

Rape and Reverence: Culling the Lessons from 20th Century Ethics

by

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Timothy Miller, Department of English and has been approved by all members of the supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Because—fault or secret of my sex—I could not preach

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To my son, Vernon & his father, Jacob

Abstract

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This thesis aims to contribute to contemporary feminist theory through the integration of several interdisciplinary texts from the last century, all of which challenge an existing, male-oriented norm of woman as ‘lesser’ in a particular field of study. The historical position of woman as ‘other’ in a negative light is a postulate that contemporary feminist studies may take too much for granted. The supposed lack of prominence of women in scripture, such as what Phyllis Tribble gestures to for example, is not erasure at all, but women present as archetypes, a mode of representation later dispersed in literature and film. The textual ‘absence’ of the feminine which has been previously understood as erasure, may in fact be an interpretative tool which must be explicated within a textual framework. Instead of accepting woman as a minimized ‘other’ to be merely a given in biblical and other texts, her peripheral role must be teased out in order to be fully appreciated. The critical authors central to this claim include Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* and film theorist Molly Haskell’s *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*, the

latter of which lends this thesis its title. Lastly, I will be using erasure as an interpretative method as applied to a series of case studies: to analyze the female figures in *Hamlet* using Carol Gilligan's psychological and developmental framework; to consider Haskell's rigorous critique of American cinema alongside *Woman in the Dunes*, a 1964 film based on a fabulist novel which uses erasure as its *modus operandi*; and to apply Phyllis Tribble's hermeneutic interpretive method to Lot's wife. The interdisciplinary design of this thesis allows for the inclusion of scholars from a variety of inherently ethical disciplines to showcase how societal perceptions of women have informed women's ethical decision-making and identity.

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Introduction

This thesis will use three critics from the last century —Carol Gilligan, Molly Haskell, and Phyllis Tribble—to illustrate how their distinctive interpretive methodologies may be linked to study erasure from clinical/psychoanalytic, cinematic, and biblical perspectives, as well as apply each’s framework to perform succinct case studies of *Hamlet*, *Woman in the Dunes*, and Genesis 19 (Lot’s wife), respectively. Contemporary overviews of the field, such as: *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*, edited by Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger, rarely include—with justified but insufficient reason, as Mary Daly expounds upon in *The Church and the Second Sex*—the theological. The *Rape* sequence preceding the *Reverence* chapter is reversed from Haskell’s titular *From Reverence to Rape* as illustrative of Carol Gilligan’s own notable reversal of Tribble’s hermeneutic interpretive method, where the hypothetical (vehicle) is inverted to the real (tenor). In other words, in literature, unlike the ethics of care, cause must be found before effect. This thesis attempts to borrow from Gilligan’s, Haskell’s, and Tribble’s terms of methodological interpretation with the female figure moving from naïve childhood to the increasing threats and ethical complexities of adulthood. By offering a corrective to the secularization of mainstream critical approaches to women’s representation over the last several decades, this approach will also combine ethical and theological methodologies. This approach includes the study of biblical women spliced with psychoanalytic theories of erotism and seduction to help bridge the secular—religious divide.

While Carol Gilligan's corrective to Kohlberg's moral development model to include the female sex has been acknowledged by gender studies, it is the benefit of hindsight that allows one to assemble these 20th century texts to make the counterintuitive claim in gender studies that what is first considered as negative erasure (i.e., absence) of women in the artistic products of cultural consciousness is instead a parallel, subsumed presence. What most read as simple erasure is instead a hidden presence that is inherently feminine. In literature, this feminine withdrawal necessitates close reading such as dictated by the New Critics, pioneering an interpretative method that in recent scholarship have been used distinctly from some of their other claims. Phyllis Tribble demonstrates this interpretive method most excellently as a hermeneutical practice which she uses as a methodical interpretative approach in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. This interpretative method is the erasure method, i.e.: disrupting the interplay between absence and presence in which absence is more prominent as fabulist, parabolic device to communicate a message. The erasure method, utilized by the surrealist Kōbō Abe's *Woman in the Dunes*, perhaps began almost a century and a half earlier—with Ernest Hemingway's Iceberg Method as the middleman—in John Keats' toleration of negative capability, or, resting in ambiguity, from "Ode to a Nightingale." Thus, negativity prevails in erasure as a charge of blackout instead of negative capability in the positive sense of erasure as 'showing by not showing.' Erasure is also a contextual tool, in biblical texts as well as Shakespeare's plays, in which information is not stated as it would be redundant due to the reader/audience being already familiar with it in a given literary tradition.

To begin with, Molly Haskell's attention to women's cinematic treatment as it evolved in America is an ideal place to start with its (albeit sexist itself as Joan Didion recognizes)¹ cordoning off of 'the woman.' The importance of the nature of choice in the stages of psychological development, and how it is often subsumed into the notion of sacrifice as an immoral means to an end serves as the thesis of Haskell's 1974 book. *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* deals with the gradual worsening of the treatment and portrayal of women in film chronologically in chapters arranged from the twenties, thirties, the Woman's Film, the forties, the fifties, the Europeans, and the last decade. Haskell uses the (often) male director, screenwriter, actress, and the role itself as a critical lens through which to chart collective perceptions of the woman's role in society from the 1920s to the 60s. The heart of Haskell's argument is a "loss of innocence" or "fragmenting of the unified self—a split that is different, and emblematic, not only for each sex, but also for each era."² This split is echoed and renewed, especially since the fifties, in "the age-old dualism between body and soul, virgin and whore...the split was internalized in the moral code we adopted out of fear as well as out of an instinct for self-preservation."³ This unreconcilable split in the caricatures of film only rigidified with American morals after the Jazz Age and the Depression, and was only exacerbated by the Hollywood Production Code. The increasing behavioral regulation of women undermines the once mutual camaraderie of women from the 20s to the 50s (without the aid of advertising).⁴ In a biblical context, social regulation preceded the codification of women's behavior. The biblical

¹ Joan Didion, "The Woman's Movement," *The White Album*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979, 110.

² Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*, viii.

³ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 371.

transgressive were not merely transgressive to serve the creative arc of the story or reflect what was expected of American women, but served as warnings against a morality rooted in the self. The exhaustive chronicling of typical and singular woman mentioned in biblical literature in the appendix will serve to illuminate the necessity for the feminine, playing essential biological, as well as transgressive roles which seem invisible to a disinterested eye.

While Camille Paglia's aforementioned *Sexual Personae* offers more of a corrective to contemporary mainstream gender theory, her social identity as provocateur necessitates wary discussion of her corpus, as Eve Sedgwick offered in her 2003 essay.⁵ In the book, Paglia suggests a cult of high art and worship of femininity in the Romantic aesthetes and puts forth a comparative study of what is revered in the female sex as Molly Haskell does. Within the scope of *Sexual Personae*, Paglia discusses how social ideas of femininity changed in the Age of Enlightenment, which for sociologists Jean Baudrillard (*Seduction*, 1990) and Georges Bataille, (*Erotism, Death, & Sensuality*, 1957) all but killed eroticism. Both are interested in the games the sexes play in the theatrical domain of victim and sacrificer, thus traversing both the secular and the theological. Ethically, a woman moves from naïve girlhood (the sacrifice) that the profane world beguiles to an internal recognition of the destructive tendency in herself. After realizing this, she can take responsibility for her own choices, (re)gain control of her life, and adopt a principle of nonviolence, especially if violence has been done to her, or has the potential to be done. When she moves into a Post-Conventional ethical stance which ensures her

⁵ Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Duke University Press, 2003, 123-152.

survival, she can then demand reverence from a society that sees her as transgress-able, or penetrable.

In *Sexual Personae*, Camille Paglia argues that: “the origin of the Greek Apollonian is Egypt. Greek ideas are creatures of Egyptian formalism...the Egyptians had...ideas in images.” In addition, she claims the Logos’ heavy emphasis on word belongs to Judeo-Christianity, and so Judaism necessarily “put[s] a taboo on visual representation,” but nonetheless fails “to control the pagan Western eye.”⁶ Image, for Paglia, is “built on perceptual relations.”⁷ The ‘roving eye’ of Western culture puts the woman on a pedestal, objectifying her as shown through the male gaze through the lens of cinema. She is naught but man’s ideal, and so stripped of her subjectivity like Salome dancing with seven veils.⁸ Salome’s dance is unnamed in the Bible (Mark 6:22-25);⁹ it is Oscar Wilde who names it in his titular French play and so may originate the notion of the striptease. In 1905, Richard Strauss devotes an opera to her. In Wilde’s novel, words are undermined by the intense eye contact between John the Baptist (Jokannan)¹⁰ and Salome. Paglia attributes “the Decadent erotization of visual experience” to Gautier. Though G. K. Chesterton would protest against Paglia’s admiration of Wilde’s irreverence (though one could just as easily accuse Paglia of the same lack of humility or sense of transcendent divinity) in his book *Heretics*:

The same lesson [of the pessimistic pleasure-seeker] was taught by the very powerful and very desolate philosophy of Oscar Wilde. It is the carpe diem religion; but the carpe diem religion is not the religion of happy people, but of

⁶ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, 50.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 563.

⁹ *The Catholic Gift Bible*, 1147. See Salome.

¹⁰ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, 63.

very unhappy people. Great joy does not gather the rosebuds while it may; its eyes are fixed on the immortal rose which Dante saw.¹¹

Dante's rose was Beatrice, whom he wrote in *Paradiso* as transcending mortal femininity to *become*¹² exalted in moral glory. Chesterton seems to locate the missing locus of man's happiness in the same moral ideal Paglia dismisses as mute effigy. The lack of such mutual identification in the sexes results in, as Haskell put it: "Women [as] the vehicle of men's fantasies, the 'Anima' of the collective male unconscious, and the scapegoat of men's fears."¹³ The prescription of the feminine is a recurrent theme in a history that woman consistently evades. The evasion seems to orient itself from the attempt at categorization as a threat. In any case, this thesis attempts to rehouse the place of morality from its displacement in the prescription of women's roles by gender studies to contextual, theological description and as interpretive tool. If "human survival in the late twentieth century...depend[s] less on formal agreement than on human connection,"¹⁴ perhaps more urgent in the twenty-first is allowing woman's transcendence in the refocusing of the theological into gender studies. In other words, it is the crawling to absolution that begs forgiveness (not permission). Compounding this blind spot in gender studies is the fact that although the mass market availability of contraception allowed women to break free of centuries of passive sexuality, it nonetheless still necessitates an ethical stance reorganized into an active one. Within is the beginnings of how to rectify the silence around sex and contraception since it came on the market in 1960.

¹¹ G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, "Chapter V: Omar and the Sacred Vine," John Lane Company, Plimpton Press: Norwood Massachusetts, 1905.

¹² Every sense of "become" should be read with reference to Simone Beauvoir's use of the word in *The Second Sex*.

¹³ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 40.

¹⁴ Carol Gilligan, "Moral Orientation and Moral Development" as quoted in: *Theorizing Feminism*, 210.

This thesis attempts to use all three models (Haskell, Gilligan, and Tribble) upon which to base its own reclamation of the theological back into 21st century feminism. Molly Haskell analyzes the mythmaking of the feminine in film to save the 'Deus' in the machine, while Carol Gilligan corrects the empirical basis for theory construction of ethical development in psychology. Through episodic and strophe by strophe reading of Hebrew grammar, Phyllis Tribble identifies the tenor of a given metaphor in biblical accounts of women, providing context and translation along with groundbreaking insight that shatters traditional interpretations of Genesis particularly.

