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ABSTRACT

The Femme Fatale:
A Recurrent Manifestation of Patriarchal Fears

This thesis examines how and why the representation of the femme fatale is constructed and recycled by a dominant patriarchal ideology throughout history by outlining the catalysts that have produced and continue to produce such a figure. The image of the femme fatale is utilised as an ideological contrivance, occurring in the cultural discourses of various historical epochs in an attempt to quell any social change considered to be threatening to the patriarchal infrastructure. Massive improvements in women's social, political and/or economic position produce stress points in the historical continuum which destabilise previously clearly demarcated sex roles and other boundaries thereby provoking a response from the dominant ideological network through its institutions (legal, governmental, religious) and cultural productions (myth, religion, art, drama, literature, film).

It becomes obvious that there is little change in recorded civilised history as to how patriarchal discourses oppressively delineate women. Its ideologically encoded message is clear—a good nurturing mother benefits man, allowing him to be prosperous and progressive, while a selfish and barren female, concerned only for and of herself, is destructive and abhorrent. While the former is a patriarchal necessity, the latter must be reinscribed within the safe workings of the status quo or destroyed. The image of the femme fatale is a recurring patriarchal ideological construction which, in all future simulacra, will possess the archetypal mythological characteristics of the emasculating licentiousness of the Siren, the Furies' malicious retributive sense of justice, the
avaricious rapacity of the Harpies and Pandora’s narcissistic and destructive curiosity.

Because the femme fatale is a symptom and symbol of male fears of female equality, resurfacing at those periods when the smooth workings of the patriarchal social infrastructure are experiencing excess tension, she can be interpreted as a necessary evil not only to the patriarchal network but also as a emblem of inveterate feminist endeavours.

Chapter one outlines the ideological implications of the femme fatale’s representation; chapter two provides historical contextualisation; chapter three investigates her filmic incarnations in the first half of the twentieth century, concentrating on the femme fatale of film noir; and the final chapter examines issues associated with the contemporary cinematic femme fatale.
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I would also like to thank my father, Michael Anderson, for exposing me to the dark, twisted, depraved world of film noir at a very young and impressionable age.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Femme Fatale and Patriarchal Ideology:
The Non–Maternal Female’s Threat to Male Dominancy

Although the femme fatale is customarily associated with the films noirs of the 1940s and 1950s, the image has existed since time immemorial, albeit under a myriad of what might now be considered pseudonyms: Harpie, Siren, Pandora, Jezebel and Lilith. While the term might not have come into common usage until the twentieth century,¹ the fatal woman herself has been generously represented in the popular cultural expressions of several major epochs: Classical Antiquity, biblical times, Medieval Europe, the fin de siècle of the 1800s and, most conspicuously, mid-twentieth century America.

But what exactly is the femme fatale? According to Webster’s rather ambiguous definition, the femme fatale is any “irresistibly attractive woman, especially one who leads men into danger or disaster.” Patrick Bade’s sketch in Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women (1979) of “women as malignant, threatening, destructive and fascinating” (9) provides little clarification. In The Femme Fatale: Erotic Icon (1983) Virginia Allen states that she “is a woman who lures men into danger, destruction, even death by means of her overwhelmingly seductive charms” (vii). In The Women’s Companion to International Film (1990) Annette Kuhn explains that “the femme fatale is primarily defined by her desirable, but dangerous, sexuality—which brings about the downfall of the male protagonist” (1990, 154). While these analogous descriptions provide brief, if somewhat vague, explanations of what a femme fatale might be and possibly how to recognize her, they do not even hazard a
guess as to the cultural, historical, political, social and ideological catalysts that might have produced, and continue to produce, such a character. And although most of the studies on the femme fatale acknowledge at least some of her numerous foregone incarnations, the neglect given to the possible reason(s) for her origins has consequently led to various other oversights, most importantly why this figure is perpetually revived throughout Western history as a negative icon of the barren female. Concern with the symptoms rather than the cause of this phenomenon may be due partially to how deeply embedded this figure is in the collective unconscious. Moreover, because most of the studies of the femme fatale tend to concentrate on only one era, most often her fin de siècle literary and/or visual manifestations, there is an overwhelming ignorance as to the extent and the insidiously oppressive nature of her relentless delineation as a powerful and potentially destructive force.

