

“THIS BEAUTIFUL EVIL”: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WOMEN, THE NATURAL
WORLD, FEMALE SEXUALITY, AND EVIL IN WESTERN TRADITION

Gretchen Esely Gregg, B.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2000

APPROVED:

Diana York Blaine, Major Professor
Richard M. Owsley, Committee Member
Barbara Rodman, Committee Member
Ruthann Masaracchia, Director of Women's
Studies
C. Neal Tate, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse
School of Graduate Studies

Gregg, Gretchen Esely. "*This Beautiful Evil*": *The Connection between Women, the Natural World, Female Sexuality, and Evil in Western Tradition*. Master of Arts (Interdisciplinary Studies), December 2000, 96 pp., works cited, 37 titles.

Female archetypes reflect a social construction of reality, expressing expected modes of behavior, beliefs, and assumptions about women and are reinforced by repetition of common patterns and themes. Often female archetypes take on the physical characteristics of animals, commune with nature, engage in sexual promiscuity, and possess special powers to bewitch and control men into doing their bidding. Four prevalent archetypes include: the Predatory Woman, who with her bestial nature becomes the hunter of men; the Sacrificial Woman, who dutifully negates herself for the sake of men; the Bad Mother, who is cold, unnatural, and challenges men; and *les enfants terrible* seductive girl-women who at once tempt and torment men.

This research traces the development and evolution of female archetypes and explores how images of women, nature, sexuality, and evil are structured within a cultural framework of Western tradition: myths and folktales, religious, philosophical, and scientific works, and film.

Copyright 2000

Gretchen Esely Gregg

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Sexuality and the Nature of Woman: Bridling the Goddess.....	8
3. The Wicked Stepmother, the Cartesian Cat, and the Marquis de Sade: Essential Female Evil in the Age of Enlightenment.....	34
4. “Flowers of Poison” and the “Household Nun”: The Dangers of Female Sexuality in the Industrial Age.....	57
5. <i>Les enfants terrible</i> : The Sexualization of the Woman-Girl, Desire, and the Unconscious Mind.....	75
6. Conclusion.....	95
Bibliography.....	98

In anger Zeus spoke to him, “Prometheus, deviser of crafts beyond all others, you are happy that you stole the fire, and outwitted my thinking; but it will be a great sorrow to you, and to men who come after. As the price of fire I will give them an evil, and all men shall fondle this, their evil, close to their hearts, and take delight in it.”

But then to replace good, he made this beautiful evil thing, Pandora, he led her out where the rest of the gods and mortals were . . . wonder seized both immortals and mortals as they gazed on this sheer deception, more than mortals can resist. For from her originates the breed of female women, and they live with mortal men and are a great sorrow to them, hateful of poverty, they will share only luxury. So Zeus of the high thunder established women, for mortal men an evil thing, and they are accomplished in bringing hard labors.

Hesiod *Theogony*

Images of beautiful women who create chaos, havoc, and destruction occur throughout the scope of Western cultural history. Often, these women take on the physical characteristics of animals, commune with nature, engage in sexual promiscuity, and possess special powers to bewitch and control men into doing their bidding. Examples of women who live their lives beyond the boundaries of designated social behavior, as well as images of women who do conform to societal expectations, are represented by female archetypes. Archetypes reflect the social construction of reality within a particular culture. They express expected modes of behavior, beliefs and assumptions, and repeat common patterns and themes. Furthermore, female archetypes demonstrate how concepts surrounding women correspond to the perceived reality of the world. They indicate the essential nature of women rather than explore the shared experiences of women. In defining terms, it is important to draw a distinction between archetype and stereotype. In this work the term archetype is not referred to as an

essentialist vision, an imprint on the primordial “collective unconscious” described by Carl Jung in *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912) and *Psychological Types* (1923). Rather the use of the term archetype is referred to as a prototypical image which has been historically represented and reinforced. Stereotyping, on the other hand, occurs as an extension of the archetype. Stereotypes result from the reinforcement of archetypal assumptions as they are applied to individuals within a particular group over time.

Gender roles surrounding the females in Western culture are fraught with conundrums. A woman may have to attempt a moral or behavioral contortion act in order to satisfy all that is required of her according to the expectations of society. Women often find that their actions are criticized regardless of what type of behaviors they adopt. For instance, if a woman remains submissive, then she is perceived as a non-entity, fragile, or a “doormat;” however, if she voices her opinion, then she is thought to be noisy, irritating, or fractious. Frequently assumptions about accepted modes of behavior lead to the stereotyping of members within society, which in turn, produces limits on an individual’s potential. Those who do not operate within the confines of the social code are often considered unnatural, pathological, or dangerous.

Beliefs and assumptions about gender roles (male as well as female) and about human nature are grounded in traditional Western-Anglo systems of society (religion, philosophy, linguistics, the arts, medicine, psychology, etc.). These systemic ideologies are so well constructed, well justified, and deeply ingrained that even if one were to reject them outright, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to disavow that any connection or any influence remains imprinted upon the individual. Every human

being is a product of culture. Culture provides individuals with the necessary information as to how one operates within society, how one should or should not behave, and what is expected from the members of society. However, over time, the changes in attitudes toward women have created contradictory information. Perhaps the most conflicted messages concerning the female gender role are the cultural codes connected to female sexuality and moral fortitude. On one hand, women are thought to be morally superior to men. On the other hand, women are simultaneously thought to be subordinate to men, physically, mentally, spiritually, and therefore, morally, weaker. Such concurrent dichotomies are numerous in defining women as well as that which constitutes womanhood.

Racial terms, as well as gender and socio-economic class inform the cultural history of Western-Anglo thought. As what Richard Dyer describes as the “enterprise of imperialism,” being white is equated with being “normal” (5). The condition of being white (and male) sets the standard against which all others (non-white and female) are measured. While exploring the social construct of the patriarchy it is necessary to investigate how entitlement and privilege operate on various levels. The normative status of white racial identity pervades Western culture as does sexism, and white representation is so predominant that white people tend to be viewed “as ‘people’ in general,” and “the normative state of existence,” while those who fall outside the normative category are defined by difference to the norm, with terms such as “African American,” “Jewish,” “crippled,” or “lesbian” (Dyer 3).

Images and archetypes are deeply rooted in the cultural psyche and are not easily

discarded; moreover, archetypes may function upon the recipient group through stereotyping. Individuals within the recipient group may go on to perpetuate the generalized assumptions upon themselves. The effectiveness of stereotyping is very potent indeed, considering that it can operate independently in this manner. It is important to understand that archetypes and stereotypes are placed in a social construction of perception of the world, and they have roots in a society's cultural past. This research begins with the premise that human perception has a history of its own. Unlike the political history of territory and legislature, which follows a more traditional view of history as events arranged consecutively along a time line, the history of perception is a conversation or exchange of ideas. Beliefs evolve within a cultural environment, but do not do so arbitrarily. Human beings attempt to invest their world, which surrounds them, and the events, which affect them, with meaning and significance.

It is the task of Women's Studies to draw connections, and the interdisciplinary nature of Women's Studies accepts the overlapping of different fields of study. Feminist theory attempts to uncover the connections between the ideology of the social order, human events, and the experiences of women. In doing so, one endeavors to arrive at a deeper understanding of the assumptions about women which are so prevalent in Western culture.

The following research is an attempt to identify different female archetypes, ideas surrounding women and the so-called "nature" of women, especially as these ideas embrace the connection between women, the natural world, female sexuality, and evil. I

will explore how female archetypes have developed and changed over time, the ideas and events which influenced these changes, and how these beliefs operate within a cultural framework: folk tales and myths, and religious, philosophical, and scientific works. The traditional canon gives weight and credence to archetypal applications and justifies the continued use of such generalizations. Feminist thinkers and writers have offered analysis and criticism of the patriarchal canon. They are also mentioned in this research and include Simone de Beauvoir, Elinor Gadon, Susan Griffin, and Bram Dijkstra. The study of folk tales, which is grounded in the oral tradition, reveals similarities in story patterns. Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson gathered and classified thousands of standard “tales types” and numbered them accordingly. The references to the standard classifications of folk tales by way of the Aarne/Thompson scheme have been both useful and reliable in my research of German and French folk tales.

In addition to printed texts, the primary examples used will include female archetypes presented in film. Dijkstra’s works, *Idols of Perversity* (1986) and *Sisters of Evil* (1996), made such an impact on my research, so that I decided to apply Dijkstra’s theory, which he used on images of women in nineteenth century art, to images of women in film. The use of film may be considered an appropriate tool for examining Western culture, for since its inception, this medium has been accessible to and a mirror of society in general. Many of the films chosen for this research are, in fact, adapted from novels or plays. However, film is a unique device in its use of imagery, light, shadow, sound, and the ability to record and then replay action. Whereas in the past, one studied religious text, the oral tradition of epic poetry, or philosophical treatises to uncover the

belief system of a particular culture, the importance of film cannot be overemphasized.

With its invention in the early nineteenth century, film quickly became a suitable vehicle for the expression of cultural ideology. In this celluloid realm, one can observe the depiction of human struggle, the shape of ideas, and the creation of myth translated in a medium for the present era.

Ideas regarding gender roles also quickly found their way into the new medium of film. Although the ideas surrounding women's roles have been in existence much longer than the medium of film, many of the archaic images of women have clung tenaciously to the Western cultural psyche and have reappeared on the screen in modern array. The most prevalent archetypes include the Predatory Woman, who with her animal characteristics becomes the hunter of men; the Sacrificial Woman, who dutifully negates herself for the sake of men; the Bad Mother, who is cold, unnatural, and passionless and challenges men; and *les enfants terrible*, seductive girl-women who at once tempt and torment men.

Sexuality and the Nature of Woman:

Bridling the Goddess

If such a thing does indeed exist, then what is the nature of woman? The questions of inherent qualities and traditional definitions stem from such ideas as female inferiority and biological determinism. In order for inequality to function efficiently, it must do so within each system or institution that comprises any particular culture. Woven throughout Western culture are iron clad justifications, rational explanations, and vivid examples of inherent female inferiority and the dangers of female sexuality, which are perceived as threats not only to individuals, but also threatens the structure of society as a whole.

In retracing the early history of female subordination in the patriarchal structure, it is useful to examine the primary texts of the patriarchal canon such as classical Greek mythology and philosophy, Biblical text, and the Hebrew Scriptures. Primary texts dealing with creation myths often cite female characters who are trouble makers. For example, Ishtar in the Gilgamesh epic, Circe the sorceress-seductress in the Homeric epic poem, *Odessey*, and Queen Dido from Virgil's *Aeneid*, are all women who are powerful, independent, sexual, closely related to nature, and dangerous. It takes no average mortal man but an over-achiever, an ideal model of masculinity to overpower the super-seductress. However, the powers of spellbinding vixens are no match for the ideal masculine hero. After succumbing to the hero's superior, male prowess, the seductress' power is overthrown, and once again balance is restored to the world. The stories are

surprisingly similar in structure, and from early examples of Western myth and literature, strong, independent female characters are identified with the natural world, with destruction, and with death.

The Predatory Woman possesses bestial characteristics, sometimes totally transforming into a large feline, a spider, or a snake, especially when aroused by intense emotion, such as jealousy, anger, or lust. These animal-women are remnants of earlier female deities such as the Egyptian Sphinx, the Native American Spider Woman, and the Snake Goddess of Crete. The human-to-animal transformation indicates that this type of woman holds a mystical power linked to primal nature in humans, but being less evolved and closer to nature than men, women supposedly have a greater tendency toward regression to the non-human state than men.

Feminist scholars and writers such as Simone de Beauvoir and Susan Griffin as well as noted art historian Elinor Gadon have examined the notion that women are more closely tied to nature than men because of the cycle of menstruation and birth. Almost universally, the menstruating woman is believed to be polluted and dangerous. Sherry Ortner, for example, cites that during their menstrual cycle, even the most prominent women in the matrilineal Crow tribe cannot participate in ceremonies, approach or come into contact with wounded men or men in a war party, or come near sacred objects, in fear that the power they generate may curse or defile members of the tribe or contaminate sacred rituals. Muslim women must not enter holy places during their menses. In contemporary American society, menstruation is commonly referred to as “the curse.” (Ortner 3). There is an old joke that states “Don’t trust anything that can bleed for a week

and still live.” In the ancient past, menstrual blood and placenta were beheld as having supernatural powers (Gadon 69-73). However, in Western culture, loss of blood is viewed as loss of power (Dijkstra 86-113). Woman’s tenacious inability to “rise above” her animal nature is evidenced in her inability to escape the monthly menstrual cycle or the release of the afterbirth, arousing suspicion toward her sexuality and leaving her inextricably bound to her biology.

Along with her mystical powers, the Predatory Woman is also viewed as seductive. It seems as though the animal nature in the Predatory Woman reminds even the most stalwart of men of *his* inescapable animal nature. However, being so grounded in sensual physicality, she is connected to death, the inevitable reality for all things living. In the archetype of the Predatory Woman, the lines between human and animal, desire and fear, and sex and death are blurred. The modern Western mind set is not comfortable with blurred lines. The security of modern perception relies upon distinct polar opposition. The Predatory Woman’s sexual stirrings are at the core of the process of transformation, but her sexuality is a source of destruction. Union with her results in the death of the male victim. She is a hunter, after all, and she seeks to overpower a male character who is usually strong, virile, and moral. In stories containing the Predatory Woman, nature is depicted as the enemy of man. She is intent upon pulling her victim down from his transcendent perch and seducing him to death.

In the ancient past, the worship of the Goddess was “earth-centered not heaven-centered, of this world not otherworldly, body-affirming not denying, holistic not dualistic” (Gadon xii). Remnants of Goddess-based cultures were found in Neolithic

mounds of Catal Huyuk from the seventh millennium BCE in what is now the Near East and throughout Europe with paintings and artifacts such as the *Venus of Willendorf* dating from 25,000 BCE (Gardner 108). Elinor Gadon contends in *The Once and Future Goddess* that Goddess-worshipping cultures were replaced by religions in which one supreme male figure, wielding absolute power, existing in a transcendent reality, shaped how human beings came to believe themselves split into a dual psychological-versus-biological being. The monotheistic god, such as the Judeo-Christian god, had a transcendent existence separate from earthly human existence and possessed a superior existence to that of earth-bound human beings. He was pure spirit rather than material, and male rather than female (Gadon xv).

Greek culture underwent a similar transformation. The Minoans of Crete were a Goddess-worshipping culture that existed from approximately 3000 to 1500 BCE. The Minoans lived in an abundant geographical region with fertile land, ample water supply, and a temperate climate (Gadon 87). Island existence gave them access to the sea, travel, and trade so that the Minoans lived in affluence and prosperity in a cooperative manner with those around them, without resorting to warlike behavior or aggression. The Cretans glorified their bountiful way of life in their artwork, representing symbols of life and fertility in the world around them and “saw the supreme divine power in terms of the feminine principle . . . [f]ertility and abundance were the purpose and the desire, sex was the instrument, and for this reason its symbols were everywhere” (Gadon 94). In the poem “The Works and Days,” circa sixth century BCE, Hesiod described Crete as a natural paradise, where “the earth poured forth its fruits unbidden in boundless plenty. In

peaceful ease they kept their lands with good abundance, rich in flocks . . . and did not worship the gods of war” (116-120). The Minoan artwork and religious articles symbolized their way of life and their worship of the Goddess. They represented the natural world around them, depicting the changing seasons, snakes, birds, bulls, trees, water, vegetation, and pregnant women as symbols of fertility, abundance, and incorporated an essential part of the natural cycle, death (Gardner 86-100).

The first invaders appeared around 2000 to 1600 BCE, and not being knowledgeable in the art of warfare, the Minoans were soon overpowered by Indo-Europeans or Mycenaeans. By 1200 BCE, the Mycenaeans were invaded in turn by the Dorians, then the Ionians, each of whom brought with them their own religion and culture. Remnants of Minoan culture survived and are apparent in classical Greek art and culture such as symbols of the bull, the cave, the dove, the tree, and the sacred pillar. The Greek god Zeus, believed to have been born in Crete (Hawkes 133). The goddesses Athena, Diana, Demeter, and Persephone are presumed to have originated with the Minoan representations of the Goddess (Gadon 143-66). However, the peace-loving, gentle Minoans of Crete were overcome, defeated, and forcibly assimilated into a war culture.

