort and hope could be derived from the text." 149.

88. Ruether Mary 23.

90. Frye *The Great Code* 141.

91. Ruether *Mary* 43.


96. Gilbert and Gubar 20.

97. Gilbert and Gubar 20-1.


100. Gilbert and Gubar 19.


102. Schibanoff 199. Susan Schibanoff's terminology of the discourse of the possible and the impossible woman neatly describes the two possibilities for the representation of worthy women in literature. Her article, focusing on Boticelli's painting, discusses this issue with which female humanist authors writing in fifteenth-century Italy struggled.
Chapter II: The Canon: Impossible "Worthy" Women

Chrétienn de Troyes' *Perceval*

The Disembodied Woman

With the work of Chrétienn de Troyes, I suggest that the figures of worthy women are portrayed primarily in a disembodied form and used structurally as pure symbol. In the introductory comments about the tradition of romance, Julia Kristeva connects the literary tradition of courtly love with women's semiotic presence in narrative as the "Other" to the male hero. According to this rubric, the questing male is psychologized. The narrativization of his internal voyage by way of external action guarantees his entry into time and space and his construction as an active human being.¹ Yet, in the context of this literary tradition and the long-established Church doctrine whose disdain of all things feminine has been discussed, the existence of a womanly symbol of beloved power is remarkable if not surprising.

My discussion of Chrétienn de Troyes' final, unfinished work begins with the historical background of the work. I also discuss the ways Chrétienn incorporates women as symbols of important, desirable powers into his narrative and the history of those icons associated with women that influenced his use of them. And finally, I address the question of romantic love which Chrétienn is said to have abandoned as his opus progressed.
Chretien de Troyes names his patrons in the introductory sections of his romances. For example, *Li Chevaliers de la Charrette* (Lancelot) is written for Marie, daughter of Louis VII of France and his first queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, supported the arts in France while married to Louis and in Normandy after her divorce while married to Henry. An enthusiastic supporter of the arts like her mother, Marie spent significant periods of time in her mother's court in Poitiers where Eleanor served as regent for her son and where for a brief period of time, 1167-1174, the arts received the primary interest of Eleanor and Marie.

With *Lancelot*, Chretien demonstrates the continuing influence that Eleanor and Marie had upon him. Chretien's lyrical and troubadour poetry about courtly love are also identified with this period. Under the aegis of Eleanor and Marie, Chretien, along with Marie de France and the troubadours, developed the genre and the conventions of courtship and love which now form an integral part of the imagination of Western European civilization. I will save the discussion of those conventions, literary and social, until later. Now I focus on the birth of the literary tradition.

In the twelfth century, three main avenues of poetic expression dominated the cultural tradition. They included the following legends and stories: those of France, those of Arthur and other Celtic heroes, and those of Greece and Rome. Chretien used the Arthurian legends and Celtic quest stories
already circulating in the Norman courts on both sides of the Channel and, with characteristically French refinement, polished them and gave them form by using the conventions of courtly love poetry. Thus, Chrétien de Troyes "invented" the Arthurian romance. The new genre was soon capable of handling complicated, universal issues and experiences. In his works, Erec and Enide, Cligé as well as Yvain and The Story of the Grail, the narration begins with the male hero's youthful adventures, followed by a crisis or major failure, and concludes with the penance or expiation necessary to right this wrong and bring about a final resolution and expiation of all conflicts. Through the process, the hero matures and defines his values and identity.

One of the most important aspects of the romance of this late medieval period was the question of the code of heterosexual love. Courtly love conventions defined proper romantic behavior between men and women. The lais of Marie de France figure prominently in this tradition. Initially the works of Ovid, including Metamorphoses, The Art of Love (Ars amatoria), The Cure for Love (Remedia amoris), and the Amours (Amores) also influence its development. To Ovid, love is frankly sensual, though not illicit. Ovid describes love in terms of warfare, the lover as a soldier, a sexual encounter as a conquest.

But, by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the code of courtly love, although it originally developed out of the
tradition of Ovid, takes a turn. No longer are the lover and the lady playing a game of mutual deceit as had been the Ovidian tradition, in spite of his disclaimer regarding illicit affairs. The Lady becomes the feudal suzerain of the lover—unattainable. Scholars conjecture that this turn toward the spiritual may have resulted from the influence of the Arab traditions regarding love.

This tradition found its way into European culture through poets like Ibn Hazm. After the fall of the Califate of Cordova in 1031, the territory of the Moors was divided among petty kings. For a brief period of fifty or so years, Christian and Arab lived together in peace. The classical Arabic tradition, which became accessible at this time, had a sensual tradition of love poetry similar to that identified by Ovid. It also had a spiritual tradition probably influenced by Plato and had come down through the commentaries of Arab scholars. With the removal of an accessible lady, love leaves the temporal and enters a spiritual realm.

Like the changing tradition of courtly love, Chrétien changes his treatment of women. For example, Faithful, earthly love is celebrated in Lancelot and Yvain. In his final poem, The Story of the Grail, Chretien takes the exclusivity and unconditional devotion to an earthly heterosexual relationship and applies it to an ascetic, Christian love. He thereby removes the earthly woman,
honoring the Platonic tradition, not only from the narrative, but from the privileged, spiritual site as well.

The frustration if not absence of a loving earthly woman seems to have plagued the life of Chrétien's patron; perhaps explaining his desire to find solace in a feminine spirituality. Chrétien tells us that the romance was inspired by and written for Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders, whom Chretien had tutored. Scholars identify the writing of this poem to the years 1181-82. By that time, Marie, patroness for the Lancelot poem had been married to and widowed by Henry I of France who went on crusade in 1179 and who died shortly after his return in 1181. Philip of Alsace, by then King of France, frequented Troyes, home of Marie. He was both a half-brother to the widowed Marie and her suitor. He proposed marriage to Marie in 1182. Presumably Marie refused him. In 1190, years after the appearance of the romance written in his honor, Philip left on the Third Crusade and died in Palestine in 1191.

Another vignette sheds some light on the personality of Chrétien's patron for the Grail story which demotes women to symbolic status. After accusing his wife, the Countess of Vermandois, of encouraging the amorous advances of the knight, Walter of Fontaines, Philip had the knight put to death and his wife disgraced. Perhaps, it might be conjectured, the quest for spiritual love matches the aesthetic mood of Philip
who had been jilted, as far as we know, by at least two women: his wife and Marie.

Having located the story against its historical backdrop, I now turn to the semiotic role of the women characters. The Story of the Grail, coming as it does at the end of Chrétien's life, seems to be an indictment of chivalry and courtly love.¹³ David C. Fowler confirms this. He describes the Grail story as an internal conflict between prowess, the knightly and courtly ideal, and charity, the Christian ideal. ¹⁴ According to Fowler, the ultimate victory of charity, i.e., Perceval's return to the spiritual ideal of his mother, represents a challenge to the feudal order including the doctrine of courtly love.¹⁵ However, Fowler insists that later adaptations which are written by other authors and which emphasize the institutionally prescribed religious path miss the essence of Chrétien's work which is a sensitive portrayal of a personal, internalized struggle leading to the acceptance of the Christian faith.¹⁶

Scholarship seems to be divided about the specificity of Chrétien's religious message. Fowler's interpretation falls on middle ground. On the one hand, some scholars tend to minimize Chrétien's institutional, religious intent. They see a more humanistic message. Reading the work as a metaphor for a human life, the tale becomes a symbol of personal transcendence.
The Grail is an early recognition that doctrinal teachings are symbols which are no more meant for literal acceptance than any express fables. . . . The quest is not pursued with horses or clothed in outward armor, but in the spirit. 17

As John C. Wilson writes, "Christ's blood in the Grail Cup is there and it is not there." 18 Waite goes on to quote Weston who writes:

To Chretien the story was Romance, pure and simple. There was still a certain element of awe connected with Grail and Grail Feast, but of the real meaning and origin of the incidents he had, I am convinced, no idea whatever . . . We have here passed completely and entirely into the Land of Romance: the doors of the Temple are closed behind us. It is the story of Perceval le Gallois . . . which fills the stage, and the Story of Perceval there comes upon the scene a crowd of folk-themes, absolutely foreign to the Grail itself. 19

Because of the open-ended nature of Chretien's work, Waite maintains that the entire genre is a parable depicting either the salvation story of Christ or the personal search of a man for his soul. 20

On the other hand, for other scholars, the historical context of the work, in addition to the personal story of the patron, tends to point to a strong ecclesiastical institutional influence on the tale. The narrative developed during the time when the Church was actively promoting the celibate life. The aesthetic resonances of this directive in the Grail stories are everywhere. Under Chretien's pen, the hero is metamorphized from the Celtic husband or lover to the chaste knight. Thus the transformed chivalric hero is, as Lizette Andrews Fisher writes, "aggressively chaste, with a
chastity which is uncompromisingly identified with celibacy." The knight who indulges in a sensual life does not recover the Grail.

Pressing the semiotic analysis further, I now discuss the women characters who symbolize Perceval's internal voyage toward his ultimate communion on Good Friday. As Fowler points out, none of the characters except Perceval are psychologized. The male characters represent prowess—the world view Perceval ultimately rejects. They serve the semiotic function of testing the knight's resolve by providing external action. The narrative teaches us that only by experiencing the sins of the world and then rejecting the temptations and luxuries of the flesh and secular life can an individual be truly tested and earn his salvation.

On the other hand, the internal, emotional voyage is represented by the women characters. I now briefly summarize those women characters or projections of Perceval's inner life. Although the story suggests a psychologized mother early on, she is quickly dismissed and will be replaced semiotically by the Grail. Chrétien makes certain the reader understands the noble nature of his hero even if he does act like a country bumpkin. Chrétien makes this point during Perceval's first appearance at Arthur's court with the prediction of the Smiling Maiden who announces to the entire court that Perceval will prove to be the best knight.
Once he leaves Arthur's court, he comes upon the Maiden-in-the-Tent whom he mistreats, because he has misunderstood the meaning of his mother's words. The Maiden shows up later in the narrative as the Wretched Maiden who has lost everything as a result of Perceval's thoughtless behavior. As a result, in addition to feeling guilty about his mother, Perceval also feels guilty about his treatment of the Maiden.

To foreground the distinction between the life of the flesh and that of the spirit, Chrétien has his hero tutored in both chivalry (Gornemant de Goort) and earthly, although asexual, love (Blancheflor) before he first sees, but misunderstands the meaning of, the Grail. In this way, the reader learns that even though a country bumpkin may be turned outwardly into a swan, spiritual wisdom can only come with that which the eyes cannot see.

The connection between the spiritual woman, represented by the mother, and the Grail, a vessel, was only hinted at in many works in medieval literature, perhaps because of the overwhelming Church directives to ban the presence of women in any important Church leadership and theology. But as Jessie L. Weston points out:

Lance and Cup (or Vase) were in truth connected together in a symbolic relation long ages before the institution of Christianity, or the birth of Celtic tradition. They are sex symbols of immemorial antiquity and world-wide diffusion, the Lance or Spear, representing the Male, the Cup, or Vase, the Female, reproductive energy.
The first "grail" Perceval sees is a bowl containing food. Although Chrétien makes sure the reader understands the sacred nature of the vessel by having it ceremoniously carried by a virgin, Perceval does not connect any sacred implications to it.  

The original French placement of the word "grail" at the start of the line underscores both the importance of the object while maintaining the air of simplicity maintained in the accompanying lines with which it is presented at Court.

A maiden accompanying the two young men was carrying a grail in her two hands;

Un graal antre ses deux mains
Une dameisele tenoit
Qui avoec les vaslez venoit

The images of the woman bearer of the cup had an extensive tradition in folklore. Typical of the woman as representative of the land and the people is her appearance in Irish legend where the female goddess, Eriu, representing the "Sovrenity of Ireland" was the prototype of the Grail bearer. She and by extension the grail vessel itself represented the land of Ireland.

The religious implications of his having seen the Grail are presented to Perceval around line 3522 by his cousin, the Weeping Maiden, who was raised with him by his mother and whom he finds seated in a meadow rocking a beheaded knight, her dead lover, in her lap.
Perceval the wretched!
Ah, unlucky Perceval,
how unfortunate you were when you failed to ask all
this,
because you would have brought great succor to the
good king who is maimed:29

Percevax li cheitis.
Ha! Percevax maleureus!
Com ies or mesavantureus
Qant tu tot ce n'as demandé,
Que mort eüsses amandé
Le boen roi que est maheigniez30

Later, when he is at the height of his prowess, the Ugly
Damselle enters into the court and also decries Perceval's
irresponsibility. Instead of asking about the importance of
the appearance of the bloody drop from the white lance, he had
been thinking about his earthly love, Blancheflor.31 The
appearance of the Ugly Damselle is a projection of his inner
conflict. His conscience is bothering him. The hideous face
of the Damselle, just like the wound in the thigh of the
"Fisher King," suggests the sterility of land and soul that
will continue to plague its inhabitants unless Perceval
discovers the Grail.32 Her message stings him with its
urgency.33 Around 4613, the Hideous Damsel speaks:

Cursed be anyone who'd greet you
or who'd wish you well,
for you didn't catch hold of Fortune
when you met her!34

Maudahez ait qui te salue
Et qui nul bien t'ore ne prie,
Que tu ne la retenis mie,
Fortune, quant tu l'enccontras!35

Finally, when Perceval confesses to the Hermit, whom he
discovers is his maternal uncle, that he strayed from the path
laid out by his mother, he completes the telos of romance by re-membering his heritage. He is ready for a new life. He finally understands the Grail.

Brother, a sin of which you are unaware has caused you much hardship:
it is the sorrow your mother felt for you when you departed from her
for she fell in a faint on the ground
at the head of the bridge before the gate,
and she died of this sorrow.
Because of this sin of yours
it came about that you did not ask
about the lance or the grail,
and much hardship has resulted for you.
And understand that you
would not have lasted until now
had she not commended you to God;\textsuperscript{36}

Frere, mout t'a neu
Uns pechiez don tu ne sez mot,
Ce fu li dix que ta mere ot
De toi quant tu partis de li,
Que pasmee a terre chei
Au chief del pont devant la porte,
Et de ce[st]

duel fu ele morte.
Por le pechié que tu en as
T'avint que tu ne demandas
De la lance ne del graal,
Si t'an sont avenu maint mal.
Et n'eusses pas tant duré
S'ele ne t'eust comandé
A Damedeu, ce saches tu\textsuperscript{37}

The feminization of the spiritual symbols is remarkable considering the position of the institutionalized Church and its frowning upon feminine icons. But it must be recalled that, with uncanny precision, the acceptance of the woman as powerful, beloved icon and symbol by both Church and Chrétien is achieved by disembodying the real woman and removing her subjectivity from narrative. As I discussed earlier, in an
analogous fashion, the Church authorized its first anthropomorphized woman, Mary, only after she had been denaturalized by the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Chrétien creates Perceval, the virgin, as the perfect knight to find the Grail.\textsuperscript{38} We can only conjecture whether the interrupted tale would have changed his fate. However, according to Fowler, the message of the tale is that the spiritual ideal does not come in the flesh.\textsuperscript{39} In fact, the reason that Perceval could not see the "Fisher King" in the castle early in the narrative is because he had not yet understood that spiritual message and could still only see with the eyes of the material world.

Perceval's epiphany resolves his internal conflict between the legacy of his mother and that of his father. Having rejected earthly prowess for spiritual charity, Perceval's father received eternal life and was able to join his mother. With their spiritual union, Chretien textually objectifies the resolution of Perceval's internal struggle between the two forces that the parents represented: prowess and charity, once again reaffirming the ascetic message.\textsuperscript{40}

Having considered the narrativized deprivileging of earthly, maternal love in favor of ascetic love, I now turn to the consideration of the figure of the worthy woman by another canonical author. While, undeniably, the dynamics of the \textit{Divine Comedy} move inexorably away from earth and upward toward an idealized, celestial love, and the figure of the
angelic, impossible woman, Dante opens narrative space for historical women. The "voice" and subjectivity of these women serves as benchmarks of critical interest along the path of this thirteenth-century questor.

Dante's Divine Comedy
The Angelic Woman

In the Divine Comedy, both the impossible and the possible worthy woman are represented. Although Beatrice serves as a beloved symbol, a veritable embodiment of love and a universal ideal, Dante's portraits of historical women, as we shall see, vibrate with a life force of subjectivity and agency. They are "possible" women. So much so that on the occasion of "seeing" the beautiful women that people his imaginative world, Dante experiences the desiring, male gaze which we think of as objectifying women. Yet, as will be discussed below, he rejects the fetishistic power of domination that the gaze inspires and quickly establishes an egalitarian human relationship. Written when the Church and other cultural traditions began to define the woman as Other to the normal man—as Kristeva points out and to ossify the dualism of women's gendered construction, his accomplishment is notable.

Following a discussion of the semiotic construction and meaning of the literary Beatrice, I survey Dante's portrait of the possible women in Hell and Purgatory. These women, as we
will see, like their male counterparts, represent real and legendary women, each with her own story to tell and a unique subjectivity, not a projection of a male desire. I return to Beatrice and discuss the important universals that she, and metaphors associated with her, represents.

With the creation of the literary Beatrice, Dante develops an iconography associated with the numinous woman. He constructs a beloved figure which recalls the religious and literary genealogy of Monica and the mother of Perceval. Dante, as did Augustine with Monica, gives his handmaiden an active spirit. She works very hard to ensure the success of her penitent's spiritual quest. Like the religious force of the Grail standing in for Perceval's absent mother, Beatrice represents perfect love. "Beatrice draws Dante towards God because she is Love, but she enables him to see because she is also Wisdom, Theology, and Contemplation." Her semiotic role serves as a symbol of the perfection he seeks to culminate his quest.

But, as mention before, Dante does not stop with the portrait of a disembodied ideal represented in the form of a female figure. He maintains an genderly balance of earth-bound subjectivity throughout the work, granting to his historical and literary women voices of their own. A cursory summary of the women characters supports this argument. The first women characters we meet are the queens. In Canto V of Hell, Dante introduces Semiramis, Dido, Cleopatra, and Elena. They are
rulers who gave up their public roles because of their lustful entanglements. However, instead of foregrounding the sins of the women, Dante criticizes the men, implying that any man who indulges in such lustful relationships is feminine. Then Francesca and Paolo appear. While Dante has just made a statement regarding the concupiscence of the Queens, he shows great sympathy for the beautiful Francesca who, along with her lover Paolo, were murdered by Francesca's husband. Salient to this discussion of women's voices is the fact that it is Francesca who tells Dante the story. Paolo only weeps. Dante also weeps empathetically, "So loud and full of feeling was my cry." He reacts as though he were watching himself. He recognizes her passion as his own. She speaks. He responds.

Love, that never lets the loved one not love too,  
Inflamed me with such pleasure in this man  
That, as you see, it has not left me. . . .  
"To think that such desire and such sweet thoughts  
Should bring these two to such a grevious end."