In Carol Gilligan's book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, she sees the awareness of one's own capacity for destruction as the first step to a Post-Conventional ethical understanding of the world necessary for a fully mature individual. The Post-Conventional understanding formulates the good in universal terms, and represents stage six of Kohlberg's stages,¹ being the final stage that progresses from:

- I. Punishment and Orientation (Pre-Conventional)²
- II. Invariant order to Hedonism
- III. Interpersonal concordance (Conventional)
- IV. Law & Order
- V. Social Contract (Post-Conventional)

Pre-Conventional ethics moves from the needs of the self to conventional judgement which derives from the understanding of society. Post-Conventional understanding equates justice with the maintenance of existing social systems. Carol Gilligan objects to Kohlberg's stages, in which he applies his own male bias to an ethical system.³

Specifically, the transition between stage three and stage four had been repeatedly problematic for women, seemingly because of their 'failure' to subordinate the

¹ The previous reigning standard for the stages of the evolution of an ethical conception as an individual matures. This standard Carol Gilligan revises in 1982 to encompass women too, as Lawrence Kohlberg's 1958 "Stages of Moral Development" was biased towards men, having been based on Piaget's 1932 theory of moral development in principle.

² One thinks of Pavlov's Dog.

³ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982, 8.

interpersonal to the societal definition of the good. In a study done in 1973, Kohlberg records girls as reaching stage three sooner than boys, with their judgement tending to remain there, while boys' development continued further along the scale. Constance Holstein's 1976 study concludes that the moral judgements of women are tied more to "feelings of empathy and compassion and are concerned more with the resolution of 'real-life' as opposed to hypothetical dilemmas."¹ This thesis will work through the examples of biblical women: Jephthah's daughter, the unnamed woman, Tamar, the two mothers before Solomon, and Lot's wife in my application of Gilligan's ethical framework, to demonstrate how each make Post-Conventional ethical choices in different ways.

Gilligan corrected the attribution of infantile inferiority complexes and thinking to women because of Kohlberg's male perspective from male research data. Thus, "divergence from the masculine standard" could only be seen as a failure of development. Gilligan also attributes the vast oversight and systematic exclusion of women's development through sheer lack of alternative criteria on studies solely concerned with male adolescents and by women's reluctance to speak publicly in their own voice. The dilemma of choice is an ethical conundrum for women, argues Gilligan, when the availability of birth control and abortion presents them with it. Why? Because it changes the "relationships that have traditionally defined women's identities and framed moral judgements no longer flow inevitably from their reproductive capacity." For the first time, woman is confronted with a private choice that is wrapped up in conventional ideas

¹ Ibid., 69.

about femininity society holds, like “the moral equation of goodness with self-sacrifice,”² a formulation she shares with Haskell.

According to Kohlberg’s scale, “independent assertion in judgement and action is considered the hallmark of adulthood,” while for women, it is “their care and concern for others.”³ This conflict between self and other kickstarts a woman’s ethical understanding out of Conventional and into its Post-Conventional sphere, by incorporating femininity with adulthood. The woman’s moral dilemma is between “compassion and autonomy, virtue and power.”⁴ The Conventional moral woman wants to avoid hurt, and so is defined by her denial of responsibility. The Conventional immoral woman renounces or ignores the commitments that plague her with guilt for not having, mired in self-deception and betrayal. But in so far as her choice does not allow for not hurting, the woman becomes initiated into a Post-Conventional understanding. An example of the need for a Post-Conventional ethical response is the decision to continue or abort a pregnancy. The choice lays no burden of responsibility unto anyone but herself, so the conventionally ethical woman cannot claim only to meet the needs of others. Carol Gilligan studied twenty-nine different women referred by abortion and pregnancy counseling services.⁵ Four decided to have the baby, one miscarried, twenty-one chose abortion, and three remained in doubt about the decision. Gilligan found that women used a “distinct moral language of selfishness and responsibility, which defines the moral problem as one of obligation to exercise care and avoid hurt.”⁶ The evolution of this

² Ibid., 70.

³ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*, 10

⁴ Ibid., 71.

⁵ Ibid., 72.

⁶ Ibid., 73.

moral language directly informed women's ethical development. Gilligan's progression of women's ethical understanding moves through the following levels of judgement:

I. Initial focus on the self and survival of the self.

1st Transition: Discovery of the concept of responsibility, which builds a new equilibrium between self and others. A move toward social participation and away from sanctions imposed by a society.

II. Concept of Responsibility elaborated and fused with maternal mortality, which seeks to ensure protection for the dependent and unequal. Good=caring for others/self-sacrifice. Inherent contradiction of "logic of self-sacrifice in the service of a morality of care" that breeds resentment.

2nd Transition: From goodness to truth. Logical inequality between self and other necessitates the need for a new equilibrium which dissipates the tension between selfishness and responsibility. Inherent in the conventional definition of feminine goodness is lack of responsibility for self, and the self is viewing the ethical problem from the outside perspective of other's judgement, creating a disparity of hurt and care. Once she realizes this, she exercises personal responsibility by acknowledging the reality of the situation's intention and consequence. The morality of action moves the self from goodness to truth.⁷

III. The self becomes the arbiter of an independent judgement that now subsumes both conventions and individual needs under the moral principle of nonviolence.

"Judgement remains psychological in its concern with the intention and

⁷ Ibid.,17. In the interview data, the transition is announced by the reappearance of the word "selfish."

consequences of action, but it now becomes universal in its condemnation of exploitation and hurt.”⁸

In conclusion, the difference between the moral imperatives for males and those for women consists in the following: Women see morality as an “injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the ‘real and recognizable trouble’ of the world.”⁹ Women’s ethical development moves from care that is self-critical then self-protective, then altruistically protective, while men move from obligation taken negatively “in terms of noninterference.” Whereas men see the moral imperative as an “injunction to respect the rights of others and thus to protect from interference the right to life and self-fulfillment.” Ethical development lies in the integration between rights and responsibilities. For the women in her study “ranging in age from fifteen to thirty-three”¹⁰ this integration comes about through “the principled understanding of equity and reciprocity [which] tempers the self-destructive potential of a self-critical morality by asserting the equal right of all persons to care,” including the self. For men, this crucial integration is made when he recognizes “through experience of the need for a more active responsibility in taking care that corrects the potential indifference of a morality of noninterference and thus turns attention to the logic of consequences of choice.” In other words, women come to see the “violence generated by inequitable relationships,” while men realize “the limitations of a conception of justice blinded to the real inequities of life.” The whole illusion of choice illustrated by Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken,” is realized by those with a postconventional ethical understanding that led the women in Gilligan’s study to “recast the moral judgement from a consideration of the good to a

⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰ Ibid., 3.

choice between evils.”¹¹ This fundamental nature of choice can be illustrated, like many things, in Shakespeare’s female figures, seemingly washed out by the spotlight on their male leads. Ophelia’s attempt to navigate the triangular conflict between herself, her father, and Hamlet ends with her drowning, a reversion to the male Oedipal psychological standard and to the infantile roles she measured according to the male adolescent developmental yardstick. As Gilligan frames it: “Women impose a distinctive construction on moral problems, seeing moral dilemmas in terms of conflicting responsibilities.”¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 20.

¹² Ibid., 24. See Portia in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, a boy actor who dresses as a female character who masquerades as a male judge “to bring into the masculine citadel of justice the feminine plea for mercy” (105).

Case Study: *Hamlet*

Ophelia embodies the Post-Conventional ethical dilemma of choice as discussed in Gilligan. At first, Queen Gertrude's lust for her brother-in-law makes her motives hedonistic. However, she transcends her sexuality in an altruistic, Post-Conventional ethical understanding when she supports her son in his duel against Laertes. When Hamlet accuses his mother of frailty in love, the queen herself ignores his barbs, perhaps thinking him ignorant of the dichotomy between love and marriage. Her son, then, is the voice of a traditional view of woman as failing in her one-dimensional role of widow. Often, readers if not critics substitute quantitative criteria for the qualitative to substantiate claims of the erasure of the feminine in Shakespeare's plays in a negative sense. In *Hamlet*, these are Queen Gertrude and Ophelia, charged as "underwritten."¹ Of Gertrude's sixty-nine lines, her one aside makes her more compelling as a character than, say, Claudius. *[Aside] To my sick soul (as sin's true nature is) /Each toy seems Prologue to some great amiss. /So full of artless jealousy is guilt /It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.*² This at the beginning of Act IV, scene five, the only scene where Gertrude begins the action. That it is a negative statement in the future tense she seems to contradict: *Let her come in*³ gives us a clue to the context in which the aside occurs. The queen's soul is sick with guilt at seeing Ophelia distraught over her father's death, or so the gentleman reports. Whose death, Gertrude is certainly responsible for, (as opposed to her former husband, King Hamlet, whose death she is only implicated in) knowing the identity of Polonius behind the curtain and complicit in colluding with him against her son. Unlike

¹ Kavita Mudan Finn and Jessica McCall, "Exit, Pursued by a Fan: Shakespeare, Fandom, and the Lure of the Alternate Universe," *Critical Survey* 28, no. 2 (2016): 27.

² William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 5, ln.17-20.

³ *Ibid.*, ln. 16.

Claudius, Gertrude here shows remorse about dispossessing Ophelia of both father and lover. More than this, this one aside showcases Gertrude's *ars poetica*. "Prologue" capitalized and "artless jealousy," like Ophelia's (*to Queen*) *Lord we know what we are, but know not what we may be*,⁴ is allusive of fabulist vehicle delivering caustic barb. Gertrude's guilt and Ophelia's recognition of that guilt while charging her with languishing in her faithlessness (as opposed to Hamlet's charge of infidelity) are both made with literary devices. Ophelia compares the queen to the parabolic baker's daughter whom Jesus turned into an owl because she did not respond generously to his request for bread⁵ directly preceding the pith of Gertrude's "sin." The nuance between Hamlet's disgust for his mother's infidelity in marrying her husband's brother immediately following his unnatural death and Ophelia's recognition of the queen's lack of faith and humility has to do with these two virtues: fidelity, and humility, which Ophelia loses when her lover flees after killing her father in the presence of the queen. Proof of the Queen's vitriol—if needed—is in one of the most notable quotations from the play-within-a-play (another literary fashioning to catch the queen's "artless jealousy" out): *the lady protests too much, methinks*.⁶ Hamlet designs the Player Queen as desperate to be known as virtuous, when it is clear she is steeped in falsehood as Hamlet sees it: false humility and false fidelity. Hamlet, the audience's stand-in, recognizes his mother and Ophelia as foils. What feminine sin: *Woman, Frailty thy name is*⁷ Hamlet by association attributes wrongly to Ophelia. This nuance of meaning between infidelity (male charge against woman) and faithlessness (woman charge against woman) Ophelia delivers

⁴ Ibid., 43-44.

⁵ Ibid., 42-43. As annotated by Philip Weller, an Eastern Washington University professor of English and Shakespearean scholar, *Shakespeare Navigators*, 1941.

⁶ Ibid., Act III, scene 2, 230.

⁷ Ibid., Act I, scene 2, 146.

through a Christian parable. In other words, without the theological context, this nuance might be lost.

In addition, “as Jan Blits has beautifully shown, the structure of *Hamlet* resembles that of a book of the Hebrew Bible, written as a series of linked rings, showing internal symmetry within each scene as well as overall symmetry between scenes.”⁸ Indeed, a specialized knowledge in theology benefits a critic who finds traces of “the Church Father Tertullian...in the recorder reference in *Hamlet*.⁹ Hamlet uses the same verbiage in teaching Guildenstern to play the recorder as does “the fifth-century bishop St. Paulinus of Nola” in a Latin poem. They both use the word “govern”/ “*regit*” as it applies to the “fingers”/ “*digitis*,” and Hamlet’s instruction to *give it the breath of your mouth*¹⁰ is reminiscent of God giving Adam life by blowing it into him. Eve’s creation, however, is more mysterious. God uses Adam’s rib as a tool and spends the veiled night in creation.

The eponymous male protagonist of *Hamlet*, through false equivalence of the ‘feminine’ sin of infidelity from his mother to his beloved, single-handedly magnifies the suspect death of his father to such a degree that the whole court of Denmark crumbles. Ophelia, recognizing instead Gertrude’s lack of faith, presents it to her within verse and parable, strives to correct the ‘original sin,’ not of the murder of King Hamlet as Hamlet sees it, but the dilemma of choice which Ophelia herself exercises in virtue—like the forbidden fruit given to the woman first, with the man complicit in his silence.