The first, and still one of the most extensive, explorations of the femme fatale is a chapter entitled "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" in Mario Praz's The Romantic Agony (1933). His insistence that "[t]here have always existed Fatal Women both in mythology and in literature, since mythology and literature are imaginative reflections of the various aspects of real life, and real life has always provided more or less complete examples of arrogant and cruel female characters" and that her image is "more numerous during times in which the springs of inspiration were troubled" (189–190) illustrates both the initial cursory concern given to the reasons for the femme fatale's existence and, perhaps more importantly, the tendency to blame women for a construct fabricated by and for the appeasement of men's troubled psyches.

In more recent, feminist oriented publications, several authors have managed to arrive at a more substantial explanation for this icon's resilience by correlating the image of the femme fatale with men's dread of female equality. In
Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis (1991), Mary Ann Doane asserts that the femme fatale is “a symptom of male fears about feminism” (2–3), while Lynda Hart elaborates in Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression (1994) that “[t]he femme fatale is a functional construct of the masculine imaginary, a representation that, at once, expresses (while producing) a patriarchal sociosymbolic order’s fear of femininity and disarms that fear by disabling her” (141). Virginia Allen simply states that “one social factor underlying the birth of the femme fatale was the threat to men inherent in the rise of feminism” (ix). According to Webster’s, feminism is essentially “a doctrine advocating, or a movement for the attainment of, social, political, and economic rights for women equal to those of men.”

Therefore, ‘feminist’ advancements, meant to create equality between men and women, are interpreted by patriarchy as a threat to the male’s position at the apex of the power structure. This threat is made visible in the image of the femme fatale.

But this is not, as implied by the preceding statements’ use of the 1890s’ word ‘feminism’, specifically a twentieth, or even a nineteenth, century occurrence, since from the very beginning of civilisation, men have found it necessary to manipulate the representation of women in order to maintain the patriarchal infrastructure’s power imbalance. E. Ann Kaplan in her “Introduction” to Women in Film Noir (1978) posits that “[o]ne of the depressing aspects of the study of women in art works is the repetition of the same structures, showing the strong hold of patriarchy.” She elaborates that “the alterations in the conventions reflect a continuing ideological struggle within patriarchy to maintain control over female sexuality and to assimilate its new, would–be liberating manifestations” (1). The representation of the femme fatale throughout history in various mediums is clearly ideologically constructed.
Patriarchal ideology utilises a vast infrastructure to maintain and reassert its right to power. A Marxist interpretation of how ideology functions insists that "the class which rules by virtue of its ownership of the means of production [...] has power thereby to disseminate a society's 'ruling ideas.' The ideology of the ruling class explains society in terms of its natural fitness to rule, and thus misrepresents the place of other classes or groups in that society's power relations" (Kuhn 1990, 214). And while ideological control tends to stem from a ruling class's institutional governing systems, its doctrines are circulated through that society's popular cultural expression(s).

The image of the femme fatale is utilised as such a contrivance. She occurs in the cultural discourses of various historical epochs in an attempt to quell any social change considered to be threatening to the patriarchal infrastructure. Massive population expansion combined with modulations in a culture's primary means of production destabilise the previously clearly demarcated sex roles and other organisational boundaries in a civilisation and produce these stress points in the historical continuum. Technological breakthroughs which allow for the successive transitions from a hunting and gathering to an agricultural to a commercial and trade to an industrial and then to a technological and computer economic base permanently alter societal frameworks. Because such shifts open up possible avenues for improvement in women's and other subordinates' positions, the dominant ideological network, through its institutions and cultural productions, must respond in order to maintain its control.

While the society's principally male-directed and male-biased legal and religious institutions are quite adept at imposing restrictions on personal and sexual freedoms, this control is most practically and subtly effected through its ideologically informed representational systems. Analogous to the variations in
the economic base, these representational systems must also adapt to the changing technologies. Originating in primitive mythologies, these cultural productions and their archetypes, like the femme fatale, are then reincarnated in such subsequent, though not mutually exclusive, delineational frameworks as religion, art, drama, literature and film. These complex networks present a seemingly simple and unproblematic method of understanding the world yet because they express dominant ideologies, they invert the culturally constructed into what is regarded as natural so as to be virtually invisible (Barthes, 165). And it is because they are almost imperceptible that they are so manipulatively oppressive.