Amor, che a nullo amato amar perdona,  
Mi prese del costui piacer si forte,  
Che, come vedi, ancor non mi abbandona. . . .  
'Quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio  
Menò costoro al doloroso passo!' The fact that Francesca does not admit that she initiated the adulterous entanglement with Paolo does not stop the compassionate Dante from identifying with their all-too-human desire. In fact, it is self-deception, presumably just like Francesca's, which Dante finally recognizes in himself when he meets Matilda later, in Purgatory.
His overwrought attitude continues when he sees other women. His visions often, as with the sight of Francesca, inspire emotional, if not sexual, arousal. Thus, on the one hand, the poet damns the sins; on the other hand, the wanderer empathizes with the damned female souls.

Further along in his journey through Hell, Dante arrives at the third section of fraud in Circle VIII, Malebolge, where popes who practiced simony are being tortured by being turned upside down in a pit while the soles of their feet are on fire. Once again, we see the use of female universals, like Whore and Bride. This tradition, influenced by the gendered imagery of the Song of Songs, continues throughout Hell. Here the Bride of Christ, the Church, is prostituted by the greed of the popes. "In this case the woman is the victim and the sin is treated as a perversion of love which is the gift of the Holy Spirit." Although women are mentioned in subsequent circles in Hell as victims of evil men, the remainder of Hell is populated by male sinners.

Women become more numerous in Purgatory. In Canto V, Dante meets Pia, who like Francesca, was murdered by her husband. Pia's poignant story, told in four lines, is quite different from Francesca. Although both women were murdered by their husbands, Francesca was absorbed in self-deceptive lust. Pia is a victim. She was pushed off a balcony by her enraged husband.
'Please remember me. I am La Pia; Siena gave me life: Maremma took it. This is known to him who ringed my finger With a jewel before he married.'

'ricorditi di me, che son la Pia: Siena mi fè, disfecemi Maremma: Salsi colui che 'nnanellate pria Disposando m'avea con la sua gemma.'

Although Pia has been murdered by her husband whose punishment is not mentioned, she speaks to us through the text and produces a sense of her own subjectivity both intelligent and self-reflective.

To represent an earthly ideal, Dante introduces Matilda in Canto XXVIII. As a well-known, accomplished, and beloved woman of her time, Matilda represents Dante's feminine counterpart. Although she was on the opposite political fence from Dante (she defended the Church against the Emperor), Dante admires her for her idealism. He understood that she also wanted a reformed Church, as did Dante, cleansed of hypocrisy and malice. Matilda, it must be noted, is not in Paradise. According to Joan Ferrante, because of her excellent character, she is placed at the end of Purgatory to teach and show the purged souls how to cross over waters, through the church. Perhaps her amorous life precluded her "advancement."

According to Marguerite Waller, the meeting with Matilda represents a metaphor for the poet's recognition of difference between the sexes. At first, he is overcome by her beauty. In the following lines, Matilda responds to Dante's pleas to
look up. As she turns to face the poet, Dante reacts emotionally:

[She] lifted up her eyes to me as gift.
I do not think such splendor could have shone
Under the eyelids of the goddess Venus
When her son's arrow accidentally pierced her.

Di levar gli occhi suoi mi fece dono.
Non credo che splendesse tanto lume
Sotto le ciglia a Venere trafitta
Dal figlio, fuor di tutto suo costume. 52

However, his first words to her describe his sense of pathos which Waller attributes to his recognition of the differences, cultural as well as physical, that separate the sexes and place barriers in the way of their mutual understanding and respect. He speaks of the separation between Demeter and her daughter.

You make me recollect where Prospertine
Was, and what she was, at the time her mother
Lost her, and she herself the springtime.

Tu mi fai rimembrar, dove e qual era
Prosperpina nel tempo che perdette
La madre lei, ed ella primavers. 53

Although he is initially aroused sexually, the poignant thought about Demeter refocuses his attention. He recognizes the difference between himself as a man and Matilda as a woman. He no longer sees her as a sexual object, something to be conquered, but as another human being who, like himself, seeks the comfort and peace of a loving relationship on all levels; sexual, intellectual, and spiritual. According to Waller, Dante seems to be saying that he must give up his self-centered absorption typical of the Hellish population.
Waller points out that the interdependence, loss of self, tenderness, and responsibility required of true sexual and emotional commitment is what Dante learns as he ascends to Paradise. This epiphany leads him to recognize that his behavior has been one of self-absorption. Seeing Matilda, known for her altruistic deeds as well as her amorous life, makes Dante realize how self-absorbed he has been and how he has deceived himself by his selfish life style.

An important female-gendered icon introduced in Purgatory in Canto XXIX is the chariot or car. With the help of this icon and the rich host of metaphors associated with it, Dante represents his political and religious views. He sought to deny the Pope's right as secular ruler. Instead of the Church, earthly salvation required the Emperor. In Monarchy, Dante claims that the Roman Empire should rule Italy. He maintains that the Emperor's authority comes from God. Having spent most of his life in exile, Dante hoped that the Emperor would free his beloved Florence from the grips of the Pope's party, the Black Guelf's. Although, in 1313, the death knell came for any hope of his return to Florence with Emperor Henry VII's death on the battlefield, Dante is able to express his idealized panoramic view of history in Paradise.

For example, to objectify the all-important universals of the Church and the Emperor for literary expression, Dante enlists the familiar female-gendered icon of a chariot. R. E. Kaske explains that the chariot, considered a feminine image
since Noah's ark, is a traditional icon for the Church. On the other hand, Joan Ferrante sees the chariot as an emblem representing the Empire. The image, whether Church or Empire, metaphorically represents the transporting of souls to safety. As Noah is to the ark, so Beatrice, in Canto XXXII, is to the chariot. She is the admiral. When the chariot receives a gift of feathers from the Eagle, the Empire, it reels like an overloaded ship. Like an admiral, Beatrice steadies her vessel to guarantee the safety of her passengers: whether parishioners or citizens. When it is ruled by immoral rulers (married to the wolf of avarice) and the Church/Empire is threatened with sinking, Dante expresses the hope that an heir will arrive to lead the Empire down the right path or reform the Church and kill the whore. Beatrice's prophecy is one of hope. A time of peace will arrive when all earthly conflicts will be resolved for Church and Empire and justice will reign once more. Thus recalling Augustine's longing for an appropriate sustenance for adult life as mother's milk was for his childhood physical life, Beatrice provides the spiritual sustenance to help her troubled penitent bear the burden of earthly life.

If Hell is dominated by powerful, but sinful, men, heaven is filled with powerful women known for their sexual purity. Piccardia, Dante's contemporary, and Empress Constance represent women coerced into arranged marriages and as a result forced to give up life in a cloister and their nuns'
vows. Although Dante recognizes that, according to strict Church standards, they could, perhaps should, have chosen martyrdom, he expresses compassion instead of censorship for these women who chose to honor their vows in their hearts and not in the cloister. He places them in Paradise. 59 Clearly the compassionate message of the poet speaks ever stronger.

Dante's progression through Paradise produces an increasing frenzy of ecstasy. Although the ecstasy is ostensibly ascetic, the richness of imaginative detail invites a sensual possibility. As has been discussed earlier, the rose was used in The Romance of the Rose as a feminine symbol. Although Dante metamorphizes the icon to include a spiritual layer, the sensual implication is not completely lost. Together, the two registers, one spiritual, the other material, dissolve into one icon the mind/body breach born out of the Platonic tradition; a breach which sprang from the Augustinian ascetic tradition that had such devasting cultural implications for women. In one iconic representation, Dante unifies sensual and spiritual ecstasy as an experience of peace and harmony which includes men, women and children, Jew and Gentile, old and young. 60

With the Divine Comedy, women found a divine advocate. They are seen both as symbols of spirituality and as real women with unique subjectivities. Unfortunately, as Ferrante points out, the window for expression of a woman's subjectivity in a positive light, was quickly closed.
Although there are authors who represent numinous and psychologized women in a powerful, positive light after Dante, they prove to be the exception rather than the rule.

In the next half of this dissertation, I look at the strategies contemporary women are enlisting to combat the reification of women whose meaning is fixed by culturally-inspired, emotional projections of male desire. My introductory comments in the following chapter dwell on the important role of contemporary women who, with a critical eye, investigate the products of culture which marginalize, deprecate, or silence the voices of women. I also recognize those women artists who speak through their work from a marginal perspective that critiques the hegemonic status quo. However, my main thrust will be to hear the voices of contemporary women authors producing in the entertainment field for television and computers. By "listening" to their voices and what they are "saying" through their creative works, I hope to communicate a "sense" of the ethos with which these women are producing and the "look" of the women characters being produced by them.
NOTES

1. There were of course women troubadours in Southern France as Meg Bogin's *The Women Troubadours: An introduction to the women poets of 12th century Provence and a collection of their poems* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980). Here women's expression speaks eloquently. But this was the exception rather than the rule and, because of economic, political, legal, and social changes this Golden Age of women's poetry, along with the courts of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter, Marie, lasted a relatively short time.


13. Lacy 83.


15. Fowler 54.
20. Waite 493.
22. Fowler 36.
23. F. Douglas Kelly, Sens and Conjointure in the Chevalier de la Charrette (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966) 62. The chosen knight in Chrétian's world is chosen not because some force is miraculously going to clear his path of all obstacles, but because that knight posses the qualities which will enable him to overcome obstacles which no other knight could.
31. Fowler 44.
32. Loomis 51.
33. Fowler 44.

38. Kelly 62. Kelly explains that in the tradition of romance for every adventure there is only one knight whose capabilities are appropriate for the success of each venture.

39. Fowler 56.

40. Fowler 63.


42. Ferrante *Woman As Image* 138.

43. Ferrante *Woman As Image* 145.


45. Dante *Hell* 20.

46. Ferrante *Woman As Image* 146.

47. Dante *Purgatory* 20.


49. Ferrante *Political Vision* 247.

50. Ferrante *Political Vision* 246.


52. Dante *Purgatory* 116.

53. Dante *Purgatory* 116.

54. Ferrante *Political Vision* 35.

55. Ferrante *Political Vision* 125.

57. Ferrante *Political Vision* 251.
58. Ferrante *Political Vision* 251.
59. Ferrante *Political Vision* 260.
60. Ferrante *Political Vision* 306.
Part II: Chapter III Introducing the "Possible" Heroic Woman

Feminist Theory and Practice

The following analysis shows the variety of ways women claim a space of their own both as authors and as authors who create powerful and psychologized women characters. As Gilbert and Gubar write, "[T]he daughter of too few mothers, today's female writer, feels that she is helping to create a viable tradition which is at last definitively emerging." The texts at center stage are twice blessed; women authors, women characters. The characters featured in this dissertation are robust, brave, and funny. They are active, intelligent, and loving. They are idealistic, practical, and goal-oriented. They are numinous and psychologized. They are erring, insightful, and self-critical. They learn and mature. Some are virtuous, some not. Some nurturing, others not. For too long, women have had to read through male heroes to find these attributes represented for them. Women characters offer a liberating synecdochal alternative. They provide the woman spectator, and one assumes, the male spectator as well, with the satisfaction of experiencing through representation the complexities of a real and strong woman.

The changing codes of gender effect, both intra- and extratextually, three critical cultural sites: one, the discourse of feminism; two, women writers; and three, the
figure of the worthy woman. In the following discussion, I address how changes in these three areas effect each other.

By conflating the feminist critical position with the motif of powerful women, I turn contemporary, feminist discursive practice back on itself to interrogate its credibility and validity. Earlier in this dissertation, I examined the depiction of beloved, powerful women in canonical works. However, women represent spiritual transcendence, virtue, and charity appearing as an objectified male ideal. The representations of such beloved power inspires hope and, ideally, compassion both inward and outward. Yet the broad sweep of the canon offers only marginalized or demonized portraits of real women.

Feminism, born out of a modernist sense of alienation and desire to alter the status quo,² is positioned at a metacritical, cultural site, and interrogates that canon on the issue of the representation of women. The telos of strategies enlisted by feminists, including psychoanalysis, semiotics, performance and cultural studies, is the validation of women's subjectivity at every level of cultural production. Feminist psychoanalytic discourse provides the opportunity for scholars to examine the variety of ways—structure, diegesis, performance, and conventions of the medium—by which textual women are undermined. Applying the theories to visual images, psychoanalytic film theorist, Teresa de Lauretis, explains:
[F]eminist film culture [emphasized] in the mid- to late seventies . . . insisted on rigorous, formal work on the medium—or, better, the cinematic apparatus, understood as a social technology—in order to analyze and disengage the ideological codes embedded in representation.  

The work of Laura Mulvey served as the nexus of this dialogue from which the theoretical orientation for the women's film culture of the seventies, eighties, and to the present emanated. Mulvey's voice is representative of feminists who call for subversive strategies grounded in critical formalism.

Foregrounding the cinematic process privileging the signifier [the patriarchal logos embedded in hegemonic representation] [which thereby] disrupts aesthetic unity and forces the spectator's attention on the means of production of meaning.

As analytic strategies, deconstruction and psychoanalytic theory significantly advanced the project of the empowerment of women at every front by pointing out the ways that the mainstream culture has operated to subvert that empowerment and ways to read the culture subversively to set the project of empowerment back on course.

Armed with psychoanalytic and deconstructive strategies, E. Ann Kaplan, a prolific feminist scholar, investigates cultural practices to discover their effect on the relationship of power as it effects women's characterization. Her work on film noir, salient to my upcoming discussion of Gabriel Knight, demonstrates the powerful narrative mechanism by which women are demonized or marginalized.
In the film noir tradition, melodrama and horror combine to create a gothic nightmare. Kaplan writes that the tradition denies the independent woman a site of fulfillment and harnesses her sexuality. Typically, several functions occur which accomplish this: illness, insanity, suicide, murder, imprisonment, abandonment, or disappearance. In a variety of ways she is silenced. Another group of characters within the same tradition is also silenced and like their evil sisters, falls victim to narrative, i.e., the all-nurturing mother/girl friend/wife who sacrifices her desires and subjugates herself to the man in her life. Within this rubric of angel or devil, the real woman understands how Ulysses felt when he was caught between Scylla and Charybdis. Trapped.

Grounded in a critical site, marginalized by choice, the discursive space of metacriticism locates feminism outside, not inside, mainstream culture. Today, critical feminism serves as society's watchdog. Tania Modleski comments on this economy of virtuous marginality as a forced reaction to patriarchal power.

Given this pervasive scorn for all things feminine, it is hardly surprising that since the beginnings of the novel the heroine and the writer of feminine texts have been on the defensive, operating on the constant assumption that men are out to destroy them. Yet a slippage between theory descriptive of a patriarchal society and prescriptive of women's behavior often produces
its own surveillance so that feminist discourse sometimes attempts to control the subjectivity of women, women's desire, and women's imagination.

Some users of the strategy are not as clearly descriptive as Kaplan who distinguishes clearly between her analytical and judgmental points. Typical of feminist, psychoanalytic logic promoted as representing an inalienable truth, Lynne Joyrich describes female specular desire as non-existent; a condition ostensibly enforced by the presence of male specular desire.

Just as film theory posits the female spectator as "too close" to the cinematic image to adequately command the text, psychoanalytic theory represents women as too close to the maternal and their own bodies to claim the gap required for mastery of signification and desire that is granted men by the phallic signifier (representing the possibility of loss). 9

Joyrich continues by explaining that this desire for signification through the symbolic realm results from the "necessary" separation or dichotomy of subject/object that Freudian theory claims characterizes the male experience. 10 The theoretical impossibility of feminine spectral desire according to this psychoanalytic logic forecloses the possibility of the suturing of the female spectator into the visualized, central narrative site of hero/questor. 11

To describe the psychoanalytic dynamics in which a woman is trapped and can even trap herself, Kaja Silverman explains that women experience both a negative Oedipal complex and a positive Oedipus complex. 12 Upon maturation and arrival at
the mirror stage, the moment when a child leaves the maternal plenitude and enters into the world of the symbolic (and desire) wherein the subject and object are separated, a daughter both loses the mother, as does the son, but also identifies with the devalued mother who defines the father's unity by her lack.

She experiences the "irreconcilable" because within the present symbolic order, desire for the mother can never be anything but a contradiction of the daughter's much more normative and normalizing desire for the father.¹³

According to Silverman who relies on the monumental work of psychoanalytic theory, this establishes for the daughter, her own lack and that of her mother both of which are needed to assure their acceptance into the symbolic order.

The pattern explains the "impossibility" of the woman's place in the symbolic realm which is gendered male. It explains the "impossibility" of the representation of women as a strong, central, heroic/questing character, or of a female viewer who desires these representations.¹⁴ Within this same economy of refusal, for example, Joyrich explains that soap operas and melodrama are gendered feminine, because of their weak central characters, male or female, and the multiplicity of important characters, privileging no one single character—a phenomenon typical of a female aesthetic economy assumed by psychoanalytic discourse.¹⁵

Summarizing the concern that feminist theories can be misused as prescriptive, Fred Pfeil points out that the
strategy of resistance presents a problem. On the one hand, it fights a patriarchal reification of Woman as a constructed myth effacing her subjectivity; on the other hand, it contributes to that reification by enlisting the same logic and accepting as truth its own construction of women.16

Patricia Mellencamp states that critiquing the Other of feminism, i.e., patriarchy, represents only one important stage of women's emancipation from patriarchal construction. She calls for a new feminist strategic stage, one based not on deconstructing patriarchal power but on constructing and recognizing women's empowerment. Libby Lumpkin expresses a similar call. Society and women should "come to terms with a kind of sexual politics that is not preconditioned on feminine virtue, but is grounded, rather as it should be, on the social relations of power."17

Generally, twentieth-century mainstream feminist criticism is "preconditioned on feminine virtue," and constructs a preferred maternal/virginal role for women of power in its self-selective placement at a metacritical site. Thus, according to many critics, feminism is to mainstream culture as Beatrice is to Dante. As feminist critics, women and men construct themselves as virtuous, if not self-righteous, mothers chastising their unruly off-spring.1819

From this self-selective "maternal" position flows the vast amount of feminist discourse which still relies on critiquing the expression of patriarchal fantasy, power, and agency. One
might ask, "Why is not the mirror turned more often toward itself, in recognizing women's fantasy, power, and agency?"

But of course it is. When the mirror is turned to reflect the subjectivity of women under this oppositional rubric of feminist modernism, it reflects a subjectivity that has been marginalized, victimized, or silenced. These artists are the "women making art in a male dominated society," according to Claire Johnston. The work focuses on women, typically constructing men within an oppositional frame. According to a variety of scholars including Kaplan and Johnston (already cited), these artists glorify female mythic power, feminine bonding including mother/daughter and woman/woman bonding, or they critique the dominant culture that continues to master them. From cinema verité to experimental film, the works serve to express rage, frustration, pain, and very often, fear. Typically when the message is political, the issues center on the ecosystem, the abject members of society, or women's issues. Often their work is inaccessible. Producing for a pre-selected audience, these artists view mainstreaming with suspicion and see production for the popular, commercial market as too inhibiting or self-defeating. Rarely are their films feature length.
A Corrected Feminism

Kaplan concurs with Teresa de Lauretis when she says that feminists of the seventies to the mid-eighties "took for granted" the modernist, oppositional work necessary "in criticizing dominant narrative paradigms and in conceptualizing (and creating) counter-texts." However, Kaplan explains that two main branches of opposition to this strategy developed in the mid-eighties.