⁸ John Hudson, *Shakespeare’s Dark Lady: Amelia Bassano Lanier: The Woman Behind Shakespeare’s Plays?* Amberley Publishing, 2014, 41.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 127. *Hamlet*, Act 3, scene 2, 348-51).

Gilligan sees women's former "strategies of withholding and denial" in the sex war predating contraception as manifesting itself now as "evasion or withholding of judgement in the moral realm" that reveals "a self-uncertain of its strength, unwilling to deal with consequence, and thus avoiding confrontation." Granted, the sex war postdating contraception is no less murky, when there is a double standard in accessibility, risk, and cost. Contraception for women is both harder to procure and more expensive. Her choices (themselves spiritually immoral in Catholicism) include: the removal of parts (or the whole) of her reproductive system, the routine ingestion of a pill that comes with hormonal fluctuation, or else, the surgical implantation of birth control devices. The female body in this way is more vulnerable not just to transgression (through penetration) but excision.

While one Catholic woman, when asked about her choice to abort in the aftermath of the decision, answered what her priest said: "[the moral factor] is there and it will be from now on, and it is up to the person if they can live with the idea and still believe they are good."¹ Others express "in their resolution of the abortion dilemma, a reconstructed understanding which creates the opportunity for 'a new beginning, a chance to take control of my life.'" Only this "release from the intimidation of inequality finally allows the expression of a judgement that previously had been withheld." This is the willingness to express and take responsibility for judgement stemming from recognition of the psychological and moral necessity for an equation of worth between self and other.² In this way, women goes from traditionally deferring judgement to men, to women who, in interviews, will not even "impose a belief in the value of human life on others, like the

¹ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, 18.

²Ibid., 16.

reluctance to claim one's sexuality."³ The feminine ethics of care versus the male ethics of indelible rights of the individual is a psychological nuance that is useful as an interpretative model for the degree of emphasis put on depictions of male versus female character.

Although Carol Gilligan's *Moral Orientation and Moral Development* is featured in Oxford University Press' 2006 *Theorizing Feminisms, A Reader*, the reader contains no trace of the theological. Included are everything from: *Oppression, Social Construction, Epistemic Position, Humanist Feminism, Contextual Studies, Gynocentric Feminism, The Dominance Approach, Postmodern Feminism, Feminist Identity Politics, Postcolonial theory, Neo-Materialist theory, and Queer Theory*. However, there are redemptive qualities. I will show below what is valuable and still relevant from this Feminist reader of the last century, but also demonstrate what is lacking in them, where, for example, Phyllis Tribble would have been a contemporary text to include and fill the theoretical gaps. I begin with the essay by Iris M. Young, "Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics" which makes the eloquent claim that:

Beauvoir's account of women's oppression depends on the distinction between transcendence and immanence. Transcendence designates the free subjectivity that defines its own nature and makes projects that bring new entities into the world. The free subject moves out into the world, takes initiative, faces the world boldly, creates his own individualized life...Patriarchal culture confines women, on the other hand, to immanence. Immanence designates being an object, a thing

³Ibid., 6-7.

with an already defined nature lined up within the general category of things with the same nature...that restricts women...to being defined as Other.⁴

Specifically, she sees Beauvoir's limitations (as does Daly in *GynEcology*) as engendering woman's homosociality and ethics of care,⁵ when she "defin[es] humanity as transcendence [which] requires setting a human being in opposition to nonhuman objects and in particular nature." Here she makes the same claim as Gilligan when she says: "Thus, risking life and being willing to kill are cardinal marks of humanity for Beauvoir as for Hegel."⁶ Thus, for Young, womanhood means sisterhood, devaluing woman by virtue of her mind, or discursive rationality, to exalt the labors of the heart. "Gynocentric feminism...seek to uncover and throw into question some of the most basic assumptions of the Western tradition of thought of which modern humanism is a part—the distinction between nature and culture, spirit and body, the universal and particular."⁷ Like Nietzsche's criticism of Western culture, it equates phallogocentric thinking as defined by Irigaray with the repression of spontaneity. Gynocentric feminism seems counter-intuitively self-exasperating, when it "warrants the claim that women need liberating in the first place."⁸

Another invaluable and inevitable addition to the reader for students unfamiliar with Feminism is Audre Lorde's—used twice in the reader along with Judith Butler—"Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power." Lorde begins by returning eros to feminine arms, after being "misnamed" by men: "the erotic is a measure between the beginnings of

⁴ Iris. M. Young, "Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics," 1985, 175 as quoted in *Theorizing Feminisms*.

⁵ Ibid., 181.

⁶ Ibid., 177.

⁷ Ibid., 183.

⁸ Ibid., 185.

our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which...we know we can aspire.”⁹ She continues with eros as god, related to the spiritual realm and thus elevated to divinity. She places the locus of eros as originating in Chaos, the domain of the feminine yet which the masculine retreats to when overwhelmed by the domestic sphere. Nina Baym expounds further about male proscription of the domestic as feminine three years later in her article, “Melodramas of Beset Manhood.” However, Lorde goes a step further and dismisses eros as able to survive under “an exclusively European-American male tradition,” a prohibition she bases purely on personal experience.

Finally, Carol P. Christ’s “Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections” is the last text of note in the anthology. In it, Christ identifies pagan primary sources as the source of “political and psychological effects of a newfound love for the divine”¹⁰ in 1978 feminist creative works. God is identified as the subconscious, the locus of spirituality. Female power is housed in the mind and feelings, and only in relation to an ethics of care within the body. Through some ritual to invoke the God inside man and woman, Mary Daly’s thesis in *Beyond God the Father* that: “according to the divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated” is made irrelevant. Female power is human power, and not some sort of magical feminism belonging solely to the female sex, or pagan ‘Goddess.’ Like Audre Lorde, Christ recognizes the friendship between women as a sort of ethical standard to maintain bonds of sisterhood. It is the luxury of hindsight that makes it possible for Phyllis Tribble’s *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* in her close reading of Genesis in its

⁹ Ibid., as quoted in Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” 189.

¹⁰ Ibid., as quoted in Carol P. Christ, “Why Women Need the Goddess,” 212.

original Hebrew to stand as the response and correction of the last pseudo-‘religious’¹¹ text for the Hackett and Haslanger’s *Feminist reader: Alice Walker’s “The Only Reason You Want to Go to Heaven Is That You Have Been Driven Out of Your Mind (Off Your Land and Out of Your Lover’s Arms)”* from 1997. In it, she critiques Genesis’ 3:16 in the epigraph as representative of a tyrannical religious upbringing she sheds for a pagan one. This “misogynous reading [of Genesis] has acquired a status of canonicity.” An example of such a detail “cited as support for traditional interpretations of male superiority and female inferiority” that is nonetheless [in] “accurate and...not present in the story itself” is: “Woman is cursed by pain in childbirth (3:16); pain in childbirth is a more severe punishment than man’s struggle with the soil; it signifies that woman’s sin is greater than man’s. Woman’s desire for man...is God’s way of keeping her faithful and submissive to her husband. God gives man the right to rule over woman.”¹² These are clearly widespread misassumptions, even now, resulting from poor scholarship that does not analyze and contextualize the original Hebrew language in which Genesis was written. This would be easily remedied with the inclusion of Tribble in the reader, and perhaps in future editions this change can be made.

¹¹ Ibid., xvi.

¹² Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 73.

Reverence

There is no Hebrew word for “wife” in the Hebrew Torah.¹ This highlights the inherent tension between woman as wife and woman as mother. The root of Adam’s Hebrew name for Eve (*Havah*)² at the end of Genesis 3 after the Fall, is life, as the Mother of all life, she will mother the child that will crush the head of the serpent.³ Adam first calls the *bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh*, woman, *because she was taken out of man*, in a different vocabulary and syntax than he used in the naming of the animals in Genesis 2:19-20.”⁴ The fact that God addresses Adam “as the one who is ultimately responsible”⁵ after they disobey God, asking him: *Where are you?* “as the first moment of God’s redemptive activity.”⁶ Adam is present during the serpent offering his wife the forbidden fruit,⁷ but is silent. Failing to act, the woman steps forward, like Deborah does

¹ Ruth 2:5: *Whose young woman is this?* Ruth catches Boaz’s eye, and he identifies her as inquiring of whom she belongs (whether father or husband). However, this plurality of relationship reveals that a woman’s identity cannot merely be translated into one role: wife joins virgin, female servant, servant’s daughter, concubine, aunt, niece, or mother.

² Also an expression of the divine feminine as “mother earth.” In this form *Jah* (God) and *Havah* are joined to become Jehovah.

³ Genesis 3:15: *the mother of the redemptive Seed*.

⁴ John Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Genesis*, Zondervan Books, 2001, 3904.

⁵ Joey Cochran, “When Adam Named Eve.” Topics: Genesis 1-3, Leadership, Manhood, CBMW.org, 2013. Available Online: < cbmw.org/2013/11/13/when-adam-named-eve/>.

⁶ Matthew Lee Anderson, *The End of Our Exploring: A Book about Questioning and the Confidence of Faith*, Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013, 42.

⁷ Roland Barthes attests to the knowledge of milk as the vestibule of power as pervasive in contemporary culture, since a “strange mixture of milk and pomegranate...is to this day sometimes drunk in Paris, among gangsters.” Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 61. As Paul Celan says in “Death Fugue,” “Death is a gang-boss” Paul Celan, “Death Fugue,” ln. 27. Jewish scholars believe the pomegranate (from Latin: *pomum* ‘apple,’ *granatus* ‘seeded’) to be the fruit Eve ingests and offers to Adam as the forbidden fruit of Mankind’s fall. Paul Celan upends the same Jewish fugal history of subjugation and ends it with woman, disobedient to the naming of man as superior or inferior.

when Barak fails, and Tamar (No.1) when Judah fails to act. “In Adam we all fall.”⁸ Pope Benedict XVI puts it thusly:

Woman is the mother of all life, whence she receives her name. In my opinion, it is significant that her name is bestowed in Genesis 3: 20 after the fall, *after* God’s words of judgement. In this way the undestroyed dignity and majesty of woman are expressed. She preserves the mystery of life, the power opposed to death; for death is like the power of nothingness, the antithesis of Yahweh, who is the creator of life and God of the living. She, who offers the fruit which leads to death, whose task manifests a mysterious kinship with death, is nonetheless from now on the keeper of the seal of life and the antithesis of death. The woman, who bears the key of life, thus touches directly the mystery of being, the living God, from whom in the last analysis all life originates and who, for that reason, is called ‘life,’ the ‘living one.’⁹

An echo of woman’s innocence: *The Woman was deceived*¹⁰ is only found later in Ophelia’s “I was the more deceived.”¹¹ Ophelia, indeed, is the beginning embodiment of the tension as it evolves between loyalty to and love for herself, loyalty to her father as daughter, and love for her betrothed as wife. This eventually is also confounded by love and loyalty to her children as mother. The Hebrew word for the Edenic land that the many rivers circumvent (*Havilah*)¹² is a pun on the naming of woman that is Adam’s unique characterization of her in relation to him. Thus, women in Genesis are compared

⁸ A poetic re-rendering of 1 Corinthians 15:22: *In Adam we all die.*

⁹ *The Magnificat Rosary Companion*, St. Ignatius Press, 2007, 28.

¹⁰ 1 Timothy 2:13.

¹¹ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 1, 5, 119.