Most war cultures operate in a similar fashion. Conversion of another civilization begins with invasion and defeat in battle, often followed by rape and impregnation of captured women, then the destruction and conversion of the defeated culture’s religion. The transition of religion can take place rapidly, but often the transition must take place gradually as new rituals and deities replace the old. Initially, due to the deeply imprinted

bonds of humans to their religious worship, conquering civilizations found it much more effective to convert existing temples and shrines, which were built on established sites, to adapt rituals, and to integrate seasonal festivals into their own devotional calendars (Gadon 194). Religious conversion is achieved by incorporating some of the conquered civilization's religious symbols into the invading culture's religion, but it is also advantageous to demonize the old religion and its symbols, making it not only undesirable but also immoral to hold such symbols as sacred. In this manner the disintegration of old beliefs lose their power and the old religion is exterminated. Eventually the old culture is assimilated into the invading culture, but as a secondary, lower class structure, creating a convenient labor force to exploit. Domination of the lower class is not only a convenience, but it also takes on the vestiges of holy edict or manifest destiny. Domination begins with the appropriation of old symbols and customs, but they are redefined as antagonistic or subordinate to the new regime's purpose.

Creation myths often provide information surrounding the essential nature of human beings. Literal readings of Biblical text and the Judeo-Christian religion justify the subordination of women as part of a natural order, adhering to a strict interpretation of the scriptures as the indisputable word of God. Revisionist and feminist criticism of the Bible and the Judeo-Christian religion examine the inherent misogyny derived from a male-oriented point of view in canonical text written by men, supporting a superior being that is decidedly male, in an attempt to subordinate women and to keep the patriarchal structure intact. In the book of Genesis, "God created man in his own image," and he gave Adam dominion over all the creatures of the earth, but this privilege was not

extended to Eve (King James Version, Genesis, 1:26-27). The Medieval theologian Augustine asserted that Eve was created as a “help meet” to Adam, and as an extension of him rather than as his equal, she was not granted the same authorization (Lerner 141). The Apostle Paul claimed that woman was “the glory of man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.” The privileging of male over female roles is problematic, considering the female role in conception, gestation, and birth. St. Paul supplants the ancient view of the feminine creative principle with that of a male creator. He goes further in promoting male superiority in stating, “Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man” (I Corinthians, 7:4). According to the traditional view of creation, Eve was created from Adam’s rib, implying that women are not autonomous beings. The reason for female existence is not self-actualized, but rather they are extensions of male superiors, such as fathers, husbands, or their husband’s children. Women were created for man’s use, just as nature was created to be used as a resource by man.

Adam is given dominion over as well as responsibility for the creatures and vegetation in the Garden of Eden. Metaphorically, the garden represents man’s dominion over nature. Gadon believes that the separation of man from nature began with monotheistic religion, that the “ ‘truths’ sanctioned by religious and secular authorities, have come to be accepted as inalienable; a male god created the world. Humans have the right to dominate nature. Man has the right to dominate woman” (xiv-xv).

The perception that women are naturally weaker and more easily persuaded is evidenced in Genesis as the serpent convinces Eve to eat the forbidden fruit:

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, “Yea, hath God said, ‘Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?’”

And the woman said unto the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden.

But the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, “Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”

And the serpent said unto the woman, “Ye shall not surely die; For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, the your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis, 3:1-5

The ancient symbols of the tree, the serpent, and fruit are present, but they have been transformed and demonized. The fruit of the tree is “forbidden.” The serpent is an evil creature, persuading Eve to transgress. Did the most “subtil” of all beasts, the serpent, choose Eve rather Adam for deception because she was weaker? When questioned by God, Eve admitted that the serpent had “beguiled” her, and she had eaten the fruit (Genesis, 3:13). Therefore, if Eve is weaker and more susceptible to sin, then

she also is more inclined to beguile others into committing sin. Eve seems to be more at home in the garden, communing with the serpent, while Adam converses directly with God. Eve's province is the less significant, physical world of nature, and Adam's realm is closer to the metaphysical transcendence of God. Tertullian pronounced Eve, the prototype for all women, "the Devil's Gateway," and Augustine asserted that Eve's inferior status, not being created in God's image but merely in his "likeness," gave her a "greater propensity for sin" (Lerner 141). Hence, it is Eve who carries the burden of blame for the Fall of mankind. The underlying psychological message is that Eve represents all women, and therefore, all women are considered naturally lesser than, weaker than, and more evil than men. The concept that women are weaker than men and more prone to sinful behavior also implies that women exhibit an element of danger to men. Eve was able to convince Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, even though he knew it was a sin. So in one respect, Eve had a type of malevolent power which enabled her to entice Adam, who was more loved by God, more privileged, and morally stronger, to disregard God's command. If women possess the power to entice men into sin, then it is necessary to exert control over women:

Unto the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Genesis, 3:16

One method used to control women, a method which endures today, is submissive silencing. Women were commanded to practice submission with regard to their husband's authority so that "no woman [be] allowed to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent" (I Timothy, 2:11). The fact that women were not allowed to have the authority to teach men presents a contradiction. Women bear most of the responsibility for the raising of children, and lessons learned in early childhood lays the foundation for life as an adult. However, it is important to consider that male children were not considered men. The act of silencing has resulted in the destruction of the female voice in historical texts, "wiping out . . . [female] narrative and creative work from all historical records, has been one of the most grievous patriarchal sins, so deadening because women's culture has been rendered invisible and women know themselves only through the words of the male" (Gadon 274-5). The ideal concept of female passivity and acquiescence has not diminished much in 2000 years. Gerda Lerner noted that "the most serious obstacle" to women's intellectual growth over the last two millennia has been "the absence of Women's History," and exclusion of women's "cultural knowledge and viewpoint" in the "Western historical process" (12).

God also tells Adam that as part of his punishment, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman" (Genesis, 3:15). In so doing, God broadens the gap between one divine supreme being and subordinate human, but this also creates further division between and men and women so that they will no longer share simply a superior/inferior relationship, but henceforth they will be adversaries. The passage may be interpreted as

meaning that Adam will resent Eve's enticing him into sin, causing the Fall, which resulted in their expulsion from the garden. However, the adversarial relationship may work in both directions. Eve may resent Adam's higher status and his ruling over her. Eve might also have cause to resent Adam for not taking more responsibility for his own sinful behavior and placing the entire blame upon her. Perhaps here is evidence for provocation in the "battle between the sexes."

Contrary to Christian belief, Eve was not the first subversive woman in the Bible. According to the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, there is an earlier, lesser-known account of the creation in which God creates both man and woman out of the earth. This "first Eve," as called by El'azar of Worms, is named Lilith (*Encyclopedia of Religion* 554). Lilith and Adam have an altercation when Adam attempts to mount Lilith in order to have sex with her. When Lilith insists upon occupying the upper position, she argues that she and Adam are equals, citing their equal status in creation. Perhaps the motivation to create a woman from a part of man, his rib, is that she will not have the benefit of equal status as an argument, and therefore will be easier to control. Adam claims that "it was proper for him, as a man, to lie on top," but Lilith refuses to submit to him and flies away (*Encyclopedia of Religion* 554). The Lilith legend illustrates what happens when women transgress and refuse to submit to their husbands. They are not behaving according to the passivity expected of them. Lilith's fate for her insurrection is a gloomy one. In Isaiah 34, Lilith resurfaces in an uninhabited wasteland where:

the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone,

and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.

It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever . . .

But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it; and she shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness . . .

The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there . . . and no one will want her as mate.

Isaiah 34:9-15

Lilith is a prototype of the Predatory Woman. Her appearance suggests the woman-animal transformation, and she seduces and devours men. Lilith is transformed from a woman into a demonic bird-like creature, who is an unfit mate for human males, although it appears she could consort with the wild beasts, screech owl, and satyr. Gadon came across references to Lilith in Sumerian poetry dated from the early third millennium. Lilith is included in the Inanna creation legend, where the “symbol of new life is the *huluppu* tree, which emerges out of the ground into the light and grows toward the heavens . . . embodies the forces of . . . consciousness and unconsciousness, light and dark, male and female, the power of life and the power of death . . . Inanna rescues the

tree of life from the world flood and plants it in her garden” (Gadon 121-22). A serpent, a bird, and “the dark maid, Lilith,” who made her nest in the trunk, all reside in the tree. Representations of Lilith on bias relief dating ca. 2000 depict a “sensually modeled nude body contrasting awkwardly with powerful clawed feet” (Gadon 123). Gadon compares this image to the harpies and sirens found later in Greek mythology and art.

In later Babylonian texts, Lilith appears as an evil succubus who “seduces men in their sleep” or flies out of the desert, “seizing men at night and forcing them to copulate with her” (*Encyclopedia of Religion* 554). Apparently refusing to take her assigned, “natural” role as Adam’s subordinate resulted in lowering Lilith’s status, according to the patriarchal construct. She is marginalized. Lilith also becomes a threat to women during childbirth and a murderess of young children and infants. Gadon points out that Lilith, “like the Neolithic Bird Goddess,” who once aided women in labor and childbirth, was relegated to “a threatening female power [which] is a telling example of the reversal of the symbol’s meaning under patriarchy” (Gadon 125).

The Greeks also found female sexuality loaded with danger. In the poem, “The Works and Days,” Hesiod introduces a character named Pandora, the first woman who is destined, as are all women who follow, to be “a great sorrow unto men” (25:55). Pandora is described as “this beautiful evil thing,” created by Zeus as a punishment to man in exchange for Prometheus’ stolen gift of fire (25:56). First she is modeled from a mixture of earth and water, which is appropriate because both of these elements can extinguish fire. The immortals each make contributions to fashion Pandora into an irresistible package. Hephaistos gave her the “bewitching features of a young girl,” confirming the

desirability of youth over age (25:62). Athena taught Pandora “her skills” and “intricate weaving,” which alludes to cleverness as well as to handicraft, since Athene was associated with intelligence (25:63). However, it is Aphrodite who gives her “the cruelty of desire and longings” and Hermes, who “put in her the mind of a hussy, and a treacherous nature,” which make Pandora a volatile and dangerous woman (25:66-67). She is decorated with golden necklaces, “glorious tresses,” and spring flowers from the Graces, Persuasion, and the Seasons, and as a final touch, Hermes fills her heart with “lies, and wheedling words of falsehood, and a treacherous nature,” so that no man could resist “this sheer, impossible deception” (27:74-79). However, it is not Prometheus who is to be the recipient of the “beautiful evil.” He is too clever, manly, and heroic. Prometheus is also more paranoid, expecting retribution for stealing fire from the gods. It is Epimetheus, Prometheus’ younger, dimmer brother, who is overcome by Pandora’s bewitching charms and forgets his brother’s warning never to accept a gift from Zeus.

There are interesting similarities in the ways Pandora is manufactured, packaged, and given as a “gift” and the ways in which young girls and women are encouraged to present themselves in order to attract a man. Pandora is a doll, crafted with beguiling beauty and deadly charms, for underneath the attractive wrapping lies disaster. Female gender roles today are very much the same. Young girls are encouraged to role play with dolls. They dress them in extravagant attire, apply cosmetics, comb and style their hair, and project their fantasy lifestyle upon the doll. Once grown, women are encouraged to “bait the trap” and ornament themselves in the same manner Pandora was packaged. It is desirable to be witty and charming, young and “bewitching,” to wear seductive clothing,

and adopt an ornamental and passive manner of conduct. The prevalent attitude toward female sex roles dictates that women are not supposed to be the initiators, they are to be pursued. Underlying all the trimmings, however, women are suspected of malicious and evil intentions.

Before Pandora's creation, men had been living "free from all evils, free from laborious work, and free from all wearing sicknesses" (29:90). Pandora, from whom "originates the breed of female women," released evil into the world by opening "the lid of the great jar," otherwise known as Pandora's box (29:94). The contents of the box, containing "troubles by the thousands," is opened, filling the earth and seas "with evil things" and "sicknesses that come to men by day, while in the night . . . they haunt us, bringing sorrow to mortals" (30:100-104). Similar to Eve's sin in the Biblical Old Testament, woman is to blame for bringing evil in the world to plague *mankind*. What is the implication in myths between female gender and the unleashing of evil? There are many stories of women creating havoc or bringing about destruction; however, the evil is perpetrated on men. Since the stories originate from a male perspective, they present a warning that women with power threaten the male patriarchal structure.

The jar or box containing evil may be interpreted as containing "evil in general," but another interpretation is that of the box as a metaphor for the vagina. Folk tales, myths, biblical stories, epic poetry all employ language that is figurative and highly symbolic. For example, the audience hearing the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" in the eighteenth century would have understood that the "red riding hood" symbolized the virgin's hymen, and that "straying from the path" meant putting one's virginity at risk.

Hesiodic poetry also makes use of devices such as allegory by attributing human persona to the act of influence, Persuasion. With the more subtle and abstract use of metaphor, the connection between one object and another is inferred, and the audience associates the relationship. The evils of the world contained in a jar or vessel is a metaphoric representation of the vagina. Evil is correlated with the female sex organ. Pandora spread her legs and “unleashed all evils upon the world” (29:95). The context of the message is clear: good girls should keep their legs closed.

The patriarchal concept of universal wickedness in women does not spare little girls. If women are inherently evil, then the evidence is present from the start. The sexualization of prepubescent girls is considered a taboo, but the images of coquettish little girls, flirting and seducing men to their doom, are prevalent throughout Western art, literature, and film. The interrelation of female and the ability to cause devastation indicates that females cannot be innocent at any age.

Medieval theologians Augustine and Thomas Aquinas drew upon the writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who determined that women were “misbegotten males,” left unfinished by a botched reproductive process (Aristotle II, 3). If the semen were to cool, then the fetus would not complete development of a penis, resulting in a female child. This inaccuracy seems almost naive by today’s standard of medical knowledge, but Aristotle’s writings provided the model for today’s scientific principles. Today’s science is also based upon drawing conclusions from that which is observed (no doubt the errors made today will seem naive to observers in the future). However, the impact Aristotelian thought had on shaping attitudes and ideas about women in the field of medicine persist

today. Aristotle's claim gave a "scientific rationale" to the question of women's natural inferiority. In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas questioned the appropriateness of God, who is perfect, Divine, and male, creating woman, a creature obviously imperfect, weak, and reckless. Aquinas concluded that human females, just as females in the animal kingdom, were created for the sole purpose of procreation. He went on to say that men possess a "rational soul" and a superior capacity for knowledge, while women were compensated with "lower reason," which was just barely adequate to enable them to have sex with men (Aquinas XCII, 3a: 31). Aquinas did point out, however, that women need not feel ashamed of their lower status, "despise not yourselves, women, the Son of God was born of woman" (3a: 35). Hence, the notion of innate female moral inferiority combines with the concepts of innate female intellectual inferiority and biological determinism.

In order to instruct women in acceptable behavior and their rightful role in society, it became necessary to create an archetype and female role model in direct opposition to the Predatory Woman. The Sacrificial Woman is contented with the role of "help-meet" and is sublime in her modesty (Aquinas XCII, 3a:9). She is often described or depicted as glowing with internal light and beauty, which reflects spiritual purity. She defers to male superiority and fervently embraces the male-oriented doctrine. Unlike the Predatory Woman, the Sacrificial Woman seeks ecstasy from heavenly, spiritual sources rather than earthly, sensual ones. Physical suffering is the catalyst to her redemption, and she often endures illness, intense sorrow, physical torture, and death. Often the Sacrificial Woman is a mother figure, but she can also assume the role of a chaste virgin. Obviously

the most prominent Sacrificial Woman is the Virgin Mary, for she is able to claim both mother and virgin status.

Unlike the images of the Mother-Goddess, which depict the power of female sexuality and regeneration through the processes of nature and life on earth, the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception and virgin birth represent the transcendency of the spiritual principle as well as the downfall of female sexuality and the female body. Mary is not self-determined but rather she is the vessel of God's design, "[s]he is merely the agent through which he acted" (Gadon 192). The role of women is thus viewed as being an extension of man, just as Mary was the vessel of God. The female body is therefore equated with motherhood as symbol as well as function. With the ideology of Immaculate Conception, the power of intercourse, reproduction, and birth is seized from the Goddess and given to the male transcendent spirit. In 1854 Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Virgin Mary "the only human creature ever to have been preserved from the original taint of sin" (Gadon 204). As a result, human sexuality is transformed into something base, polluted, and vile, and the female body in particular was associated with sexuality and feared. Whereas Eve was identified with nature, a lower form of material existence that lured Adam's soul from his spiritual connection with God, the Virgin Mary was imbued with purity and delivered man from the clutches of bodily sin.