The representational system of any particular patriarchal civilisation, and all of its interconnected institutional networks (e.g. legal, governmental, religious), strive to illustrate how women are still, always have, and always will be, best suited to the pure and virginal (read ‘powerless’) roles of wife and mother. 5 The corollary of this is that excessive female sexuality is shown to be inevitably and inherently destructive. According to Annette Kuhn, “female characters are generally defined in relation to their sexuality—either by its excessiveness (the vamp, femme fatale, sex goddess) or by its absence (the spinster, the mother, the virgin)” (1990, 362). And because sexuality/sexual difference is actually an ideological, cultural, social and psychic construct of a biological category in which a female’s ‘femininity’ is defined as “passive, receptive and compliant” while a male’s ‘masculinity’ is defined as “active, initiating and powerful” (147), it is understood to be a primary source of women’s repression (362). This oppressive dichotomous and stereotypical delineation of female sexuality is actually a device exploited by patriarchy to prevent women from attaining political, economic, and social, freedom and equality.
Many feminist film critics, historians and theorists have illustrated how, although "male stereotypes were soon broken down and male characters in films became increasingly differentiated and individuated, female roles remained shallow stereotypes reflecting the ideology of femininity as eternal and unchanging" (Kuhn 1990, 386) and therefore ahistorical. The representation of women by men tends to be repeated through the decades in its incongruous Eternally Feminine essentials (also known as the virgin/whore split) so that it changes only superficially in accordance with current styles and fashions. Subsequently, the image of women is relegated to a position of absence, silence and marginality, outside of boundaries of historical discourse.

Because the patriarchal network perpetuates "unequal sexual relations [...] which are] embedded in ideologies of romantic love, family, and maternity [...] and] systematised in the institutional practices of the home, school, church and media and in the representational practices of journalism, fiction, film, television, advertising" (Kuhn 1990, 213–214), the asexual mother figure continues to offer a safe, contained and subordinate female image. Conversely, the non-maternal female is a threat to the ideological infrastructure and the male's position at the summit of the patriarchal power structure because she has control over her own sexuality. Women's mastery over their own bodies, enabled by breakthroughs in birth control and conflated with advancements in political, economic and social arenas, releases them from male dominancy. The femme fatale is the ultimate mythic embodiment of this non-maternal female. It is not therefore surprising that the treatment of her image is doubly manipulative in that it depicts her as an assertive, independent and powerful female who exists outside of the restrictiveness of such patriarchal institutions as marriage and motherhood and then either destroys her and/or associates her with all things negative and reprehensible.
Mary Ann Doane asserts that "it is appropriate that the femme fatale is represented as the antithesis of the maternal–sterile or barren, she produces nothing in a society which fetishizes production" (2). Virginia Allen states that the image of the femme fatale emerges from the "fear and desire experienced by men confronted with women who demand the right to control their own desires, their bodies, their reproductive tracts—women who, in other words, deny the right of men to control female sexuality" (x). This independence desired by the femme fatale is often translated by patriarchal ideology in cultural production into a self-absorbed, narcissistic and emasculating female. Janey Place believes that "self interest over devotion to a man is the original sin of the film noir woman and metaphor for the threat her sexuality represents to him" (47). Plainly put, because a single, childless woman refuses to be defined by her relationship to others (as wife or mother) and desires something for and of herself, she is therefore a hindrance to male–oriented 'progress' and is a menace to a male–dominated system.