¹² *The Catholic Gift Bible*, 2:10-14: *A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.*

to the paradisaal land watered by four different rivers, which produces the precious metals of gold, onyx, and bdellium (used in perfumes produced by trees related to myrrh). Eve as the first created woman surrenders her obedience to God and as punishment are made subordinate to the male sex.¹³

The female figures of the Bible are perhaps so self-effacing, they appear invisible. In Genesis, “woman is not derived from man, even as the earth-creature [Adam] is not derived from the earth. For both of them life originates from God...both owe their origin to divine mystery.”¹⁴ Tribble is convinced thereby that neither of the sexes are completely autonomous, and this is just an example of one of the reasons a framework of transcendence is necessary in contemporary gender studies, for it makes a claim for woman’s longing to be one with the male in the Fall, or through Adam’s betrayal of the woman, as the reason that can never again happen, and why Adam is complicit in the Fall through his silence. “Built of raw material from the earth creature, rather than from the earth, the woman is unique in creation.”¹⁵ Woman is not made submissive to Adam neither, as Tribble demonstrates: “she does not fit the pattern of dominion that the preceding episodes [in Genesis] have established...to be sure, continuity exists in the oneness of humanity, but here stress falls upon the discontinuity that results from sexual differentiation.” In being God’s material for another creature, the earth creature becomes man, “for the first time *hā-adām* employs direct discourse.”¹⁶ “The lack of the word

¹³ Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Fortress Press, 1978, 128. “The man will not reciprocate the woman’s desire; instead, he will rule over her...The man dominates the woman to pervert sexuality. Hence, the woman is corrupted in becoming a slave, and the man is corrupted in becoming a master. His supremacy is neither a divine right nor a male prerogative. Her subordination is neither a divine decree nor female destiny. Both their positions result from shared disobedience. God describes this consequence but does not prescribe it as punishment.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

curse is a second difference between the judgements upon the woman and those upon the serpent and the man. Having accused the serpent, God cursed him directly...after accusing the man, God cursed him indirectly...[but] the woman is never cursed.”¹⁷ Tribble sees the subject as human disobedience and obedience, making the woman and the man equally culpable, and “mutually responsible.”¹⁸ The making of the woman from the rib of man creates both sexes, and sexuality, characterized by the play made cognate with the creation of humanity earlier in Genesis. “Utilizing a pun on the Hebrew word for woman, *’iššâ*, the earth creature refers to itself by the specific term for man as male, *’iš*.”¹⁹

Women had to learn how to survive in a patriarchal world as mere pawns. In Molly Haskell’s words:

women live longer than men, give birth, endure pain bravely; yet they are ‘the weaker sex’...men too, are victimized by this lie. Secretly, they must wonder how they came to be entitled to their sense of superiority if it is to these ‘inferior’ creatures they owe the debt of their existence. And defensively, they feel ‘emasculated’ by any show of strength or word of criticism from their nominal dependents.²⁰

Paglia sees the modern feminist movement’s ecstatic bond as the yearning for the lost private sphere where generations of women ruled the roost and traded wisdom. She cites Odysseus’ meeting with Nausicaa in Homer’s *Odyssey* as proof of a kind of island of Lesbos, where Amazons reside.

Women demonized by strict ancient Israelite law against pagans and the transgressive—like Lilith, or Jezebel—have or exercise proprietary rights, rule, or

¹⁷ Ibid., 126.

¹⁸ Ibid., 127.

¹⁹ Ibid., 98.

²⁰ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 2.

authority; the feminine ‘Lord:’ Lilith is the profane version of Eve, whore to our mother figure. Her mention is in Isaiah 34:14 when Isaiah describes the apocalypse of the Edomites, infidels and the ancient Israelites’ foes. Edom is forecast to be a chaotic, infertile desert land. It reads: “there too Lilith will repose.”²¹ This suggests another contextual purpose of erasure: the familiarity of the audience with the story or existence of the character such that no explanation of identity or even name is necessary, as with the Elizabethan audience of Shakespeare. Thus, the profane as an entrance to the sacred as Bataille suggests, and an ambiguous moral character like Jezebel in that she is both fertile mother and filicidal. Lilith represents the archetype of warring couple, that underside of marital bliss: “patriarchal authority versus matriarchal desire for emancipation.”²² Both Lilith and Jezebel remain as vacuous symbols of female transgression that seem to be solely reserved as cautionary tales and not as complex individuals stripped of any redemptive arc.

Turning from the profane feminine to the sacred now we begin with Paul’s commended coworker, Priscilla, who taught Apollos, the great preacher.²³ She also co-founded the prophetic Christian sect of the 2nd century with Montanus and Macimilla, the latter of which attained ecstatic visions through fasting and prayer. Phoebe worked in the church.²⁴ Mary, Tryphena, and Tryphosa were the Lord’s workers,²⁵ as were Eudoia and Synthche.²⁶ In Corinthians 11:5, Paul also mentions that women publicly prayed and

²¹ *The Catholic Gift Bible*, 853.

²² Janet Howe Gaines, “Lilith; seductress, heroine, or murderer?” Gaines says the first account of creation is Lilith (Genesis 1:26-29), while the second is of Eve (2 Genesis 18-25.)

²³ *Ibid.*, Acts 18: 24-26, 1246.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Romans 16:1,1272.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Romans 16:6, 1263.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Philippians 4:2-3, 1308. *I urge Euodia and I urge Synthychē to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel.*

prophesied.²⁷ In Matthew 27:55,²⁸ among the women at Calvary, Mary the mother of God is mentioned, as well as Mary Magdalene, which the rest of the group of women, although “many,” are nameless except to say that there are distinct from the “daughters of Jerusalem” (Luke 23:28)²⁹ and were known “minister[s] unto Him” (Luke 8:2, 3). The three sins characterized as feminine as composite in Isaiah 47:1-15³⁰ is: pride of intellect,³¹ rank, and wealth as embodied by Miriam, Michal, and Salome respectively. As Haskell claims: “There is no passageway between the two, between marriage and love. There is no sense of growth and progression, but rather a vicious cycle that relegates woman to the home and a consequent dissatisfaction with herself, a dissatisfaction from which man will be justified in wanting to escape.”³² Such circumstances allow ‘the melodramas of beset manhood,’ or the flight of the male into the wilderness from perceived domestic duties.

Hence, a woman “com[es] to consciousness” in her realization that she has been “played false by the old relationships—marriage, procreation, love affairs—that are always conducted on male terms.” Haskell does see hope for the:

reconciliation of the sexes...but the overtures must proceed from a mutual commitment, and they must be gestures that are open and exploratory rather than proscriptive and judgmental...there are so many habits we need to unlearn—the

²⁷ *The Catholic Gift Bible*, 1280. *Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head.* “Only children, prostitutes, and maenads run about unveiled.” Anne Carson, *Men in the Off Hours*, New York: Vintage Books, 2000, 147.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1139.

²⁹ See “The Daughters of Jerusalem.”

³⁰ *The Catholic Gift Bible*, 867-868.

³¹ John Keats, in his 1818 letter to his brothers, says that humour is superior to wit “in respect to enjoyment,” since rather than conversation that moves the heart to passionate action, it merely startles, and makes men’s characters all alike in their knowledge of decorum. In Nietzsche’s 1885 book, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, he tells of the pride of a great intellect preaching in the public square, a tiny man with a giant ear, what Nietzsche identifies as a false idol, intelligence, “the New Idol,” Chapter XI.”

³² Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape* 22.

constant need, for example, to be sexually validated by the opposite sex—and so many reflexes to overcome: men, their distrust and fear of the professional woman, women, their dislike and distrust of their own sex.³³

In the following chronicle of biblical women, unnamed women like Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's concubine will display a Post-Conventional ethical understanding as opposed to Jephthah and the Levite who have reached stage 2 of ethical development, based on self-interest.

Take Jephthah's daughter, though unnamed, it is not her name, but her ethical choice (sacrifice) negotiated on her own terms, that we remember her by. Jephthah's victory against Ammonites necessitates he keeps his vow to God "whatsoever comes forth from the doors of my house...I will offer as a burnt offering."³⁴ Tribble connects Jephthah's unfaithfulness in God by bargaining instead of having faith in His choice of Savior for the Israelite victory over the Ammonites "about which God has kept silent."³⁵ Jephthah's daughter acts as her own agent (in the absence of one) when bargaining: "the victim assumes responsibility, not for blame but for integrity...[and] uses paternal vocabulary [in a]...request for respite, a time and place apart from her father"³⁶ to lament her virginity with her female friends. Lastly, Tribble remarks upon the postscript which "reemphasizes her barrenness" while at the same time emphasizing her feminine faithfulness as opposed to her father's faithlessness with the Hebraic feminine form of "become:" "Although she had not known a man, nevertheless she became a tradition in

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Phyllis Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 96.

³⁵ Ibid., 101.

³⁶ Ibid., 103.

Israel...From year to year the daughters of Israel went to mourn for the daughter of Jephthah.”³⁷

The unnamed woman, or Levite’s concubine echoes the story of Lot giving up his virgin daughters in Sodom instead of the seraph they demanded to sodomize in Genesis 19. Tribble puts the Israelite law of hospitality protecting only males this way: “no male was to be violated...conflict among them could be solved by the sacrifice of females.”³⁸ The men of Gibah demand the Levite to sodomize. Instead, the old man in the house offers his virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine to appease them, as the Levite is a guest in his house. The old man gave the unappeased men the concubine. She is gang-raped and tortured by them all night. The Levite then drapes her unresponsive body over a donkey and starts home. Once there, he chops her body in twelve pieces and sent to the twelve tribes of Israel, akin to the same practice of declaring war with twelve oxen parts. The story emphasizes the dishonor done the woman, and once again it is the depravity of Sodom and Gibeah who would kill and sodomize the angel and the Levite man who are the wicked ones, and their sin is not gone unpunished, since as a result of the act, Israel goes to war. The ambiguity of whether or not the concubine is dead the following morning after the gang rape protects the reader. The attention given to men intensifies the terror for the women, thus imparting the true terror of the incident. Each incidence of rape described in the Bible is treated to impart the most sympathy upon the woman.³⁹ The ambiguity of whether the Levite kills his concubine before cutting her limbs is again reinforced by the silence of the woman. The twelve pieces of flesh to each tribe of Israel commands them to “direct your heart to her.” For Tribble, “the ambiguity of the

³⁷ Ibid., 106.

³⁸ Phyllis Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 75.

³⁹ *The Catholic Gift Bible*. Judges 19:22, 245.

grammatical forms serves a particular hermeneutical emphasis: to highlight the woman who is the victim.⁴⁰ Four-thousand soldiers question the Levite, who omits his part in giving his concubine to the men of Gibeah as well as killing her. “The Levite fears no retribution.” The tribe of Benjamin to which the men of Gibeah belong are then annihilated, with only six hundred men survive. To compensate for the lack of a tribe, the soldiers attack the town of Jabesh-gilead, murdering all but four-hundred virgins. While still not satisfied, the men of Israel abduct two hundred women as they dance in the yearly festival of Yahweh. “The rape of one has become the rape of six hundred.”⁴¹

Tamar is another example of a woman refusing victimhood: David has three children. Absalom, the third son, Tamar, his daughter, and Amnon, his firstborn. Amnon lusts after Tamar. Jonadb, their cousin tells Amnon to feign illness and request from his father (then a command for his daughter) that Tamar prepare bread for him. “A special verb for making bread...suggests a Hebrew play on the word heart...Tamar preparing the...bread will herself be the desire of Amnon’s heart.”⁴² Tribble recognizes this act that makes Tamar an object of voyeurism. Amnon orders his servants to leave and commands Tamar to bring the food to the bedroom, so he can eat from her hand. He grabs hold of her and commands her to lie with him. She refuses, appeals to the custom of Israel against incest, describes the shame it would bring on her and the folly on him, and then tells him to ask King David, their father. Although Tamar speaks, at this point she is unnamed, “hinting to her powerlessness.” The narration goes: *he did not want to hear her voice*. “To hear might mean repentance.”⁴³ He rapes her and hates her. He sends her

⁴⁰ Phyllis Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 81.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 46.

away, but she refuses “without the fraternal vocative...kinship language has ceased...Tamar understands that expulsion is greater than rape.” Amnon commands the servants to come in and send “this” away...She has become for him a disposable object.”⁴⁴ Absalom hates Amnon and takes his sister into his own house. David is angry but does not rebuke Amnon. Absalom waits two years, then has Amnon murdered while drunk. Absalom flees in exile, and returns after three years, but David refuses to see him. Absalom has three sons and a daughter he names Tamar. Tribble’s repetition of the word ‘hate’ here serves to illustrate how Tamar, although the victim of rape and therefore object of hate, does not herself perpetuate it, as Absalom does in retribution.