Since her body was sanctioned for the vessel of Christ, Mary was incapable of sin. Gadon points out that, unlike Eve, Mary did not have the choice to sin. She was predestined to be exempt from sin. "Her perpetual, improbable virginity became the key to a new uncorrupted, untainted spirituality through which all humanity would be

redeemed from the stain of sexuality. The symbol of this new religion was the *immaculate womb* of the Virgin that made redemption possible” (Gadon 192). In traditional Catholicism, the Virgin acts as the intermediary between earthly humans and the spiritual heavenly father. The practice of praying to the virgin to intercede on behalf of the human request is thought to possess special power. It is in this way that the Virgin Mary redeems man, but she also redeems woman, for although all women are thought to retain the stain of Eve’s original sin, so too do all women retain the grace of the Virgin’s redemption.

The Virgin Mary’s freedom from death is an accomplishment long sought- after in the Western tradition. Because sexuality is equated with sin, and death is the punishment for sin, the Virgin Mary’s purity freed her from the decay of death. Combined with her ascension into heaven before death, the Virgin’s ability to elude both the carnality of the body and the death of the body propelled her into the ideal model of human feminine according to the patriarchal canon. Of course, achieving these criteria of perfection in woman is impossible, but realizing of this lofty goal is not expected. Failure is inherent. It is something to which women can only aspire but can never fulfill.

The Virgin-Mother’s body was commissioned to bear the body of Jesus, God in human form, and her body became the symbol of ideal and sublime femininity. Women in traditional Western culture cannot be viewed as self-determined individuals because their biological role in human reproduction defines them. Their role is well delineated as the vessel of the fetus. The individuation of woman-as-separate is impossible. The current issue of abortion is an indication of the problems surrounding women as

individuals. A pregnant female may be viewed as a vessel containing potential life or as a separate individual. Once again, the distinct lines are blurred. Western perception has difficulty separating the woman from the fetus. Her traditional role is that of mother, and combined with her sexual role as the compliment to the individualized male binds woman to her physical biology.

Essentialist definitions of female gender roles originate from the emphasis on physical embodiment of women, female progenerative capabilities and biological determinism, and the view of female as compliment to the individualized male. Female gender roles were divided into two distinct categories, that of the mother, the Sacrificial Woman, or that of the whore, the Predatory Woman.

Female archetypes are prevalent in the film, *The Women* (1939), which was adapted from the play by Clare Boothe Luce. The film, like the play, features an all-female cast and even goes so far as to compare the main characters to animals in the opening credits. Mary Hanes, a perfect wife and mother, (played by Norma Shearer) is portrayed as a deer, and her daughter, Little Mary, is a miniature version of her mother, a fawn; Mary's mother is depicted as a wise, old owl; Mary's nemesis, Crystal Allen (Joan Crawford), is depicted as a ferocious leopard, and Mary's hypocritical friend, Sylvia Fowler (Rosalind Russell), represented as a lesser version of Crystal, is a cat. The depictions of women as animals connote that women are closer to animal nature than are men and that female personalities can be reduced into archetypes in essentialist terms.

The story revolves around Mary Hanes, her treacherous friends, and Crystal Allen, who steals Mary's husband. Although set in New York City, the competitive,

deceitful behavior of most of the characters imply that Mary is actually living in a jungle. The sound of women gossiping is compared to animal chatter, a fashion show presents monkeys wearing identical clothing to the models, throughout the film women tout the latest nail color, "Jungle Red," but it is the behavior of most of the main characters which reinforces the concept of competition. Hostility hidden under a thin veil of manners creates a contradiction in the female mode of discourse. The cautionary messages that what women say and what they do are often in opposition of one another and that women cannot trust other women are prominent themes in the film. Of course, animals in the wild do not behave in this fashion, but it is the perceived view of the animal kingdom, a social construction of reality, which would have one believe this is so.

Mary is sweet, innocent, and a perfect wife and mother. She epitomizes the value system of the white upper-middle class: motherhood, domesticity, family, and the proper role for a (white) woman in a proper (white) household. Mary believes she has a perfect marriage, but there is an intruder. Mary's husband Steven is having an affair with a perfume sales girl, Crystal Allen. Crystal is portrayed as a "home wrecker" and a threat to Mary's marriage, but she also presents a threat, on a larger scale, to the institution of marriage itself and to the wealthy upper-middle class way of life.

Mary has invited a few friends to lunch, one of whom already knows about Steven's involvement with Crystal. Sylvia Fowler can hardly contain herself as she spills the details to Edith, another guest at Mary's luncheon. The two women, who are supposedly close friends of Mary's, relish the details of her misfortune. "Isn't it just too awful?" Edith giggles, wondering how she'll be able to "sit at her table, eating her food,"

which reinforces the concepts of female deceit and hypocrisy. “It wouldn’t be so bad if he picked someone from his own class, but someone who works at a perfume counter!” The fact that Steven has chosen someone beneath his social class delights them further. Then as if to detract from the glee they share in their friend’s misfortune, each testifies, “I adore Mary. I worship her.” The contradiction between what the women are saying, “I worship Mary,” and their behavior, taking delight in the destruction of their friend’s marriage, further reinforces the idea that women are treacherous and not to be trusted.

Sylvia reveals that she received her information from a manicurist, Olga, and exhibits her manicured nails, “Isn’t it divine? Jungle Red!” The name of the nail lacquer, “Jungle Red,” becomes a significant code in the story. The red nails are reminiscent of talons or claws dripping with blood, and the “Jungle” alludes to the primal nature of women, who are more predisposed to savage bestial behavior. Later at the table, Edith suppresses a giggle when Sylvia recommends the gossiping manicurist to Mary.

While visiting the salon, Mary enters the manicurist’s station, and it soon becomes obvious that Olga has established her clientele through her ability to spread the most current gossip. Initially, Mary shows no interest, and even expresses distaste, until her husband’s name is mentioned in conjunction with that of Crystal Allen’s. Mary learns several things about the notorious Crystal: that she is a “home wrecker,” that she is “very ritzy,” that she can determine a man’s financial status at a glance with “eyes that run up and down a man like a searchlight,” and that she is a “terrible girl . . . terribly clever and terribly pretty.”

Crystal Allen is an example of the Predatory Woman. She is young, beautiful,

sensual, and dangerous. Crystal threatens the social construct of marriage and family, but she also threatens the boundaries of economic class. She is associated with feline qualities. Her walk and gestures are fluid, and she appears elegant and aloof. Her speech and diction are precise, and her voice is carefully modulated to imitate a purr. However, when interacting with her co-workers in the back room of the department store, Crystal's character, tone of voice, and appearance change. When out of public view, she struts, shoves, and snaps her chewing gum. She uses vernacular rather than proper diction, "Shut up, will 'ya. Get outta here!" Crystal also loses her ladylike demeanor, "So help me, I'm gonna slug you." The contrast between Crystal's private and public behavior indicates that she is a common, cheap tramp, disguised as a lady in order to ensnare a wealthy man, and whether he is married or not is of no consequence. Crystal will take whatever she wants.

When Steven telephones her, Crystal exhibits even more characteristics of a Predatory Woman. She purrs into the receiver, "Hello, Steven." When he tries to cancel their date, she uses several kinds of manipulative tactics, including guilt, "I'll save you a piece of the cake . . . with a candle on it;" exploitation, "I didn't want to tell you . . . I was afraid you might do something extravagant;" and veiled threats, "Oh, *I* won't be lonely, I promise I won't," until Steven recants and agrees to meet her. Crystal demonstrates self-confidence in her ability to catch a man, but she voices surprise and indignation when she complains to her co-worker: "Say, can you beat him? He almost stood me up for his wife!" Steven Hanes, the man over whom Crystal and Mary are competing, actually never makes an appearance on camera. He is a totemic image representing white upper-

middle class wealth, status, and power.

Mary decides to take her mother's advice, to "keep still," and wait for Steven to tire of his affair. The white upper-middle class values demand acquiescence and passivity from its women. A ladies dressing room provides the scene for Mary's confrontation with Crystal. Although the dressing room is supposed to be an intimate environment, in reality, saleswomen, seamstresses, models, and other customers (including Mary's friends) are spectators to the events taking place. A private environment is transformed into a public spectacle, much like a zoo. Mary enters Crystal's dressing room discretely while a small crowd gathers behind the closed door. Crystal is standing before a mirror, wearing a gold lame dress slit to her thigh. Mary offers a suggestion, "If you're dressing to please Steven, not that one. He doesn't like such obvious effects." Mary implies that Crystal is cheap and vulgar, a reflection of her taste in clothing. But Crystal is well versed in her craft. "Thanks for the tip," she replies, "but when anything I wear doesn't please Steven, I take it off." More than an implication, Crystal's statement is an explicit confrontation of what the two women represent. While Crystal is coarse, rude, and conniving, Mary is well-mannered, well bred, and sacrificing. Mary represents the home, marriage, and family equated with the proper role of white womanhood -- the Virgin Mary. Crystal Allen, on the other hand, is a reflection of Lilith. She represents female sexuality, lust, wantonness, and the baser instincts. She is a predator intruding upon the territory of the privileged upper class and using all the power of female sexuality to acquire financial gain and raise her own social status. "Look, what have you got to kick about?" Crystal reasons, "You've got everything that matters -- the name, the position, the money." By

contrast, Mary does not need to acquire financial wealth, status, and power. These qualities are her birthright Crystal poses a threat to the social order of class by birth just as she poses a threat to the sanctity of marriage and family. Mary, on the other hand, lacks a predatory nature. She is a “helpmate” to her husband, providing comfort and compassion, securing the home, and raising their child, assigned to her by the upper-middle class social code. Her adherence to the proscribed role of good wife and mother, however, is inadequate when her marriage is threatened by the blatant sexuality of lower social-classed Crystal.

It is only when she appropriates the role of a predator that Mary is able to win her husband back from the clutches of Crystal. Mary opens Pandora’s box to reveal her own sexuality. In the final scene, she throws on an evening gown and make-up, paints her nails “Jungle Red,” and storms into a nightclub. Mary’s tactics of sacrificing and “keeping still” proved ineffective when her secure life is threatened by a home wrecker. However, once Mary dipped her talons in the blood-red primal ooze of female sexuality, only then was she able to triumph, marching away with her prey, her husband Steven. Here again, Steven is seen in terms of a token or prize. His character is emblematic, more significant for *what* he symbolizes (money, social status, and power) rather than *who* he is (husband, father, doctor). Of course, the message of the film conveys that Mary strikes a victory for the white upper-middle class over the lower classes, that when in competition, the “best” woman always wins, and that the God-given birthright and social order will hold dominion over the bestial, primal instincts of nature.

The Wicked Stepmother, the Cartesian Cat,
and the Marquis de Sade:
Essential Female Evil in the Age of Enlightenment

As mentioned before, in order for inequality to function within society efficiently, it must do so within each system or institution that comprises the culture. During the Age of Enlightenment, the field of science was elevated to a new position of prominence. In effect, science became the new religion, reflecting a new systemic ideology. Rene Descartes established a restructuring of human perception of the self and the self's relation to the world. The Medieval conceptualization of existence observed outward, visible signs of the immanent, metaphysical world, and invested corporeal reality with spiritual significance, creating what Susan Bordo in *Flight to Objectivity* (1987) terms as "continuity," or interrelation between the physical and spiritual realms (Bordo 11). Cartesianism is characterized by detachment and objectivity, the emergence of Individualism, and the privileging of rational thought over sensual experience.

Within the Cartesian method there lies the concept of fragmentation and a belief in the objectivity of the subject. In other words, in order to "solve it best," or to master the object by understanding its parts, the subject must first assume neutrality and then dissect the object (Descartes *Method*, II: 18). One of the problems with this method is that it relies on the assumption that tearing something to pieces and studying the separate parts can the object be known. The holistic "beingness" of the thing no longer occurs in

an existence for its own sake, but rather it becomes the sum of its separate parts much like a machine. In order to serve its purpose, the Cartesian subject is preoccupied with order, rationalism, categorization, and objectivity, all from an assumed stance of neutrality. It is no accident that rationalism is conducted by what is known as the “detached” observer (II: 15). The rational subject is distanced from that which is observed. The subject is not connected to the object. From a neutral stance, the observer assumes no experiential, cultural, historical, or biased influences. The rational subject transcends nature in much the same way as the Judeo-Christian God. There is no organic, dialectic relationship between the knower and that which is to be known. Nature ceases its cohesive, holistic phenomena of processes and resembles mechanized clockwork, which can be controlled and repaired. Objectivity, not meaning, becomes the emphasis of human perception. Nature is no longer something of which man is a participant, but rather he becomes a detached observer.

Susan Bordo outlines the problems with Cartesian thought from a historic-psychoanalytic perspective. First, she says that there is a problem with the purification of the subject. The neutral stance of the subject must “purge” itself of “‘prejudice’ and reject the ‘merely probable’,” in order to “cleanse” itself of doubt (Bordo 16). Bordo claims that Descartes’ attempt to attain a detached, empirical stance is instead a psychological preoccupation with contamination. Descartes claims that he must “purge” his mind of ideas connected with experiential or sense perception and “cleanse” his mind of any assumption of ideas which might produce “probable doubt,” such as “cares,” “passions,” “previously held beliefs,” and “all opinions acquired from the senses,” which

can mislead or deceive the mind (*Meditations*, I). Descartes wants only those thoughts which are “clear and distinct” to inhabit his “rational soul” (*Meditations*, II). The claim that ideas of sense, experience, and emotion, those ideas which are connected with the physical world, are somehow contaminated, and those ideas which are rational and objective are pure, evidences the literal privileging of mind over matter which underscores Cartesian thought. Furthermore, the relation of “pure” and rational thought is associated with masculine qualities while polluted sense experience and emotion are associated with feminine attributes. The polarization of the mind/body split, combined with the associations they represent, and the designation of privileging one over the other, consequently result in the equations of male/female, rationalization/emotion, light/darkness, and pure/profane.

Another feature of Cartesian thought is the emphasis on Individualism. What Bordo terms as the “emergence of inwardness,” or the consciousness of the self, is directly related to individualism. Inward reflection is a distinction of modernist philosophy, which differs notably from medieval thought. Medieval philosophy considers a “frame of reference [which] involves a human mind that has access in its apprehension to reality itself,” or the outside world, while modernist philosophy involves the “human mind restricted in its direct apprehension to the confines of the human mind itself,” (Bordo 109). The focus of the medieval mind was its relation to the world as a physical reflection of the metaphysical world. The transcendent Supreme Being made its presence known through signs, and medieval philosophy searched for exegesis of such signs. It is during the modernist period that emphasis on the individual, as an inward-turning, self-

reflective, rational being, averts itself from the outside world as the principal realm of existence and establishes the inner mind as the elemental arena.

Along with changes in perspective concerning human existence and thought, the physical world, individualism and the emphasis on self-consciousness, attitudes toward women became even more solidified. In addition to the biblical support and philosophical support for subjugating women, there was now further reason to support subjugation. The belief that women were inferior to men physically and morally now had new affirmation that women were incapable of rational thought. In Aristotle's *De Generatione Animalium* the concept that females were "misbegotten males" became substantiated as scientific fact (II and IV). Aristotle's notion adhered, and in the seventeenth century women were compared to children with minds, which were not fully formed. As noted previously, women were perceived as being closer to nature. Descartes' new evidence corroborated that "very clearly . . . intelligent nature is distinct from corporeal nature," and women were "clearly" sided in the corporeal camp (*Method*, II: 19). According to the modernist framework of reality, the image of a woman with a "rational soul" was impossible; therefore, the rational woman was considered an anomaly. She must necessarily, by definition, be a perverted replication of the masculine "pure, rational soul" (*Meditations*, IV). The concept of the woman-nature-death association was perceived not only as dangerous but also connected to impurity and filth. The attempt to overcome and control nature masks the cultural obsession of controlling death. Reflecting the biblical tale of the Fall and the myth of Pandora's box (everything is right with the world, no sickness, no need for labor, no death), woman, with her natural propensity for disaster, spoils it for all.