One branch opposed the consistent attack by feminists against narrative which they believed proved deadly or at the very least unhealthy for women. Teresa de Lauretis had been one of the strongest proponents of this strategy. She foregrounded the gender configuration of Vladimir Propp's work on character functions in romance. Her work brought attention to the passive role consistently assigned to the female character-as obstacle or prize for the hero.

However, with "Oedipus Interruptus" and Technologies of Gender, de Lauretis began to question the productiveness of denying the potential of narrative to empower women. She began to consider the desirability of women authors writing narrative. In a similar vein, other feminists, Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman, actively questioned the strategies of radical, feminist avant-garde works, and expressed concern that, even though they satisfied a need to vent personal emotions, these works might only minimally effect cultural change.
Another oppositional branch to critical feminist strategies came with the developing academic work of cultural studies which recognized the possibility of multiple readings of narrative texts. According to the logic of cultural studies, even texts like soap operas and "weepies" (melodramas produced by men), can be construed as empowering for women viewers. These sub-genres, according to a cultural studies analysis, validate women's activities and relationships such as a mothering relationship or female-female bonding.28

The two oppositional branches to critical feminism are axiomatic to this dissertation. The deployment of narrative allows the women authors addressed in this dissertation to mainstream into popular culture. To deny narrative, rephrasing the words of E. Ann Kaplan quoted below, would be to relinquish the ability of women authors and producers to penetrate an entertainment industry fed by narrative and the mode of romance. In fact, the apotheosis of their narrative creativity is the placement of the female figure at the site of the hero.

Representing the second aspect of this dissertation which distinguishes it from critical feminism is the enlistment of cultural studies. This analytic perspective lends itself to an analytic flexibility and openness that continually interrogates superficial meanings, pressing them ever further to subvert the obvious. As a result, what might otherwise present itself as an opaque or even seemingly misogynist work
can be understood as representative of the tradition of psychologized women characters typical of the figure of the possible woman recognized in this dissertation as an important step forward in the representation of literary women.

Although today Kaplan continues to write as a modernist critical positioning, she does recognize its limitations and the difficulties of metacritical avant-garde work as a source of pleasure and inspiration. In her own words, "to refuse narrative is to refuse pleasure." Targeting this desire for viewing pleasure present in women as well as men, the three producers represented here place the subjectivity of women into narrative by portraying primary and secondary characters who are psychologized and sympathetic whether portrayed as real or numinous. They also consistently represent the genders as more similar rather than different. In fact, these professional women seem to be invested in doing so. The authors consistently materialize a philosophy that implicates all men and women in similar struggles and rejects the oppositional positioning of the genders which, according to feminist theory, is an important strategy of patriarchal discourse.

Patricia Mellencamp continues this logic of a revised feminist aesthetic to include the desirability of the representation (reflecting a reality) of women as agents: in control at every level of society. Mellencamp expands the theoretical seed of de Lauretis' recognition of female
spectral desire\textsuperscript{31} and calls for representations of women in power, of powerful women, and of their empowering placement at the heart of narrative.

Writing as early as 1982, Annette Kuhn describes women's spectral pleasure which invokes but then rejects the psychoanalytic theoretical point that women are not effectively sutured into narrative by a single, strong woman character, because of their "natural or cultural" configuration as lacking:

As dominant cinema, their [new women film makers] realism rests on the credibility of texts which construct identifications for the spectator on the levels of character and narrative, within a fictional world constituted as coherent and internally consistent. The spectator may, in other words, be drawn fairly readily into the identifications offered by the films.\textsuperscript{32}

Kuhn further explains that pleasure comes with recognizing similarities between the character, the action, and the spectator and the latter observing a "win" for the woman hero.

The works represented in this part of the dissertation are narrative and offer similar pleasures to the reader as that of a novel. Judith Mayne says the two traditions are analogous:

The affinities between the middle-class novel and the cinema, above and beyond the status of women, have been described in a variety of ways. Some say that the novel is to eighteenth-century British society what the cinema is to twentieth-century American society; others, that the novel is an emblematic art form of a developing industrial society, and the cinema equally emblematic of its later stage of consumerism; and still others, that the novel provides a model of the connection
between art and industry later expanded by the cinema, an industrialized art form par excellence. Perhaps most obvious is the narrative connection: As cinema evolved as a story-telling medium, it was drawn closer and closer to the devices of the novel.\textsuperscript{33}

Mayne's article, quoted above, also investigates the degree to which the male-authored works reify the gendered division while those of the women construct a less gendered division of appropriate behaviors. In the hands of the former, narrative becomes a reification of the status quo, in the hands of the latter, narrative offers alternatives to that closure. It can critique and/or construct new possibilities for women. The same can be said of the women featured in this dissertation. The works of women presented here confirm Mayne's hypothesis.\textsuperscript{34}

Contemporary women producing for popular culture comprise a second-wave modernist avant-garde movement. They follow a tradition begun by the first wave of modernist avant-gardists represented by dada and surrealist artists and theorized and executed by Brecht who, while still preaching to a pre-selected audience, sought to politicize art and combine art and life.\textsuperscript{35,36,37} They are also highly influenced by the postmodern ethos of a dissolving cultural construction of boundaries. Their project breaks down while not demolishing the familiar boundaries of high/low art, politics/art, men/women, patriarchal/matriarchal, mind/body
exclusivity/mutuality, industry/art, science/art and a number of other dualities.

No one "ism" describes their work which is characterized by a conflation of the early modernist and feminist modernist avant-garde and postmodern traditions. The results are works which offer new possibilities for characterizing women's subjectivity; works which honor narrative tradition; works which respect the conventions of popular culture; and works which are accessible to a broad audience.

Correcting the "Impossible" Woman

Notable examples of impossible women characters, neither evil nor angelic, but human, portrayed by male authors do appear beginning in the sixteenth century. However, the exception proves the rule. Humphrey Tomkin writes that Spencer's Britomart portrays a world where a female questor is allowed sexual desire and assumes a role of controlling power.38 Mary Nyquist writes that Milton's Eve assumes an active role in controlling her destiny and that of Adam. In this way, Eve is elevated within a patriarchal logic, granted a literary subjectivity, and understood as a questing hero searching for salvation within a frame of patriarchy.39

Male and female authors have created complicated women characters, avoiding the tradition of the polarized figure, to advance the philosophical and narrative dynamics of their stories. Interrogating and attempting to subvert patriarchy,
the tradition of the gothic romance in the hands of both men and women authors serves, according to George Haggerty, as a site of disruption and cultural interrogation.

What ... takes place is a process of formal insurgency, a rejection of the conventional demands of novel form, first within the gloomy confines of Gothic novel, causing disruption and inconsistency, and later as a liberated and liberating alternative to the conventional novel. Gothic fiction, in other words, plays out a formal drama which is itself Gothic in its implications. 40

Other authors, both men and women, seek to expose a patriarchal tradition that seeks the erasure of the woman's voice. Critiquing a society that defines the woman's voice as monstrous, these authors paint a dystopic vision in which the voice of the woman is effectively silenced and co-opted by patriarchal domination. According to Emily Miller Budick, such romance authors as Hawthorne, Henry James, Melville, Poe, Faulkner, and Sherwood Anderson and women authors following in their footsteps, such as Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin, Toni Morrison and others, produced antipatriarchal ("opposing the dynamics of male domination") and antiphallocentric romances ("opposing male society and male language"). 41 However, according to Budick, their projects are flawed. 42 Problematic by often accomplishing the very erasure they seek to avoid, these texts nevertheless help to destabilize the autocratic gender-coding produced by a strict patriarchal vision. 43
Undertaking an analogous analysis of works by men during the enlightenment, Stephanie Hammer arrives at a similar conclusion.⁴ Four marked by criminal and gothic horror, works such as Fielding's Jonathan Wild, Godwin's Caleb Williams, and Sade's Justine expose the injustice and victimization suffered by women. The skepticism and cynicism characteristic of these authors interrogates gender formation and challenges the very bedrock of cultural stability. Yet while their critical goals seem clear, the failure of their projects to produce a creative alternative to their dystopic vision strips the works of a truly revolutionary potential.

Reflecting on what appears to be a long-standing resistance to the representation of possible female worthies, Susan Schibanoff says this tradition has deep roots. She concludes that the humanist canonical tradition of quattrocento male authors and artists articulates the extreme anxiety experienced by its male representatives regarding the worthy woman.⁴⁵ The fact that the ordinary woman could produce a legitimate artistic or intellectual product without male agency guiding her was constructed as an aberration or miraculous. Male humanist authors and artists displayed a "deep discomfort with the rhetoric of [female] possibility."⁴⁶

Clearly, women have been excluded from the mode precisely because society, like its quattrocento ancestors, heretofore denied the possibility of the worthy woman in everyday life.
In fact, women's authorship has an established history not only of participating in the mainstream of literary world, but in the mode of romance as well. Notable examples include Marie de France,47 Marguerite de Navarre,48 Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz,49 Mme. de La Fayette,50 and, in the post-enlightenment/ early romantic period, Mme. de Staël.51 Serving as lonely monuments to a sparse field, these authors establish the precedent of the figure of the possible heroic woman.

Not until women penetrated every avenue of public life has a distinct aesthetics of a possible heroic woman figure realized. Today, if still in limited quantities, the ordinary rather than the exceptional woman can finally assume the hero's site of the mode of romance. The importance of the figure of possible female worthies as constructed by the following women for the mass media cannot be underestimated. They are enlarging the lexicon of Western literature by developing the psychologized real women. Another important contribution is their depiction of earthly love. Earlier in this dissertation, I discussed the ways canonical authors invoke and reject earthly love. At the start of their canonical works, Augustine, Chrétien de Troyes, and Dante present realistic relationships between earthly lovers. Augustine confesses his liaison with the mother of his child. Chrétien de Troyes also introduces the devoted mother of Perceval. Dante narrates the stories of historical men and
women in *Hell* and *Purgatory*. Yet as their respective works progress, the canonical authors reject selfless, earthly love, whether courtly or maternal, between earthly partners. Instead they idealize ascetic, spiritual love.

The contemporary women, like their canonical ancestors, also reject selfless courtly and maternal love. In fact, in the case of Jane Jensen, romantic love requiring a total subordination of self-interest to that of the beloved, is depicted in a dystopic light. Yet unlike the canonical authors, they do not opt for ascetic, spiritual love. Instead the women authors provide corrected models of loving, faithful, sexual, and satisfying earthly relationships. As though in answer to Freud's question, "What do women want?," they offer the answer that lovers should be faithful to one another. Lovers should keep their relationship sensual and exciting. But unlike their ancestral expert in the matters of love, Eleanor of Aquitane, who requisitioned Lancelot and influenced Chrétien de Troyes' other courtly romances, these women reject the concept of the requisite total obedience of lovers to the whims of each other. As though to recognize the reality that in real life it is more often the woman who loses her identity in a loving heterosexual relationship, the women authors are very careful to privilege loving relationships whose very premise includes respect, individuality, and dignity; a relationship which recognizes the individual
capabilities, needs, and desires of the lovers without compromising on commitment, responsibility, and morality.

In Chapter IV, I discuss Candida Royalle's video erotica targeted for home video use. She produces sensual adult videos with a narrative structure which combine a fictional story and sexual activity performed in a non-threatening, instructive, yet seductive, manner. The work of Candida Royalle and her Femme Productions have carved out a niche within the popular, bourgeois, commercial market, catering mostly to heterosexual monogamous couples. As a successful, mainstream producer of erotica and recipient of many "Bests" from the Adult Critics Awards including admission to the Hall of Fame, Lady's Choice, Best Cinematography, and Best Editing, Royalle also speaks publicly about issues of censorship and sexuality. She has lectured at Princeton, Smithsonian Institute, and at many national and international sexology conferences (including American Psychiatric Associations) and appeared in the U.S. and in Europe on television and in print.

In Chapter V, I discuss Neema Barnette, director for Hollywood film and television. Barnette represents a cadre of women who within the last decade have climbed the corporate ladder within the film and television industry. Columbia Pictures spokesman described her as one leader in "'the first new wave of African-American women directors'" to break into the realm of studio-produced movies."^52^ Included in Barnette's prolific directorial career are fifteen *Bill Cosby*
Show episodes, American Playhouse' "Zora is My Name," and her Emmy Award winning ABC Afterschool Special "To Be a Man." Barnette was the first black woman to direct a TV sitcom when, in 1986, she directed Columbia Television's "What's Happening Now." Barnette is the 1991 recipient of the American Women in Radio and Television Award of Excellence and the 1991 recipient of the Monitor Award for Prime Directing. She was also the 1992 recipient of the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame Award.53

In Chapter VI, I discuss the computer game writer, Jane Jensen. Jensen's goal is the novelization of computer entertainment. She hopes to bring the same intensity and satisfaction achieved by reading a good gothic or detective novel to the console screen. In the process, she also seeks to bring strong women characters into her gothic world of computer games. The break in her career as a computer technician and amateur creative writer came when Sierra On-Line's co-founder and most prolific writer, Roberta Williams, hired her to co-write the sixth game in the King's Quest series, a series which has sold over a million computer games. After its successful completion, Sierra On-Line agreed to let Jensen develop her own gothic-detective game. Now she is writing a sequel to Gabriel Knight in which the lead female character consumes fifty percent of play time on her own quest that runs parallel to that of Gabriel Knight's.
In the following chapters, I examine the works of these women using a semiotic analysis with a cultural studies orientation to foreground the gender relationship of power and a sympathetic depiction of women as a vehicle of power. As has been explained in the preface, this critical strategy best serves the works at hand which produces sympathetic portraits of powerful women who are not positioned as culturally oppositional. Although Candida Royalle speaks against the puritanical censorship that she believes belies the best interests of women and promotes good/safe sex, she defines herself not in general opposition to the mainstream but as offering constructive corrections to that mainstream. While Neema Barnette promotes the interests of the African-American or otherwise marginal Americans, i.e., uneducated women or the poor, and although she may stretch, as do Royalle and Jensen, the main stream conventions of the electronic media, she respects and works within those conventions and finds them challenging not demoralizing. Likewise, Jensen lives and breathes the world of popular computer entertainment. She relishes the commercial as well as the artistic aspects of her work and while she seeks the novelization of the computer game and its promises of self-expression, she also enjoys playing most games.

This does not mean a call for the end of feminism or the end of the need for feminism. Patricia Mellencamp, commenting on the current phenomenon of young professional women who
steer clear of words like "feminism" and do not think of themselves as "feminists," points out the need both for their creative work for popular culture as well as the critical theoretical work in academe. She notes that about every twenty-five years the need for strong feminist critical discourse belies the too-comfortable sense of professional young women in an industry that is only now just beginning to admit them.

However, these producers invoke and ultimately reject feminism as a construct whose oppositional discourse limits the real life potential and aesthetic expression. In this vein, Julia Kristeva's teleology of feminism applies to this dissertation:

[Y]ou, through language [Kristeva's emphasis], . . . [change and mature] until you recover possibilities of symbolic restoration: having a position that allows your voice to be heard in real public matters. . . With this device, castration applies not to this or that person, but specifically to each individual recurrent. 54

In Kristeva's terms, a woman's jouissance occurs when she enters into the symbolic. By doing so, a woman is able to "step outside" a reified concept of herself. The entry into the symbolic promotes the ability to self-examine, to evaluate, and ultimately to construct one's own identity. It enables one to control one's environment instead of being controlled by it. This is jouissance. This is the woman of power. This is the feminist unspeakable. This is the "I" of
narrative, the self-conscious "I" not the self-present "eye." 55

"Symbolic restoration" is the topic of this study. As Gramsci writes "there is no social legitimation without re-sembantization through the hegemonic code." 56 Women, traditionally excluded from the symbolic, function, according to Julia Kristeva, in synchronic time. 57 Men, on the other hand, function within diachronic time and the symbolic world of change, action, and struggle.

Masculine system has until now required women to assume material continuity -- daily life and the species -- while men assume the function of discontinuity, discovery, change in all its forms, in essence, the superior, differentiating function. (Claudine Hermann quoted in Mayne 36)

Kristeva's feminist thrust requires women to leave the synchronic mode and the seclusion of "safe" ideology, of practice that removes them from the contradictions, the mistakes, and the failures of public life. 58 According to Kristeva they must recognize that the phallus as site of patriarchal power is "just a myth of power." 59 Narrative, as a site of empowerment and privilege, should be coopted by women. As Kristeva writes:

In the narrative, the speaking subject constitutes itself as the subject of a family, clan, or state group; it has been shown that the syntactically normative sentence develops within the context of prosaic and, later, historic narration. 60

Shoshana Felman puts a different twist on this explanation of women as finally entering into the symbolic realm. Felman
maintains that Kristeva's directive, to put desire into language, is also the true, empowering message of Oedipus, Freud, and Lacan. She argues that all three discourses have suffered from misplaced emphasis. By focusing on the *Oedipus Rex* instead of *Oedipus at Colonus*, theoretical work incorporating these narratives emphasizes issues of sexuality, male rivalry, the victory of the patriarchy over the matriarchy, the linear passage from the imaginary to the symbolic, and Oedipus as a symbol of suffering, i.e., a Christ figure.

Declaring that this focus misses the true Sophoclean, Freudian, and Lacanian point, Felman argues that the true message of all three discourses lies in *Oedipus of Colonus*. In this play, Oedipus assumes instead of denies the limits and extent of his guilt. He puts *into words* his inner thoughts and desires. This is the true gift of Oedipus according to Felman who maintains in an analogous reading of Freud and Lacan that this is their intent as well. In this way, the story of Oedipus is analogous to romance which also retrieves an authentic personal past, expropriates the inauthentic, and in so doing recognizes simultaneously a letting go and a rebuilding of individual authenticity. By writing women into narrative, the authors as well as their viewers become empowered by experiencing the speech act of self-recognition. To act we must know ourselves and be able to speak ourselves.
NOTES


2. Linda Wolff, Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture (Berkeley: California UP, 1990) 51-66. Her chapter "Feminism and Modernism" and "Postmodern Theory and Feminist Art Practice" are very helpful in understanding the intersections of these discourses.


5. I am indebted to Dr. Hammer for this latter thought.

6. E. Ann Kaplan, Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera (New York: Methuen, 1983. Kaplan uses Cukor's Camille (1936) to discuss patriarchy and the male gaze. In this film, the heroine sacrifices herself to secure the social standing of her beloved. She discusses fetishism and the repression of Motherhood in Von Sternberg's Blond Venus (1932) in which the woman is not allowed to be a loving mother, a sexual wife, and an independent professional woman. She addresses the struggle for control over the female discourse and female sexuality in Welles's Lady from Shanghai (1946) in which a beautiful woman turns out to be a seductive murderess. She addresses the forms of phallic domination in the contemporary Hollywood film: Brooks's Looking for Mr. Goodbar (1977) in which the heroine, after choosing a boyfriend unacceptable to her class is punished. [These summaries include Kaplan's chapter titles.]


Melancholia describes a form of cultural empowerment associated not with a pathological disease but with male privilege which dates back to Aristotle. A privilege not granted to women.