Lastly, the two mothers before Solomon illustrate a mother’s Post-Conventional ethical choice for the life of her child over her possession of it. Tribble sees their identification as “harlots” as just that, and “not a judgement.” What is remarkable is that each woman speaks for herself, “speaking directly to the king without intermediaries.”⁴⁵ The two women give birth to sons within three days of each other. Tribble draws attention to the absence of witnesses to corroborate or negate the truth. One son dies at night after his mother crushes him in her sleep, and upon waking, switches her dead son for the other woman’s living one. They go before the king, known for his wisdom, to settle the bespoke crime. Tribble remarks upon how their chiasmic claims entrap them so their “end is their beginning, thus creating a stalemate: “living child, dead child” and vice versa. Solomon “break[s] this egoistic and dualistic thinking” of possession by equating the problem’s absurdity to its solution, by ordering the division of the living child in two. Then, “The women judge themselves,” allowing the mother to prohibit the murder of her

⁴⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁵ Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 31.

child, while the other to sanction its death in petty possessiveness. Tribble shows how “this story builds on the words of its participants,”⁴⁶ and rewards the one driven by an ethical motivation of compassion, or the Hebrew noun *rah^amîm*, the singular *rhm* meaning “womb, or uterus.” In the plural, *rah^amîm* means “compassion, mercy, love”; as a verb *rhm*, “to show mercy.” Thus, the woman’s Post-Conventional ethical understanding moves from “concrete to abstract,”⁴⁷ as opposed to Gilligan’s method of encouraging her subjects to apply moral action from the hypothetical to the real in order to tease the tenor from the vehicle. This is also what literary analysis strives to do.

The female sex, as in Song of Songs, are named after their relationship to their patriarchs: kings, fathers, brothers, sons. They are their brides, widows, mothers, servants, prophetesses, prostitutes, and virgin daughters offered to God, or to the lustful male mobs of Sodom and Gibah in the place of seraphs and male guests. Hence, the abject.⁴⁸ Instead of mere belief in truth, the elect of God *walk* in it, as the ascended prophets and John’s “elect ladies” do.⁴⁹ The history of the human race is bookended by its female agents of death, knowledge, and eroticism: Eve, and its salvation through the fruit of the womb of the Virgin Mary. Whether a woman is the embodiment of humiliation and consciousness of sin (Delilah) or the paragon of virtue and beauty (Judith), each woman embodies the ideals and failings of the female sex.

Sexual immorality is a feature of the “Whore of Babylon,” synonymous with the perennial threat of apostate religions as seen in Revelation. However, the yoking of

⁴⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁸ Julia Kristeva, “Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection.” Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982: “Abject body is abject because it cannot be assimilated into any kind of established order. It cannot become the clean and proper bodies regulated by the symbolic order.”

⁴⁹ See Appendix: “Elect Ladies.”

paganism with sexual voraciousness precedes its embodiment in Revelation in Ezekiel 16 as “God’s faithless bride.”⁵⁰ Ohloah and Oholibah, two sisters who are described as whores defiled by the idols of everyone they lusted after are surrogates for Samaria and Jerusalem’s corruption.⁵¹ Fornication as illicit intercourse is analogous to idolatry as spiritual fornication (Ezekiel 23:37)⁵² as seen in ‘The Great Whore’ and Jezebel. Only in Isaiah 54:6, 7, 62:4, 5, is Israel restored as God’s wife. Only in Song of Songs is a female expression of erotic love for her husband expressed within the context of marriage. Jerusalem is personified in the book of Ezekiel as a woman born of pagan parents, or, settled by pagan nations which David conquers and makes his capital. Solomon, David’s son, then further beautifies Jerusalem as the capital of a unified country. Over time though, the people turn to idols, which Ezekiel compares to a woman who prostitutes herself. Further, Jerusalem’s political alliance with Egypt to help defend against invaders is unsuccessful, and Ezekiel construes it as an unholy sexual union (Ezekiel 2:20-21).⁵³

By way of comparison to the men of the Bible, especially in accounts of Christ at his death, not one woman is mentioned as acting against Christ or mocking him. Instead,

⁵⁰ *The Catholic Gift Bible*. 983. The book of Ezekiel contains the oracles, visions, allegories, and symbolic actions of the priest and prophet Ezekiel who lived during the time of Babylonian exile. His prophecy is marked by visions and ecstasy and various forms of severe maladies, i.e., paralysis of limb and tongue (3:22). He more than any other prophet uses symbolic actions to announce judgements and events. He would perform dramatic actions to make his point or get the attention of his hearers, i.e.: taking a sword to his own hair (5:1-4) or refusing to grieve at the death of his wife (24: 15-27). His most famous vision of dry bones (37:1-4) after the exile of the Jews, announces the coming of a future restoration for Israel rising up out of the ashes of Babylon. This passage is a description of God’s boundless love for woman rescuing her from certain death, entering into a covenant with her, and lavishing her with benefits as a metaphor for Ancient nation of Israel, rife with murderers of innocents and false prophets done in exchange for money and food, worship of idols, being puffed up by fame, trusting in beauty, the sacrifice of children, and “lewdness beyond all your abominations.” Jerusalem’s decay is compared to playing the whore. God exposes ancient Israel for all to see “her adulteries.”

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Ezekiel 23, 993. God gives them to the Assyrians, Babylonians, Pekodians and Chaldeans for whom she lusted, who strip them naked. Oholah is Samaria and Oholibah is Jerusalem, described as more corrupt than her sister in her lust for Babylonian idols, adultery, and murder. Oholibah plays the whore in Egypt, the southmost and therefore the land furthest from God, and them coming from the north, closest to God to set themselves against the wickedness.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 993. Of Oholah and Oholibah: “with their idols have they committed adultery.”

⁵³ *Women of Faith Bible*, 138, 1365.

they weep over Him, following him every step of the way. In Proverbs,⁵⁴ the foreign women that Solomon loved and took as wives from surrounding pagan territories are described as “harlots,” not so much as a profession but as a deterrent to pagan seductresses that felled the last king of a unified Israel. However, it also recounts Tamar (No.1), a thrice widowed woman who disguises herself as a prostitute to seduce Judah—her father-in-law whose marriage was sanctioned by Israelite law but which he refuses—to save the tribe from which Jesus descended from extinction. Putting the double standard of the taboo on secular prostitution aside—Tamar, and not Judah, incited indignance—Israel’s leaders nonetheless praised women’s diligence, piety, and virtues more highly than their beauty. Among some of Solomon’s proverbs about his experience of women are: *Gracious women retain their honour;*⁵⁵ *Lovely women without discretion are like jewels in a swine’s snout;*⁵⁶ *Wise women build substantial homes; foolish women destroy a home;*⁵⁷ and *A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband.*⁵⁸ Deuteronomy is one of the books of law in the old testament along with Exodus (also Jeremiah) in which Phyllis Tribe identifies dialectic changes of meaning through omission and different accents, or degrees of emphasis, to illustrate a thematic solidarity of generations moving from iniquity to loyalty as a renewal of the covenant with God.

However, in discussing how prisoners of war (cattle, women and children) were to be treated, women were not considered to be victims of rape, since the state of war

⁵⁴ Proverbs 2:16; 5:3; 5; 20:16; 23:27; 33.

⁵⁵ Proverbs 11:16.

⁵⁶ Ibid.,11:22.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 14:1.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 12:4. Proverbs 31, the chapter on a virtuous woman is “a eulogy unsurpassed in classical or religious literature” in an acrostic form as a mnemonic device. Mystical interpretations of the virtuous woman interprets it as the law, the church, and the Holy Spirit.

precluded asking the father permission for the daughter.⁵⁹ In addition, captured (raped) women were wed to the conquerors, and thus able to retain their social status instead of working as slaves.⁶⁰ The victor was not able to divorce the woman he married according to law. There was even a ritual waiting period of one month between capture and marriage,⁶¹ firstly to ascertain whether or not the woman was pregnant, and secondly to “cleanse” the woman of her grief and former, often pagan (and thus “savage”) loyalties. Also in Deuteronomy 22: 13,⁶² the laws concerning sexual relations are laid out. The “three laws” protecting “the virgins of Israel” and punishing adultery are as follows:

- I. If evidence of a woman’s virginity is accounted for in a case where a man dislikes his bride and the father of the young woman complains of false charges made by the man against his daughter, the cloth showing her virginity will be laid out before the elders of the town. The elders of the town will then punish the man with a fine of one-hundred shekels of silver to be given to the young woman’s father. In addition, the man will not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives. If, however, the charge against the young woman is true, and no evidence of her virginity is put before the elders, then they will bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father’s house and the men of the town shall stone her to death for the sin of prostituting herself in her father’s house.
- II. If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall be put to death. A man is also not permitted to marry his father’s wife as it dishonors the father’s rights. If a man is caught having sexual relations with a slave, designated

⁵⁹ *The Catholic Gift Bible*, Numbers 31: 25; Deuteronomy 21:10; and Isaiah 13; 156; 183; 832. The Proclamation against Babylon.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Zechariah 14, 1101.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Deuteronomy 21:10–14, 183.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 184-185.

for another man but not ransomed or given her freedom, they will not be put to death, since she has not been freed, but he shall bring a guilt-offering for himself to the Lord and be forgiven.⁶³

- III. If a virgin about to be married is found lying with another man and no evidence of rape is found with her cries heard in the town, both of them will be brought before the gate of the town and stoned. However, if a man meets an engaged woman in the open country and the man seizes her and rapes her, only the man will die, since no one is there to rescue her or hear her cries. But if a man seizes a virgin who is not engaged and rapes her, the man will be fined fifty shekels of silver to be given to the young woman's father and she will become the man's wife. He is not permitted to divorce her as long as she lives.

These laws make it clear that the purity of the state of Israel intolerant of impurity are what is at stake in cases of rape, and social order, as well as the social status of the wronged woman and family is upheld when divorce is forbidden. In the patriarchal ancient world, a young woman was considered the property of her father until she became a wife, where she was then the property of her husband. This does not mean however, he had any formal rights *over* his wife, but from a societal point of view, she owed the male figures in her life unwavering fidelity. This is ironic given that all human beings owe female figures life itself.

⁶³ Ibid., Leviticus 19:20, 110.

Case study: *Woman in the Dunes*

It is important to remember, as Molly Haskell asserted years ago, that any filmic representation of a nude woman, or of a woman undressing, is in modern (or contemporary) America and Western Europe (and I add, in Japan) first and foremost always read in terms of a judgment of its sexual appeal. However, in *Woman in the Dunes*, the shot of the naked woman...is not simply "spectacle." There is a supplementary interpretation of the function of the eroticized woman in *Woman in the Dunes* that emerges out of a more careful reading of the film in its immediate cinematic context. Rather than halting the narrative for a purely aesthetic or erotic function, this employment of the woman's body simultaneously cites and hence comments on the specific, developing visual economy of woman as erotic object in filmic representation.¹

The woman, with the playful display and dialogue using her body as main interlocuter, represents the sacred that can and does exist within the profane. *Woman in the Dunes* is a 1964 film by director Hiroshi Teshigahara with cinematographer Hiroshi Segawa, based on the 1962 existentialist, fabulist novel by Kōbō Abe, through which the erasure method was first introduced to me.² In it, eroticism falls under the erasure method in terms of surrealistic storytelling, in a foreign land where the miniscule is *asserted by a simple pin*,³ but not before nature reveals to a man his ethical purpose of life in pure survival. While Molly Haskell notes that the sixties—or “the last decade”—were a time, at least in the U.S., when the previous cinematographic tropes of romance were ‘raped’

¹ Nina Cornyetz, “Technologies of Gazing in “Woman in the Dunes,” *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, No. 26, 2004, 50. Nina is describing the ‘the 1960s sex-and-erotic-film boom’(35) in Japan.