In her work *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature*, Susan Griffin deals with the objectification and sexual enslavement of women and the inter-relationship between the church and the pornographer. "The obscene mind makes an alliance with the Judeo-Christian vision of the world. Both render death to the things of the material world," for they each share "the same sensibility" (Griffin 71). As evidence to support her argument, Griffin compares Christian doctrine with the writings of the ultimate libertine, Marquis de Sade. In what initially appears to be an unlikely pairing, one discovers that both are actually rooted in the same enterprise, as Griffin successfully demonstrates. Both the church father and the pornographer "reject knowledge of the physical world and his own materiality," and create a division between spiritual and carnal love, directed toward hatred of the female body (Griffin 24).

If Rene Descartes is considered the father of modern philosophy, then Sade is certainly its bastard. The philosophy of Marquis de Sade exemplifies the modernist ideology taken to its extreme. His unconventional views are revered by many, making him a hero, a rebel, and a free thinker. Sade is able to explore his desires internally. Perhaps separation from society is a requirement for examination of the self. It would be safe to assume, then, that the "free" individual and society are in conflict and in opposition to one another. Descartes and Sade share other similarities. Sade seems to have employed the Cartesian method of dissecting the act of sex and observing the various parts. Sade assumes a neutral stance of the detached observer, which is also central to Cartesian thought.

Sade's *Philosophie dans la boudoir* (1795) reveals such concepts as freedom of

the individual, “natural” dominance of the stronger over the weaker, and views on morality and Christianity as obstacles to freedom. Beaudelaire extolled the virtues of Sade’s defiance, “one must always come back to Sade, to the ‘Natural Man,’ in order to explain evil” (Paulhan 16).

Griffin points out that the nature of rebellion itself “ultimately imitates that which it rebels against” (Griffin 16). No doubt Sade’s frequent ranting about the church and Christianity are evidence enough that he was rebelling against religion. He referred to Christianity as “moral enslavement,” the primary impediment to individual freedom (Sade 298). According to Sade, in order to be free, the individual must cast off the “fetters of religious superstition,” which conceal the ulterior motives of personal gain, acquisition of riches, and ambition and power for the clergy (298). Echoing the Apostle Paul, who rejected the teaching of women, Sade posits:

Let the absurd dogmas, the appalling mysteries, the impossible morality of this disgusting religion be examined with attention . . . Do you honestly believe I would allow myself to be dominated by the opinion of a man I had just seen kneeling before the idiot priest of Jesus? No; certainly not! That eternally bad fellow will eternally adhere to the atrocities of the *ancien regime*; as of the moment he were able to submit to the stupidities of a religion as abject as the one we are mad enough to acknowledge, he is no longer competent to dictate laws or

transmit learning to me; I no longer see him as other than a slave to prejudice and superstition.

Philosophie dans la boudoir 299

It is interesting to note that Sade was educated in a strict Jesuit school, Louis le Grand College in Paris (Seaver and Wainhouse 74). Perhaps it was in his youth that he developed a distaste for the “slave to prejudice . . . the idiot priest of Jesus,” by whom Sade would refuse to be “dominated” nor would he allow the clergy to “transmit learning” to him. Sade is clearly rebelling against religion. However, the rebel is not “free” of that which he rebels against, for the two are inextricably bound together. He assumes that he has severed his past and his culture, and yet without religion, Sade’s philosophy, his reputation as the “Natural Man,” and his concept of freedom would be impotent. Mimetic of the transcendent, omnipotent Judeo-Christian God and the Cartesian neutral, detached subject, Sade dominates the *mise en scene* of his illusionary world.

Sade’s ideas about women are more difficult to extract from his works. Did he indeed want women to be “as free as men,” as Guillaume Apollinaire stated? Or was Sade taking his revenge on women through the characters in his works, just as he took his revenge upon society and the church? In *Philosophie dans la boudoir*, he states, “Women, having been endowed with considerably more violent penchants for carnal

pleasure than we [men] . . . able to give themselves over to [libertinism] wholeheartedly, absolutely free of all encumbering ties, of all false notions of modesty, absolutely restored to a state of Nature . . . guaranteeing them a similar freedom to enjoy all they deem worthy to satisfy them” (321). The female characters are titillated by torture, humiliation, incest, buggery, and pain, and they perform, and are performed upon, in a mechanized fashion.

In *Pornography and Silence* Griffin asserts that Western culture has constructed within itself a sexist environment, “[w]e have become so used to this way of thinking that we do not immediately recognize the contradiction here. It seems to us quite usual that a man would have to dominate an ‘object’ (woman), a being who exists only to please him, a being that is not a being” (39). The patriarchal construct of sexism has ingrained itself into Western culture’s psyche, that the fabricated “world of illusion” has been accepted as fact, and in studying examples of art and literature, and even science, the image of women “as docile and as objects” is repeated until the image is perceived as reality (39).

While religion struggles against sin and Sade struggles against religious control, each rejects an integral part of human existence, the physical body, and in their struggle, conflict, and fear, each “comes to imagine that he struggles with a woman. Onto her body he projects his fear and his desire” (Griffin 20). The fear and dread man feels for his own body, and his own mortality, is projected onto a woman’s body, “he pretends to himself that she *is* evil” (Griffin 19). For women, body hatred creates a double bind. Since women have been led to believe that by their very nature, they are submissive, and they have been also led to believe that they secretly enjoy punishment and are masochistic,

women have sometimes assumed that they have a natural predilection toward enduring and dispensing physical suffering. The archetype of the Bad Mother encapsulates these opposing ideas to the Cartesian “pure, rational soul” and the sacrificing, nurturing mother. She is an anomaly as a distortion of the Modernist rational mind and as a non-nurturing mother.

The antithesis to the idealized mother lurks uneasily in the Western-European patriarchal psyche. Her visage is seen in characters such as Medea, Lady MacBeth, Snow White’s wicked stepmother, Nurse Rachitt, and Mommie Dearest. Whereas the ideal mother is viewed as sympathetic, nurturing, supportive, and subordinate to male superiority, the character of the Bad Mother is controlling, dominating, and completely lacking compassion, warmth, or love. She is cruel, but there is a purpose to her cruelty. As if to compensate for her deficiency of nurture and emotion, the Bad Mother is granted unusual intelligence, and since she is disconnected from emotion, love, and the bonds of motherhood, she can afford to devote her energy to calculation and manipulation. Although she may not necessarily be a mother in the biological sense, she challenges male authority by manipulating her role as nurturer and withholding or negating those qualities sought in traditional mother figures. The Bad Mother is a pathological character based upon fear of the power that mothers hold. If male survival is contingent upon the mother to nurture, care for, and provide for him, then the Bad Mother is his worst nightmare realized. Without her, the child would die:

And if the little boy remains in early childhood sensually attached to the maternal flesh, when he grows older, becomes socialized, and takes not of his individual existence, this same flesh frightens him, he would ignore it and see in his mother only a moral personage. If he is anxious to believe her pure and chaste, it is less because of amorous jealousy than because of his refusal to see her as a body. To have been conceived and then born an infant is the curse that hangs over his destiny, the impurity that contaminates his being. And, too, it is the announcement of his death. The cult of germination has always been associated with the cult of the dead. They are women . . . who weave the destiny of mankind, but it is they, also, who cut the threads.

de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 147

The Bad Mother differs from all the other archetypes in one important aspect. She withholds love as a means of control. The notion of a non-loving mother is viewed as an anomaly in Western culture. As mentioned before, the Bad Mother is not necessarily a biological mother. Often she is a representation of the maternal figure. She is most likely a woman past child-bearing years, and she is quite often the object of desire, withholding

sex as an instrument of punishment or instilling guilt. Although she is physically beautiful, her youth has faded, and her consequential anger is directed at those who possess that which she has lost. In folklore, the wicked step-mother-queen in Snow White consults her mirror daily asking, “Who is the fairest of them all?” The catalyst for the Queen’s evil occurs the moment she loses her first place position to her stepdaughter.

The Queen’s vanity may be considered over-zealous, perhaps, when she demands that Snow White’s heart be brought to her in a golden casket as proof that her yeoman has carried out her orders. The fact that the evil Queen commands such an atrocity from her yeoman is a testament of her confidence in his loyalty. Her trust is misplaced, however, for the yeoman finds that he cannot carry out his Queen’s command. The excessive lengths of her vengeance give one cause to wonder what motivates a woman to such grisly extremes. Jealousy is perhaps the primary catalyst for the Bad Mother’s rage. The ingénue possesses all the qualities the Bad Mother has lost: youth, innocence, and beauty. Extreme acts of vengeance illustrate the perceived danger of the older woman in a culture that upholds youth and beauty as its most highly valued assets.

The element of danger is increased when one considers the Bad Mother possesses that which her younger adversary lacks most: experience. The Bad Mother character uses the tools at her disposal, such as a broader base of knowledge, an understanding of human psychology, the ability to manipulate, devise strategy, and wield power, as well as her ambition, self-confidence, and a strong sense of her own sexuality. Frequently the Bad Mother directs her destructive power toward young, innocent, virginal female characters, but her target may also include strong-willed, independent, young men. Her

most lethal function may be in the role of a lover.

The Bad Mother's appearance will often reveal stern features, twisted and hardened from years of bitterness (the Wicked Queen in *Snow White* and Medea come to mind). In other examples, she may appear vacuous and expressionless, indicating that she is unapproachable and there is no way to connect with her emotionally (examples include Nurse Rachitt in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* or Bette Davis' Regina in *Little Foxes*). Overall, the features which distinguish the Bad Mother from the other archetypal female characters are her ability to control and manipulate others and her insatiable thirst for ambition. The qualities of power, control, and advancement are viewed as strong characteristics in a male, but these qualities in women are seen as dangerous. The Bad Mother uses a male's desire for warmth and nurturing as her weapons, and this is one female who knows how to get whatever she wants.

The figure of the wicked stepmother is central to many folk tales, which grew in popularity during the late seventeenth century in France, Germany, and England. The prevalence of fairy tales in Europe coincides with the social transformation of the economy from agricultural to urban societies. Although the tales themselves have existed much longer as part of the oral tradition of Anglo-European folk-culture, they gained popularity in the forms most currently recognized due to the invention of printing and the rise in literacy. Many folk tales have been sanitized for modern consumption, and in spite of the deviance from the earlier recorded forms, the main elements, such as story patterns, stock characters, repetition, rhymes, and mnemonic devices, remain, keeping the tales intact and recognizable over time.

Charles Perrault introduced the first printed version of Mother Goose, *Contes de ma mere l'oye*, in 1697. Perrault gleaned most of his material from the oral folk tales of the French peasantry, but he revised the tales to appeal to a more sophisticated and fashionable Parisian audience. Perhaps it is no coincidence that tales of this sort grew in popularity during the development and rise of the bourgeoisie. It is during the development of villages and towns into cities, the transformation of the feudal system into that of independent townships, and the development of capitalism, which sees the rise of the middle-class economic structure. In the earliest forms of Western-European folk tales, the wicked stepmother existed as a reflection of the meager living conditions that many were forced to endure during times of food shortage. For example, due to a high mortality rate among females who suffered difficulties with labor and childbirth, sickness, malnutrition, and inadequate hygiene, it was not uncommon for men to remarry younger women. "In Crulai, Normandy, one in five husbands lost his wife and then remarried. Stepmothers proliferated everywhere -- far more so than stepfathers, as the remarriage rate among widows was one in ten" (Darnton 270). The average marriage lasted fifteen years, "terminated by death, not divorce" (Darnton 271). The men would then father new families with their new wives, which left the children from his previous marriage at a disadvantage. The step-mother would "naturally" favor her own offspring for survival, leaving the step-children to suffer neglect or worse. Laws forbidding parents to sleep with children less than one year old indicate the prevalence of infanticide smothering, "a rather common accident" (Darnton 29). Many children were turned out of their homes, forced to beg, sold into servitude, or led into the forest and abandoned when

food became scarce and the family had grown too large. Hence, the tales such as “Hansel and Grethel,” “Snow White,” and “Cinderella” had roots in actual practices adopted more out of desperation rather than cruelty.

The peasant versions of folk tales have a more ominous tone than their modern counterparts. In an earlier version of the Cinderella cycle (Aarne and Thompson, tale type 510B), Cinderella indentures herself as a servant to escape her wicked father’s sexual advances. In “Hansel and Grethel” (tale type 327), the hero tricks the witch into cutting the throats of her own children. The girl in “Little Red Riding Hood” (tale type 123) drinks a bottle of her dead grandmother’s blood and eats her sliced flesh thinking they are wine and meat. These stories reflect a social construction and human perspective of life that really was as Hobbes described, “nasty, brutish, and short” (I: 13, 186).

Perrault’s audience’s lifestyle differed from the squalor and the miserable existence the peasantry had to endure. An illustration of *Contes de ma mere l’oye* depicts an old servant woman surrounded by three well-dressed children listening as she tells stories by the hearth. The class distinction between the story-teller and her audience reflects the passing of the peasantry of the Old Regime to modern bourgeoisie. The old gives way to the new. The tales in Perrault’s edition maintained much of the same story patterns and stock characters as the older tales, but in his updated versions, he imbued the stories with a sense of humor and a sense of justice. The central characters in the stories of the *ancien regime* were innocents who faced foes arbitrarily, much like the consequences faced by the peasant population. In other words, they did not deserve the hardships they endured. Perrault’s audience, however, relished a true villain who

deserved just punishment. The character Parisians admired most of all was the clever, “Cartesian” trickster who defeated his or her foes by utilizing clever ruse, prank, or theft. Not only does the trickster escape the ogre, giant, or devil, he uses his wits and gift for chicanery to humiliate his enemy. The central theme in such tales pits the clever lad or maid against an oafish, stupid enemy, with humorous results. The French have very little patience with ignorance and stupidity, for they “epitomize the sin of simplicity, a deadly sin, because naiveté in a world of confidence men is an invitation to disaster” (Darnton 56).

The lighthearted trickster works within the system, using it to her or his benefit, making use of opportunities as they are presented to improve her or his status. The French tales differ from the German versions, “which [are] full of piety and nearly empty of tricks” (Darnton 60). The French tales “celebrate the trickster” as a champion representing a social perspective with which the common people could identify or a way to survive in the world. The practical nature of the trickster’s methods suggests that “tricksterism will work quite well as a way of life -- or as well as anything in a cruel and capricious world” (Darnton 61).

[I]t is a distinct cultural style; and it conveys a particular view of the world -- a sense that life is hard, that you had better not have any illusions about selflessness in your fellow men, that clear-headedness and quick wit are necessary to protect what little you can extract...and that moral nicety will get you nowhere. It still

speaks today in colloquial exchanges like: *Comment vas-tu?* (How are you?) *Je me defends.* (I defend myself.)

The Great Cat Massacre

Darnton 59-62

Perhaps the most beloved trickster in French folklore is “Puss ‘n Boots” (tale type 545). When a poor miller dies, he is survived by three sons: to the eldest, he leaves the mill, to the second son, he leaves an ass, and to the third son, he leaves only a cat. Inheritance customs in France favored the eldest sons, often leaving younger sons a life of poverty (Darnton 29). At first, the youngest miller’s son does not realize his luck, but soon, through a series of tricks, this crafty feline exploits the greedy, lazy, stupid humans and secures a better position for herself and her master. “Puss ‘n Boots” demonstrates that one can rise above unfortunate circumstances if one is clever and takes advantage of opportunities when they present themselves.

Cats are associated with the feminine gender in many cultures. In seventeenth-century France, cats were most related to witchcraft. Witches were believed to transform themselves into cats in order to cast spells on their victims (Thomas 446). Cats could suck the life out of infants’ mouths, or they could understand gossip and repeat it outside the home (Thomas 439). Cats were burned at stakes, enclosed alive in walls, used as ingredients in medicine, maimed to prevent harm, and tortured in village rituals (Darnton 94). Cats also are associated with sexuality. In French and English, the word “pussy” or

la chatte refers to the vagina, and the petting cats was believed to enhance a man's success in seducing women (Thomas 438). Cats have long been associated with fertility. "Girls were commonly said to be 'in love like a cat'; or if they became pregnant, they had 'let the cat go to the cheese' " (Darnton 95). As a result the Cartesian cat in "Puss 'n Boots" symbolized more than an opportunistic trickster, she represents a woman who can turn the tables on the patriarchal system in order to get whatever it is that she desires.