Furthermore, because the barren female refuses to produce the 2.1 births per woman necessary to maintain the population (Bianchi, 48), she is negligent in her reproductive responsibilities. Lynda Hart explains that "the fantasy of sex=death is built upon a biological metaphor in which "sex" is consonant with reproduction" (116). The femme fatale, due to her barrenness, is easily aligned with the lesbian, each of whom "bear the onus of the unproductive woman and her threat to the future of the species. The 'unnaturalness' of the lesbian has always had much to do with a sexuality that is nonreproductive. In that the nonreproductive woman is located in a category constructed as sexually abnormal, women who aspire to normality are simultaneously enjoined to reproduce and to be heterosexual. Indeed sex and reproduction are thereby made entirely consonant, and any woman who fails to prove herself in either
category is suspect of lesbianism” (Hart, 116) and therefore of mutiny against
the patriarchal system. The femme fatale falls into this suspect category. Molly
Haskell in From Reverence to Rape (1974) describes how women are ‘allowed’
to pursue whatever goals they might have “as long as they don’t forget their
paramount destiny to marry and become mothers, an injunction that effectively
dilutes intellectual concentration and discourages ambition. Women are not
‘real women’ unless they marry and have children” (2). The non–maternal
female’s rejection of her biological role subsequently makes her guilty of
threatening patriarchal authority which is so easily exercised within the
hegemony of the nuclear family unit where members subscribe to the traditional
roles of father, mother and child much more readily. Moreover, the barren
woman is thereby not only capable of attaining the economic means to equality,
simply because she has the freedom to do so, but, in refusing to be governed by
her biology and thereby maintain or increase the population, she also declines
to perpetuate the need for many patriarchal institutions firmly entrenched within
Western civilisations. It is even possible, as E. Ann Kaplan explains in
Motherhood and Representation, “that any ‘mother–self’ is inevitably already a
patriarchal construct, part of a patriarchal ideology that depends for its
coherence on the binary opposition ‘Father–Mother,’ and on an unconscious
repression of the mother’s [...] possibility to become something ‘other’ than a
mother” (Kaplan, 216), although it is more reasonable to assert that
motherhood, like sexual autonomy, in and of itself, is not an inherently
oppressive state, but rather that it becomes such via patriarchal ideological
institutionalisation.

The existence of the femme fatale can also be psychoanalytically
explained. Laura Mulvey in her seminal essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative
Cinema” (1975) explains that women are represented as passive objects of
male voyeuristic and sadistic impulses, that they exist simply to fulfil the desires and express the anxieties of a male gaze. A psychoanalytic approach insists upon how male desires about women and castration anxiety structure the representation of sexual difference. The male desire to possess, control, and punish female sexuality reproduces the patriarchal organization of sexuality around an active/masculine and passive/feminine divide. In patriarchy the female form is a privileged object of visual desire and therefore woman can be a source of scopophilic pleasure (which is the drive to pleasurable looking in which another is taken as an erotic object). But woman is also a source of unpleasure since she represents the threat of castration. This anxiety motivates the male unconscious to circumvent her threat through two avenues. He can become preoccupied with a reenactment of his original trauma through voyeurism and investigate the female in an attempt to see her source of shame—her lack of a penis—which is generally counterbalanced by the devaluation / punishment / saving of the object guilty of provoking the anxiety. The male unconscious can also circumvent the woman’s threat of castration by fetishism which is a complete disavowal of castration by substituting a fetish object, even to the point of turning the represented figure itself into a fetish. In this manner the female as a whole becomes a substitute for the absent phallus. This phallic substitution is seen as man’s attempt to deny woman’s difference from man and thereby alleviate his castration anxiety. It is a method of dominating women in a representational system and of lessening the threat that her sexuality holds in patriarchy.

Because of the physical iconography of her elongated, taut body, the femme fatale is regarded as such a fetishised phallic woman. Annette Kuhn explains that this figure points to a crisis within the workings of sexist ideology because it inverts the power dynamics within male–female relationships (1990,
Images of the femme fatale are initially so attractive to a feminist interpretation because these “women are active, not static symbols, are intelligent and powerful, if destructively so, and derive power, not weakness, from their sexuality” (Place, 35). Expectedly, it is for these exact same reasons that the femme fatale is a threat to male dominancy. In her contribution to Women in Film Noir (1978), in an essay of the same name, what Janey Place attributes to “the attitudes toward women evidenced in film noir—i.e., fear of loss of stability, identity and security—[as] reflective of the dominant feelings of the time” (37) is actually applicable to all of the instances of the femme fatale’s various incarnations throughout history.