² Kōbō Abe, 安部公房: *The Woman in the Dunes*. Vintage Books, 1962.

³ T.S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” *Prufrock and Other Observations. The Egoist*. London: 1917, ln. 47.

by “the substitution of violence and sexuality [a poor second].”⁴ While the woman is unnamed in both novel and film, she, like Gertrude, is a widow who, with the villagers help, entraps the stranger to a life of endlessly shoveling sand for two reasons. One, to impregnate her, and two, to stave off the sand from swallowing the village whole. The screenplay Abe wrote for the film is “scarce”—ninety-five pages—the film primarily communicates suspense and dread by the score composed by Toru Takemitsu. According to the director, Takemitsu “involved himself thoroughly in every aspect of a film—script, casting, location shooting, editing, and total sound design.”⁵ Even as a film begins in the collaborative, *auteur* process, the film’s erasure in its sparse subtlety allows the sand itself to dominate the screen, characters, and story. The sand therefore takes on a distinctive musical voice, which Takemitsu embodies instrumentally as a shrill, onerous tone. The woman refuses vocal answer more often than she speaks in the novel and is most stunningly communicative both visually and physically. She surprises Junpei, the entomologist, when they first meet by tickling him. She is also devout in her daily ritual—so much so “that her face seemed bloated”⁶—of stringing beads of black grains and black seed. When Junpei scatters her beads in spite, he receives only a startled look. This domestic habit, along with the equally tedious, Sisyphean task of shoveling sand every night speaks for her from the very outset. She dutifully washes the particles of sand from the man, cooks for him, and has sex in view of the villagers. Their coupling precedes the omniscient or perhaps, Junpei’s, view of the woman as having “lost all desire to escape” after uttering, “Have you gone out of your mind?” the woman suddenly

⁴ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 323.-

⁵ Criterion Collection, *Woman in the Dunes: A Film by Hiroshi Teshigahara*, Spine #394, released 2007.

⁶ Kōbō Abe, *The Woman in the Dunes*, 214. Reminiscent of the Fates.

gasped. “You’ve left your senses. I couldn’t do a thing like that. I’m not sex mad.”⁷ This reversal of ‘losing all desire to escape’ from first the woman, then Junpei, fulfills the book’s fabulist epigraph on Japanese social behavior: “Without the threat of punishment, there is no joy in flight.”⁸ The sand here as looming threat of death suggests that life would not be worth as much if we were not fighting for an existence that day by day means struggling in vain against mortality.

⁷ Ibid., 231.

⁸ Ibid., iii.

Rape

Be not ashamed women...your privilege encloses the rest...and is the exit of the rest,/ You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the soul./The female contains all qualities and tempers them...she is in her place.../she moves with perfect balance,/She is all things duly veiled.—“I Sing the Body Electric,” Walt Whitman¹

When a woman puts off her tunic, she puts off her modesty also. —Herodotus, The Histories of Herodotus, 1. 8.

Both Camille Paglia and Molly Haskell tackle that which most people look away from: the topic of rape, so disruptive as to throw a psyche from sexual security into mental “widowhood.”² There is a “complex interplay of fear and desire by which women respond to the image of rape.”³ Character, masculine or feminine, is forged through undergoing tests where the risks are real.⁴ In the kill-or-be-killed pagan world of *The Faerie Queene* and modern war of the sexes, “the ability to fend off rape is a prerequisite for the ideal [and complete] female psyche.”⁵ Camille Paglia recognizes the naïve girl,

¹ Walt Whitman, “I Sing the Body Electric,” *Leaves of Grass*, Eakins Press, 1855, 80, 96-97. Still speaking of the female in terms that evoke the Virgin Mary: as “the bearer of the great fruit which is immortality/...the good thereof/ is not tasted by roues, and never can be,” 105-107. Roues here has a double meaning of roué, an elder debauched man, and roue, unaccented: a simple, sentimental song in praise of honor of God. Whitman here seems to discount the two extremes as unable to corrupt the incorruptible, i.e.: the Sinless Virgin and her son, the Savior Jesus, as embodied by pure femininity. Again, the sacred feminine is not to be found in hedonism or abandon to sensuality, nor too in empty praises of God made without feeling and love.

² See Appendix: “Ten concubines of David.”

³ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, 186.

spiritually empty of personality and will as the successful target of rape by churls¹ in *The Faerie Queene* driven purely by power. Embodied in the figure of Florimell, unarmed victim whose series of “narrow escapes from disaster are sheer melodrama; they are not self-won or spiritually paid for.”² The rapist, according to Paglia, “has not undergone the feminizing refinement of social life. Due to his failure to incorporate a feminine component, he pursues fleeing, malleable femininity with a headlong ferocity that is hunger for self-completion.”³ On the other hand, while men might long for the womb, women are caught between the naïve desire to be loved without any expectation to reciprocate

and her sexual drive, brute and impersonal, demanding to be ravished

“anonymously,” that is, taken without asking, almost unawares, so that she will

¹ “Just as for Kierkegaard's seducer the girl's naive grace, her spontaneous erotic power is merely a myth, which issues tainted only so that it can be annihilated (perhaps he loves her, but in the suprasensual realm of seduction the girl is but the mythical figure of a sacrifice); similarly, for the seductress, the power of man's desire is a myth that she uses in order to both evoke and destroy it. The seducer's artifice, directed at the girl's mythical grace, is fully equal to the seductress' artificial reworking of her body, which is directed at the man's mythical desire. In both cases the mythical power, whether the power of grace or desire, is to be reduced to nothing. Seduction always seeks to overturn and exorcize a power. If seduction is artificial, it is also sacrificial. One is playing with death, it always being a matter of capturing or immolating the desire of the other. Seduction, by contrast, is immortal. The seductress, like the hysteric, wants to be immortal and live in an eternal present -much to everyone's astonishment, given the field of deception and despair in which she moves, and given the cruelty of her game. But here she survives because outside psychology, meaning or desire. What destroys people, wears them down, is the meaning they give their acts. But the seductress does not attach any meaning to what she does, nor suffer the weight of desire. Even if she speaks of reasons or motives, be they guilty or cynical, it is a trap. And her ultimate trap is to ask: ‘Tell me who I am’—when she is indifferent to what she is, when she is a blank, with neither age nor history. Her power lies in the irony and elusiveness of her presence. She may be blind to her own existence, but she is well aware of all the mechanisms of reason and truth people use to protect themselves from seduction; and she is aware that from behind the shelter of these mechanisms they will nonetheless, if handled correctly, let themselves be seduced. ‘I am immortal,’ in other words, relentless. Which is to say that the game must never stop, this even being one of its fundamental rules. For just as no player can be greater than the game itself, so no seductress can be greater than seduction. None of the vicissitudes of love or desire can be allowed to break this rule.” Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 86-88.

² Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, 187. Florimell's “lack of sexual complexity allows a knock-off copy of her to be easily fabricated by the witch-hag” who creates a “False Florimell...because of her psychologically embryonic state, Florimell's identity is quickly invaded and occupied by a daemonic hermaphrodite.”

³ *Ibid.*, Paglia attributes sadism to the naïve rape victim's masochism, and since “nature abhors a vacuum,” “the rapist vainly strives to obliterate his opposite.” See Appendix for victims of rape as entering “the widowhood of life” in the aftermath.

neither be held responsible for her surrender nor bound by it afterward. (Even today, studies show that an amazing number of modern women neglect to prepare themselves with contraception, indicating that women still like to think of sex as a seduction rather than a partnership. The reluctance of women to take responsibility for sex⁴ would seem a prime factor in perpetuating the stereotype of a dominant, active male and the submissive, passive female.⁵

Molly Haskell sees women's "need to possess [as] result[ing] from a spiritual and intellectual appetite that was largely frustrated by society." Ideal love Haskell equates to the ultimate ideal of humanity: Christ: "men and women are meant to rise above their selfish and conditional identities, their petty possessiveness, in a transcendental union of the souls."⁶ Like Mary Daly, Haskell sees the danger of the ideal in being 'untouchable' so to speak, with the exception of working towards the ideal through social change⁷ beginning with the justification of individual faith as well as doubt. In other words, if men and women can see past sexual differentiation and intercommunicate their creative divinity.

In order to avoid Mary Daly's critique of the idealization of women, while at the same time recognizing the necessity of faith—not to usher in women's liberation, but for a woman to feel fulfilled in her own right, perhaps even to reconcile her multiple identities (girl, daughter, niece, mother, partner, wife, lover, grandmother, great-grandmother, widow) with her given ethical framework—we must adopt Gilligan's

⁴ Precisely what Eve refrains from doing when she accepts the forbidden fruit from the snake in the Garden of Eden. Although, ironically, the knowledge that it brings with it causes her and Adam to hide in shame from God's omniscient knowledge of her act, which cancels out the impulse to take the fruit and offer it to her male counterpart in the first place. Knowledge, however terrible, is meant to be shared collectively.

⁵ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 166.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁷ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, 180.

approach of constructing moral conflicts from hypothetical characterizations (as archetypes like those in film which Haskell analyzed) to daily life.

William Blake sets up the archetype of innocent simplicity without teeth (sainthood reduced to passive virtue as a paradigm in the secular world is not yet shaken by Jesus baring his teeth in biblical Cleansing of the Temple of the gospels, since Jesus is not a saint, but God incarnate) as occasioning *the rough beast...slouching towards Bethlehem* and the *rocking cradle*.⁸ Erich Fromm describes Blake's cosmology in his prophetic books as: "For the authoritarian character there exist, so to speak, two sexes: the powerful ones and the powerless ones."⁹ Power determined survival in the primitive world, just as power, not sex, has always been the motivation behind crimes of rape. In "Infant Joy," Blake lays out the simplicity of innocence as a "infancy of consciousness" that is threatened by a "Rousseauist vacuum into which Sadean nature is about to rush."¹⁰ In other words, idealized nostalgia is by its very design destined to be stripped bare at the violent will of perversity which takes pleasure in pain. Nature is not passive according to Blake and De Sade. While De Sade revels in the perversity of this fact, Blake marks it as the end of innocence. According to Jean Baudrillard, de Sade is among the 'impure seducers,' who wish to exorcise female fecundity, "seduc[ing] for pleasure without attaining what Kierkegaard considered the 'spiritual' dimension of seduction." Extant even in primitive societies, the woman is the sacrificial lamb for the man's suppression of the "female's 'natural' advantage of seduction."¹¹ Here Baudrillard recognizes, as the Ancient Greeks did, the cultural and ritual delineation of the female boundary, in that

⁸ W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming," 158, 20-23.

⁹ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, 273.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 100-101.

ancient civilizations saw a need to create one for females in order to contain their excesses. Instinctive reactions are nothing but impulse and so cannot be moral. (amoral=animal). Freud's major contribution was the Oedipal mother as the devouring mother as the image of the maternal instinct in both its benevolence and danger. According to Julia Kristeva, giving birth "does not successfully reestablish that continuous relation prior to individuation because the infant invariably suffers the prohibition on incest and is separated off as a discrete identity."¹² In the case of the mother's separation from the infant, the result is melancholy for both, for the separation is never fully completed, a possible explanation for postpartum depression. Thus, the maternal body as monstrous is due to the internalization of the woman's identity as negation, a characteristic lack.