The battle between the sexes is a predominate theme in the novel, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, by Choderlos de Laclos (1782). The novel was adapted to film in 1988, directed by Stephen Frears, starring Glenn Close as the Marquise de Merteuil, a woman seeking revenge against a lover who discourteously deserted her. She hatches an elaborate plot with the Viscount de Valmont, played by John Malkovich, promising that it involves, "Love and revenge. Two of your favorites." The Marquise urges Valmont to seduce and sexually instruct the virginal, intended bride of her ex-lover. Initially, Valmont refuses the Merteuil's offer, based upon the ease of the seduction. "She's been in a convent, she's bound to be curious. I have my reputation to think of."

Valmont asks her, "I thought betrayal was your favorite virtue?"

"Oh no, no," Merteuil protests in true Sadistic fashion. "Cruelty. I always think that cruelty has a nobler ring to it."

Later she claims, "I have always known I was meant to dominate your sex and avenge my own."

The Marquise de Merteuil embodies the vision of Sade's woman, "absolutely restored to a state of Nature" (Sade 298). She is unencumbered by "false notions of modesty," and unafraid to exert her dominance over others (Sade 299). The Marquise de Merteuil is beautiful, independently wealthy, intelligent, and deceitful, and these qualities provide her with a certain amount of security. However, she is aging, and of this she is acutely aware. She has not always occupied her current social status, and she has had to work for the position and respect she feels she has earned. She believes that she has been able to sever herself from the confines of human empathy, love, and sentiment, replacing them with cold, objective detachment, thereby enabling her to propel herself to her current social status. In the following scene, Merteuil acts as confidante, teacher, lover, and mother, relating her secrets and initiating Valmont into her way of life:

"I've often wondered how you managed to invent yourself?" Valmont asks.

"I had no choice, did I?" she muses. "I'm a woman. Women are obliged to be more skillful than men."

Merteuil insinuates that she has had to employ tactics which subvert the patriarchal system in order to gain power. Furthermore, she enlightens Valmont as to the precarious nature of the position women hold in society. Female sexuality makes women easy targets. "You can ruin our reputations and our lives with a few well chosen words," she tells Valmont.

Merteuil reveals the tools of her success, "Of course I had to invent, not only

myself, but ways of escape no one has ever thought of before.” By employing methods of escape and “inventing” the self, presenting not her true self, but convincing others to believe a fabrication of the self, Merteuil places herself in the company of tricksters and other masters of deceit such as Puss ‘n Boots. Merteuil then relates the process by which she came to “create” herself:

When I came out into society, I was fifteen. I already knew the role I was condemned to, namely to keep quiet and do what I was told, which gave me the perfect opportunity to listen and observe. Not to what people told me . . . but to whatever it was they were trying to hide. I practiced detachment. I learned how to look cheerful, while under the table, I stuck a fork into the back of my hand. I became a virtuoso of deceit.

Merteuil resembles a trickster character in other ways. When giving advice to an ingénue, she says, “Our sex has few enough advantages. You may as well take advantage of those you do have,” which confirms the opportunistic nature of the manipulation tactics which she employs. Her features often mask her true emotions. In one scene she has been summoned, pretending to assist her friend, Madame de Volanges, when in reality, Merteuil’s presence can only assist Valmont in carrying out their deception. Merteuil descends from a carriage nearly gloating, but when Mme. Volanges rushes to her, Merteuil opens her arms with a look of solace on her face. Her ability to mask her true intentions indicates that Merteuil is accomplished at the art of deceit.

Merteuil's marriage provided her both wealth and access to ascend the social scale, however, now that she is widowed and unfettered, she refuses to place herself in a position where she can be controlled by a man. Merteuil enjoys the sexual company of men, but only on her terms. She and Valmont strike a bargain, and Merteuil promises him her sexual favors if Valmont can manage to seduce a woman of high morals, Mme. de Tourvel, portrayed by Michelle Pfeiffer. Merteuil seems to delight in manipulating Valmont, wriggling out of honoring her part of the bargain by placing more and more conditions on the agreement. By maneuvering him thus, Merteuil is able to continue dominating him. When Valmont becomes angry and pressures her to honor their wager, she quite vehemently turns on him. "One of the reasons I never remarried, despite a quite bewildering range of offers," she tells Valmont, "was the determination never again to be ordered around. I therefore ask you to adopt a less marital tone of voice." Merteuil does not intend to allow another man to control her.

Valmont succeeds in seducing Mme. de Tourvel, but makes the mistake of falling in love with her. Merteuil further manipulates Valmont by telling a story of a young man who had fallen in love with a woman who was "completely inappropriate" and had thus become a laughing stock to his acquaintances. He was able to rectify his reputation by immediately breaking off his relationship by repeated use of the phrase, "It's beyond my control," no matter how much the lover protested. Merteuil insinuates that Valmont will also lose his reputation if he continues his relationship with Mme. de Tourvel, but in telling him the story, she instructs him on how she wishes him to proceed. Valmont follows her advice, realizing that the phrase, "It's beyond my control," is quite correct,

for it is Merteuil who is in control.

After he has done her bidding, Valmont returns to Merteuil's side, fully expecting payment. "Shall we go up?" he asks as he tosses his hat on the sofa and removes his waistcoat. Merteuil withdraws her promise, refusing to sleep with Valmont, which further enrages him. "We made an arrangement, and I really don't think that I can allow myself to be taken advantage of for a moment longer," he shouts.

Merteuil remains calm, unmoved, and even threatening, "Remember, I'm better at this than you," reminding Valmont that she is more practiced and experienced in the art of manipulation.

"Perhaps," Valmont replies, "but it always the best swimmers who drown. Now, 'yes' or 'no.' It is up to you, of course. I will merely confine myself to remarking that a 'no' will be regarded as a declaration of war." Merteuil, eyes beaming, smiling, radiant, and triumphant, remains immovable. She takes great pleasure in the confrontation with her pupil:

"A single word is all that is required," Valmont insists.

"All right," Merteuil responds quietly. "War."

The Marquise de Merteuil epitomizes the Bad Mother archetype. She is cruel, cunning, and self-indulgent. Moreover, she is adversarial and competitive, making her dangerous. Merteuil's attempt to detach herself from emotion, break with her past, and "reinvent" herself, likens her to the Cartesian "cold observer." Although she invites

Valmont to participate in her deception and initiates him into her way of life, Merteuil ultimately destroys him. Reminiscent of the Wicked Step-mother, Merteuil is jealous and seeks revenge on young, female characters as well as male, and her employment of deception and manipulation suggests the trickster character, one who must survive by the use of her or his wits. The Marquise de Merteuil is very much a product of her culture.

“Flowers of Poison” and the “Household Nun”:

The Dangers of Female Sexuality in the Industrial Age

As the modern age gave way to the industrial age, another shift occurred in Western culture. In Europe and the United States, factories, commerce, and cities grew as the agrarian way of life and society dwindled. Individual freedom became synonymous with amassing wealth, fueled by the triumphs of industrialism. As Jules Michelet in “Woman” phrased it, “[m]an is on a train of ideas, inventions, and discoveries, so rapid that the sparks dart from the burning rail” (Dijkstra, *Idols* 13). Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory substantiated the notion that Western-European man was the highest and finest creature on the hierarchical evolutionary scale, just as was Adam in the Garden of Eden, only Darwin’s theory lent itself to scientific validation. The normative state in the nineteenth century definition of evolved man referred explicitly in racist terms to the white race as superior. The question arises of the role women were to occupy in the new industrial age.

In his book, *Idols of Perversity* (1986), Bram Dijkstra says that it was during the nineteenth century that “the establishment of fundamentally new, massively institutionalized, ritual-symbolic perception of the role of woman in society” would become “a principal source of the pervasive antifeminine mood . . . by logical extension, the source of sexist mythology,” which persists in society today (6). While white men’s roles involved braving the “destructive influence of the business world,” acquiring wealth and position in the daily battle of “survival of the fittest,” white women were to offer men

the safe, peaceful haven and comfort men required for carrying on the daily fray (20). In fact, Dijkstra says, women were appointed the “safekeepers of men’s souls,” their duty as dictated by nature (20). In other words, as white upper-middle class men’s roles expanded, providing them more freedom, more social and financial mobility, more opportunities, white women’s roles constricted, providing them less.

Viewed as a submissive “angel in the house” or “household nun,” white women were placed upon pedestals of an impossibly high moral standard, and each man had his own personal Eden within the confines of his home. Cloistered away and kept uncorrupted by the outside world, white upper-middle class women were thought to be closer to children in their intellects and in their innocence. However, underneath that child-like innocence lurked the inherent “beautiful evil,” for after all, are not all women daughters of Eve?

The 1944 film, *Life with Father*, was based on an autobiographical account of Clarence Day, Jr., and depicts the typical Victorian household complete with an authoritarian father, played by William Powell, and a virtuous mother, Irenne Dunne. The characters of Vinnie and Clarence Day illustrate the polarized nature of gender assignment of the Victorian culture, but they also represent the privilege of the upper-middle class white family. Other films of this ilk, which portrayed the Victorian family along with the Victorian value system, were *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), *Cheaper by the Dozen* (1950), and *Shine on Harvest Moon* (1944). The popularity of films of this type in the 1940’s and 50’s reinforced the “desirability” of class and race as well as expected gender roles to an American public just after World War II. Such films depicted a

prepackaged, idealized version of Anglo-American life. *Life with Father* provides an example of male and female sex roles and promotes the white upper-middle class enterprise to the public. White women do not have the same access to power as do white men. “The archetypal role of white women has been to foster individualism in white men while denying it to themselves” (Dyer 30).

When Mrs. Day discovers that her husband, Clare, has not been baptized, she makes it her moral and sacred duty to see to it that he “gets into heaven” with the rest of the family. In the white upper-middle class Victorian household, it is the wife’s obligation to secure the moral and spiritual nourishment of the family, but most importantly that of her husband, for he is exposed to the corruption of the outside world more than the other members of the household. It is the husband’s obligation to provide physical sustenance for the family, food, clothing, and shelter, but he is also responsible for instructing and ruling his wife, who is ignorant to rationality and the pragmatism of the outside world.

In one scene, Clare’s disciplinary and parental tone is unmistakable as he questions his wife, Vinnie, about the household accounts:

Clare: Vinnie, what happened to that six dollars I gave you?

Vinnie: What six dollars?

Clare: I gave you six dollars for a new coffee pot. Now I find that you apparently got one . . . and charged it. Here is their bill for five dollars. (thrusts the bill at her).

Vinnie: (looks worriedly at the bill, then smiles) So you owe me a dollar, and you can hand it right over. (extends hand).

Clare: I'll do nothing of the kind! What did you do with that six dollars?

Vinnie: Why Clare, I can't tell you now. Why didn't you ask me at the time?

Clare: (exasperated, throws up hands and sighs) Oh, I give up.

Vinnie: Wait a minute. I spent four-and-a-half for that new umbrella.

Clare: Now we're getting somewhere . . . (writing) one umbrella . . .

Vinnie: And that must've been the week that I paid Mrs. Tolbin for two extra days' washing. That makes two dollars more . . . that makes six- fifty. That's another fifty cents you owe me. (smiling happily, extends hand)

Clare: I don't owe you anything. What you owe me is an explanation of where my money's gone!

Clarence Day attempts to keep his home under his firm control much as he does his finances (he is a stockbroker by profession). He does not consider his home or his marriage a partnership. They are distinctly his property, as demonstrated in his last comments, "*I don't owe you anything . . . you owe me an explanation of where my money's gone.*" Vinnie's inability to comprehend financial matters reflects the prevailing attitude that white women were less intelligent than their white male counterparts.

The measurement and comparison of biological difference was popular in the mid- to late nineteenth century, which further promoted and legitimized the Western-Anglo enterprise of white male superiority. Dijkstra cites that in 1864 noted craniologist

Carl Vogt provided “irrefutable scientific evidence” that “the female skull is smaller” and the brain mass is less than that of the male, resembling “that of the infant, and in a still greater degree that of the lower races; and with this is connected the remarkable circumstance that the difference between the sexes, as regards the cranial cavity, increases with the development of the race, so that the male European excels much more than the female” (*Idols* 81). Richard Dyer notes that from Linnaeus’ classification of species, “to make his racial distinctions . . . flowed the mania for measurable biological distinctions in subsequent racial thought, from phrenology, craniology, and anthropometry to genetics” included white males as the norm, but they were “not in need of investigation” (22). As Dijkstra observes, “scientists decided that woman’s evolution had not progressed beyond the condition of childhood” (*Idols* 169).

Vinnie’s apparent inability to grasp financial matters stands in contrast to her belief in spiritual matters. Clare treats Vinnie like a child, and she responds like one, but she is able to confound and perplex him as she subverts the rationale behind his bookkeeping and she turns the tide in her favor.

During a typical “father and son chat,” Mr. Day enlightens his son, Clarence, Jr. (played by James Lydon), on the subject of women:

Clare: There are things about women I think you ought to know. Yes, I think it’s better for you to hear this from me than if you learn it for yourself. Clarence, women aren’t the angels that you think they are . . . We men have to run this world. It’s not an easy job. It takes work, and it takes thinking. A man has to

reason things out.

Now you take a woman. A woman thinks . . . no, I'm wrong right there. A woman doesn't think at all. She gets 'stirred up,' and she gets stirred up over the most confounded things. They get stirred up and then they try to get you stirred up, too. But don't you let them do it, Clarence. Don't you let them.

Now if you can keep reason and logic in the argument, well a man can hold his own, of course. But if they can switch you, pretty soon the argument's about whether you love them or not.

Clarence, Jr.: I see what you mean so far, Father. If you don't watch yourself, love can make you do a lot of things you don't want to do.

Clare: Exactly.

Clarence, Jr.: But if you do watch out, and know just how to handle women . . .

Clare: Then you'll do all right. All a man has to do is be firm. You know how sometimes I have to be firm with your mother.

Clarence, Jr.: Yes, but Father, what can you do when they cry?

Clare: (perplexed) Hmm . . .well, er, . . . That's quite a question. You just have to make them understand that what you're doing is for their own good. Now,

Clarence, you know all there is to know about women.

Clarence, Jr.: But Father, I thought you were going to tell me about . . .

Clare: About what?

Clarence: About *women* . . .

Clare: Clarence, there are some things gentlemen don't discuss. I told you all you

need to know. The thing for you to remember is to be firm.

Mr. Day makes it clear to his son that where women are concerned, men are in control. To the white upper-middle class mind set, men provided the necessary stability and rationality which women lacked. Just as a parent is responsible for children, men were responsible for their wives. Women were considered too childlike to be responsible for themselves. Mr. Day reveals his discomfort with emotional matters, “women get ‘stirred up,’” and his hesitation and confusion over what to do when women cry, indicate the distinct boundaries between the gender specific arenas of reason and emotion. Mr. Day’s answer to his son to rationalize that “what you’re doing is for their own good” and his instructions to “be firm,” further supports the notion that men played a parental role in the marriage relationship. Mr. Day also expresses discomfort with sexual matters as he informs his son that “gentlemen don’t discuss” sexuality. The Victorians considered sexuality too delicate a subject for refined individuals to discuss, for sexual intercourse was to be held in reserve for procreative purposes, but sexual desire implied a loss of control, and physicality of the human body.

If all women possessed a penchant for evil, which was transmitted through their sexuality, then a vehicle for controlling their sexuality was necessary. A woman who was powerful threatened the ascendancy of the evolutionary male and the entire patriarchal culture. According to the formula of polarized opposition, if female sexuality expresses itself through vitality, life, and the physical world, therefore the remedy for female sexuality must be sickness, death, and the metaphysical world. In the nineteenth century,

white women were often portrayed as docile, frail, ill, or dead in art and literature. Portraying them in such ways helped to promote images of dead or dying white women as idealized in the “embodiment of whiteness” (Dyer 23). The whiteness of the female body indicated that the white spirit could “both master and transcend the white body, while the non-white soul was prey to the promptings and fallibilities of the body” (23). Whiteness indicated superiority in the containment of a spiritual “comprehension,” which other (non-white) bodies lacked. The image of a sick and dying woman became synonymous with idealized beauty and femininity, so much so that frailty became a sign of status. Dijkstra quotes Abba Goold Woolson in her observations of this phenomena which was in fashion in 1873 when she wrote *Woman in America*:

The familiar heroines of our books, particularly if described by masculine pens, are petite and fragile, with lily fingers and taper waists; and they are supposed to subsist on air and moonlight. Longfellow, Tennyson, and the whole tuneful throng immortalize the maidens of their verse as slender and wand-like, with a step so light that the flowers scarcely nod beneath it. A sweet-tempered dyspeptic, a little too spiritual for this world and a little too material for the next, and who, therefore, seems always hovering between the two, is the accepted type of female loveliness.