In The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis (1993), Barbara Creed, influenced by Julia Kristeva’s work on horror and abjection, argues that men’s fear of women is due in part to her generative powers (157). While it is difficult to deny that the male may be unable to truly ‘conceive’ (physically, intellectually or emotionally) of what pregnancy and labour entails, it seems more likely that the patriarchal infrastructure in general, as evidenced through its depictions of women within its representational systems, finds motherhood to be a safe and comforting position in which to contain women. In fact, a pregnant woman is more often regarded as a sign of the male’s potency rather than interpreted as the power of the female to reproduce. This may be associated with the decline and fall of the veneration of ancient fertility goddesses which will be discussed in the succeeding chapter.

In the chapter entitled “The Dread of Woman” (1933) in Feminine Psychology, Karen Horney postulates that the person who is wholly ‘other’ than the self is understood to be threatening to the point of terror and that for man, woman is the ‘other.’ This unacknowledged dread of women in men produces their need to conquer her, to objectify her as a thing to be dominated and
possessed, since it is only through domination that fear can be vanquished (133–146). This oppression is further enhanced by the fact that representation of this ‘other,’ fabricated by the dominant ideology of the ruling class (read ‘white, middle-class, heterosexual male’ in most Western societies), is structured by a binaristic system “which classifies in terms of oppositions ([e.g.] man/woman, [father/mother,] white/black) in order to define the ‘other’ ([e.g.] woman, [mother,] black) as inferior” (Kuhn 1990, 320).

The femme fatale is both a receptacle and an emblem of men’s fear of this ‘other’ and of his possible redundancy or obliteration. She resurfaces at those periods when the smooth workings of the patriarchal social complex are under stress and when the male population has been especially hard hit by war, disease and/or substantial disenfranchisement from the power base. The femme fatale is repeatedly offered as a sacrifice to the patriarchal network because she and what she represents contradicts its power dynamics in every way imaginable. Although feminist advancements are actually only interpreted to be harmful to the male’s power position, the ideological infrastructure presents it in an inverted form, situating the woman as the culpable party.

From her mythological origins as a selfish, sexually aggressive, vain, and predatory lethal weapon and fortified by her biblical, Medieval and fin de siècle literary and visual reincarnations, the femme fatale has been, and continues to be, a recurring ideological instrument for patriarchal manipulation. And because the twentieth century has experienced the most rapid technological and consequently the most extreme societal changes of any period in history combined with the fact that women have also made vast advancements in the fight for equality (though hardly what might be considered anything like a balance) in political, social, economic, and sexual arenas, the figure of the femme fatale has emerged at closer and closer intervals. From her early
cinematic career as a Vamp and Androgyne and culminating in her climax as the femme fatale of the film noir, she is now evident in numerous contemporary Hollywood films and in far too many day and night time television soap operas. And while the realignment of the patriarchal status quo in most of these small screen versions is less meticulous so too is the force of the femme fatale's initial power. Because mainstream Hollywood films are by far the most accessible due to their vast world-wide distribution in both theatres and now especially in video, they most readily disseminate a particular ideological slant thereby effecting the largest influence on global cultural practices. Therefore it is her appearance in so many post Second World War American films noirs and in numerous contemporary Hollywood neo-noirs of the 1980s and 1990s, including *Body Heat* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1981), *Black Widow* (Bob Rafelson, 1986), *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987), *Kill Me Again* (John Dahl, 1989), *The Grifters* (Stephen Frears, 1990), *Femme Fatale* (André Guttfreund, 1991), *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992), *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (Curtis Hanson, 1992), *Red Rock West* (John Dahl, 1992), *Body of Evidence* (Uli Edel, 1993), *The Last Seduction* (John Dahl, 1994), *Disclosure* (Barry Levinson, 1994), and *Bad Company* (Damian Harris, 1994), that should, and will, be examined.

Prior to an examination of the cinematic femme fatale, it is first necessary for chapter two to place the concept of the figure within a broader historical context. Chapter three will investigate her filmic incarnations in the first half of the twentieth century, especially in the films noirs of the 1940s, and the concluding chapter will examine issues associated with the contemporary cinematic femme fatale.
Notes to Chapter 1


2. I am only concerned with an Occidental overview of the femme fatale for two reasons: first, because of the obvious limitations of the perimeters of this thesis; secondly, because my ultimate concern is with the mass disseminations of this figure in twentieth century American Hollywood cinema.