Melancholia is a cultural category for the exceptional man [which] appears concomitant with a denial of women's own claims to represent their losses within culture. Perhaps nothing more poignantly corroborates the shifting force of cultural values than the simultaneity with which the substitution of "melancholy" by "depression" is doubled by the switch in gender attribution.

11. Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford UP, 1983) 195. Silverman defines suture as "the name given to the procedures by means of which cinematic texts confer subjectivity upon their viewers."


14. Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment, The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture (Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1989) 22. As the title suggests, these authors recognize female spectral desire. However, they qualify that desire by saying it operates "without the mastery and voyeurism of the male gaze." My disagreement with this conclusion is addressed in the Royalle chapter.

15. Joyrich 240.


18. Lumpkin 14-19.
19. In a related context, Gilbert and Gubar agree with Ellen Moers in that a characteristic dynamic of women authors is to use social or political inequities as a metaphor for private dissatisfaction: a metaphor for "private, brooding, female resentment." [Moers words] Gilbert and Gubar 205.

20. According to de Lauretis in Technologies of Gender the goal of these avant-garde works was [and is] "the destruction of narrative and visual pleasure." 109.


22. Kaplan Women and Film. The second half of Kaplan's work, "The independent feminist film" describes the avant-garde traditions.


24. Kaplan "Feminism/Oedipus" 31. Also Mary Ann Doane, The Desire to Desire (Bloomington: Indiana UP 1987) makes the point that in the classical Hollywood tradition and even the tradition today, the possibility of a woman's subjectivity represented in classical Hollywood narrative or as a desiring spectator is non-existent. If she is represented, it is as a sexual object; if she watches, she must perform "transvestite" identification with the male hero to achieve mastery 19.

25. Teresa De Lauretis, Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984) 79. "Can it be accidental, I ask, that the semantic structure of all narrative is the movement of an actant-subject toward an actant-object (Greimas), that in fairy tales the object of the hero's quest (action) is 'a princess (a sought-for person) and her father.'"


Doane also uses the term in the same way and refers to these films as appealing to women's masochistic spectral desire.

29. Kaplan "Feminism/Oedipus/Postmodernism" 32.


33. Mayne 29.

34. Patrice Petro, "Mass Culture and the Feminine: The "Place" of Television in Film Studies," Cinema Journal spring 1986, 16. While Petro remarks that modernist theorists like Noël Burch and Frederic Jameson changed from preferring an aesthetic negativity to calling, in Burch's words, for "narrative forms which will restore spectatorial unity and elicit some kind of emotional, intellectual, and perhaps even ideological commitment . . . [i.e.,] involvement through realistic form," Petro maintains that this tradition still excludes women's work which is seen by male theorists [and as we shall see later within the male-dominated film industry] as part of low culture.

35. Wolff 97. The works featured here do not enlist postmodern formal strategies. They do not enlist the postmodern strategies of pastiche, irony, quotation, and juxtaposition. 88 Wolff quotes Griselda Pollack who thinks feminists should not abandon modernist practices with the recognition of a self from which to become engaged politically. 97 Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929) 79. Women seek to construct their own "feminine sentences," a phrase introduced by Virginia Woolf, as an alternate symbolic site, one which negotiates with the patriarchy while representing the particularity of feminine desire, reality, and subjectivity.

Historically as well as strategically, the move of the artist from the modernist elitist venue to that of popular culture represents an important cultural move. Cultural theorist, Michael O'Shaughnessey, notes that opinions about whether there exists any redeeming aspect to popular culture have traditionally been framed by two opposing ethical rubrics whose ancestors are Pascal and Montaigne. The former, who might be called the ancestor of the modernist view of popular culture, opposed popular cultural texts as hedonistic entertainment, cognitively and morally depraved, and promoting of the status quo.

Ancestor to the postmodern view of popular culture as site of political change, Montaigne, viewed the utopist, escapist entertainment which Pascal despised as texts capable of producing a cosmological vision different from that of the status quo to which to strive in everyday life.

Goodwin and Whannel's introduction, explains that the current interest in popular culture rests on the theoretical work of Antonio Gramsci who incorporated modernism's avant-garde teleology into a popular culture frame. Gramsci's concept of hegemony and ideology promoted the investigation of texts from the point of view of the way people think and feel instead of the didactic and elitist focus of the modernist artist and theorist.

George Lipsitz, Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1990) 16. Theorists now recognize that popular culture provides an arena of rehearsal for utopic dreams and that political change springs from cultural change.


42. Budick 71, 73.

43. Budick 104.


46. Schibanoff 201.

47. Alice Kemp-Welch, *Of Six Medieval Women to which is added a note on Medieval Gardens* (Williamstown, MA: Corner House Publishers, 1979) 32.


50. Mme. de Lafayette with *The Princess of Clèves* is another leading example of this installation. Appearing within a year as Racine's *Phaëdré* (1677), de Lafayette's novel centralized the role of a psychologized woman. Although both centered on the tragic love and impotence of women in a male-dominated society, the two works offer strikingly different points of view. Racine used Phaëdré as an emblem of transgressive love while Mme. de La Fayette used the Princess as a metonym for human tragedy. Mme. de La Fayette's portrayal of a central, feminine character with verisimilitude and within a frame of normalcy proved an important step in the Western, aesthetic tradition of gender.

called the "Corinne of St. Louis," Charlotte Brontë and others.


53. Information from Barnette's resume sent to me by her staff.


55. Hélène Cixous, "Utopias," New French Feminisms: An Anthology, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981) 245-264. Cixous opens her famous article written in 1976 with "Woman must write herself" and concludes with "In one another we will never be lacking." Although the emphasis by the contemporary women about whom I write is not woman-to-woman bonding but achieving in the symbolic realm, they understand that writing comes from a need to express their identities--typical of a modernist impulse to self-expression.


58. Kristeva Desire in Language 166,

59. Kristeva Desire in Language 163.

60. Kristeva Desire in Language 175.
Chapter IV: Candida Royalle's Revelations and Three Daughters: Reel Bodies

The commerce of women has served at every level of society as a metaphor for the play of power. Eve Sedgwick calls it the universal currency of sexual desire.¹ The inference is of course that women are the pawns and men the players. This state of affairs has existed in one form or another since time immemorial. But its appearance in our current variety of bourgeois capitalism is what interests me here. I first discuss how women literally have been put in their place and how Candida Royalle, both as critic and as producer of erotica, works to offer a different kind of balance of power.

Helping to launch the embourgeoisment of society in the late seventeenth century with its romanticized, virtuous woman, instructional manuals of conduct described a woman's ideal behavior, consigning her to the domestic realm even before the middle class had sufficiently developed to make that public/private division a wide-spread reality.² With the progression of the next century and its revolutionary disruptions largely responsible for bringing about that very embourgeoisment, a tradition developed which provided a porous cultural alternative to that strict behavioral rubric, i.e., libertinism.

James G. Turner describes the vast differences of opinions about the nature of libertinism:
Apart from denoting some combination of irreligion and sexual rampancy, libertinism appears to be a nebulous concept defined by the interests of the individual scholar. . . . Assumptions about the nature of libertinism--its scope and period of efflorescence, and its relation to other movements--vary widely and are often contradictory. ³

The French enlisted a variety of words to represent discursive variations of the tradition: the "libertins erudits," the "libertins de moeurs," "libre penseur," "libertinage," or simply the "libertins." The Latin source of the word is "affranchi" or liberated, i.e., released from slavery. Rosy Pinhas-Delpuech offers this quote from a 1500 AD dictionary:

[Cil qui de droiturel servage
Sont franchi par le droit usage
Ceulx sont appellez libertins⁶]

She distinguishes between the tradition of libertinage of rebelliousness against social, moral, or religious conventions and the libertinage of emancipation. It is the libertinage of emancipation which describes the ethos of the work of Candida Royalle.

Her name alone locates her within that tradition. The second part of her stage name, Royalle, recalls the courtesan of the ancien régime, the "little royalty,"⁵ who was able to wield political and personal power through the use of her mind as well as her body. The first part of her stage name, Candida, recalls the picaresque hero of Voltaire. Voltaire's work by the same name offers the following wisdom spoken by the leading character himself.⁶ Although Candide here refers to the reverend father Cordelier who has been notably

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uncelibate, it is clear that he also means both genders neither of whose passions Voltaire never disparaged.\(^7\)

The goods of this world are common to all men, and that every one has an equal right to the enjoyment of them.\(^8\)

Finding other writers that share that liberating libertine ethos is not as easy as it might seem. The first relatively well-known European writing in this tradition is the French physician Nicolas Venette (1633-98), a professor of anatomy and surgery, who published an explicit sex manual (1680) which continued to be published until 1955. According to Herman Roodenburg, another doctor, French physician Ambroise Pare (1517-90), also validated sexual pleasure, but:

Venette was the first doctor who again accorded sexual pleasure as important. He was even convinced that 'mutual embraces' -- and by that he meant coitus -- 'are the knots of love in marriage, and that they truly determine the well-being thereof.'\(^9\)

John Milton believed in the gratification that sexual love and commitment offered in marriage.\(^10\) Yet in the long history of pornography and erotica this concept proved the exception not the rule especially for women. According to Roodenburg, until the end of the sixteenth century, a "measure of tolerance towards sexuality" persisted from the middle ages.\(^11\) But afterwards, repression or license rather than tolerance characterized the treatment of sexual practices.

Each century bore its own burden of philosophical baggage by which sexuality was constructed as transgressive. The
seventeenth century, in spite of Milton's idealism, with its Restoration puritanical bent, launched a libertinage tradition of "repressed sexuality" while the eighteenth century, with its anti-clerical, humanist bent produced a libertinage of "power, glory, and solitary predation." Erotic and pornographic works, libertine organizations, and political pornography were all written by men for male audiences. The voices of the women in the works were all men performing transvestite literary maneuvers to express their sexual desires.

In the middle ages, women were burdened by society's disdain for them as continuations of a genealogy that began with Eve whose uncontrollable sexual passion resulted in human misery. This tradition still effects the representation of women. However, another tradition began in the mid-eighteenth century and was announced with the introduction of the instructional manuals mentioned above. A changing economic landscape redefined gender roles and assigned to women the domestic realm. Women were now burdened by the ideal of Augustine's mother, the desexualized wife and mother and provider of unconditional love. Women were not whores because by their nature they were intended for the domestic joys of motherhood. This was the new ideal. It differed from the old ideal, which held that every woman was at heart a rake, with her sexual desires more powerful and less controlled than those of men. By 1750, the families of gentlemen were affected powerfully by the new ideal. The romantic marriage began to replace the arranged. A married couple hoped to
share one another's constant company after marriage rather than going out separately into the social world.  

For all of the above reasons, nowhere in the long history of pornography in Europe can be found the voice of a woman.  

As we shall see in the following discussion, Candida Royalle proves herself to be a libertine for the new millennium. Her audience, whether at a lecture or watching an erotic video, is offered a thoughtfully produced enrichment to their lives. In this chapter we shall look at how the women's subjectivity is imbricated in the pornographic constructions of her body.  

Royalle represents a cadre of contemporary women on a quest. They are determined to correct the puritanical, sexual attitudes of society and to encourage the respect for and protection of women's sexuality. Royalle has carved out her own niche of influence and interest; the heterosexual couple. Royalle's work represents not so much erotica for women, as a sensuality acceptable and accessible to her consumers; a corrective to the embourgeoisment of gendered sexual practices which code the voice of sexual desire as male. She offers a socially acceptable currency of sexual activities. Not intending to shock bourgeois sensibilities, but to liberate men and women from unnecessarily restrictive cultural, sexual conventions; not intending to disrupt religion, but merely to make it more meaningful; not intending to deny romantic love, but to frame its limitations. She
provides fantasies that are non-violent and passion that reflects a balance of power between the sexes. With her strategy of erotic videos for both men and women, Royalle hopes to correct the gendered balance of power produced by the early embourgeoisment of society. Like the other two women featured in this dissertation, she seeks to redefine romantic love; to advocate privacy not secrecy, faithfulness not ownership, passion not domination.

Yet before we turn to her works and the semiotic strategies she uses to visually empower women, I take a brief side trip to discuss the view of other feminists regarding pornography. The issue represents a battlefield. The insistence that "the personal is political," long a feminist war cry, has been turned against itself. The policing of the private, reaching into fantasy life itself, the politicization of the private world, has been used as a project of the anti-pornography feminist activists who have aligned themselves with moral conservatives. In a recent Ms. issue devoted to pornography, a number of feminist luminaries favored strong sanctions against the industry while a smaller number of organizations and women vehemently opposed censorship.¹⁷ For these feminists writing in the mainstream of academe and popular culture, women's reality is a dystopic vision.¹⁸ They cannot overlook the depiction of violence against women in pornography and the fear that they believe it instills in real women.
Yet Candida Royalle is vehemently opposed to censorship of the pornography industry. Called upon by the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists (ASECT) and the American Psychiatric Association to speak, Royalle positions herself with those institutions who recognize the place for plaisir in our culture. On the Board of the Feminist for Free Expression, she joins forces with such noted authors as Barbara Ehrenreich as well as attorneys from the ACLU to serve in the role of congressional and cultural watchdogs in an attempt to guard against censorship. Other academicians speak out as well.19 Linda Williams explains that historically any effort by women to control cultural production on the basis of sex is ultimately co-opted.20 The usual rhetoric involves claims to protect women. She points out that the cultural imperative of the nineteenth century claimed to protect women. Instead, it only served to contain and control them. As Andrew Ross points out, the rhetoric of protectionism is used both as a censoring device against women, against pornography, and against mass culture.21 Royalle, pointing to her years as a porno star and her vast familiarity with the experience of other women in the business, testifies that women are not mistreated in the production of pornographic works.22 She insists that, although she does not like the way sex is displayed in traditional pornography (which is why she decided to start Femme Productions), the porn industry conducts business in a
professional, if not artistic, manner. The women, like the men, enjoy worker satisfaction and financial rewards. Royalle maintains that, "It's been shown historically that censorship hurts women and minorities first." For example, Canada passed a censorship law which defined pornography as degrading to women. Statesmen used the phraseology of Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin's proposed (but never passed) 1984 Indianapolis ordinance. The first act of the authorities was to seize copies of a lesbian magazine made by lesbians for lesbians in a gay book store.

Andrew Ross makes the same comment about the sexually marginalized:

More often than not, the first to suffer from any moral regulation of the sexual marketplace are those sexual minorities who survive, for lack of civil legitimacy, on its margins, and this has certainly been one of the first effects of the AIDS crisis.

Feminist critic, Jill Dolan, points out that the lesbian discursive position insists that the sexual remain uncensored. Lesbian subjectivity sees itself threatened by the woman who seeks to erase sexuality as a site of free expression.

With Revelations, Royalle joins the ranks of the satirist in her biting political attack against the anti-pornographic feminists, Dworkin and MacKinnon, whom she calls "the New Puritans." The video portrays the dystopic realization of their world view which Royalle says is destined to destroy
women. Royalle insists that any censorship of sexually explicit material leads to a totalitarian regime in which women are the first victims. Heterosexual enjoyment within marriage, any type of homoerotic sexuality, as well as any form of personal, artistic and spiritual expression (Royalle links sexuality with these two human impulses) are punishable by imprisonment or worse.

The narrator, a young childless wife, is a sympathetic figure, trapped in a dystopic world of a misogynistic dictatorship whose leadership controls all sensual passion except its own. Heterosexuality only serves as a source of reproduction for the State. Individual pleasure of any type is banned including personal ownership and artistic expression. As the narrative progresses, our young sympathetic wife sees a man being dragged out of his apartment building as authorities announce a house-to-house sweep to roust out pockets of insurgencies against the state. Motivated by curiosity, the narrator sneaks into the house. She discovers his apartment is wallpapered with his own colorful abstract, expressionist paintings executed on newspaper. Further investigation into the abandoned apartment reveals a cache of pornography displayed in a hidden, cave-like room. The works include books, paintings, and videos. The young woman turns on a video, sits down in the comfortable chair formerly occupied by the collector, and watches erotica for the first time.
Deeply moved by the beauty and spirituality of the sexual experiences of the video, she reads the epigram of one of the videos and experiences the joys it implies, "The beginning when every touch is full of wonder." The ingenue voyeur is stimulated by watching an erotic encounter and experiences her own arousal for the first time through sight, touch, taste, and smell. She returns several times to watch the videos and becomes committed to the legitimacy of the behavior portrayed.

The narrator tries to "convert" her husband so that he too might enjoy bodily pleasures even though the behavior would transgress the orders of the State. Instead of responding to his wife's appeals, he turns her into the authorities. Our last image of the video is of the imprisoned narrator who, looking skyward toward the light from the small window of the prison cell, provides us with a simultaneous image of martyrdom and ecstasy.

In addition to the anti-censorship constituencies, another group disparages the kind of erotica produced by Royalle. The modernist critic or what Ross calls the "circle of intellectuals," typified by Susan Sontag, privileges the "libertinist imagination" of high culture or the libertinage of "power, glory, and solitary predation" as exemplified in Pauline Réage's pornographic work, The Story of O. The forms of erotica this tradition advocates attempt the sublimation of the body and appeal to the mind and to a detached, reflective
subject. It opposes the low cultural forms which address the body and an emotionally engaged subject.  

The avant-garde tradition in France of Georges Bataille, Jean Genet, Roland Barthes, and later Phillipe Sollers, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig, and others whose common patron saint in the field of libertinage is Sade. It is a tradition in which the limited and mundane libidinal economy of *plaisir* is contrasted with the higher, transgressive experience of *jouissance*, to use Barthes's well-known opposition, itself based on the Freudian distinction between the "economic" pleasure principle and the destructively "spendthrift" death drive. *Plaisir* is thus linked to the controlled hedonism of consumer capitalism, an economy which the avant-garde pornographic imagination seeks to disrupt by pursuing pain and pleasure in excess of its conventional limits; as Sontag puts it approvingly elsewhere, "having one's sensorium challenged or stretched hurts."  

The comments of Sontag reflect the modernist tradition which validates pornography only if mind-expanding or framed as transgressive.

But what about the pornography which appeals to *plaisir* and is successful within mass culture? What about pornography for women? Forty percent of the estimated 100 million rentals of X-rated tapes each year, as of 1987, are rented by women. The Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force (FACT) as early as 1982 at the Barnard Conference on Sexuality recognized women's sexuality as a site both of agency and dreams.  

FACT helped to file an *amicus* brief in *American Booksellers v. Hudnut* (1986) in the U.S. Appeals Court which ruled that the Indianapolis antiporn ordinance drafted by Dworkin and MacKinnon on the basis of protecting the "civil rights" of women was unconstitutional.
FACT recognizes that pornography is no longer gender-coded male. Television, computer networks, video and book stores attest to the vastness of the sexual entertainment market which women utilize. Ross writes, "Even S/M, once the privileged preserve of a wealthy male class, has become a typical post-camp pop fantasy, and a conventional, if not entirely common, practice in middle-class culture."

Royalle would agree with the popular writer of horror and erotica, Ann Rice, who complains that men develop a more elaborate fantasy life than women who, Rice claims, are more likely to accept "what is dished out to them." Royalle points out that women's sexuality has only begun to be recognized and culturally accepted within the last twenty years.