136

The connection of women with death was so irresistible, in fact, that invalidism

and death became a means by which white women were redeemed and purified. The representation of the frail, white, female body indicated the spiritual energy or “comprehension” to transcend the vulgarities of mortality (Dyer 23). In other words, illness was considered an outward sign of internal virtue. The cult of the “consumptive invalid” was an effective means for controlling the fearful energy of female passion.

The gender role for white women dictated that they remain weak, helpless, and submissive, which was viewed as “natural” as systematically validated by traditional ideology, “scientific” theory, and cultural standards. A “healthy woman was therefore regarded with suspicion,” since the purifying effects of illness were absent (Dijkstra, *Idols* 23). Whereas strength and power in white men were viewed as valuable qualities, the opposite was true for white women. Female power was considered to have an undermining effect on the evolutionary enterprise, and as a result, “toward the final years of the century, feminists had become quite vociferous and daring, ideologically charged counter images of women ill, dying, or already safely dead, proliferated” (Dijkstra 31).

The very survival of the patriarchal structure depended upon women being noble, subservient, and self-effacing so that men could strive forward. Dijkstra points out that the highest form of subservience came to be regarded, in its ultimate form of self-sacrifice, as death. The recipient for whom the “sublime consumptive” was wasting away, of course, was her man (Dijkstra 131). A male who fit the requirements of a pillar of virtue, should rise above such carnal temptations, and preferably the sublime consumptive should die as a result of his lack of attention of affection for her. Her death, then, could have a beneficial effect of purification of her sinful lust.

One of the most famous consumptive heroines of the nineteenth century was Alexander Dumas' character Marguerite Gautier in *La Dame aux Camelias* (1856). *Camille* gained such popularity that it was also produced as a play. Then in 1934, it found its way onto the cinema screen with Greta Garbo playing the ill-fated courtesan (not for the first time, however; the story was also put to film in 1915, 1917, and 1921). The casting of Garbo, her pale, yet luminescent complexion, limpid eyes, languid voice, and thin, waif-like figure, illustrates the persistence of the image of fragile white beauty into the twentieth century.

The story of Marguerite Gautier traces the rise of a poor girl living in the provinces of France to her gaining access in Parisian society as a courtesan. In the opening scene, Marguerite and her companion, Prudence (Laura Hope Crews), buy camellias on their way to the opera. Marguerite caresses the delicate flowers against her face, her eyes rolling back in their sockets in ecstasy, she purrs, "I shall have twice as many tomorrow." Prudence chastises Marguerite, warning her that she is too extravagant and deeply in debt. Due to Prudence's manipulations, Marguerite "accidentally" meets the wealthy Baron de Varville (Henry Daniell). "It's high time you settle something about your future," Prudence instructs. "You won't be young forever, you know." Prudence's admonition reminds Marguerite that she must be pragmatic. The theme of pragmatism recurs throughout the story, and is linked to Marguerite's physicality. The association of white women with flowers symbolizes their connection with nature, and these flowers in particular, camellias, are noted for their exquisite delicacy and perfect, creamy petals. However, camellias are not known for their durability, an indication that

Marguerite will not be blooming for long.

Through a typical case of mistaken identity, popularized in many nineteenth century novels, Marguerite flirts with Armand Duval (Robert Taylor), thinking he is the Baron. Mistaken identity provides an ironic twist in the plot to indicate that fate has brought the couple together. However, once she discovers the error, Marguerite sends Armand to purchase *marron glacees*, and while he is absent, she swiftly reels in the Baron and departs with him, leaving Armand alone with his package of candy. Marguerite's adept maneuvering of the situation as she exchanges one suitor, who is "unsuitable," for another of higher status, demonstrates her skill of survival in a world where she must fend for herself. The fact that she has made it this far in society speaks highly of her survival skills, but her skills do not rescue Marguerite from committing a dangerous error. She is discarding the man that fate has sent her. The two men, Armand and the Baron de Varville, may be analyzed in terms of what they represent in their relationship to Marguerite. On one hand, the Baron personifies the physical aspect of Marguerite's life. Their relationship is based upon pragmatism and opportunity: her illness, her social position, her need for money, his social position, his money, and his need for an attractive partner. Furthermore, their sexual relationship is a physical one, which also emphasizes Marguerite's corporeal nature. On the other hand, Armand represents the spiritual aspect of Marguerite's life. Their relationship is driven by fate and spiritual love. Armand and Marguerite share an inner connection which extends beyond physicality. Through her relationship with Armand, Marguerite is able to transcend her corporeal nature.

Unlike the women of high social position and status, courtesans were “tarnished.” They could not be considered for marriage. They did not have the protection of family name, position, or a dowry. Rather, courtesans represented the rise of the bourgeois class. They were accepted in some, but not all, social circles, and they had the mobility and freedom to move about in social situations that “proper” women did not. Susan Griffin states that courtesans were the equivalent to nineteenth-century France what “super models” are today. They set the tone for the latest fashion, entertained the most prominent politicians and celebrities, and knew the latest gossip. At premiers and social events, such as the opera, the theater, the cafes, or the races, all eyes were upon them to see what they were wearing, with whom they were consorting, and with whom they were sleeping. Courtesans could place bets at the gambling tables, dance with princes, and have sexual liaisons with kings, but they were prohibited from associating with “ladies.” Ladies of high social rank were selected for marriage according to their position. Courtesans were selected based upon their abilities to entertain. In spite of the rigidly stratified social structure, courtesans were permitted mobility that their married, “proper” counterparts could never attain. However, unlike the married aristocratic woman, whose position was secured the moment she wed, the popularity of a courtesan was fleeting, and her stability in maintaining her social status was in constant flux. In order to remain successful, a courtesan had to maneuver her way through the changing fashions of Paris and the changing fancies of her benefactors. As always, the courtesan’s position in society was an impermanent one, and she had a limited amount of time to secure her future.

Marguerite's financier-lover, the Baron de Varville, is her better. He has wealth, power, and position, but Marguerite is a symbol of status for him, since she is charming, beautiful, sought-after, and at the apex of the Parisian social scene. She is a valuable ornament, displayed to the world to show his success. However, the symbiotic relationship of convenience is disrupted when Marguerite and Armand meet once again while the Baron is away. She invites Armand to her birthday party. As the dancers reel at a dizzying pace, Prudence exclaims that Marguerite is "too lively." Suddenly Marguerite steps back, and holding her handkerchief to her lips, she coughs. This is the first indication of trouble to the audience that all is not well.

Tuberculosis was a disease often associated with excessive living. Marguerite's excesses, that she is "too extravagant, too beautiful, too lively," are indications that she is predisposed toward illness. She has transgressed the model of appropriate behavior for women, thus, her lack of morality shows itself in her physical debilitation. Susan Sontag writes that tuberculosis, or "consumption," was a metaphor for those who are poetic and sensitive, "burned up" by life (Sontag 14). The fantasy surrounding tuberculosis was that it "speeds up life, highlights it, spiritualizes it," so that the victim takes on an aesthetic quality "diseased and consumed by love" (20). The symptoms of "white pallor" followed by the "red flush" of fever, "hyperactivity alternating with languidness" were extreme contrasts, further lending support to and reinforcing the romanticized notion that TB was thought to give the sufferer more erotic attractiveness (11).

Armand declares his love for her, but Marguerite rebuffs him, saying, "Why do

you care about me. I am always too nervous, too sick, too sad, or too gay.” Marguerite’s cynicism connotes her acknowledgment of her social and economic status. She cannot afford to fall in love and risk losing her financier, the Baron. Marguerite laughs as she exclaims that Armand “must be the great romance of my life!” The irony of her statement is not lost on Marguerite, for she knows that she is trapped in a dilemma. With the Baron as her lover, she has financial stability, but she must choose between a life of affluence, devoid of love, or follow her heart, and choose Armand. Marguerite’s acceptance of her illness, and her inevitable demise, is evidence that she acknowledges her corporeal nature and that her time is limited.

Tuberculosis was also often associated with luxury and decadence. The disease flourished in cities, where greater risk of exposure was present, and a polluted environment increased the spread of the infection. “There was a notion that TB was a wet disease, a disease of humid and dank cities. The inside of the body became damp (‘moisture in the lungs’ was a favored locution) and had to be dried out” (Sontag 15). Therefore, it was considered as part of the remedy for tubercular patients to travel to the country. The city-versus-country notion operates on a metaphoric level contrasting the different lifestyles and different moral viewpoints of country and city living. The country is viewed as being healthier physically and morally for the patient, and since the disease of low moral standards may affect the outward physical ailment, in order to cure the body of such ailments, one must therefore treat the soul.

Armand, going against the wishes of his father, takes Marguerite to the country to resuscitate her, and Marguerite grows stronger once returned to natural environment. She

instructs the farm girls on the feeding and care of cattle, keeps bees, and goes on long walks with Armand through the countryside. The simple life in the country appears to have a regenerative effect upon her; however, Marguerite finds that she cannot return to a state of innocence. Armand's father (Lionel Barrymore) comes to visit her one day, and he begs her to "make the sacrifice" of her own happiness for his son's sake. Marguerite speaks of her transcendence from the vulgarities of her past by love, "lifted above self interest by sentiment so delicate and so pure." M. Duval warns her that she will bring about Armand's destruction (socially and financially), "He'll not enter rooms that you cannot." Armand has a promising future, and he will never achieve high social standing with Marguerite as his wife. "Everything you are ashamed of in your own past would taint his future," says the father. His final plea, "think what you would want for him if he were *your own son*," finally breaks Marguerite's resolve. The sanctity of motherhood is too strong for her to violate, and just as any good mother would, Marguerite sacrifices her happiness for Armand. She breaks his heart and returns to the Baron. Marguerite's sacrifice gives the appearance that she seeks a more lucrative lover. In reality, Marguerite is aware that the stratified society of Paris would not accept her as the wife of a young, enterprising financier, and eventually a union with her would bring about Armand's financial ruin. She is unable to rise above her status; however, Marguerite applies the skills she has developed as a courtesan. She gives the illusion of being the ultimate courtesan. Only Marguerite (with the audience) is aware of her true intention to save Armand by sacrificing her happiness with him.

In comparison, Armand and Marguerite reflect two very different views of love.

Armand's view of love is traditional, "an example of classical love: bourgeois, descended from an essentialist culture" (Barthes 103). Marguerite refers to Armand's constructing a love between them that is "delicate" and "pure," which excludes the outside world and exists between the couple. Marguerite, on the other hand, has a more pragmatic view of love, admitting the realities of the culture in which they both live. She is a realist who understands that human beings cannot transcend the world in which they exist.

Marguerite is as much a woman in the world as she is a woman of the world. Perhaps her illness has endowed Marguerite with her corporal-affirming acceptance of reality, or perhaps her struggle to survive and prevail in a tightly structured society has made her acknowledge the impossibility of happiness with Armand.

A later scene depicts Marguerite's advanced state of illness. She is pale, drawn, and listless, with her dress hanging loosely about her body and shoulders as if hanging on a skeleton. She stumbles behind the Baron as he descends a staircase. Without noticing, she drops her fan, but the Baron has noticed, and so too has Armand. "You dropped your fan," says the Baron. "Pick it up."

The Baron's refusal to pick up Marguerite's fan is a public display of contempt, showing that she is not worthy of his stooping. Armand, who occupies lower social status than the Baron, picks up the fan and presents it to Marguerite, who thanks him. "It's what any gentleman would do," he replies, curtly. Armand's reply is an insult directed at the Baron, challenging the Baron's status as a gentleman.

After a long absence, Armand returns to Paris, more experienced and hardened. He attends the opera and finds Marguerite's friends gossiping about her illness. He learns

that during his absence, Marguerite has refused to see the Baron or accept anyone's help. With her health disintegrating, she has been forced to liquidate her assets. Olymphe proudly flaunts the jewelry she has purchased from Marguerite's dwindling estate. "Only 200 guineas," she boasts. "Am I smart!" Of course, intelligence has nothing to do with the fact that Olymphe is profiting from her friend's misfortune, giving one the impression that the treacherous drive for power and position will continue long after Marguerite's demise.

Marguerite's physical ruin is mirrored by her financial ruin, but in a woman's case, there is a purifying effect. Financial ruin for a white man, in nineteenth century terms, would indicate that he is morally ruined. By purging herself of her property, Marguerite is purging her soul of sin. No longer is she leading a lifestyle of extravagance and decadence. Armand's love purged her of materiality in the same manner that the disease purges her body of life. Her transcendence over the vulgar instincts of sensual pleasure and materialism is expressed in the wasting of her physical body. Armand rushes to Marguerite's death bed, but he is too late. Their happiness together is impossible, but she is now worthy of his love having elevated herself from profane to sacred. At last she has proved her love for Armand and found redemption through her ultimate sacrifice, death.

*Les Enfants Terribles: The Sexualization of the Woman-Girl,
Desire, and the Unconscious Mind*

Later in the nineteenth century, the writings of Sigmund Freud and the new field of psychology lent itself to new assumptions about human sexual development, the human mind, and male/female relations. Freud's study of the subconscious, delving into its secret desires and motivations, and describing how those desires influence human behavior, are among his greatest contributions. However, Freud was very much a man of his time and a product of his sexist culture. For instance, he concurred with the assumption that women were naturally passive and determined by their reproductive role: "[i]t is the case that in a woman, on the basis of her share in the sexual function, a preference for passive behaviour and passive aims . . . within which her sexual life thus serves as a model" ("Femininity" 97). Freud also agreed with the prevailing thinkers of his day that women were more predisposed toward suffering, having "the development of powerful masochistic impulses, which succeed . . . in binding erotically the destructive trends which have been diverted inwards" (99). In addition, Freud was in accordance with the perception of non-passive women as dangerous, sexually-charged vampires, who "reject their true 'femininity,' castrate men, have a penis of their own, and disrupt society" (105).

Near the end of his lifetime, Freud had witnessed the effects of industrialization

on society. A somewhat disillusioned voice is present in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, which he wrote in 1930, as Freud examines the absence of happiness in the twentieth century. The nineteenth century had earnestly gazed ahead to a promising future, where ignorance, sickness, and poverty would be vanquished, science and technology would unlock all of nature's secrets, and mankind would proceed upward on the evolutionary continuum. Instead the early twentieth century was left to grapple with promises left unfulfilled. Freud postulates upon the antagonistic relationship between the individual and the external world. The antagonism arises from several sources: that the individual is at-odds with external natural forces, over which he has no control, that there is an on-going struggle between individual freedom (the needs and wants of the individual) and societal demands (what society dictates one should do in order to coexist), which results in guilt, and finally, that there were three sources of suffering which threaten humans:

from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other

Civilization and Its Discontents 25.

This rather fatalistic view depicts nature as an intentional, antagonistic force bent on destruction, whether it surfaces as physical illness resulting in death, or as natural

disasters, or in relations with (wo)men, nature is an enemy to man. As a remedy to guard against suffering derived from human relationships, Freud offered “the readiest safeguard is voluntary isolation, keeping oneself aloof from other people” and thereby deriving “the happiness of quietness” (*Civilization* 25). In other words, to prevent discord in relationships, the “remedy” is either complete isolation or lack of emotional involvement, both of which involve a modernist detachment. For suffering caused by natural disasters, Freud recommended a “becoming a member of the human community, and, with the help of a technique guided by science, going over to the attack against nature and subjecting her to the human will” (62). Apparently, if an individual cannot overcome nature, perhaps an organized group could. Finally, Freud suggests reducing suffering by the individual’s “influencing the instinctual impulses” through self-regulation (27). Consequently, the worst possible solution is to submit to suffering, for it is equated with surrendering to nature.