Elision in which one sex is featured and prominent, while the other is seemingly omitted or confined to a fixed role would be a glaring textual absence if degree of emphasis were not a factor. Instead, the seemingly unreal feats of faith only serves to heighten the courage, faith, resourcefulness, and humility of these women. Women transcended their mere economic value as wives and mothers to become beacons of revered womanhood. Even a transgressive woman, through a single redemptive act, or the better choice between evils, is immortalized. The deceptive absence (absence that is understated presence) of the feminine serves only to magnify their necessity as stewardesses that supersede that which is present through their procreative ability. Like stagehands in black garb, women are history's waitresses in the wings. But that which is absent lingers long after the eyes leave the page. It is akin to Kant's idea of the movement

¹² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, 1990, 84.

of the mind when contemplating art, as well as the silence with which we meet the sacred and sublime.

Woman is veiled. Violent tearing of this veil may be a motive in gang rapes and rape-murders....Sex crimes are always male, never female, because such crimes are conceptualizing assaults on the unreachable omnipotence of woman and nature.¹³

Anne Carson describes how “the institution of marriage was regarded as ushering civilization out of chaos, of female promiscuity at random to defining patrilinear descent. The ancient wedding ritual undertook, systematically to redeem woman from her original roughness...and to purify her of chaos by dramatizing and reinforcing female boundaries.”¹⁴ The ancient Greeks were as preoccupied with names and renaming as a defining quality as well as a significant allusion to an important circumstance in the career or character¹⁵ as the ancient Hebrews were in the Bible. Just as God is described as despising traversing of the boundaries He appointed for man (Ecclesiastes 7:13)¹⁶, the ancient Greeks and Hebrews feared crossing the boundaries of men and of Apollonian man so much, they covered it up and ordered it within a societal hierarchy when they saw it in their counterpart, the female. Hence, the monstrous feminine so pervasive in Greek myth. The climax of the ancient Greek wedding ceremony is the unveiling of the bride facing her bridegroom, separated with females on the left, and males on the right.

¹³ Camille Paglia, *Free Women, Free Men: Sex, Gender, Feminism*, 33.

¹⁴ Anne Carson, *Men in the Off Hours*, New York: Vintage Books, 2000, 148.

¹⁵ Huw Spanner, “Third Way,” Third Way Trust Ltd, September 1993, Vol 16. No. 7. Middlesex, England: St. Peter’s, 1933, 96.

¹⁶ *Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked? The Catholic Gift Bible* 725.

This echoes the idea in Hans Memling's triptych *The Last Judgement* of sinners entering hell on the left while on the verso side, the saved enter the gates of heaven. Hence, the denunciation of Jezebels, Delilahs, and Salomes, as well as the Whore of Revelation. The Whore of Babylon represents the idea that ecclesiastical power¹⁷ (corrupt by its very possession of power) is overthrown—literally dismounted from her beast—by civil power. The injunction is given: “Thy shall hate the whore.”¹⁸ It is only when the angel directs John in his vision to “Write this,” that: “I will show thee” turns into “I will tell thee” (Revelation 1-7). John promises the angel he will reveal the “Mystery” of the antichrist to mankind. Ergo, it is only in the explanation as it moves from: the mouth of God, through an angel, to the prophet, through a vision that it is made eternal through the writing of it. The ancient act of prophesying vision (show) to telling a story has been made obsolete and reversed in the modern world: show, do not tell. But if showing is the tenor, telling is the vehicle.

The Ancient Greeks were right to fear the boundary-less woman, akin to the moral relativism in which the world turns entirely profane, without any limits at all. A code of transcendence is therefore necessary for a socialized individual, theological or otherwise. According to Rousseau, while the Sciences trains the threat of moral relativism at humanity, art poses the physical threat of opulence, fostering corrupt ideas

¹⁷ Ibid., “Rome was the mistress of the world,” John wrote. By the reference to a golden cup, which is traced on medals with the self-condemning inscription—*Sedet super universum*—[He sits above the universe.]”

¹⁸ Ibid., Revelation 17:7-14, 1370. Four phases of the Beast (civil power) history are explained to John. In four, brief, crisp sentences John hears the course and consummation of the greatest empire in the world: “was,” “is not,” “out of the abyss,” and “go into perdition.” This is a neat summary of the events of the Apocalypse as well with The Judgement that ends with the marriage of the Church and Christ at the supper of the Lamb in Heaven. Revelation 19:7-9: *The marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride is made ready...and the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These are true words of god.’”*

of moral conduct.¹⁹ Perhaps, then, art is the method through which to correct the pseudo-moral, through a rigorous interpretive method which reverses the ‘science’ of the moral one. In other words, instead of moving from abstract ethical reasoning to the personal, the interpretive method uses the material to reach the ephemeral.

Seduction has traditionally been considered a woman’s art. Although Baudrillard worships a kind of abstracted, “true seduction” in its execution of the ‘perfect crime,’ which artists refuse to commit; that is, “saying nothing.”²⁰ Seduction is characterized by its theatrics, and for Baudrillard a single seductive act is simultaneously “a conspiracy of power; a sacrificial form; a murder, and ultimately, the perfect crime; a work of art; a stroke of wit or a flash of inspiration: a ‘spiritual economy.’”²¹ The characterization of stroke of genius infers a game matrix, or, a duel of allusions. Perhaps ‘spiritual economy’ here means the ritualized code of illicit love, a code the lover presents, and the beloved must crack. The tantalization of the covert is present in the erotic even when the love is perfectly moral. “One might also consider ancient Chinese ideas on sexuality, according to which the male, by maintaining the orgasm in suspense, draws into himself the power of the female yang.²² Here women have the physiological advantage in potential successive orgasm, but the amorous disadvantage that craves beyond what discrete excitation and release can satisfy.

The delay of the male masturbatory act characterizes “delight at the seduction’s deferment...it is like fencing: one needs a field for the feint.” The key to understanding Baudrillard’s nullifying artistic ideal is in the deferment that seduction hinges on. There

¹⁹ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *First Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*.

²⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 112.

²¹ *Ibid.*,

²² Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 100-101.

is no pleasure without the hunt. Indeed, Baudrillard characterizes the seduced who give in to their seductor by the same naïveté that turned virgins of Greek mythology into flowers: “thereby [they] achiev[e] a vegetative and lugubrious grace, the echo of the seduction grace of their first life.” To Kierkegaard’s seducer, then, a woman is infantilized into girlhood by seduction’s “sublime”²³ nature to neither offer nor take; act nor react. By the same token, the seducer then only exists by his power (the motive for rape) to destroy the woman’s active life.

Beyond the three core theorists of Gilligan, Haskell, and Tribble, Paolo Coelho and Georges Bataille contribute to the conversation around the sexes. Naïve innocence is morally empty, nameless, mute, given an identity by “somasochistic tenderness.”²⁴ This is Coelho’s definition of the battle of the sexes: Men are vulnerable, chasing sex as society tells them they should in order to embody that vague notion called ‘masculinity,’ which, when challenged, must be proven. Women on the other hand, Coelho puts forward (echoing Molly Haskell), in their romanticism of marriage and sex, believe they should not have to say, for fear of spoiling the fantasy of love as seduction.

Georges Bataille puts the perversity of man in a universal sense, as the will-to-seduction in Erotism:

Eroticism is a sterile principle representing Evil and the diabolic...seduction is often aimed at the erotic rather than the genital. The obsessive element in temptation is what the religious fears. His aspirations to divine life are translated

²³ Ibid.,117.

²⁴ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, 272-273. Citing Milton Kessler’s poetic analysis of Blake’s “Infant Joy.”

into the desire to die to himself, thenceforth everything perpetually changes before his eyes, each element continually transforming itself into its opposite.²⁵

Bataille seems here to describe 14th century mystic John von Ruysbroeck's God-seeing stage, where every material thing is touched with the fingertip of God. Contradicting Ruysbroeck, however, is Bataille's assertion that "human sensuality in its loftiest form, in the way the Carmelites [take it]...is something intended by God."²⁶ Indeed, the body is not corrupt, but corruptible.

The paradigm of the incorruptible Virgin represents the eternal, ideal triumph of innocence over the profane perversity which seems to rule the mundane. While nonetheless bearing the death of her son, the thoroughly Incarnate Savior, she also bears witness to the corruption of the world. Perhaps the pinnacle of profane perversity is rape, which, besides aging them prematurely, propels the victims into a 'no-man's land,' unable to be regulated to a social place—what King David calls: "the widowhood of life" in the aftermath of the social, spiritual, mental, and physical transgression.²⁷ Naïve innocence is not benign in a world of profane perversity which allows for that innocence to be taken by force and the selfhood of the person replaced with shame and powerlessness. Perhaps the function of the varied forms of artistic storytelling is, in this case, to arm young girls against the seduction of succumbing to victimization. Humanity turns to the mythmaking of its predecessors, whether theological or merely literary, to trace collective understanding of ourselves as it has evolved through time and technology, and the relationships between us as two diverse sexes which are perhaps

²⁵ Georges Bataille, *Erotism, Death, & Sensuality*, San Francisco: City Lights, 1957, 230-1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

²⁷ *The Catholic Gift Bible*, 2 Samuel 1:16; 16:2; 20:3; 285; 301; 305.

timeless. As long as we are human, we are bound to an ethical standard: to resist the sadism of animal instinct and to worship an ideal greater than ourselves.

While Molly Haskell does not explicitly analyze religious films, she does mention the religious characteristics of pious femininity. Of Kitty Shcherbatskaya, modeled on Tolstoy's wife, Haskell sees a plethora of ideal traits: docility, sureness, instinct, "a natural meeting place of religious faith, family feeling, and feminine intuition."²⁸ While she does mention *Anna Karenina* as film lacking the novel's nuance of character with its analysis of "country + city; society+ art+ religion,"²⁹ in favor of the cult of leading lady, Haskell also applies the word to the classical European, "biological view of women, always framed from a male perspective"³⁰ that characterizes the work of Bergman, Godard, Pabst, and Fellini. To the American filmmaker too, or "producer of antiseptics[,] it becomes a matter of both religious and professional honor to sanitize what it cannot dispense with,"³¹ like sex. In this respect, Haskell sees the strict censure of the Production Code of Hollywood as a friend to the "'wife' in a society without the social and religious safeguards of marriage common to older societies and without their institutionalized escape valves."³²

Like most cinephiles, Haskell sees the 1950s "split between movies as 'entertainment' and movies as 'art'...[as] destroy[ing] the faith: that belief in their fictions and fables by which the movies touched base with millions of viewers and had the authority of received religion." If films are Haskell's religion, reflecting society's image of women, she, like Mary Daly, wants to save women from the idealization and

²⁸ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 283.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

³² *Ibid.*, 124.

denigration man makes of her. Haskell even identifies film as the “only national religion America had ever known.”³³ Indeed, the typecasting of roles for an actress’ career transitioning from maudlin to serious (“glamour-girl to self-reliant woman...the progression is not reassuring, for it tells us that a woman can’t be both feminine and successful”) is akin to a “religious commitment.”³⁴ Haskell then traces “the emphasis on orgasmic sex” of the 1960s to the “phallic philosophy of D.H. Lawrence.”³⁵ This specific profane religion:

like [in] the religion of Christ, men and women are meant to rise above their selfish and conditional identities, their petty possessiveness, in a transcendental union of souls. And yet the effect is to reinforce male superiority; the phallus acts as a totem to strike fear and awe in the woman (and appease man’s fear and awe of the womb) and distract women from their spiritual quest.³⁶

Speaking of Catholic directors specifically, woman “is an intermediary, a half-human, half-divine go-between between man and God, or between whatever extremes present themselves...this is a traditional view of woman’s temperament...between madness and idealism...the sweet small voice of reason.”³⁷ In films like these, a woman’s intuition is their “holy function,” and casts them as visionaries. This link between miracles, and the feminine, thus brings the idea of the Immaculate Conception closer to earth. It is in the eye of the traditional religious director that the virgin and whore, an otherwise irresolvable dichotomy, can coexist within the same role.

³³ Ibid., 234.

³⁴ Ibid., 178.