Royalle decided to explore that new territory. Her goal is twofold. As a business woman, she wants to create mainstream sexual expression with a resonance in a large audience. As a pioneer in feminine iconography, she wants to unhinge the gender-coding of conventional pornography and create a new iconography.

Royalle privileges the woman's story, the woman's body, and the woman's desire as it unfolds within a loving heterosexual relationship. Her mission requires risk taking. When she first committed herself to taking her idealism into the business world, "experts" in the pornography field told her that certain conventions were required to sell
pornographic videos. Royalle disagreed. Today, after having seen the experts go out of business, she believes her success validates her mission.

The work of Linda Williams and Andrew Ross document Royalle's career from her early work as a porn star to her videos for commercial sale. However, Williams disagrees with Ross's conclusions about Royalle's work. Ross, Williams writes, associates Royalle's work with tastefulness and fine art. He sees her work too preoccupied with education, political statements, and idealism. Her strategies, he writes, compromise the erotic status of the fantasy. Williams disagrees. She writes that the mixture of safety with excitement that Royalle's work produces develops the appeal of pornography to include the sexual fantasies of women as well as men.

From the beginning, Royalle decided to change the gender coded iconography and conventions of pornography. Three Daughters stands as an example of Royalle's strategy and opus. This epic-length, narrative, sensual adult video tells the story of a middle-aged couple watching their three daughters pass through important life decisions. The oldest daughter, about thirty, resists a marriage which might limit her career. The middle daughter, a concert pianist in her mid-twenties, flirts with her piano teacher. The youngest daughter, eighteen year old anticipating a pre-med college career, entertains her own sexuality. As the three girls pass through
their life stages, the couple, who faces an empty nest, reignites a satisfying sexual relationship.

Royalle achieves her goal of expressing a woman's sexuality as adumbrated in her subjectivity at two textual sites: the narrative level and the level of inserted, sexual episodes. First, Royalle constructs a knowing, known, and knowable woman.\textsuperscript{38} The men characters understand their women and appreciate their complexities. Unlike the woman of the classical Hollywood tradition who remains veiled "like the Sphinx,"\textsuperscript{39} the Royalle woman has goals, successfully communicates her desires, and is willing to assume responsibility for her decisions. Unlike the psychoanalytic rubric which describes women as lacking at every level in the culture, Royalle's characters demonstrate agency and control over their lives.\textsuperscript{40} Like the other two women discussed herein, she also interrogates and devalues romantic love if it means a loss of the woman's subjectivity.

A second means to portray a sexuality as part of a woman's subjectivity is through the sexual, principally heterosexual, episodes Royalle inserts into the narrative. Royalle's project includes the deprivileging of both the phallus as a transcendental signifier and the penis as the material signifier of the cultural and philosophical signified. She does not replace these signifiers with a parallel constellation of feminine signifiers. Instead, Royalle constructs sexual unions which privilege the sensual,
the intellectual, and the emotional sexual experience of both sexes. Characters in these videos know what they want. They want to touch, taste, and smell their bodies and the bodies of their partners.

Because of the type of women characters Royalle portrays and the narrative sites into which they have been inserted, Royalle's women characters function within the mode of romance. In Royalle's *Three Daughters* and *Revelations*, women take the active role and are central to the narrative flow. Royalle enlists dialogue, camera work, and choreographed imagery to construct these feminine heros. On the one hand, her sensual adult videos honor many of the conventions of the pornographic industry. The videos present the requisite six heterosexual sex scenes and a woman/woman sex scene. More than three-quarters of the film involves sexual encounters. The remaining narrative provides the Utopic frame for the sexual unions achieved after minor, narrative disequilibrium. Yet, the differences between her work and the heretofore traditional pornographic work is decisive.

Most remarkable is the difference in what is photographed and how. According to Royalle, the "old-style" (as she calls it) pornographic camera work cuts up the body, interrupts the intimate scenes to "get a better close shot," and uses a spot light to emphasize the genital area. Royalle, on the other hand, uses a cinema verité style which keeps the camera rolling during the filmic event. She explains that her
approach extends the metaphor of wholeness to the sexual experience which assumes an intellectual, religious, and full-body involvement to the filmic image.

Like conventional pornography, Royalle portrays the genital areas of both male and female. However, they are never paraded alone or privileged without their sexually engaged functions. Fellatio, cunnilingus, and intercourse are depicted. But, the genital area always appears at a deprivileged placement within the frame at the left lower edge or left corner of the screen. On the one occasion, in Three Daughters, when the female pubic area remained in sight at center frame and on the other occasion when the full male genitalia came into view, they appeared only as two-second frames and were immediately overlaid by full body or facial images. Male ejaculation is never photographed and only once in Three Daughters and Revelations is an erection briefly shown. According to Royalle, her pornography is not about "body parts" and no one organ is privileged. As a result, her strategy denies male fetishistic and voyeuristic desire.

However, the full body and its texture are always privileged and presented to the specular desire of both sexes. The eyes, forehead, and full head are the first and last shots of each sexual encounter. As the camera pans a female body, it only lingers on the face, not on the genitalia or breasts. The panning camera is not positioned below the body, a position which produces a sense of hierarchization of body
parts, but at a mid-body position. This filmic convention equalizes the relationship of all body parts and emphasizes the body as a unified whole. As it photographs sexual encounters, the camera typically swings around the engaged couple to provide a panorama. Over-head shots are also carefully choreographed to envelope the entire pair.

Shots either include the full body or extreme close-ups. Close-ups focus on a section of the torso or the face to reveal skin texture and mood. The lighting is particularly conducive to exposing the changes of skin texture and tone and muscular activity with the developing sexual encounter. Royalle advances her project of revealing a woman's subjectivity in other ways. The voyeuristic woman in Three Daughters looks and learns from her sisters. The youngest daughter peeks at her older sisters engaged in lovemaking. By touching and tasting her own wetness, she realizes her own sexual arousal. In fact, the film is dedicated to that moment. Royalle explains that women do not seem to be turned on in exactly the same way as a man. According to Royalle, the feminine voyeur is more likely to be stimulated by looking at erotic situations. Although the detached sense of sight does figure into the rubric of Royalle, the senses of touch, taste, and smell signify the preferred aspects of the sexual experience, because of their phenomenological immediacy and pleasurable intensity.
The women in *Three Daughters* relish their individual sexuality and that shared with their partners. Royalle's iconography explicitly represents sexuality as though it were an institutionally approved aspect of the human experience. The first masturbatory orgasm of the youngest daughter is celebrated by a musical piece that suggested a church choir. When she admires herself nude and then dressing in front of her bedroom mirror, the youngest daughter is crowned by a mound of fabric resting atop the mirror suggesting a bridal veil or a halo. The inexorably rhythmic waves of sexual engagement, the gentle movement of the bodies, and the contentment and bliss appearing on the post-coital faces of the lovers all suggest the kind of religious bliss depicted by Bernini's *St. Theresa*.

With *Three Daughters*, Royalle resignifies the Garden of Eden. It becomes an Arcadia and changes from an iconography of sin to an iconography of mutual pleasure condoned by a loving father and mother. In this idyllic video world, men and women experience desire equally. The mutuality includes active, female desire along with passive, male vulnerability. Sexuality exists in an economy that involves all of the aspects of the individual life experience. Royalle's erotica confirms what psychologists describe: the most important sexual organ is the mind.
In the following chapter, Neema Barnette continues the tradition of the active, whole woman at the center of narrative. In *Scattered Dreams*, the heroic mother seeks to resolve inner conflict over her own self-worth and family conflicts with society.
NOTES


5. I am indebted to Dr. Hammer for this connection.


7. Bernard Shaw's Candide and the medical term for vaginal irritation, candidiasis, also come to mind.


10. Turner 79.

11. Roodenburg 86.

12. Turner 76.


15. Although the titles of a vast number of pornographic and erotic works include the first name of a woman: Juliette, Thérèse, Laure, Mme. Victoire, or Justine, these works were by and for men. Jean Marie Goulemot, *Ces livres qu'on ne lit que d'une main: lecture et lecteurs de livres pornographiques au XVIIe siècle* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinea, 1991) 97. Also as Cazenobe (7) points out, Marguerite de Navarre in *The Heptameron* told the story of a young man violating a woman—an early example of the libertinage of the rake.


17. "Pornography: Andrea Dworkin, Marilyn French, Norma Ramos, and Ntozake Shange speak their mind," *Ms.* vol. IV, no. 4 January/February 1994, 32. In addition to the round table transcribed discussion, another article addressed the following questions: "Stop it? Use it? Ignore it? Does women's equality depend on what we do about it?" Represented were women from the National Coalition against Censorship as well as for example Holly Hughes, the performance artist who felt the censorship sting with the denial of her NEA grant.

In a similar vein, Wendy Kaminer wrote "Feminists Against the First Amendment," *The Atlantic Monthly* November 1992, 111.

Two "men's" magazines focussed on pornography the same valentines month as *Ms.* *Esquire* with "The Rise of 'Do Me' Feminism" which focused on women writers who use no-nonsense language to deny that as a woman they have to hate men. The issue included a survey which discovered that 60% of the women they interviewed would rather be Elizabeth Taylor than Gloria Steinem; 80% preferred equal pay for equal work over a full year of great-hair-days; 80% said "no" to wanting a penis; and 75% responded that they would rather have an
increase in income than political power or breasts. The humor of the *Esquire* survey and articles was totally lacking in *Ms*.

*GQ*’s "The Way We Are: Men versus women" and other articles revealed a little more paranoia about the battle of the sexes. Geena Davis, dressed in a mannish linen suit with no shirt and her navel showing, seemed designed to reassure men that their visual viewing pleasure would not be disappointed even though women are having success in the business world.

18. Johnson in "Snuff," aptly describes the dichotomy within feminism that has crystallized over the pornography issue. "By analyzing the Snuff controversy, we have attempted to understand the powerful discursive force that has converted pornography into a polarized "rape-revenge" scenario in which all women are either victims or heroines and all men are potential rapists." 56.

19. Royalle's "Star Director" series is typical of the close business and personal relationship she maintains with women in the industry. Testimony like that of Marilyn Chambers, according to Royalle, is suspect. Those who knew her at the time of *Deep Throat* knew she was happy on the set. Interview with Royalle 19 June 1991.


22. In 1981, Royalle started a support group for porn stars who included such luminaries as Veronica Vera, Gloria Leonard and Annie Sprinkle. One of her pet projects is her Star Series of pornographic films which gives porn stars, many of whom met at the support group, a chance to direct their own porn film.

23. Candida Royalle, personal interview, 19 July 1993. Special thanks to Chris Mahoney for transcribing both the interview with Candida Royalle and Jane Jensen.


26. Dolan 60.

27. Candida Royalle, personal interview.
30. Williams 231. Quoting Time magazine's 30 March 1987 issue, Williams reports that women rent 40% of the estimated 100 million rentals of X-rated tapes each year.
32. Ross 191.
36. Williams 263.
37. Williams 263.
38. Royalle. Royalle's goal is to demystify woman, romantic love, and industrial pornography.
39. Stephen Heath, Screen winter 1977/78 vol. 18. no. 4, 67. "There are no women in psychoanalysis." The Laura Mulvey/Peter Wollen film, Riddles of the Sphinx deals with this patriarchal projected aspect of women.
40. Heath 55.
42. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Visual and Other Pleasures (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989) Written in 1973 and published in 1975, this article explains that "One part of a fragmented body destroys the Renaissance space, the illusion of depth demanded by the narrative; it gives flatness, the quality of a cut-out or icon, rather than verisimilitude, to the screen." 21. In this way pornography in the hands of men producers establishes a discourse which fetishizes women and their body parts.
43. This strategy suggests that of early film theoretician, Andre Bazin, who insisted that the most powerful filmic images resulted from a rolling camera. "The Long Take," Film Art: An Introduction, eds. David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990) 195. Another early

44. Royalle. Royalle confirms this conclusion.

Chapter V: Neema Barnette's *Scattered Dreams*:
The Heroic Mother

Although she works in a male-dominated media world, today's woman in Hollywood is producing, directing, or writing for television and film. She may own her own development company, be on the A list of directors, produce mini-series, direct docudramas and movies-of-the-week, represent major stars, or produce such well-known blockbuster films as *Terminator II* and *The Fisher King*. At a 1991 American Film Institute and Women in Film conference, testimony from dozens of women professionals reveals a variety of experiences; some women explained that they found that the industry differentiated between a "woman's film" (as described earlier, a melodrama, a "weepie") in which it was an advantage to be a woman in the industry (because of the gender "type-casting" that applies to women producers, directors, and screenwriters as well as actors) and a self-defined "man's film" which privileges the boy-buddy system; some described having to over-achieve to carve out a niche; most concurred that one of the reasons women still form a minority in the business results from women "just having come out of the house in the last fifteen years." On the whole, testimony talked about women's experience in Hollywood as involving "trade off's."

The following statistics reveal the sobering disparity between opportunities for men and women in the film and television industry. The 1991 Directors' Guild statistics
based on the directing work of its nine thousand members reveals the following gender count of directing jobs:

- Features--11 women, 96 men;
- Mini-series--0 women, 6 men;
- TV Pilots--7 women, 91 men;
- TV movies--2 women, 85 men;
- Half-hour episodes--205 hours directed by women, 1534 by men;
- One hour episodics--67 hours directed by women, 1048 by men.

In 1992, the DGA reported that women worked just 8% of the total 49,368 days by all directors while black directors worked 818 days or 1.7% of the total days worked.

Committed to improve the statistics for her and for other women, Neema Barnette relishes the opportunity to mainstream and uses her experience and power to those ends. Focusing on the stories of individual women, she unravels the traditional stereotypes. Fleshing out women characters, she portrays characters who mature, command respect, and accomplish their goals. In the following discussion, I analyze Barnette's *Scattered Dreams* to learn about Barnette's political agenda as well as her aesthetic strategies.

Barnette's made-for-television movie aired on CBS the Sunday evening before Christmas 1993. Its inspirational mood and emphasis on strong family values provided a safe frame by network standards for this empowering portrait of a woman. As we have seen in our discussions earlier, the presentation of a sexual mother functioning within the public realm and making demands on privileged male institutions can be called transgressive, even subversive. With Barnette's vision, these
very institutions are painted as porous sites of power which are capable of being breached by an individual who enlists persistent, educated strategies. Kitty Messenger, the heroic mother in this made-for-television drama, finds the holes in the system. If necessary to achieve her goals, she bulldozes through them. Like the Kitty reminiscent of the flight of Kitty Hawk, she learns that learning to fly begins with a flight which is measured in inches. Like the name Messenger recalls, she like Beatrice, serves as a powerful, beloved force that ultimately reunites her family. Her heroic deeds overcome poverty and ignorance, remorse and loss of faith. She represents spirituality and family values over materiality and misplaced cultural pressures. Yet unlike the canonical examples of the idealized mother figure, Kitty develops as a psychologized character. She is depicted as fully developed and experiences conflicting emotions and goals.

Kitty Messenger of Scattered Dream joins the ranks of the women heroes of television. Like Cagney and Lacey, Murphy Brown, and Roseanne, Kitty Messenger explores the definitions of woman, women, and femininity. While clearing narrative space for women, Neema Barnette has produced a movie which develops an iconography of verisimilitude within a dramatic narrative. More specifically, through the development of the female hero in Scattered Dreams, Barnette redefines "mother" and "woman" at several different levels: structural, textual, cultural, and ultimately iconographic.
Before I turn to an analysis of *Scattered Dreams*, it is important to answer the question, "Who's watching?" Studies show that within the everyday family life, women watch television relatively little when the family is at home.\(^{10}\) Their watching tends to be spotty when the father of the family is present because he controls the remote. Also women don't feel they have the leisure to watch television when the family is around. Women-watching-television typically occurs when the family is absent. More often women watch more fictional than factual television; more often soap operas or made-for-television movies than documentaries and the news. Thus, when CBS decided to do a woman-directed, woman-centered story their executives relied on Barnette to produce a movie that would not lose the networks male viewers. Their confidence in Barnette's ability was reflected in the advertisers for expensive cars and other costly consumer items which backed the story.

Now back to *Scattered Dreams*. This narrative takes place in "red neck" Florida during the early 1950's when segregation is still the way of the world. Kitty Messenger, supported by various educational and cultural systems of society, seeks institutional justice and social validation for her family. Unconstitutionally jailed on a trumped-up charge of indebtedness, Kitty and her husband almost lose their parental rights to their young children. Kitty successfully struggles
to overcome her own feelings of inadequacy, and her educationally and economically impoverished background.

The adjustment of identity which Kitty Messenger makes includes her own redefinition of "mother" and "woman." Prior to her final transformation, Kitty envisioned mother/woman in a traditional way. While "mother" did mean truth, love, and justice and signified a complex sexual, emotional, and intellectual "woman," the mother's proper place was in the private space of the home where all problems could be solved. She also strictly enforced the traditional gender-specific construction of her children. A son could dream of agricultural college; a daughter could not dream of being a pilot.

But obstacles challenge these preconceived, gender notions of Kitty's. Social institutions and individuals almost convince her that, because she is poor, she has no right to motherhood. A middle class mother, these hegemonic representatives maintain, could raise better children; give them more opportunity. These same obstacles, which she ultimately overcomes, force Kitty to discard her traditional gender specific moral behavior about the proper space and duties of women. She discards the private/public, nature/culture, and inside/outside boundaries and projects herself into spaces usually coded male. Sometimes, discouraged, beaten, and even suicidal, Kitty Messenger at first accepts the pejorative labels with which society
constructs her personhood, i.e., "white trash," "jail bird," "fruit tramp" and "unsuitable mother." This cultural interpellation constructs her as "better off dead." The erasure of her voice, according to a Jamesonian allegorical reading, would conveniently silence an interrogation of gender and class. But, ultimately, Kitty's voice disrupts the logic of the status quo.

The construction of "mother" as well as the ethos of the movie resonates with Bertolt Brecht's "moving and charming, grave and hilarious play of 1944/5," The Caucasian Chalk Circle. Like Brecht, Barnette takes the traditional maternal figure and reconfigures it based on a profound philosophical redefinition of the role. Mother, in the rubric of both Brecht and Barnette, stands for public struggle, not private stasis; earned value, not automatic right; resistance, not acceptance. Mother also stands for agency, desire, and dreamer; not passivity, projection of male desire, and object. Mother stands for truth, devotion, love, and faith; not material success.

The structural placement of Kitty Messenger validates her textual voice as hero and primary agent. Conversely, Kitty performs appropriately for the structural role she inhabits and serves to stabilize the romantic modal progression. This unification makes a strong cultural statement. Kitty's structural and textual importance elevates "mother" by associating power and justice with maternal love.
in the same way Perceval's importance elevated "knight" by associating purity and spirituality with knightly prowess. By this strategy, "mother," a term traditionally associated with a structural site of marginal power and a textual reading of problematic signification, is privileged.