3. While I acknowledge the existence of many ‘feminisms,’ for the purpose of this thesis, I merely require a comprehensive definition of the term.

4. The term “patriarchal ideology” should be self evident within the context of the thesis itself, but the following Webster’s definitions will provide clarity: “patriarchy: an institution or organization in which power is held by and transferred through males; the principles or philosophy upon which control by male authority is based; ideology: the body of doctrine or thought that guides an individual, social movement, institution or group; such a body of doctrine or thought forming a political or social program, along with the devices for putting it into operation.”
CHAPTER 2

The Historical Femme Fatale:
Mythological, Biblical, Medieval and Fin de Siècle Representations

This chapter outlines those forces which have come to inform the femme fatale's twentieth century North American filmic representations through an examination of her various manifestations within a broad Occidental historical context. An overview of the European economic, political, social and technological developments and influences and a presentation of the most exemplary examples from Classical Antiquity to the conclusion of the nineteenth century should supply adequate contextualisation. This chapter does not pretend to provide any sort of totalising theory; instead, it is an attempt to offer a simple, though hopefully not simplistic, summary of how, from the inception of civilisation, dominant patrifocal discourses have oppressively delineated women, particularly through the recurrent image of the femme fatale. And although there are many problems inherent within aspiring to cover such an expansive historical span, as it is near to impossible to provide adequate empirical documentation to support generalisations or to thoroughly contextualise specific historical and cultural differences, it is, perhaps, more important to offer at least some evidence of the magnitude of how ideological factors which historically situate the image of the femme fatale thereby culturally indoctrinate women with a particular vision of how they see themselves and how society regards them. Therefore, this chapter will only be concerned with popular expressions which address a mass audience since, as previously stated in the first chapter, this is where dominant ideologies most clearly emerge. This sort of mass inculcation attains successive authority over the
period under discussion because, in order to accommodate an ever increasing population, technology responds by modifying prevalent cultural discourse from an oral to a literary to a static visual and finally to a moving visual (and now, with virtual reality, to an interactive visual) medium. This subsequently allows for the acceleration and expansion of the dissemination of ideological doctrines through representational systems.

Due to the limitations of this thesis and the impossibility of excavating every instance of the femme fatale, this chapter will focus on four major periods within the Western historical continuum in which economic, technological and/or social changes necessitate the ideological infrastructure’s need for the image of the femme fatale. Additionally, only the major or exemplary figures will be discussed within each of these cycles. Fears of potential ruptures in the patriarchal hegemony are reflected in the form of women fatal to ‘man’kind in each period’s mass cultural expressions, all of which will inform and impact upon twentieth century American cinematic representations: the mythologies of Classical Antiquity, biblical stories of early Christianity, the Arthurian tales of the Middle Ages and the literary and visual incarnations of the fin de siècle of the nineteenth century.

Virginia Allen’s premise in The Femme Fatale: Erotic Icon that “the original source of the femme fatale, as we now understand the term, is the dark half of the dualistic concept of the Eternal Feminine—the Mary/Eve dichotomy” (vii) is quite valid in its recognition of the oppositional structuring of the ‘bad’ selfish female with the ‘good’ selfless woman, discussed above in chapter one, though it is nonetheless misleading due to its biblical allusion because the femme fatale’s inception lies not in her Mary/Eve incarnation but further back in the mythologies of Classical Antiquity. 2

Joseph Campbell in The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949) explains
that “myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestations” (3). In Words With Power Northrop Frye reveals that “[t]he narratives of literature [and, as will be argued in the succeeding chapter, film] descend historically from myths, or rather from the aggregate of myths we call a mythology” (22). Frye also supports a claim made in the preceding chapter that such a mythology is the product of ideological biases of the ruling class. The manner in which ideological control works is that the group in power manipulates the basics of a mythology so as to be synonymous with its own doctrines. In order that these might most readily be disseminated to the masses who will accept them as ‘the way things ought to be,’ these myths are then reflected in the most popular cultural expression of the time, thereby contributing to the maintenance of the status quo. Northrop Frye’s adept explanation of the nature of ideology is as follows:

An ideology starts by providing its own version of whatever in its traditional mythology it considers to be relevant, and uses this version to form and enforce a social contract. An ideology is thus an applied mythology, and its adaptations of myths are the ones that, when we are inside an ideological structure, we must believe, or say we believe. Belief, in its usual sense, does not go beyond a declaration of adherence to an ideology. [...] Persecution and intolerance result from an ideology’s determination, as expressed through [...] whatever corresponds to a priesthood, backed up by its ascendant class in general, to make its mythological canon the only possible one to commit oneself to, all others being denounced as heretical, morbid, unreal or evil” (1992, 23–4).