In *Evil Sisters* (1996), Bram Dijkstra illustrates how a correlation is made between the evolutionary (male) brain, “vital essence” or semen, and pecuniary acquisition in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, he describes how women, and most especially sexual women who were closely connected to nature, were perceived as threats to man’s brain-semen-capital essence. In fact, it is Dijkstra’s theory that this was the basis for the image of woman as vampire popularized as cultural icons from the nineteenth century to the present day, for it was the objective of such women to drain men of their essence. These women present a threat, not only to individual men, but also to society entirely. “Civilization was a product of man’s struggle *against* nature” in the

constant positioning for a toehold in the contest for evolutionary superiority, and “sexual woman, being a primitive woman, was not above, but part of, nature. One could go even further and insist that she was nature itself” (Dijkstra, *Sisters* 43). The thinkers of the later half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not exhibit the confidence shown earlier. Man was no longer a passenger on a “train” of evolutionary progression, as Michelet had described a few years earlier. Instead man was ever fearful of back sliding.

In Val Lewton’s 1942 film, *Cat People*, the dark theme of the animalistic Predatory Woman archetype is explored through the lens of Freudian psychology. *Cat People* is a cautionary tale of what can occur when unconscious desires are repressed. Often repression leads to actions which are not understood by the conscious actor, but the unconscious mind is inescapable. Lewton’s use of Freudian symbolism and dream analysis is apparent throughout the film, but he also employs cinematic elements such as sharp contrast of light and shadow, unusual camera angles, muffled sound, and visual imagery to evoke atmospheric mood and tension. However, the tale also conceals a warning against the immigration of “undesirable” foreigners, inter-racial marriage, and the non-white mind as mentally deranged.

The story is centered on a young engineer, Oliver (Kent Smith), and his strange but beautiful bride, Irena (Simone Simon). Oliver first meets Irena at the zoo where she is sketching a leopard. The zoo and leopard represent Irena’s bestial nature. Oliver is overcome by Irena’s beauty and arranges to take her to dinner. As they stroll away together, the lens focuses upon the discarded sketch. It is a leopard run through by a

sword. The difference between the living, caged leopard at the zoo and the dead leopard, which Irena has sketched, foreshadows events later in the film, but it also indicates that Irena's mind is not focused on reality.

Irena's apartment holds several clues to her personality, such as her affinity with the bestial kingdom and her connection to darkness. The shadows from a window give the appearance of bars across the front door to Irena's apartment. She tells Oliver, "I like the dark; it's friendly." Darkness and shadow play an important role in the film. Irena's affinity for darkness is associated with danger, but it also casts her as a suspicious, non-white foreigner. Richard Dyer describes the category that Irena falls as "maybe, sometimes white," which underscores the notion that "some whites are whiter than others" (19). Furthermore, darkness is a reflection of Irena's mental state. Unaware of the danger, Oliver exclaims, "it's like something warm and living," as he innocently enters the internal, natural environment of Irena's lair. Paintings of cats fill the room and the stabbed leopard image is repeated with a statue of St. John, sword held aloft, with the lifeless body of a dead cat impaled upon it. Irena explains that her village in Kosovo was overrun by witches who worshipped Satan and brought sin and horror down upon the people. St. John arrived and drove out most of the witches, but the legend still haunts the village and some of the witches remain, practicing their evil art in secret.

Irena exhibits rather strange behavior. She frightens and upsets animals, she has a sense of doom and foreboding, she has emotional outbursts, and she cannot bear physical intimacy. In spite of these eccentricities, Oliver finds Irena "mysterious, irresistible," and he is inevitably drawn to her. Oliver appears to be no more than an over-enthusiastic

love-struck oaf, but both he and Irena are under the influence of powers neither one can control. Oliver and Irena marry, but Irena locks Oliver out of the bedroom on their wedding night, afraid of the consequences if she allows her husband to unleash the power of her passion. Oliver is content to wait, but he is also a “red-blooded all American male” and he soon becomes frustrated. He confides in his co-worker, Alice (Jane Randolph). Irena suspects that Oliver is in love with Alice, but Oliver tells her that her jealousy is unfounded. Irena exhibits an inability to control herself emotionally, as evidenced by her angry outbursts, her jealousy, and her difficulty controlling her sexual feelings.

Alice is smart, independent, self-confident, wise cracking, and depicts the new modern gal of post-World War II. Alice’s honesty creates a comfortable environment for Oliver to express his misgivings about his marriage to Irena. Oliver thinks of Alice, not merely “as a woman,” but as he refers to her, “a pal,” and someone who is “easy to talk to.” Alice fosters a romantic attachment to Oliver, but he feels an obligation toward his wife. Alice and Oliver both reflect the white, upper-middle class American ideals of female and male gender roles. Oliver is young, successful, energetic, and yet he is concerned with appropriate behavior and protecting Irena. Alice is strong, intelligent, and she tells Oliver that she can “take care of myself,” but she also desires a relationship of compatibility. She and Oliver are racially and socially compatible. They work together, share the same interests, and they are comfortable enough to be honest with each other. It seems these two make an ideal American couple, but the ideal American couple are faced with one obstacle, Oliver’s foreign-born wife, Irena.

Oliver and Alice personify the goals and ambition of post-Industrial America.

They are striving to build a better life, just as American industrialism strove to become a world leader. Their moral stance shows a concern for the less fortunate Irena, but she is more of a hindrance than asset to Oliver and Alice's common goal. While Irena represents the negative "old ways" of Europe, still deeply connected to old tradition and nature, Oliver and Alice represent the advance of modern American technology and expertise. For example, Oliver is a ship designer, and his office is clean, well lit, modern, and minimalist. Irena, on the other hand, is more of a classical artist, and her dark apartment is cluttered with heavy, ornate antique furniture and works of art. Oliver and Alice's skills contribute to the American enterprise, while Irena's work is viewed as trifling. Alice describes herself as "the new kind of other woman," and Irena is obsessed with the dark legend of her ancestors. The contrast between the old world and the new, foreign and American, and nature and science indicates that the antiquated traditions of Europe are not only behind the times, they are also suspicious, primitive, and dangerous.

Irena's marriage to Oliver "threatens the power of whiteness," considering her foreign background. Their inter-racial marriage is reflective of post World-War II American anxiety and concern "over the 'numbers of colored immigrants' which continued to increase" (Dyer 27). Irena's mental degeneracy is further evidence of her racial inferiority. Oliver and Alice decide to send Irena to a psychiatrist, Dr. Judd (Tom Conway). As Judd's name infers, "Jude," that he is Jewish, he is also included in the dubious category of "maybe, sometimes white" (Dyer 19). Dr. Judd concludes that Irena's obsession with the legend is an extension of her inability to curtail her jealousy and "corrupt passions," and that these passions "corrode the soul." He tells Irena that

most people who indulge in such fantasies have a “temptation, a psychic need to unleash evil upon the world.” Irena is not only foreign but she is also insane, giving additional support to the concept of danger. Irena is unable to control her emotions, which further connects her to the animal kingdom. She is obsessive and jealous, she has fits of anger and outbursts, and her sexuality is so powerful that it has corruptible and pollutive capabilities. The underlying indication implies that if Irena has sex with Oliver, she is likely to pollute him as well. Foreigners are viewed as “evil” and threatening because they will pollute, “corrupt,” and “corrode” the Anglo-American race and ideology.

Irena’s jealousy rears out of control, and she begins calling Oliver at the office late at night when he is working with Alice. Irena begins following the two, and one night glimpses them having a late night dinner in a cafe. Oliver walks Alice to the corner and offers to walk her home, but Alice refuses. She prefers to walk home alone. Alice’s confidence mirrors the confidence of the Anglo-American ideal. An innocent and unsuspecting public needs to be made aware of the impending danger of foreign invasion.

In the darkness of a foggy night, the sound of Alice’s heels clicking on the pavement echo against the wall separating the street from the city zoo. The dark imagery and the use of echo create a nightmare quality, which further emphasizes the impending danger to Alice. Suddenly, she stops and listens, wondering if she hears the echo of her own heels or that of another. She shrugs and continues walking, unaware that she is being stalked. The camera shows the feet of Irena stepping in time to Alice’s feet. Alice quickens her pace, as she realizes that the other set of heels are matching her. Alice, now terrified, begins running, only to hear a low growl and the rustling of trees from the other

side of the wall. As she rounds the corner, Alice is rescued by a city bus, which comes to a halt directly in front of her. The door swings open. “Well, lady, are you gettin’ on or not?” asks the driver. A panting Alice jumps on board the safety of the bus, escaping a vicious attack.

The wall separating the street from the zoo creates a contrast between the civilized “white” environment and the brute, savage world of nature. On the other side of the wall, a zoo-keeper discovers several dead goats surrounded by leopard prints in the mud. As he blows his alarm whistle, the camera pans, following an animal’s bloody paw prints down the sidewalk as they change to the footprints of a lady’s high- heeled shoes.

Lewton’s use of sound, shadow, and image are effective in building the tension and revealing the plot. Even though Alice felt confident in walking along her familiar route, fog and darkness limited her visibility, and she became acutely aware of her fear of the unseen. Sound plays an important role in the scene, for when visibility is diminished, sound clues provide information to Alice that she is in danger, such as footsteps keeping pace with hers, rustling of the trees, and growls on the opposite side of the wall. The screeching brakes of the bus and the whoosh of the opening door provide a contrast to the ominous sounds emanating from the zoo, as if to indicate juxtaposition between the comforts of civilization and the horrors of nature. The images of a leopard’s bloody paw prints transforming into a woman’s heel prints imply what Irena has feared all along. Her rage and jealousy have transformed her from a woman into an animal.

In a following dream sequence, Irena hears the voice of Dr. Judd, issuing his warning of a “psychic need to unleash evil upon the world,” as she envisions Judd in the

armor of St. John, wielding his sword. The sword then turns into a floating key, which then enters the lock to the door of a cage. The sword-key in Freudian terms represents a phallic symbol. The image of Dr. Judd as St. John, wielding the sword signifies that he is a sexual liberator, just as St. John liberated Irena's village from evil, so too will Dr. Judd liberate Irena from her frigidity. The unlocking of the cage could signify the unlocking of Irena's subconscious acts from her conscious mind, but it also suggests the release of Irena's sexuality, which Dr. Judd described as, "corrupt passions . . . that corrode the soul."

During a session, Irena confesses to Dr. Judd her fear of unleashing evil if she is intimate with her husband. The doctor wishes to dispel her superstitions, and he insists that Irena relinquish all control over to him. When she refuses, Judd insists that, "This is a contest of wills between doctor and patient." Dr. Judd attempts to bring Irena's sexuality under his control, yet he reveals his own corrupt nature by asking, ". . . and if I were to kiss you?" as he reveals his true motive as well as his lack of ethics.

"I would not like that," replies Irena. She immediately leaves his office. Irena demonstrates an aversion to Judd's own corrupt nature, implying that she prefers to corrupt the "legitimized whiteness," represented by Oliver.

Judd meets with Oliver and Alice suggesting Oliver commit Irena to the only safe place for an uncontrollable woman, an insane asylum. He points out that with his wife committed, Oliver would then be free to marry Alice. Alice and Oliver refuse Judd's offer on the grounds that abandoning Irena when she is mentally ill would be disloyal, which further portrays the moral uprightness and character of Oliver and Alice. Judd

advises Irena to discard her beliefs, dispose of all the cat motifs in her surroundings, and “lead a normal life.” Irena attempts to conform to “normal” American society and to rekindle her relationship with Oliver. However, Oliver, in a reversal of his prior conviction, tells Irena that it is too late and that he is in love with Alice. Oliver tells Irena that it would be best for all concerned if they divorced. “Better for whom?” Irena asks. The answer is, of course, better for Alice and Oliver, but also better for the white upper-middle class ideal, which Irena threatens.

Finding herself abandoned, Irena slips further into madness. She returns to the leopard cage at the zoo, and discovering the zookeeper has mistakenly left the key in the door to the cage, Irena frees the leopard. Irena’s return to the zoo is symbolic of her digressing to an animal state and the unleashing of her sexuality.

Dr. Judd intentionally leaves his walking stick (another phallic symbol) in Irena’s apartment. “Give me the key, “ he says to Oliver. He returns under the pretense of retrieving the stick, and leaves the door unlocked so that he may return and wait for Irena. As foreshadowed in Irena’s dream, Judd has fatefully unlocked the door to the beast’s cage. Oliver, who was once in the position of power, the keeper of the key, or phallus, yields the power to another, less moral man. Oliver and Irena’s marriage remains unconsummated, which is an indication of Oliver’s purity of spirit. Dr. Judd, on the other hand, desires a sexual relationship of “corrupt passions” with Irena. It is Judd’s ability to perceive Irena’s “animal magnetism,” his curiosity to explore her darker side, and his desire to control her that enables him to unlock her sexuality. However, he finds that in stirring Irena’s sexuality, he unleashes evil upon the world, as well as upon himself. Judd

is not being consumed by passion, but he is ripped to death by a leopard. In desperation, he grabs his walking stick and runs it through the body of the giant cat. Irena's inferior mental degeneracy, her questionable foreign background, and her polluted sexuality serve to connect her with the animal, rather than human, kingdom and create a threat to the "pure whiteness" imagery surrounding the American ideal. Dr. Judd, another pollutive influence, represents the suspicion toward Jews, sexual depravity, and aspiration to control, which also threatened the security of "pure whiteness." Irena's death by the phallus/sword of Dr. Judd symbolizes the defeat of evil against itself and reflects the appropriate restoration of order.

The archetype of *les enfants terrible* is based upon the idea that even young, innocent girls harbor an innate connection to female sexuality and evil, but given their youth and inexperience, they do not fully realize the full repercussions of their sexual power. Their actions may not be considered malicious or intentional since these "innocents" do not act methodically or see the means to an end, but rather act on impulse. However, *les enfants* do bring about disaster. Their sexuality is somewhat like that of a loaded gun in the hands of a child.

These young girl-women are beautiful, sexually wise beyond their tender years, and tempting to older men. The desire men harbor for them is considered a societal taboo. The male characters in such tales are portrayed as flawed and unable to control their desire for these teenaged sirens. Even though he is full aware that acting upon his hidden desire can bring guilt, ruin, and shame down upon him, the unfortunate victim of a Lolita cannot resist. It is important to note that the older male character is represented, and sees

himself, as the victim of his young conquest. His intention begins with his initiating the neophyte. He is in control. Yet he imagines there is an irresistible beckoning in her glance, she is offering her young and firm body to him, and she makes him forget the decrepitude of his mortal self. He invests his desire for her carnally with his desire to ward off his own mortality, his death. Girl-women occupy dual roles, that of being seduced and that of being the seductress. Her eventual rejection of her older male suitor results in his inevitable confrontation with his mortality. Unlike the Virgin-character, *les enfants* do not bring redemption, only destruction.

In Berlin during the 1920's, film makers experimented with the new medium, applying the same techniques and themes used by painters and dramatists at that time, unusual angles, geometric and abstracted forms, dramatically contrasted, shadowed forms (chiaroscuro), themes which dealt with decadence and the modern age, sex and lost innocence, alienation, and psychological turmoil. The style of this period came to be known as German Expressionism. One of the best examples of German Expressionist film, also known as "film *noir*," tells the story of Lulu, a free spirit and prostitute who is exploited by men, and in turn, exploits other men, unleashing havoc on their lives until she drains them of all they have, physically, emotionally, and financially (*Pandora's Box*, 1928).

One might assume from the previous description of Lulu that she might appear as a worn and tawdry canaille, but this is not so. Louise Brooks, who played the leading role, had the appearance of child-like innocence. Very likely producer G.W. Pabst's intention in casting Brooks was in reference to Hesiod's "beautiful evil" Pandora, a

seemingly innocent woman-child who housed inherent evil. Brook's hair is bobbed like a child's with bangs framing a sweet face, guileless eyes, and charming smile. As is the case with silent film, it was necessary for actors to embellish characters with their facial and bodily expressions. Brooks succeeded in accomplishing this without over-exaggeration. Her physical expressions were extremely sensual, but they also appeared uncontrived.

Lulu personifies the image of woman as a big child. She is currently living in a luxurious apartment, the "kept" girlfriend of a prominent publisher, Peter Schoen (Franz Lederer), when the story opens. Apparently unable to support herself by any other means, Lulu depends on older father figures. She laughs and claps her hands in delight, as though she were a big child, when Schigolch (Carl Gotz), her "first friend," arrives at her lover's apartment. Lulu enjoys sitting on Schigolch's lap, throwing her arms around his neck, creating a sexualized father and child image. It is obvious that Schigolch enjoys it, too.