Within the cultural system of television, this resignification represents another important step in the reconfiguration of "mother" within popular culture. Nina C. Leibman, in her article "Leave Mother Out," writes that in the early stages of television, the 1950's, "mother" was marginalized in a variety of ways to guarantee the father-centered family.

The depiction of the mother as either explicitly evil, absent or destructive (in the films) or as implicitly superfluous, unnecessary or subordinate (in the television shows), and the (explicit or implicit) placement of the father-child relationship as the key problematic within the narrative. Leibman suggests that the disenfranchisement of the mother catalyzes the empowerment of the father. Lynn Spigel makes a similar point when describing the cultural installment of the television within the domestic family space during the 1950's. Not only do such television shows as Make Room for Daddy, Father Knows Best and Bachelor Father make powerful statements about the importance of a father-dominated family, but the family life centered around television-watching, ideally a democratizing family practice, typically served to marginalize the role of the mother who was most often serving
the family watching family or cleaning up after dinner while the rest of the family watched.\textsuperscript{18,19} In her upcoming work, Leibman focuses on the continuing veracity of these theoretical assertions throughout the fifties and the early sixties.\textsuperscript{20} Even continuing through the seventies, sitcoms and television dramas continued to model the same, gender-coded behavior in what Patricia Mellencamp calls "an endless chain of TV referentiality."\textsuperscript{21} The Brady Bunch, a successful sitcom that ran on CBS from 1969 to 1974, constructed gender in the same way as its earlier television ancestors. As Lauren Chattman writes about The Brady Bunch and an important motif which runs through many of the episodes, i.e., the behaviors appropriate for men and women, boys and girls:

Parents and children pay the price of proper gender difference and for the simultaneous and seemingly conflicting cultural mandates of [both] proper gender difference and harmony between the sexes. . . Gendered white, middle class, and suburban, [The Brady Bunch represents the proper family] in which harmony is attained through smart shopping and TV watching.\textsuperscript{22}

The sitcom continues to enjoy reruns and is now embedded in contemporary, cultural memory. But, as Stephen Heath points out, often the ideological frame of the original production does not guarantee its continuation indefinitely. "Ideology has, however, to be brought back into the understanding of television, recredited, as it were, but this is not to be done in any single, unified way."\textsuperscript{23} In fact, today, the identity politics, according to Chattman who has studied the reception
of the sitcom, demands ironic readings in which viewers explode, often with an enthusiastic celebration, the original rubric of the "typical" or ideal family and its manner of solving problems, i.e. being a good consumer and watching TV.

_Cagney and Lacey_, which reflected a changing definition of motherhood and women, originated in 1974, but did not air until 1981, continuing its run until 1988. According to Julie D'Acci, a study of the _Cagney and Lacey_ episodes:

"demonstrates the actual workings of the TV enterprise--the manifold aspects of its production, publicity, reception, and social context--and the ways in which its many players actively negotiated and vied for discursive power over defining woman, women, and femininity." According to Robert Deming, the site of negotiation is the essence of the television experience.

"Television works to integrate oppositional and resistant forces, including feminist discourses, by absorbing and naturalizing them, usually into dominant definition family melodrama and heterosexual romance." Framing the story of women within a detective show format stretched the abilities of the medium to normalize cultural changes. For the U.S. liberal women's movement, this sitcom consistently portrayed "independent" working women and emphasized women's friendship. Unlike the preceding depictions which represented women as vulnerable, inadequate, or problematic, _Cagney and Lacey_ took realistic women with strengths and weaknesses and placed them in a traditionally male profession: police detectives. Regendering a buddy-
construct system coded male as early as Perceval and Gawain, the sitcom did not focus on domestic issues as a traditionally female-centered sitcoms do, but turned its attention to a variety of issues: job, cultural, legal, as well as domestic issues of the day.

In other ways, the creators of Cagney and Lacey changed the iconography of women in a number of specific ways. One way was to permit the characters to appear unglamorous, unusual for women central characters. "They are even occasionally permitted to look rumpled, discouraged, crabby." The show actually permitted Lacey to go to bed with her husband. As Tyne Daly explained, speaking about her role as Lacey, "First they didn't want me to go to bed with my husband, and then when I begged and pleaded for us to have a little fun in the hay, they didn't want me to ever turn him down." While other female cop shows of the time tended to portray women cops as sexual objects, Charlie's Angels and Police Woman, Cagney and Lacey managed to walk the fine line of interest without being identified as either sexual or glamorous: Cagney was marked as the cute, wholesome single girl and Lacey as the strong and plain, but sympathetic wife.

Another sitcom, Roseanne, exploded onto the air in 1988-89, the year Cagney and Lacey stopped production. It reflected the growing interest of women in the production of prime time television programming, with women in such key
positions as executive producer, director, and writers for the series. Carsey-Werner, two women who developed *A Different World* and *The Bill Cosby Show* (fifteen episodes of which were directed by Barnette) also developed *Roseanne*. This mother was "at once brash and funny, compelling and moving."\(^{31}\) The same creative team which had developed the sanitized *The Bill Cosby Show* had made a success out of a beloved, if difficult mother who was often shabbily dressed, always over-weight, messy, dirty, proletarian, and sharped-tongued.\(^{32}\)

Representative of poor, but devoted mothers, Kitty Messenger declares, at the climactic custody hearing, "Maybe I dreamed for the wrong things. Is it a crime to go hungry, be poor, and not have a house? . . . . What if getting ahead does not mean more houses and more cars? What if getting ahead means showing your children how much you love them? Showing them fairness and honesty. What if that is getting ahead?" The denial of material wealth, and by extension, "good consumerism" as the road to family ties and the affirmation of motherly love is the message Kitty gives to the viewers about mothers. The message is framed by a "new mother," one who takes responsibility for herself, her family, and her community both inside and outside of the home. It is a mother who unravels the old boundaries of gender and builds new identities that value both male as well as female desire, agency, and dreams.

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In addition to her developing the discourse of motherhood and women, Barnette makes a clear statement about race. Developing a filmic rhetorical strategy of constructing a synecdochal relationship between the black subject and Kitty, Barnette interpellates the Afro-American abject subject into the movie with only the word "colored" uttered once by the autocratic sheriff. At every important textual turn, as though to subliminally remind the viewer of the association, an inconspicuous, but persistent, presence of a black man, woman, or child appears in the frame or passes across the frame. A black family appears for three seconds at the picnic; the Messenger's drive through the slums/ghettoes of the "colored" section of town just before their arrest; a black man plays the guitar in the streets after their release from jail; a black woman scrubs the floor of the Courthouse after the attorney informs her that she and her husband will be released.

The strategic selection to depict an abject white family instead of a black family recognizes the general cultural and economic system in which made-for-television movies operate. Barnette's introduction of the discourse of race into the film is mediated by a carefully encoded selection of images. The decision about which culturally-encoded images—such as the race of the characters or the gender of the hero—will ultimately appear in a movie represents an important process of negotiation of "the TV network, the production
company and production team, the television audience, the press, and various interest and pressure groups. In Hollywood, the phrase given to judgment about what images, subjects, and language will be approved by the network executives is called the "standards and practices" of the industry. Standards and practices represent an informal set of conventions that "mediates not exactly morality but what is acceptable." Based on her understanding of these "standards and practices," Barnette decided that CBS was not ready for the story of Scattered Dreams to be played by a full cast of black actors. Barnette said at the AFI/WIF 1991 conference mentioned above that black women are invisible in Hollywood.

Barnette also advances the discourse of the maternal body itself. By interweaving the power of structure, text, and cultural discourses, Barnette denies the traditional construction of the maternal body within the terms of patriarchy. Julia Kristeva's descriptive reading of mother/woman-iconography within patriarchy differs markedly from that of shown in Barnette's Scattered Dreams. Speaking about the mother as constructed through patriarchy, Kristeva writes, "Through a body, destined to insure reproduction of the species, the woman-subject, although under the sway of the paternal function [is] . . . more of a filter than anyone else--a thoroughfare, a threshold where 'nature' confronts 'culture.'" The body of mother/woman in this
configuration is an abject body. In a similar, descriptive vein, Janet Bergstrom writes, "In our society women stand for the side of life that seems to be outside history—for personal relationships, love and sex—so that these aspects of life actually seem to become 'women's areas.'" According to this construction, the body of mother/woman rests in the private domain. Countering Kristeva, Janet Bergstrom warns against the implicit, if not explicit, Freudian discursive description of woman as passive and man as active, the traditional patriarchal duality.

As though to heed this warning, Barnette introduces an important strategy to resignify the maternal body: verisimilitude of the character is enhanced by creating a believable woman's body. As Teresa de Lauretis maintains, iconography, along with structural, textual, and cultural levels, produces signification in a circular production of meaning. She writes that "images are implicated in narrative. Positions of identification, visual pleasure itself, then, .. are reached. .. as after-effects of an engagement of subjectivity in the relations of meaning, relations which involve and mutually bind image and narrative." Barnette places this iconography of a "real" body within an already privileged structural and textual site. Its verisimilitude empowers the female viewer by validation and enhances viewing pleasure by identification.
Other aspects of Barnette's camera work emphasize Kitty's importance and identity. Not only does Kitty appear in almost every frame of the camera, but she is most often centered, typically with her husband next to her or behind her. If she is not, she appears physically aligned either behind her husband or next to her children. Similar to the rhetoric of television sitcom and dramas, the camera typically does not move. Camera logic recalls that which alternately establishes viewer intimacy with close and medium shots and promotes viewer distance with the introduction of the theatrical fourth wall. Simultaneously, in this made-for-television movie, while the camera movement and editing is "often motivated by performance details [associated with sitcoms]," it also works to advance the diegetic flow of the narrative. Thus, according to Lynn Spigel, television audiences are given not just a view of what is happening behind the fourth wall as in theatrical space, but a more "perfect view," one that is more deeply engaged in the psychology of the characters.

Barnette also enlists sitcom conventions to block or place her characters within the camera frame. Invariably, instead of the familiar shot-reverse-shot of Hollywood film, Barnette frames her characters as though the viewer were part of the action. Characteristically, instead of seeing a head talking to a head, all the speaking characters occupy the same camera frame. When a character is framed alone, it is a sign
either of authority, as in the case of the judge or the sheriff, or isolation, defeat, and loneliness, as in the defeated father, or the desperate Kitty. Through her camera work, Barnette develops a rhetoric which mirrors the logic of the structure, the text, and the cultural statement of the work. People belong together, solving their problems together.

Only on five occasions, does the camera angle diverge from the traditional stable position of straight ahead. Outside the courtroom during the conversation between Kitty and the attorney, already mentioned, when the camera is positioned below the characters. In another episode, a wobbling, hand-held camera documents two moments of hysteria: once when Phyllis races to avoid vicious guard dogs; and once when Kitty frantically runs up the Statehouse stairs after receiving news that she did not qualify for custody of her children. In two other incidents, an over-head pan, beginning from above and zooming down to focus once on the attorney talking to the judge on behalf of the Messengers and once to reveal the press room where Kitty will find the journalist to write her story. This camera angle, coming from overhead, suggests a divine presence watching from above and then moving close to anoint the handmaiden, Kitty Messenger.

In order to create a sense of verisimilitude about the maternal body, Barnette's camera work focuses on the largeness, the roughness, often the messiness and the
dirtiness of this body. The strategy achieves a resignification of these iconic codes. They no longer denigrate but elevate. For example, seated with knees identically askew and feet planted firmly on the ground, Kitty and her attorney discuss the judges decision to free her. The camera is placed low in front of the two seated figures. The effect is to enlarge the four legs from ankle to knees. The legs recall the four solid and tall greek columns which support the Statehouse portico over which are inscribed the inspirational words, "Equality and Justice Under the Law." The image links the helper and the helped, the righteous victim and the liberator and denies the traditional code of denigration linked to a woman seated with her knees apart.

Kitty's body fits Bakhtin's description of a "real" body. When Bakhtin describes the "grotesque" body as a liberating representation of the real, he might be speaking of the body of Kitty Messenger.

In grotesque realism, therefore, the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people. . . . it makes no pretense to renunciation of the earthy, or independence of the earth and the body." Kitty's movements, dress, mannerisms, and stance construct a woman whose body is a road map of life, a palimpsest of experience that has not been erased.

The familiar body and persona of Tyne Daley who plays Kitty Messenger calls up, as Mellencamp says "with endless
referentiality," the collective memory of Daley's portrayal of Lacey. In the TV episodic drama, she portrays a woman who supports her family when her husband is out of work; the woman who is both strong and sympathetic; the unglamorous woman whose beauty lies more inside than out.

Barnette reconfigures the iconography of motherhood in yet another way, i.e., *Kitty does not clean*. In T.V. land where Donna Reed was queen, this is a remarkable transgression of established codes and practices. Kathleen McHugh explains, the "primal clean" is coded feminine in a rhetoric that persists from Freud to Hollywood. Preoccupation with order and sterility, the bourgeoisie strongly associates cleanliness and hygiene with class. In fact, cleanliness and tidiness are noticeably absent both from her body language and her narrative text. Unlike the wife on *The Bill Cosby Show*, Claire Huxtable, who always looks beautiful and comes home to a clean house, Kitty Messenger, like Roseanne, does not have that privilege. In the beginning of her story, Kitty associates clean with women and dirty with men, because women remain inside, while men live outside the home where dirty hands mean working hands. Later, she gets her hands dirty both literally and figuratively by working outside the home as a waitress and by fighting for her cause in public life.

Another aspect closely related to the issue of cleanliness, and presented iconographically by Barnette's camera work, is the olfactory stimuli. McHugh reminds us of
Freud's work which explains that civilization is only possible with the devaluation of the sense of smell. Yet as we have seen in the work of Candida Royalle, the sense of smell figures prominently in the phenomenological experience of living and enhances, perhaps is even essential to, the sexual experience. Barnette agrees. In fact, Kitty "seduces" her husband in the empty fields after their release from jail by picking the pods of the tall grasses that fill the field, rolling them in her hand, and then offering her wrist for her husband to smell. With that simple gesture, their love bond is reignited.

Incorporating sensual, emotional, and psychological verisimilitude into the character of Kitty, Barnette narrativizes the heroic action of a woman. Her heroic mother exudes a powerful consistency of moral standards and purpose which suggests a unified self. Discussing the concept of the self as a unified field, Jameson emphasizes its historicity. He submits that the mythology of a unified self is a cultural requirement for the bourgeois ideals of moral behavior. Yet while Jameson is critical of the bourgeois capitalist culture, he acknowledges the appeal of a concept which is required for individual political and social action.

Jameson also suggests a connection of the concept of the unified self to two literary traditions: first, narrative and second, point-of-view. These literary tools, according to Jameson, assist individual empowerment by offering an
imaginative space which provides both the continuation of and protest/defense against the myth of the unified self.49 He suggests that the hero's role narrativizes the individual's struggle with a culture which seeks the objectification, if not the erasure, of that individual.

Barnette's portrayal of a centered individuality in the form of a mother character is an important step which advances the culturally acceptable images of an unromanticized motherhood: although virtuous, the mother is not virginal; while devoted, the mother is an individual; portrayed as fully psychologized woman, the mother is also powerful and beloved. In the next chapter, Jane Jensen, like Barnette, narrativizes the stories of women. Although she presents a dystopic vision of romanticized love, Jensen offers a corrected alternative. Like Barnette's mother character, the woman-for-the-new-millennium is not without passion, compassion, and interest, but she rejects the seductiveness of a romanticized love and its required loss of individuality.
NOTES


3. This testimony comes from tape recordings of the following panels: women screenwriters, producers, directors, and agents. AFI and WIF Conference. November 1991.

4. These statistics were quoted by director Francene Parker. panel discussion. "Women Directors" AFI and WIF Conference. November 1991.


9. See introduction to the second section regarding Teresa de Lauretis' work about the play between narrative and image as the signifying process whereby a film constructs subjectivity and specifically gendered subjectivity.

10. David Morley, Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure (London: Comedia Publishing Group, 1986)146-
11. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989) 745. "Women represent the interests of the family and of sexual life. The work of civilization has become increasingly the business of men, it confronts them with ever more difficult tasks and compels them to carry out instinctual sublimations of which women are little capable."

12. *Better Off Dead* is another Barnette made-for-television movie.


14. Reinhold Grimm documents the ways Martin Luther and his works served as a foundation for Bertolt Brecht from which to carve a new, critical path. Grimm proves that the fundamental connections between Brecht and Luther are profound. "Luther's Language in the Mouth of Brecht: A Parabolic Survey with some Examples, Detours, and Suggestions," *Michigan Germanic Studies* vol. 10 1984: 181, 195.

Barnette's connection with religion is as profound, but is characterized by an embracing not a departure from the religious ecstasy and morality propounded in a non-denominational Christianity. As a pre-Christmas special, the movie contextualized the idealized ethos of the season: morality, altruism, and spirituality.

15. Stephanie Hammer, citing exemplary satirical works, notes the inverse pattern. "This self-destruction [of those texts which fail to perform and rather dismantle their satirical generic/formal mode] occurs because . . . the presence of the law-breaking figure causes the work that he or she inhabits to break its own generic and formal laws." Further, Hammer remarks that the protagonist functions like the "vicious bitch outside" who "gets away" from the male author who wants to imprison him or her in a textually ordained place." Stephanie Barbé Hammer, *The Sublime Crime: Fascination, Failure, and Form in Literature of the Enlightenment* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1994) 17.

17. Leibman uses *Leave It to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* for television and *Giant* and *Rebel Without a Cause* for film to make her point.


19. Patricia Mellencamp writes, "Held to the domesticity of situation comedy's conventions, Lucy Ricardo was barely in control, constantly attempting to escape domesticity--her 'situation' --always trying to get into show business by getting into Ricky's 'act,' narratively fouling it up, but brilliantly and comically performing in it." Mellencamp, *High Anxiety: Catastrophe, Scandal, Age, & Comedy* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992) 323.


27. D'Acci 11.


29. D'Acci 52.

30. D'Acci 118.

32. Mayerle "RoseannE" 71-88.

33. M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1988) 66. Synecdoche: a part of something is used to signify the whole, or (more rarely) the whole is used to signify a part. We use the term "ten hands for ten workmen, and Milton refers to the corrupt clergy in "Lycidas" as "blind mouths." In an analogous association, the Messenger family stands for the "family of man," which includes people of all races, class, and ethnic backgrounds.

34. Nick Browne, "Introduction," Quarterly Review of Film Studies: Television/Film Cultural Perspectives in History and Theory vol. 9 no. 3 1984, 175. Browne writes, "Contemporary critical theory, in the American context, then, is in the position today of thinking the relation of media and society by theorizing the television discourse, the institution which supports it, the advertising that drives it, and the audience which consumes it, as elements in a general system.

Linda K. Fuller, The Bill Cosby Show (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992) xxv. Fuller reports this generally recognized economy. Barnette was a guest director for several of The Bill Cosby Show episodes.