³⁵ Ibid., 340.

³⁶ Ibid., 341.

³⁷ Ibid., 122.

Case Study: Lot's wife

In Genesis 19:17, seraphs explicitly “urge” Lot to gather his relatives and flee the city, as they are sent by God to destroy it. Lot warns his sons-and-law, but they do not take his warning seriously. In the morning, the seraphs once more tell Lot: *Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the city.*¹ When read within the biblical context, i.e.: the parables concerning salt shed light on the punishment reserved for Lot's wife for faithlessly disobeying Yahweh's direct orders after mercifully sparing their lives. Like Jephthah's daughter, Lot's wife is remembered not for her name, but her fateful transgression.

- Exodus 30:34-5: *The Lord said to Moses: Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (an equal part of each), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy.*
- Leviticus 2:13: *You shall not omit from your grain-offerings the salt of the covenant with your God; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.*
- Judges 9:45: *Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city and killed the people that were in it; and he razed the city and sowed it with salt.*
- 2 Chronicles 13:5: *Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship of Israel for ever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt.*

¹ Ibid., Genesis 19:23.

- Psalms 107:33-4: *He turns rivers into a desert, /sprigs of water into thirsty ground /fruitful land into salty waste,/because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.*
 - Job 39:5-6: *'Who has let the wild ass go free? /Who has loosed the bonds of the swift ass, to which I have given the steppe for its home,/the salt land for its dwelling place?*
 - Jeremiah 17:5-6: *Thus says the Lord:/Cursed are those who trust in/more mortals/and make flesh their strength, /whose hearts turn away from/the Lord. //They shall be like a shrub in/ the desert, /and shall not see when relief/comes./They shall live in the parches places/of the wilderness,/in an uninhabited salt land.*
 - Ezekiel 16:4: *As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt.*
 - Ezekiel 43:24: *You shall present them before the Lord, and the priests shall throw salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the Lord.*
 - Matthew 5:13-14: *You are the salt of the earth; but if salt loses its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot.*
 - Mark 9:49-50: *'For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.'*
- Colossians 4:6: *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.*

The last three edicts concerning salt from the New Testament in particular lead one to equate salt with fidelity, particularly religious faith. Thus, Lot's wife, when glancing back as if in doubt, is punished with the *contrapasso* of collapsing into a pillar of the thing she lacked. These gospel accounts of salt are headed under: *Temptations to Sin*. All accounts agree that, in the ancient world, salt was sacred. Its chemical properties allowed for preserving fresh meat. It is symbolic of a life-giving ingredient. The converse of life is therefore contaminated with other particles, making it bland and useless. The New Testament, particularly Luke, made commensurate impurity and loss of sustenance with sin and lack of discipline. Lot's wife lacked the discipline to resist the urge to 'look back' in longing for something better destroyed. Here, as in Acts 2:3, the Holy Spirit is the vehicle of fire, while the tenor is salt. In the New Testament, especially Colossians 4:6, salt is representative of the sacred covenant made between God and mankind. In an ironic *contrapasso*, Lot's wife is transmuted into the inanimate sacred bond she profaned by direct disobedience. Transgression at its earliest was characterized as feminine (as with Lilith and Jezebel). The pillar of salt named after the wife of Lot to identify her as extant at Mt. Sodom in Israel is understood both in Genesis 19— as well as a pillar of fire in Exodus—to be the manifestation of God on earth. The pillar as a vertical structure similar to the ladder marks the religious catabasis of a celestial creator down to earth, while also conjuring images of the suicides in Dante's *Inferno* as trees.¹ Lest we forget, in Judges 16:20-31, Samson destroys the temple pillars and dies with the Philistines (Delilah) who bound him, while Christ was also scourged at the pillar.

¹ Dante, *Inferno*, Canto XIII. Suicide is essentially self-murder.

Conclusion

Three ethical, interpretive methodologies: one clinical or psychoanalytic, one cinematic, and the last biblical are spoken for by Gilligan, Haskell, and Tribble successively have been applied to three erasurist females and their texts: Ophelia and Gertrude from *Hamlet*, the woman from *Woman in the Dunes*, and Lot's wife from Genesis 19. The Christian dialectic that has been critiqued as too clean of a contrast between sacred and profane merely demarcates the space between an ideal and a transgression—a space which begets suffering. This is the tension, strongest in the feminine psyche, between purity and shamelessness, that is here universal. First comes the transgression (rape), which etymological meaning doubles for the violent crime of abduction, or theft. Identity and autonomy are taken from the transgressed, who must then reclaim the reverence lost.

While Tribble's hermeneutic interpretative method, grounded in the methodology of rhetorical criticism,¹ analyzes the biblical vehicle of a given tenor in order for the archetypes of women to be ethically instructive, Gilligan's clinical approach to ethical development reverses the ordering from abstract to the real. Nonetheless, using an interpretive method allows the metaphors of ideal and transgressive womanhood in a given medium (here the Bible and film via Haskell) to be processed by modern women. The necessity for humanity to adhere to and continually update their ethical standard is

¹ Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 8.

one by which we live and die, whether within a justice framework or an ethics of care, or both. The timeless archetype of the virgin and the whore, an otherwise irresolvable dichotomy, coexists within the same psyche, and, thanks to these 20th century texts, can rest so naturally.

At the risk of restatement, then, is the tenor of this thesis repeated once more: naïve innocence is not benign in a profane world perverse enough to allow innocence to be taken by force and the selfhood of the person replaced with shame and powerlessness. The function of the varied forms of interpretive methods in the framework of identity, is, in this case, to arm young girls against the seduction of succumbing to victimization. Humanity turns to the mythmaking of its predecessors, whether theological, psychological, or merely literary, to trace collective understanding of ourselves as it has evolved through time and technology, as well as the timeless relationships between us as diverse sexes. As long as we are human, we are bound to an ethical standard: to resist the sadism of animal instinct and to worship an ideal greater than what we are:

“Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.”¹

¹ Act IV, Scene V, ln. 42 *Hamlet*.

Appendix: Biblical Women

1. **The parabolic Eve:** Matthew Henry's comment on Eve: 'If man is the head, woman is the crown, a crown to her husband, the crown of visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was double-refined, one remove further from the earth....the woman was *made of a rib out of the side of Adam*, not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be beloved.' Eve is penitent for her (righteous?) disobedience of God.¹⁶⁹

2. **Daughters of Men:** these *mighty men, giants, and men of renown*, begotten sons of God ('men of the name YHWH (*vuvh*) from the Hebrew 'to be' are the fallen angels cast out of heaven (2 Peter 2:4,5) and forced to couple with 'strange flesh' (Jude 6,7) or earthly, godless women of Sodom and Gomorrah that necessitated a flood to wipe them out. The one-time occurrence of this travesty of seraphim are named *Nephilim* in Hebrew, *nep* meaning Fall, and *-hilim* meaning aborted ones (suggesting that they should have been?) See Jude 1:6, 1357: *And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgement of the great day.*¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Matthew Henry, "Genesis," *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1706.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Genesis 6:1-8, 5. Exodus 3, Jay A. Holstein, "Quest for Human Destiny."

3. Ten concubines of David: David leaves ten of his concubines in Jerusalem to keep his house, but Absalom, third and favorite son of David, following the counsel of Ahithophel, rapes the women who cannot resist or flee in a tent on top of the roof. The prophet Nathan prophesies that the nature of David's punishment would correspond to his adultery with Bathsheba. When David returns after the death of Absalom, he keeps the concubines as 'widows in the widowhood of life,' having no sexual contact with them. Widows by nature of their separate class and name (like orphans) always represent something that have lost their principle that unifies them. Hence, there are outsiders, or strangers on the outliers of the family hierarchy and identity, disconnected from it.

4. Martha and Mary: Mary sits at the Lord's feet and listens while her sister Martha works. The Lord answers her, 'Martha, Martha, you are distracted by many things, there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.' In *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the author devotes a chapter to Marthas as 'actives' who complain of Marys as 'contemplatives,' of which ignorance is the cause. The author comes to the same conclusion as Jesus' suffering on the cross, *Forgive them, for they know not what they do.*¹⁷¹

5. The Woman of Samaria: Bishop Barron calls this woman, 'the first evangelist,' as the embodiment of the Church and simplest definition of

¹⁷¹ Ibid., Luke 10:38-42, 1179. *The Catholic Gift Bible (NRSV)*, Luke 23:34, pg. 1196.

evangelism as: ‘one beggar telling another where to find bread,’ or satisfaction. To put it another way, the proper response to one who tells you everything you’ve ever done, and yet, still wants to marry you; or unify his divinity to your insufficiency; is Jesus. He is beyond time, he existed in the past, is with us invisibly in the present, and we wait His Second Coming to join him eternally in the re-embodiment of the Last Judgement. Bishop Barron explains John’s imbuelement of his parables with meaning on every level of analysis, including place and time where the story takes place. Jesus, instead of avoiding Samaria as was Jewish custom, considering the land ‘unclean’ as the Samaritans themselves as ‘hybrids’—half-Jews between the Northern region of Galilee, where he was born, and the southern region of Judea; goes straight into Samaria, to a city called Sicchar, where Jacob’s well was given to Joseph. He calls her a ‘triple outsider,’ with multiple husbands, living with someone who is not her husband, and thus a well-known sinner who everyone avoids, indicated by her coming to the well at noon, the hottest time of day, alone, without the usual group of women. In the ancient Near East, the well was a well-known trysting place for women to find husbands. Hence, Jacob and Rachel looking at a well for a wife for Isaac and finds Rebekah. Jesus, by waiting at the well, signifies he is looking for a bride. Hence, the woman represents the Church as his bride, in all her human insufficiency and sin. In this way are all sacraments of the Church trysting places, Barron insists, where Christ offers marriage of the flesh to the spirit (in the same way the Prodigal son’s father puts a ring on his son’s finger). Barron emphasizes the

first command and word Jesus speaks to the woman as ‘Give;’ a double social transgression at the time for a man to speak to a woman publicly, and a Jew to speak to a Samaritan, let alone ask for a drink. If Jesus corresponds symbolically to the head, then the church is His mystical body, the incarnate *Logos* clothed in human flesh. Barron explains the command as belonging to the counter-intuitive laws of spiritual life that Pope John Paul II recognized as ‘the law of gift.’ The first tenet explains its counter-intuitiveness when 1. ‘your being increases in the measure that you give it away. II. God alone satisfies the soul, since He made us for Himself, and ‘our hearts are restless till it rests in Him.’ God is the Supreme example of the embodiment of love that increases the more He gives it, and the more we yield to it. This God Himself describes as a human insatiableness for love that created us in *The Dialogue*.¹⁷²

- 6. Elect Ladies:** John speaks of two women, likely converts: ‘The elect lady’ and ‘thy elect sister.’ ‘Lady’ itself only occurs four times (Isiah 47:5; 7; 2 John 1; 5), while its plural occurs two (Judges 5:29; Esther 1:18). ‘Lady’ as John used it: *kuria*, was rarely used even to address queens. Her high character, coupled with her familial connections, makes her ‘chosen in the Lord.’ (Romans 16:13; 1 Peter 1:1; 2). This suggests that the nobility (and the

¹⁷² Ibid., John 4:7, 1202. Robert Barron, “The Mercy of God,” YouTube, 2016, Available online: <[youtube.com/watch?v=hliQzpI_c50](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hliQzpI_c50)>. Augustine, *Confessions*, OUP Oxford, 2008, 3.

lack of it) as a class was still a factor in moral judgement at this time. The Roman Catholic Church refers to the Virgin Mary as 'Our Lady.'¹⁷³

- 7. The Shulamite:** as in Paul Celan's fugue 'Todesfugue,' or 'Death Fugue,' Shulamite is the embodiment of Jewish maidenhood sacrificed by Nazism: "your ashen hair Shulamite" (lines 16; 28; 44).

¹⁷³ Ibid., 2 John 1-13, 1355.

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