Schoen returns to the apartment, weary and worn from his daily battle to keep his good name, his social standing, and his business afloat. Alarmed, Lulu hides Schigolch on the terrace with a bottle of schnapps to keep him company. Schoen is an older, respectable man who has had a great deal of success, but the menorah on display in the apartment and, of course, his last name, indicate that he is Jewish. Schigolch is also Jewish, although not quite respectable, "Greasy, foul, smirking, stunted, with glittery eyes and a pronounced hook nose, Schigolch proves to be a typical 'objectionable' Semite" (Dijkstra, *Sisters* 410).

Lulu turns her girlish charms on Schoen, but he pulls her arms from around his neck. His physical movements are heavy and weighted, revealing the fact that he is tormented by his affair and that his reputation is suffering. “Everyone is talking,” he tells Lulu. She on the other hand is stretched out erotically on a sofa, looking up at him with soulful eyes. Lulu knows Schoen wants her, and he does, judging from his reluctance to refuse her, but his reputation (and his wealth) is at stake. Schoen decides to marry a “proper” woman, who can assist him in gaining access into “legitimate” gentile society.

Dijkstra points out that the Jewish characters in the film are constantly battling to promote themselves from the periphery of society into acceptable society. Each one does so by exploiting “Aryan” characters, Lulu, Schoen’s fiancée and her father. The Countess Geschwitz (Alice Roberts), a lesbian, also attempts to “lure Lulu into her own degenerative realm” (*Sisters* 413). She pursues Lulu, whispering innuendo and promising bliss. The subtext of the film reveals these characters have a “polluting influence” on society in their “degeneracy” (411), and they have a tendency to pull others down with them.

Once Schoen leaves Lulu, she immediately sets her sights on his son, Alwa (Fritz Kortner). Alwa, as all men who come into contact with her, is unable to resist Lulu’s charms. However, on the opening night of her new review, the elder Schoen brings his lovely, blonde fiancée backstage. Lulu objects. She refuses to go on-stage. Schoen tries to reason with her, but true to her “woman-child” persona, Lulu throws a temper-tantrum. She flings herself to the floor, shaking her head violently from side-to-side, flailing her arms about, kicking and screaming. An exasperated Schoen grabs her by both arms and

begins to handle her roughly. Then, unable to contain himself any longer, fueled by the violence and sex, which always go hand-in-hand in these stories, he kisses her. It is at this precise and inconvenient moment that Schoen's blonde Aryan fiancée happens upon the two. Schoen leaps back, ruffled, flustered, and exhibiting an expression of shame and guilt. In contrast, Lulu, her chin tilted coyly downwards, slowly looks up with her eyes, and an evil, smirk licks across her lips. At this instant, the audience sees the evil in Lulu reveal itself, and with this one glance, her fate is sealed and she is doomed. For Lulu does not possess the moral fortitude to feel guilt, she has no remorse, and without guilt and remorse, she is not entitled to redemption. Just as a child uses whatever means at her disposal to get whatever it is that she wants, Lulu places her wants above the moral code, enlisting her only means of power at her disposal, her sexuality.

Lulu's appeal is not based merely upon physical beauty. Schoen's fiancée is beautiful refined, delicate, and proper. Lulu, on the other hand, possesses a flamboyant, carefree attitude toward her sexuality. She enjoys teasing, flirting, and tormenting men. Schoen is not in control of Lulu nor of his feelings toward her, and unlike his arranged marriage, which would bring him secure social standing, his relationship with Lulu is far from proper. Schoen's uncontrollable desire for Lulu rests in the notion that it is forbidden. Lulu is flaunting her sexuality, placing her wants above the moral code. Hers is a primeval victory of animal female sexuality over acculturated male wealth and power.

Schoen and Lulu marry, but their union is disastrous and short-lived. The guest list at the wedding provides an interesting contrast of characters. Dr. Schoen's friends

and colleges are well to do, refined, and distinguished, but they look uncomfortable and ill at ease as they pat him on the back while glancing nervously over his shoulder at Lulu's guests. Schigolch and some of his circus cronies have crashed the party and are getting drunk in the kitchen and making sexual advances at the female servants. Countess Geschwitz is brazenly dancing with Lulu, the bride, wrapped in her arms, which suggests a lesbian transgression of the traditional image of the heterosexual bridal couple. As the Countess leads her around the dance floor, Lulu's head rests against her shoulder, her demure eyes closed, while the Countess' expression is one of sheer rapture. Lesbianism, like inter-racial sex, was also considered dangerous because it threatens the continuity of the race. What Dyer terms as a "threat to whiteness," compulsory heterosexuality and motherhood, kept "women in their place," but also "kept the white population afloat" (27). Lulu's promiscuity inspires lust in many different forms, and she is willing to satisfy them all.

Schigolch, after many glasses of champagne and toasts to the happy couple, decides to scatter rose petals on the nuptial bed. Lulu happens upon Schigolch and his friends and some rather over-demonstrative congratulations are taking place when Schoen discovers Lulu and Schigolch in each others' arms. Schoen, embarrassed and humiliated in front of his dignified guests, attempts to shoot Lulu. As is often the case with *les enfants* (such as Amy Fisher or Monica Lewinsky), Lulu is blamed for Schoen's unhappiness. In its irony that Schoen discovers Lulu in a compromising position, just as Schoen and Lulu were discovered earlier, it is nevertheless Schoen's decision to displace his own disgrace squarely upon the shoulders of his accomplice. He decides to rid the

world of this dangerous female entity, and remove the source of his embarrassment and fallen position. As Lulu struggles with him the gun discharges, and Schoen falls to the floor.

In court, Lulu's former occupation as a show girl, her loose morals, and the undesirable characters with whom she associates provide sufficient evidence for a murder conviction. Alwa, Schoen's son, Schigolch, and Lulu book passage on a boat to London to avoid Lulu's impending incarceration. Alwa quickly gambles and Schigolch drinks away what little money they have managed to bring with them. Alwa's character has degenerated from an earnest, enterprising young man into a worthless, seething drunk. Lulu attempts to mollify the mob boss, but she soon finds herself considered for trade in a white slavery operation. After being told to lift her skirts to show her legs for a prospective buyer, Lulu suddenly musters some dignity saying, "I go with whom *I* choose!"

Lulu's assertion indicates that, regardless of how limited her choices have become, she maintains at least some control of her situation. She may be naive, she may be an ill judge of character, and she may be a slut, but Lulu reserves the right to say when and with whom she shares her body. However, her refusal to allow herself to descend to such a level of debasement has more to do with maintaining control than it does with her considering prostitution as an option.

Once the trio arrives in London, they do not come on easier times. It is Christmas time, and Alwa, Schigolch, and Lulu are living in a tiny loft, with missing windows, very little food or warmth, and even less money.

Alwa is a ruined man, alcoholic, penniless, and dejected. Schigolch and Lulu decide the only way that they are to survive is by her becoming a street prostitute. Schigolch and Alwa leave the loft so that Lulu may bring up a customer. As she passes the Salvation Army Band, which is coincidentally playing “Onward Christian Soldiers,” which suggests judgment on the “non-Christian” life Lulu has been leading. She consorts with Jews, criminals, and homosexuals, and she drinks, gambles, is sexually promiscuous, and has now decided to become a street prostitute. However, the presence of the Salvation Army Band also suggests salvation. Lulu meets a suspicious character (Gustav Diessl), secretly harboring a knife in his pocket. As she leads him up the stairs, he explains, “I haven’t any money.” Lulu turns toward him, and her face conveys kindness and a sweet smile. Her generosity in reaching out to another human being who has also fallen on hard times defines her truly as the hooker with a heart of gold. Lulu’s generosity beckons the stranger as she says, “Come just the same. I like you,” and he throws away the knife as the two climb the stairs. The imagery of Lulu’s whiteness symbolizes purity, even in the wake of her impure acts, and her whiteness is so pure, in fact, that it pacifies the murderous intent of the stranger.

Once inside the tiny loft, Lulu lights a single candle. Her face illuminated by the glow of the candle, she closes her eyes and prays. Lulu is transformed into a vision of saintliness. For a moment, the audience believes Lulu will find redemption or reprieve. Perhaps the stranger believes she is worth saving as well. Lulu’s willingness to lower herself even further to rescue her companions may be viewed as an heroic sacrifice which transforms her from a self-centered manipulator into a sacrificial, but saintly woman.

However, as Lulu throws her arms around the stranger's neck, sits in his lap, and kisses him, as she has done with Schigolch so often, the stranger's murderous lust is aroused, and he grabs a knife from the table and stabs Lulu. Her final act of generosity turns into the act which dooms her. However, without dying, Lulu could not achieve redemption. Lulu could not live as a saint, but she could die as one.

Conclusion

The female characters described in each of the films in this research demonstrate the longevity and persistence of reinforced stereotypes and female archetypes, from the myths and folklore of the past, to the canons of classical, Biblical, and scientific text, and finally to the reflection of popular culture in film. It is interesting to note that each of the female characters in many of the films underwent transformation of some sort. Mary Hanes, the perfect, angelic wife and mother, appropriated the sexual talons of a predator, the Marquise de Merteuil went from trickster to dupe, Irena literally transformed from a woman into a leopard, and Marguerite and Lulu were both transformed from sinners into saints. Even in the confines of the patriarchal construct, the perception that women have the ability to transform allows some latitude within female gender roles. The question remains, "to transform, but into what?" Women remain defined by stereotypes as long as they are limited to roles which are based upon misconceptions, biological determination, or moral and intellectual restrictions. For women to achieve their individual potential, they must be granted the capability to function outside the boundaries of traditional

sexually-defined roles. Perhaps viewing women in limited role assignments will someday cease, but understanding the history behind such perceptions initiates change.

Over time the development of female archetypes reflected human perception, from the ritualized, nature-worshipping cultures of the distant past; to the allegories of Greek myth and Anglo-European folklore; to the Medieval mind who saw outward, visible signs of the immanent, spiritual world; to the privileging of the rational mind over the physical body during Age of Enlightenment; to the over-confidence of the Industrial age; to the inner-most voice of the subconscious mind, unlocking that which human beings most dread in the Post-Industrial Age. I have attempted to illustrate how changing perception reflects change in the cultural environment and therefore, also reflects change in how women are perceived. In demonstrating the way in which archetypal ideas are developed within a cultural framework, it is clear that essential or inherent qualities concerning women and nature are actually social constructs. It is far more productive to concentrate on legitimizing those experiences shared by women rather than binding them in essentialist definitions such as biological determinism or limited gender roles.

The research has also attempted to demonstrate how the Western-Anglo cultural framework is structured in terms of promoting a white, male, socio-economic enterprise. By setting a white patriarchal standard against which all others are measured, the gap between “normative” and “different” is increased. The categories of “others” (females, working-class poor, non-whites, lesbians and gays, etc.) are constantly defined as “not normal.” The white patriarchal standard operates successfully on all levels of society and throughout the scope of Western cultural history. Several of the films presented in this

research reflect how the cultural standard is promoted. It has not been intended to suggest with this research that film is such a powerful medium that it can single-handedly dictate human behavior or perform mind control on its viewers. On the contrary, film, like literature, is a reflection of culture, though admittedly that culture is placed within a patriarchal framework. An individual's awareness of the prejudices and stereotypes at work is necessary in making judgments and decisions concerning gender, class, and race perception. However, without possessing the knowledge that misconceptions, prejudice, and biased opinions exist and function within society, individuals cannot make an informed choice.

Works Cited

- Aarne, Antti, and Stith Thompson. *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. Rev. ed. Helsinki: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1973.
- Aquinas, Thomas. "The Production of Woman." *Summa Theologicae. Issues in Feminism*. 2nd ed. Comp. and ed. Sheila Ruth. Mountainview: Mayfield, 1990. 95-96.
- Aristotle. *De Generatione Animalium*, II, IV. *Issues in Feminism*. 2nd ed. Comp. and ed. Sheila Ruth. Mountainview: Mayfield, 1990. 95-96.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Lady of the Camillias." *Mythologies*. 3rd ed. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Noonday Press, 1990. 103-105.
- Bordo, Susan. *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*. New York: Albany State Univ. of NY Press, 1987.
- Camille*. adapt. novel and play *La Dame aux Camelias* by Alexandar Dumas. Dir. George Cukor. Screenplay by Zoe Akins, Fancis Marion, and James Hilton. Perf. Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor, Lionel Barrymore, Laura Hope Crews, Henry Daniell. M-G-M, 1937.
- Cat People*. Dir. Jacques Tourneur. Prod. Val Lewton. Perf. Simone Simon, Kent Smith, Jane Randolph, Tom Conway. RKO, 1942.
- Dangerous Liaisons*. adapt. novel *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* by Choderlos de Leclos. Dir. Stephen Frears. Screenplay by Christopher Hampton. Perf. Glenn Close, John Malkovich, Michelle Pfeiffer, Swoozie Kurtz, Uma Thurman. Warner Bros, 1988.

- Darnton, Robert. *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. Rev. ed. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley. 12th ed. New York: Knopf, 1989.
- De Sade, Donatien-Alphonse-Francois. *Philosophie dans le boudoir*. 1795. Trans. Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse. 1st ed. pbk. New York: Grove Press, 1966.
- Descartes, Rene. *Discourse on Method for Rightly Conducting One's Reason and for Seeking Truth in the Sciences*. 1637. Trans. Donald A. Cress. 2nd ed. pbk. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980.
- . *Meditations on First Philosophy*. 2nd rev. ed. Trans. Laurence Lafleur. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960.
- Dijkstra, Bram. *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986.
- . *Sisters of Evil: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood*. New York: Knopf, 1996.
- Dyer, Richard. *White*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. 1930. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1961.
- . "Femininity." *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. 1933. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1965.
- Gadon, Elinor. *The Once and Future Goddess: A Symbol for Our Time*. New York:

- Harper and Row, 1989.
- Gardner, Louise. *Art through the Ages*. Rev. ed. Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansley. 7th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1976.
- Griffin, Susan. *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature*. New York: Harper and Row, 1981.
- Hawkes, Jacquetta. *Dawn of the Gods*. New York: Random House, 1968.
- Hesiod. "The Works and Days." Trans. Richmond Lattimore. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1984.
- . *Theogony*. Trans. Richmond Lattimore. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1984.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. 1651. Ed. C. B. Macpherson. 11th ed. pbk. London: Penguin, 1988.
- "Jung, Carl" *Microsoft Encarta Multimedia Encyclopedia*. CD-ROM. 1994 Edition. New York: Microsoft, 1994.
- King James Version Bible*. 2nd rev. ed. Chicago: Spencer Press, 1947.
- Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993.
- "Lilith." *Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2nd rev. ed. Ed. Mircea Eliade. 1998.
- Life with Father*. adapt. novel *Life with Father* by Clarence Day, Jr. Dir. Michael Curtiz. Screenplay by Donald Ogden Stewart. Perf. William Powell, Irene Dunne, James Lydon, Elizabeth Taylor. Warner Bros., 1947.
- Ortner, Sherry. "Is Male to Female as Culture Is to Nature?" *Making Gender: The*

- Politics and Erotics of Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.
- Pandora's Box*. adapt. plays *Erdegeist* and *Die Buechse der Pandora* by Frank Wedekind.
Dir. G. W. Pabst. Perf. Louise Brooks, Fritz Kortner, Franz Lederer, Carl Gotz,
Alice Roberts, Gustav Diessl. Janus, 1928.
- Paulhan, Jean. "The Marquis de Sade and His Accomplice." *The Marquis de Sade*.
Comp and trans. Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse. 1st ed. pbk.
New York: Grove Press, 1965.
- Seaver, Richard, and Austryn Wainhouse. *The Marquis de Sade*. 1st ed. pbk. New
York: Grove Press, 1965.
- Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor: and AIDS and Its Metaphors*. New York:
Doubleday, 1989.
- The Women*. adapt. play by Clare Boothe Luce. Dir. George Cukor. Screenplay by
Anita Loos and Jane Murn. Perf. Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Rosalind
Russell. M-G-M, 1939.
- Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in
Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England*. 4th ed. London: Weidenfeld and
Nicolson, 1980.