36. Judith Paige Mitchell described a made-for-television movie she wrote and co-produced. The men at the network and the studio gave the two women a "hard time" because they did not like the following aspects of the movie. It must be noted that the story was biographical, based on a book. The men did not like that the husband whose wife had an affair was not a bad husband and therefore could not be used to justify the love affair and that the wife had no remorse. Another aspect of the movie they did not like was the scene when the wife tells the husband she has had an affair, he finds he cannot deal with the information, got drunk, they begin to make love and he begins to ask her personal questions about the affair. The men did not like that. Mitchell said they would have been happier had he been beating her while he asked the questions. This discourse which resists a woman's independence and her subjectivity is what women everywhere fight. "Women Producers," panel discussion. AFI and WIF Conference. November 1991.

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41. Diane Waldman, "Film Theory and the Gendered Spectator: the Female or the Feminist Reader?" *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism and Film Theory* 18, 53-66. Waldman reviews the argument associated with Linda Williams and Nancy Chodorow that a female spectator is characterized by "multiple identifications" between the viewer and characters, thereby divesting the spectator of power, but increasing empathy. Barnette's approach suggests a different strategy. Audience identity and pleasure is fed on the growing power of Kitty, not at all diffused by identification with another primary character. The camera hardly leaves Kitty's body.

42. According to Barnette, she is trained in the four-camera technique of TV drama and sitcom as well as the one-camera technique of film. Director's Panel at the AFI and WIF conference in Hollywood. At this conference Barnette also gave credit to the WIF's Women's Director's Workshop for launching her directing career.

43. Lynn Spigel 31.


46. McHugh.

47. One is reminded by Jane Gallop that the thoughts of Roland Barthes suggest that passion and pleasure, i.e., the body, should not be erased even in conjunction with the kind of powerful political activism represented by Kitty Messenger. Jane Gallop, *Thinking Through the Body, Gender and Culture*,

48. In another made-for-television movie directed by Barnette, she represents an equally strong, but loving mother figure: the mother of Cutter Dubuque, successful, black attorney. Cutter is ambitious and quickly moving up the political scale as "the girl" of the powerful, but white, mayor, soon-to-be-governor. In Cutter's haste to climb the ladder of public success, she forgets her ethical duties as a human being, i.e., fairness and truth. In a confrontational scene with her daughter, Cutter's mother accuses Cutter of allowing her ambition to interfere with justice and truth. "I'm your mother, Cutter, not one of your employees. If I can't tell you the truth, than who can?" says mother Dubuque. Ultimately Mrs. Dubuque's incisive statement metamorphizes Cutter who sees the truth of the message. Consistent with the Kitty, Cutter Dubuque's mother is the straight arrow that centers her children and, through tough love, encourages them to believe in themselves: to believe that they stand for something.

Chapter VI: Jane Jensen's *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers/The Numinous Woman and the Millennium Woman*

Jane Jensen carved out her niche in the mainstream computer entertainment market in order to fulfill a life long dream of the novelization of the computer medium. Her career began while assisting another woman at Sierra On-Line, Roberta Williams. The most prolific and successful computer-game writer in the company, Williams is also co-founder of Sierra On-Line which has twenty-five percent of the computer game market, the largest share held by any one company. Having created the *Kings Quest I-VI* series which has sold over a million copies and other games, Williams prefers to write about the fairy tale side of life. Her *King's Quest* series relies on the traditional active prince and princess-in-the-castle scenario.

The work of Jane Jensen, through her introduction of psychologized action, offers consumers a rich alternative. As we will discuss below, both women comprise a minority in the computer industry dominated by men. Yet, the popularity of their works makes their presence crucial to that industry and its potential for tomorrow. Demographics collected by Sierra On-Line reveal that, with *Laura Bowe*, a detective computer game by Roberta Williams, women's playing increased to about fifty percent of all players. Yet, with the *King's Quest* series, as with most arcade and computer entertainment playing, eighty percent of the players are male. Sierra On-
Line discovered that girls play games just as much as boys when they are very young, then losing interest around their teen years. Players, male and female, are mostly professional, cross-cultural, and tend to be better off than the rest of the country, i.e., they can afford the large investment of the sophisticated, expensive computers that it takes to run these games. With the new, high tech CD-ROM game capabilities, game playing is more expensive fun, because the screen can do more, quicker. Identified players range in age from twelve to sixty, with generally a thirty-five to forty percent group of under nineteen players, while the rest of the players are in their twenties, thirties, and forties. Sierra On-Line's corporate focus is the big, consumer-oriented family who likes adventure games.

Working within this corporate frame, Jane Jensen claims no feminist political agenda and openly expresses her frustration at two levels of feminist discourse. First, she considers the term archaic and associates feminism with an even older women's movement, that of the suffragettes. It is not, as she hastens to say, that she is anti-feminist. Rather, her own life experience proves to her that the opportunity to express oneself and to empower oneself financially within the industry is available for any woman who develops the skills and has the talent and the drive to do so. She regrets the general absence of women from the field of science and technology. Because her up-bringing included a
science-oriented family, she considers herself lucky and loves its potential and capabilities science offers and promises. She is a technophile.

One impetus for this chapter is to honor those women who break a stereotype in our culture—that things electronic are "toys for boys." A great deal of attention in the academic and science community attests to this fact. "In many ways women are excluded particularly from the design and production of technology," writes Valerie Frisson who watches technologically oriented industry for gender bias.

Women are sometimes so much opposed to information technology that they are unable to see the creative potential the machine has and the very different styles of working with information technology that are possible. According to Turkle this strong opposition from women is a result of their aversion to having an intimate relationship with a machine, a thing, given that female culture teaches women to be very good in personal, emotional, fact-to-face relationships.

As van Zoonen writes, it is important when looking at women and NICT's (new information and communication technologies) to take into account the cultural constructions that influence their use by the women. Most players of video games are boys, most users of NICT's are men, and most marketing of these commodities is geared to the male consumer.

One important exception to this is the pioneering work of Cecile Alvergnat who in the mid-eighties took the computer system introduced by the French government as a vertical communications system to disperse information that originated with the government such as phone numbers and tax information.
and developed horizontal services between users including inter-personal private communications and professorial tutoring for children. Today this kind of minitel use, with its sophisticated business as well as personal networks, is an integral part of the French business landscape.

Jensen's second concern about feminism lies in the shackles feminist discourse constructs around individual women and their public expression. As an example, Jensen points to her own experience with her computer game, Gabriel Knight introduced in the fall of 1993, her first solo game. In the work, the lead female, an octoroon, falls to a fiery death after her lover, a German-American detective, discovers she is the murderer he sought. At face value, this is the notoriously misogynous femme fatale/good-guy detective rubric of film noir. Yet the numerous letters from women who recognize the psychologized characteristics of this woman character belie this facile conclusion. The analysis that follows examines the ways women's discursive position maintains a powerful posture throughout the work at a variety of levels. Her sympathetic aspects minimizes the women's masochistic viewing pleasure at seeing a transgressive woman punished and maximizes the sense of empowerment shared by character and viewer. The game offers an interesting epilogue to the work of this dissertation as a portrait of the woman of the new millennium.
Before I begin an analysis of the work, I turn to dwell on the medium itself. The story of *Gabriel Knight* "reads" like a traditional horror story. The comparison has been made earlier that film is to the twentieth century what the novel was to the nineteenth century, i.e., a culturally acceptable form of imaginative distraction and expression. Until recently computer games, although they might include a narrative, generally offer little of the internal life of its characters. Activities are action oriented and resemble a treasure hunt or combat. David Myers describes the aesthetic field.

What critics have found lacking in the computer game is what they have seen and found elsewhere as lending distinction and excellence to the novel, the play, and the short story: language, character, and plot. In spite of the frustration critics have had in describing the appeal of video/computer games, the seductive "dynamics" of the games, according to Myers, require the concentration of reading a book. Again, Myers.

Yet the context of home computer game play recommends aesthetic/textual rather than social/behavioral analyses. Computer game play in the home is personal and private. The game-playing experience requires an absence of distractions; and that experience is more closely physically analogous to reading a book than playing billiards.

As Myers recommends, most of my analysis on the game focuses on the aesthetic/textual issues. But so as not to lose sight
of this new entertainment medium, I now look briefly at the more mechanical and physical aspects of interactive play. Myers aptly describes the self-motivating aspects of game-play: a sense of control, companionship, fantasy, curiosity, and challenge. Other writers have also discussed arcade game play, notably Marsha Kinder and John Fiske. In the quote below, Fiske describes the physical pleasure or jouissance of play by comparing the thrill to that of the "white-knuckle" carnival rides. Typical of Fiske's popular cultural studies work is his reliance on M. M. Bakhtin's concept of the liberating liminal experience of the carnival.

The release is through the body: the intense concentration of video games or the subjection of the body to the terrifying physical forces of the white-knuckle rides result in a loss of self, a release from the socially constructed and disciplined subjectivity. The body's momentary release from its social definition and control, and the tyranny of the subject who normally inhabits it, is a moment of carnivalesque freedom closely allied to Barthes's notion of jouissance.

Unlike the combat games of arcades and nintendo, this kind of excitement is a secondary thrill in adventure game play and a tertiary thrill in the novelized game of Jensen. The quick manipulation of the joy stick or mouse requiring time-limit performance serves to add excitement to the treasure hunt and the suspense aspects of the game.

Other aspects that add excitement to game-playing are the graphic sequences and sound--both sound effects, the original musical score, and the voices of the actors. In order to
create the chilling feel of a film noir for this neo-Gothic thriller, Sierra On-Line, at Jensen's direction, invested a tremendous effort to produce the most sophisticated visual effects that state-of-the-art computer technology allows. Although the visual quality of interactive scenes are only average for the medium, the animated sequences benefit from high resolution art enhancing the clarity of color and detail. In the interrogation screen segments which involve a question-and-answer exchange between Gabriel and Grace Nakimura, his research assistant, the company debuted its patented lip-synching technology.

Of particular importance to Jensen was providing exceptional voices to read the script and music. In fact the game includes over 7,300 lines of recorded dialogue and a musical score. According to Eithne Johnson, film and video have relied on the woman's voice to express emotion and add variety to sound production. Jensen's commitment to add tonal variety to male voices as well resulted in the hiring of an all-Hollywood cast to read the script. Thus, for example, Tim Curry of Rocky Horror Picture Show (Dr. Frank-N-Furter) reads Gabriel; Mark Hamill of Star Wars, Gabriel's detective friend; Michael Dorn of Star Trek: The Next Generation (Worf), Doctor John owner of the Voodoo store and so on. Heightened male-generated emotional speech contributes to the defetishization of the female voice an integral part of the objectification of women's subjectivity in the film noir as
well as other classical Hollywood film and television tradition.

Another strategy Jensen uses to heighten the subjectivity of her women characters is the look of the characters themselves and the way they look and "feel." Gabriel, according to Jensen, is depicted as "sexy." She paints his sensuality in a number of ways. As mentioned above, Tim Curry, well-known for his role in the Rocky Horror Picture Show, a popular film spoof of gender-construction and horror shows, reads for Gabriel. As mentioned above, there is a vulnerability and openness to his voice which is slow, soft, and deep. Gabriel's hair is tussled and he dresses in an inviting casual fashion, drives a motorcycle, and loves his grandmother. With his untamed locks and his withdrawn persona, Gabriel does not establish the currency of fetishizing pleasure typical of Hollywood camera work. In fact, the relationship within the currency of sex and power between Gabriel and Malia Gedde, the love interest of the game, is balanced. Framing never privileges a fragmented body either of Gabriel or Malia in order to establish voyeuristic domination. Only the face is privileged, a strategy which recalls Royalle and Jensen, to reveal the play of emotion.

While Malia is a shapely female character, certain aspects of her look, in addition to the framing of her image, contribute to the defetishization of this attractive character. Although her clothing accentuates her womanliness
rendering her desirous, her movements, dialogue, and psychologized verisimilitude undermines her reification as a femme fatale and establishes a character who is tender and vulnerable, yet strong. Her healthy-looking body belies a link to perversity. The wide trusting eyes sooner resemble those of a trusting, lost child than a witch. The tussled look of her hair, recalling Gabriel's locks, invokes and then rejects the hydra of mythical repute. The serpentine locks that circle Malia's head are benign versions of the snake, softened into Shirley Temple curls; signs of innocence, love, and vulnerability. Long associated with feminine monstrous and often painted coiling around the woman's body or her head, Jensen has metamorphized the suggestion of serpentine locks on Malia's head into an endearing, feminine coif. 16

With Grace Nakimura, Gabriel's side-kick, Jensen establishes an important presence of another hyphenated American. In addition to Gabriel, the German-American, Malia, the African-American, Grace, the Japanese-American, at once recalls and escapes stereotypes. Although marked by a "high achieving" efficiency, Grace writes her own signification within the cultural hegemonic hierarchy depicted in the game. She is the most successful in "real life" of all the characters depicted in the game. She has carved her own way. As Trinh T. Minh-ha indicates, the other-than-hegemonic woman struggles to discover textual space as she negotiates with both her nativism and the dominant discursive reality. 17
Gabriel represents a dominant culture that has lost its values and soul, Grace represents what Gabriel cannot have, i.e., ownership of her souls and command of her values. As Donna Haraway explains, "the Other which cannot be written by culture." Having completed a master's degree, Grace has withstood pressure from her parents and has taken a summer off to explore "real life" outside of academe. She picked New Orleans; not a choice guaranteed to make her traditional, Japanese parents happy. She finds a job in the St. George Used Book Store, owned by Gabriel Knight. By inscribing herself into the public text of culture, metaphorically through the university and the used book store, through textual space into the life of Gabriel Knight, and through structural, satiric space in her role as eiron and source of humor, Grace writes herself and the "hyphenated American" into narrative and history.19

Another traditional motif that Jensen demystifies is, as does Royalle and Barnette, romantic love. In this dystopia, Jensen frames the passionate, all-consuming love of Malia and Gabriel as destructive, a death force not a life force. On the one hand, Jensen establishes the masochistic viewing pleasure of seeing a transgressive love punished. On the other hand, unlike the traditional melodramatic emotional commerce of Hollywood, the level of verisimilitude of Malia and Gabriel dignifies rather than degrades either character so
that their love, if dystopic, recalls a Romeo and Juliet scenario of transcendence.

Jensen's creation of narrative space for feminine desire realizes a textual site not often filled in narrative. Frye points out that in the twentieth century the male hero does not refuse sexual intercourse, a gesture which would be "neither believable nor admirable." Like her male heroic counterpart, Jensen's Malia Gedde does not refuse sexual intercourse for the very same reasons. In the Gabriel Knight game, the sexual "dance" is played out quite differently than that of conventional narrative. In Gabriel Knight, the hero awaits his woman. It is she who initiates the tender seduction disassociated from the perverse motivations of the mythical archetypes described above. This gesture is the male's guarantee that his beloved arrives willingly. No longer does virginity in a woman signify the feminine version of honor. In a paradoxical twist, her sexuality serves to ensure the virility of the hero. Their sincerity refuses the familiar motif of the woman as trickster. Malia demonstrate an intelligence, an inward sensitivity and resolve that marks her as human, thus subverting the familiar categories of perversion, pureness, and pathos.

A tradition of a Utopic vision of sexuality has long been associated with Gothic romance. Kate Ellis writes:

In the world of the masculine Gothic as mapped by Godwin, it is a person who is haunted, not a place. Exiled from the home reconstituted as earthly
paradise, the Gothic wanderer demands that the fall be revoked immediately, that linear time, brought into being by "man's first disobedience," release its hold on him and that he be recognized as unfallen, or "innocent."²³

Wuthering Heights theorizes a transgressive, incestuous love that is never consummated. In the work of Jensen, that consummation occurs in a transgression even unusual in the 1990's iconographic conventions.²⁴ The interracial consummated love of Gabriel Knight both in the prologue and in the main game are framed as idyllic and serve as a utopic standard against which to measure the dystopic cosmological fall that results from its betrayal. Their love should have been, in the Jensen world view, as innocent and fruitful as that of Daphnis and Chloë.²⁵

Typical of the ironic myth world of Jensen, the world of Gabriel Knight is filled with the "injustices, follies, and crimes" of real life.²⁶ Jensen turns the fairy tale romantic world of her mentor, Roberta Williams, upside down. Ellen Moers, in her important early study of the genre, explains that the female gothic has long been a tradition of women writers. Moers explains that the genre depicted women's dark side, her fears protests, and silenced anger.²⁷ Elaine Showalter writes that the tradition of the American Gothic looks more and more like a "realistic mode" considering today's violent landscape.

Ironically, if the contemporary Female Gothic has come increasingly to be perceived as an American mode it is because its concerns are now consistent
with a larger change in American fiction towards 'violence-centered plots' and a Gothic revival representing 'alternative strategies for depicting an ever more terrifying reality.'

Enhancing the mood of betrayal, transgression, and dystopia, Jensen infuses every level of the game experience with an atmosphere of alienation. When Brechtian scholar, Reinhold Grimm, defines Bertolt Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt, a computer interactive novel seems a far-removed application of this aesthetic strategy:

Brecht's concept and device of alienation are based, essentially, on the assumption that the world, and society and its workings in particular, are too familiar to be really understood. In other words, we take many things for granted and don't question them any more, or not sufficiently.

As Grimm writes regarding Brecht's epic theater, "Everything in the script, to the minutest detail of punctuation, is imbued with alienation devices." While not "everything" in Jensen's work is so imbued, she enlists a variety of strategies, as did Brecht, to paint a dystopic world view in order to foreground both her moral position and the cosmic condition of alienation caused by its betrayal. Her use of satire to parody romance opens textual space required to interrogate the "many things that we take for granted."

According to Frye, the writer of satire interrogates cultural assumptions. Satire breaks down "stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatism, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement . . . of society." Jensen
not only interrogates polarized, "black and white" morality, but challenges a society with a pluralist demography to avoid the apocalypse unleashed by its enactment. In fact, her primary critique of the King's Quest series centers on the "good guy/bad guy" structure that, as Frye writes, characterizes not only melodrama as mentioned here, but romance in its basic concept as well.

Romance . . . relieves us from the strain of trying to be fair-minded, as we see particularly in melodrama, where we not only have outright heroism and villainy but are expected to take sides, applauding one and hissing the other.

Another strategy enlisted to invoke satire is humor. Frye writes that humor recognizes the incongruous of the real world, functions on the "boundary of satire," along with the other satiric conventions, as a parody of romance. As we shall see, the satiric intent of Gabriel Knight is adumbrated in the humor of the Gabriel/Grace dialogue which focuses upon the vulnerabilities of both characters.

Jensen's didactic intent would be missed if its satiric and ironic strategies were not recognized. Stephanie Hammer's opus on satire has helped create a field validating this discursive insight. She admonishes critics who ignore satiric intent: "the unwillingness to deal with the satire question often yields distorted readings of [a] work."

Hammer's review of the strategy underlines its historicity and "protean nature." Her working definition resonates with a discussion of Jensen's game.
1) satire is a literary kind which borrows its form from other sorts of writing, 2) satire is characterized by an attack or censure of vice and evil in society which fuses the aesthetic and the ethical and 3) satire is characterized by its use of rhetorical and dramatic irony to effect its critique. 39

Irony, so closely associated with satire as to be an integral part of the definition, unfolds in *Gabriel Knight* at a variety of levels. 40 The nightmare world, the sarcastic dialogue, the tongue-in-cheek, self-reflexive narrative voice, 41 and the alienated characters serve as aesthetic strategies to foreground the cultural degradation and disarray caused by polarized morality.

To narrativize a dystopic vision, Jensen enlists the classical Hollywood film noir tradition. The dystopia that Jensen creates is the world without women or the world where women are disempowered. It is a world of easy answers that does not take into consideration historical particularities. That is "the sins of the fathers" referred to in the game's title: *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Father*. In this nightmarish, archetypal world where there is no mother, two fathers fight over the souls of their narrative daughter and son: one the African Voodoo tribal chief, the other the white German knight, Gunther Ritter. In 1693, Tetelo, the African slave and daughter of a tribal chief is possessed by the power of her father. He orders her to avenge the capture and enslavement of their African tribe by executing all of the men who worked on the slave ship. Through the generations, down
to Malia Gedde, a contemporary woman who heads a powerful, underground cartel, the thirst for revenge bequeathed by the tribal chief possesses its heirs when injustice is performed on a member of the family.

In a similar fashion, Gabriel Knight has been possessed by the powers of his ancestral father whose dualistic idea of justice proves inadequate in the complex world of slavery and bigotry. Gunther Ritter, a German witch hunter with good intentions, is hired by the village to discover the cause of the rash of murders, falls in love with the slave girl Tetelo. The trap he sets for the murderer reveals that Tetelo has organized the revenge-murders. He tries to save her, but the town burns her at the stake. In a magical moment, his powers as a good knight are joined with her powers motivated by revenge and are passed down through the earthly lineage that the reincarnated Tetelo produces. Because Ritter confused individual romantic love with justice, he is punished. Tetelo, even if his beloved, is still a killer.

Her contemporary descendant, Malia Gedde, heads a Mafia-like cartel which specializes in big business and protection. As Gabriel's love-interest, she serves the archetypal role of the femme fatale played out in myth and the film. Yet as with her portrayals of Gabriel and Grace, Jensen invokes and rejects the limitations suggested by Malia's narrative function as a femme fatale. Structurally, however, Gedde serves the role of the monstrous obstacle which must be
overcome. Required in narrative to prove that the hero is worthy of the salvation that awaits him (expressed as the virtuous princess or other female icon of virtue to which he strives), the obstacle usually comes in the form of a woman who must be overcome and left behind (the woman as obstacle). The work of E. Ann Kaplan explains the role of the femme fatale in the film noir tradition of Hollywood. According to Kaplan, the film noir tradition is a man's fantasy played out on the big screen. It serves as a socially acceptable, if veiled, vehicle, for men to blame women for a variety of micro and macro-human problems: "attitudes toward women evidenced in film noir [are] fear of loss of stability, identity and security." As a result, women are depicted in one of two ways. If they are desirable, they conform to the patriarchal ideal of desexualized mother, subservient wife, or nurturing girlfriend. If they do not conform, if they are independent and display energy and power, they are painted as the femme fatale and are ultimately disarmed by the narrative with death, imprisonment, insanity, dishonor, or illness.

According to Kaplan, the film noir narrative takes care of the balance of power between the genders in its patriarchal appearance. The male must always dominate female desire, subjectivity, and sexuality. If he has fallen victim to or been seduced by any of these feminine wiles, she must be defused. As Kaplan writes:
The ideological operation of the myth (the absolute necessity of controlling the strong, sexual woman) is thus achieved by first demonstrating her dangerous power and its frightening results, then destroying it.\textsuperscript{46}

The first name of Malia Gedde marks her as evil; her family name recalls wealth and dynastic power; together both names suggest an indictment of the dirty hands of big money, marks her as the femme fatale. Advancing the gothic landscape of the text, Jensen turns to myth to further signal Malia as the character marked for trouble: gender, racial, and personal.

In myth, just as in the film noir tradition, woman is associated with the animal world which represents degraded and depraved existence. It is a silent world that enters into reality as violence or cunning. Consistent with this association of woman and animal, the video graphics displayed during the credits and introducing the game reveal a stunning sequence of the beautiful African slave girl, Tetelo/Eliza, metamorphizing from the beloved woman of Gabriel Knight's troubled ancestor, into a leopard—a graphic metaphor for her possession by the dark forces of her father and a sharp reminder of her bestial aspect.\textsuperscript{47} The spirit of her father, instead of representing an ascending power, represents a descending one, one that sinks into the night world of anxiety and nightmare. When she is possessed by her father's dark forces, the slave girl Tetelo and, by extension, the powerful contemporary woman Malia Gedde three hundred years later, loses the agency required for moral action.
In addition to Jensen's use of satire and the film noir tradition to accomplish her satirical task, Jensen creates a story which pays homage to and then subverts literary archetypes. Ultimately the archetypes of alazon and eiron played out between the characters, Gabriel and Grace, become so intertwined, that by the end of the game they are almost interchangeable, providing a strong statement about the interchangeability of the genders. At the start, Gabriel is the pre-destined victim, the self-deceiver or alazon. The exemplary ironic character, he says little, but one presumes that he means a lot more than what he says. Gabriel's quest is the discovery of his true nature. An anti-hero, Gabriel calls up the decentered subjectivity associated with the postmodern era. Tied to ghosts and myths and a past he cannot remember, he has no identity. As with the typical film noir detective who finds the murderer only to discover it is the woman he loves, Gabriel suffers while society wins. One Hollywood actor who played the detective role in a feature length film noir summarizes the plight of the hero in the film noir genre, "I didn't get the woman and I didn't get the money." In this way, the conventions of society as expressed through the traditions of film noir punish the man who falls for the transgressive woman. The same tradition requires that the woman be stopped dead. Although individuals may falter, patriarchal order prevails.
However, in addition to her subversion of the familiar archetypes, Jensen explodes the tidy conclusion suggested by a film noir rubric with a strong narrative statement at the end of the computer game. The player has two choices during the last moments of game-play. Should Gabriel try to save his evil, but beloved woman or should he let her fall into the fiery pit? If he refuses her pleas, she succeeds in pulling him in with her. With Gabriel dead, the final frame is filled with Grace and Gabriel's detective friend, two people with no promise of a future association. If he attempts to save her, she still dies, but he lives. In a narrative twist which reverses the 1693 scenario, Gabriel's beau geste guarantees his survival and that of justice. He is shown in the final frame with Grace—an association that promises a future-love interest without the romantic dissolution of the Gabriel-Malia liaison and a future professional association to be played out in a sequel.

The denouement suggests that women must submit to the standards of ethical behavior as well as men and must suffer (divine or secular) retribution if they do not.

Serving as the alternative to the portrait of Malia, Grace Nakimura suggests an corrected view of the empowered, but beloved (and ethical) woman for the new millennium. This independent, commonsensical, and intelligent female character fills the archetypal role of eiron. Her consistent on-screen appearances in the book store and in the "interrogation"
screen privilege the relationship between Grace and Gabriel and compete for player interest with the more traditional romantic relationship of Malia and Gabriel. Like all the characters in Jensen's work, Grace transcends the simple reading of her archetype. As an eiron, Grace, playing the fearful, pragmatic character who sees the common sense world instead of the fantasy world of the alazon, serves as a foil to Gabriel. Although she finds him attractive, Grace is too practical to indulge in a fruitless romantic adventure. Except when Gabriel addresses her academic knowledge, Grace responds to him with a staccato barrage of sarcastic jabs. Gabriel teases her about her naivete. He suspects that her sarcastic manner is a ploy to hide her jealousy not only of his sexual escapades, but of what Gabriel refers to as the Knight family's "tragic poet-samurai appeal." (Grace calls it a "depraved life style.") Grace understands that Gabriel's braggadocio veils an inherent fear that makes this character seductive and appealing. Grace manages both a vulnerability and a concern for Gabriel and enjoys the verbal jousting that constructs her as both an independent woman and an integral part of the humor in this satiric work. The narrative content of Grace's story also serves to further subvert a pure archetypal reading. Jensen sends a strong message that the independent, but loving Grace is the real model woman for the next millennium.
In a variety of ways, Jensen interrogates cultural practice which dictates that the fathers' wishes be obeyed without question. By her cautionary, dystopic tale, Jensen explodes the vision of a patriarchal hegemony that removes agency and desire from its citizens. In this novelized computer game, Jensen has created a woman's space in a variety of ways. The women characters seem believable. Their gestures and motivations bespeak real people. They provide the viewing pleasure described earlier by film critic, Annette Kuhn. Using the interactive medium to create visual and narrative space for the complexities of women, Jensen opens up a symbolic tradition not defined by the discursive tradition of Lacan.\textsuperscript{50} Jensen's symbolic world includes women's desire, fantasy, and agency situated in author, text, and player.\textsuperscript{51} The body is not constructed as a grotesque show of fragmented parts\textsuperscript{52} nor is action limited to "politically correct" Arcadian fantasy. No longer is women's desire reified as male lack, nor her function defined as a panopticon for male desire, nor her body signified as the grotesque for male normalcy. No longer do women have to watch over their shoulders to determine a "politically correct" feminism as defined by a Utopic vision of a feminist world.\textsuperscript{53} The authorial practices of women have come of age. Women can paint their fantasies with a sureness that has never marked women's authorship in the history of the written word.
In the end, Grace represents an alternative to the construction of a woman trapped within the net of the patriarchal construction of the feminine. Embodying the reality that none of us, as we approach the millennium, represents a pure ethnicity, Grace provides the grace that constructs the contemporary woman as independent, yet a helpmate; as able to give love, yet not victimized by romance; as actualizing her own desires, yet sensitive to those needs of others. In the game she is now developing for Sierra On-Line, Jensen will give equal screen time to Grace and Gabriel. Grace investigates an archaeological mystery while Gabriel solves a crime. With *Gabriel Knight*, the traditional gendered structure of narrative is reversed. Grace discovers salvation along the pathway offered by Gabriel, a corrected grace which perhaps announces a new age of possibilities.

Like Royalle and Barnette, Jensen advances the aesthetic of the possible female hero. The world that includes this worthy figure also allows for real women leading remarkable, everyday lives. Admittedly, media reportage still features women in accomplished positions as aberrations, saying with praise that thinly disguises censor, how remarkable it is that a woman does such and such. The goal of these three romancers is to show the opposite. They explode the myth that women are unknowable. They take pains to describe their women figures as understandably complex people whose capabilities are as
limitless as the opportunities and challenges that face them. This is not a utopic vision that constructs perfection in its characters. Nor is it a dystopic world view that constructs disproportionate domination of its inhabitants by one gender or the other or for that matter the struggle between genders. Their world makes room for energetic women seeking to be constructive, vital members of society.
NOTES

1. This customer survey information comes from Lisa Spravaka of Sierra On-Line's marketing department, phone interview, summer 1994.

2. Ironically while women do not tend to gravitate to technology either for entertainment or career, society associates Woman with uncontrolled technology as Andreas Huyssen pointed out in "The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang's Metropolis," New German Critic fall/winter 1981, 81-2.

3. In the past few years, a variety of science institutions including magazines, universities and public schools as well as science organizations are attempting to encourage young women into technological fields of studies. For example, Science: American Association for the Advancement of Science devoted its 16 April 1993 issue to "Women in Science '93: Gender & Culture" and featured a dozen teenage girls on the cover surrounding an electrically wired construction made from leggo building blocks. The December 20, 1993, issue of Chemical and Engineering News reviewed the Linda Jean Shephard's book, Lifting the Veil: The Feminine Face of Science (Boston: Shambhala Publications 1993), a book published in that year. This is also summarized by Valerie Frisson in "Trapped in electronic cages: Gender and new information technologies in the public and private domain: an overview of research," Media, Culture and Society vol. 14 1992,31-49.

4. Valerie Frisson, "Trapped in electronic cages? Gender and new information technologies in the public and private domain: an overview of research," Media, Culture and Society vol. 14 (1992) 31. Marsha Kinder, professor at USC who studies arcade and computer games, confirms that the packaging and marketing of games has a lot to do with the gender specificity of use. She made this comment at an interview at Console-ing Passions: Television, Video, and Feminism April 1994 hosted by University of Arizona.

5. Frisson 45.


7. Frisson 31-1.
8. Marie Marchand, La Grande Aventure du Minitel (Paris: Larousse, 1987) 104-5. I interviewed Cecile in Paris in April 1992. As a woman in a man's world, she struggles to maintain a business presence within the minitel networks. Among her current clients, for whom she created an information network, are a national soccer association.


10. Myers 18.


13. Fiske 83.


16. Gabriel Knight has an analogous hairdo which a little messier, indicative, one assumes, of a romantic, Shelley-like character.


In her "The Straight Mind" in The Straight Mind and Other Essays, forward, Louise Turcotte (Boston: Beacon Press 1992), Monique Wittig discusses the erasure of the lesbian by the assumption of universality of the heterosexual discourse. In the same fashion, Grace's cultural site as an educated woman from a hyphenated ethnic origin presents textual difficulties because of the plurality of her identities. The presence of such a character in a computer game is crossing new territory.


Frye Secular Romance 73.

Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) 392. Writing about the misogynistic depiction of women by mostly men in fin-de-siecle culture, Bram Dijkstra focuses on a cross between art history and cultural criticism. Although the particular form misogyny takes in these paintings does not mark contemporary electronic game playing, the role these women play in the male narrative of primacy continues, if with displaced visual imagery, to the present.

In the fin-de-siecle tradition, the women Dijkstra talks about, representing important motifs and themes of the time, are grouped in a variety of ways. In a tradition that resonates with that of Gilbert and Gubar, Dijkstra points out the visual imagery in the cult of female invalidism, death, and sleep. Women are depicted as collapsing, at rest, weightless. They are shown in the posture Dijkstra calls the women with "the broken backs" and the women submitting to "therapeutic rape" of mythology. By their bodily positioning, the polymorphous perversity of women is foregrounded suggesting them as lesbians, masturbators, nymphomaniacs, the very flowers of evil. Imagery of woman as vampire, whore, and murderer of virulent male powers as represented by the characters of Judith, Lilith, and Salomé served as metaphors to Dijkstra's thesis that women were the projection of man's fears of inadequacy.


Hollywood film conventions still do not "allow" transgressive consummations on screen. The popular movie, Philadelphia, about homosexual desire, does not show homoerotic desire. It only refers to that desire.
25. Frye *Secular Scripture* 101.


30. Grimm 63.


34. Northrop Frye *Secular Scripture* 50.

35. Frye *Anatomy of Criticism* 225.

36. Using contemporary critical discourses, the reader might still miss Jensen's moral imperative. *Gabriel Knight* can be read through a plethora of discursive strategies enlisted to reveal underlying meanings relating to specific issues: gender, race, class, power, myth. As seen through these discursive lenses, the work can be described as sexist, racist, elitist, and fascist. In fact, according to Jensen, she has been accused of all of the above.


38. Hammer preface vii-xvii and intro. 3-14.


41. Frye *Anatomy of Criticism* 224. Frye stresses the importance of humor to satire. The incongruity of humor to the deadly serious process of attack seems necessary to make the didactic, or in this case, horrific, pill easier to swallow.


44. E. Ann Kaplan, *Film Noir* (London: British Film Institute, 1978) 35.

45. Kaplan *Film Noir* 95.

46. Kaplan *Film Noir* 45.

47. Frye *Secular Romance* 115, 116.

48. Kaplan *Film Noir* 27.


53. Libby Lumpkin, "Bad Girls West," *Art Issues* no. 32 March/April 1994, 46-8. In this article, Lumpkin bemoans the necessity for a recent exhibit of women artists to be called,
"Bad Girls." Or, as expressed in a personal interview, 14 April 1994, for women authors to allow themselves to be called the "do-me" feminists in Esquire magazine's February, 1994, issue which included Naomi Wolf and bell hooks. Lumpkin attributes this apparent need to express a "bad girl" image to what she calls the "puritanical feminism" that has overtaken academe. Lumpkin's article calls for women to write their fantasies, their desires, and their power without worrying about looking over their shoulders to see whether the feminist panopticon which monitors female as well as male desire is watching.
Conclusion

Although the subjectivity of women has found an expression through history, the female voice has typically cried out for sexual, economic, or social emancipation, for autonomy, and often expressed a self-hatred or revealed a masochistic side. The works featured in this dissertation offer women characters who differ from the pattern inspired by real women's victimization. The narrative bequeaths women the spiritual and material tools to struggle and succeed in holding steadfast to their dreams and fulfilling their purpose. Today's women producers of visual images assume that women possess specular desire stimulated by images of erotica, action, and power.

The women characters created by women producers reject the conventions of heterosexual love introduced by the courtly romantic tradition established during the medieval period. In fact, as we have seen in the computer game, *Gabriel Knight*, romantic love is portrayed as dystopic. It requires the subsuming of individuality. In a conclusion identical to that of the canonical authors discussed in the first half of the dissertation, contemporary women are anti-romantic and reject a love which erases individuality. While the canonical authors privilege ascetic love over earthly love (maternal or heterosexual), the contemporary women offer a corrected version of earthly love. They reject the kind of loss of self imposed by the romantic traditions both of courtly love and

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bourgeois romance. They insist upon retaining their own identity even when involved in a loving relationship.

The producers represented in this text embrace the capitalist bourgeois market place both extra- and intra-textually. They struggle and ultimately take the risks required to provide images to our mass culture which do not disparage the woman. Michelle Citron writes that she was asked by a producer, "Are you a feminist?" The implicit trailer to the question was, "If you are, you are not hired." Citron says that she "of course said 'No.'"¹ This is probably the future for women in popular culture. But does mainstreaming mean that women lose their ability to "speak" and express their agency and subjectivity through the texts they produce, direct, or write for popular culture. Citron addresses that issue.

A lot of women now desire the kind of power available through mainstream narrative film-making. This change of priorities is one manifestation of our changing social/political context. . . Women's move into the production of narrative film is that women now feel a willingness to take different kinds of risks: to perhaps be the woman who, while accepting the parameters of mainstream narrative film as dictated by both the market-place and the strong psychological pull of narrative, can subvert it. In one way, this acceptance of power can be seen as a desire, reinforced by self-confidence, to 'win on our own terms'. This may be easier for younger women who are entering into narrative production today, the field changed by the women who came before them.²

The phrase 'win on our terms' captures the ethos expressed by today's women in the film and television industry. While they
seek to promote full character representations of women, they are not confined to a specific genre or even a specific type of woman character. In fact, women relish the opportunity to produce, direct, or write for genres traditionally coded male such as action dramas or detective shows starring men.

What the women discussed here represent are particular niches carved out within the mainstream culture. With a great deal of courage and perseverance, with a lot of helping hands within the industry, and with a recognition that our porous symbolic system does a more inclusive future for women.

As Candida Royalle says, "If women don't write their own narratives, then who will." I might add, "If not now, when?" Developing the iconographic visualization of powerful, beloved and sympathetic women, contemporary women's practice advances the cultural conventions which authorize acceptable gender behavior. The developed women characters produced for mainstream culture expands the models for women's behavior. The women producers of these texts engage society in a revolutionary enterprise of rewriting the codes and icons of gender. They themselves assume the role of questors, of integrating a utopic dream into everyday life.
NOTES


2. Citron 58.
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