Because she is symbolic of the threat independent women pose to a patriarchal power structure, the image of the femme fatale is a necessary evil of man’s ideological application of mythological sources. This archetypal femme fatale is to be found in such mythological winged embodiments as the Sirens, the Harpies, the Furies, and is also aligned with Pandora, classical mythology's
first mortal female. She is unfavourably juxtaposed with the Muses, Iris, the Graces, and Demeter, respectively. This mythic image of the often barren yet sexually aggressive, and thereby ideologically undesirable, femme fatale is, in Frye's words, "denounced as heretical, morbid, unreal or evil" while her doppleganger, the subservient, nurturing, maternal virgin, is illustrative of what the ideological network desires its subjects to believe as part of its social contract.

Because of medium alterations due to technological advances, and cultural, economic and political shifts, the characteristics of both categories of icons will emerge again in biblical writings, Medieval Arthurian tales, nineteenth century fin de siècle prose and painting and twentieth century cinematic versions.

**MYTHOLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS: Sirens, Harpies, Furies, Pandora**

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell suggests that femme fatale types such as Sirens and kindred spirits represent the male fear of incestuous *libido* (love, desire) and patricidal *destrudo* (death, hostility) projected onto the image of mysteriously seductive female tempters (79). This figure is synonymous with the 'bad,' or absent mother and is almost always set up in opposition to the 'good,' or present, nourishing, and protecting mother (6). The fact that most of these evil female mythological creatures are vulture–like is also indicative of the dichotomous mother system which positions the femme fatale character on the indisputably negative side of the equation. Symbolically, wings and avian bodies represent feminine, nurturing characteristics while the talons are emblematic of an infantile projection of destructive impulses which converts the maternal figure into a cruel predator.
This oppressive dualistic structuring of the female is historically evident in the transition from the cult and worship of an agriculturally oriented, 'good' and generous Earth Goddess, to the most often negatively connotated 'bad' and hostile Mother Nature of the subsequent commercial, industrial and technological centred civilisations. The gradual long term effects of the initial agricultural or Neolithic revolution of around 8000 B.C. irrevocably impacted on societal structuring and necessitated an alternate focus of worship as a means of perpetuating what has now become a dominant institutionalised patriarchal ideology. Because the change to a sedentary life style of farming led to an increase in food resources and a spectacular population growth, part of the populace was able to pursue other occupations. This led to the stratification of society along the various levels of trade and to the development of a differentiated economy informed by the production and exchange of goods. This may, in part, explain the conversion to a patrilineal social organization and its concomitant male-oriented, ideologically informed, worship system, each of which encouraged a hierarchical, competitive and aggressive structure. The previous equality, cooperative and subsistence production based matrilineal social system was no longer organisationally adequate to accommodate a burgeoning population (Banner, 106). The centralisation of the state, fortified by a state religion, and the hierarchical ordering of society into highly differentiated classes allowed for an organised and controlled socioeconomic structure previously unattainable. The fertile mother figure, now re relegated to a secondary position of power, was nonetheless still necessary in order to maintain and sometimes increase the population, especially due to the high numbers of male deaths incurred by expansionism, disease and warfare. This 'progressive' system could not accommodate the independent and/or infertile female. She was a threat not only to population endurance but also to the entire patriarchal
The prevalence of a male–oriented mythological network over the former Mediterranean pagan/peasant matriarchal system of the agricultural planting cultures of ancient Mesopotamia and the Egyptian Nile was solidified by the Indo–European invasions begun in 2000 B.C. The veneration of the Goddess figure of a Mother Earth responsible for plenitude and human survival was no longer necessary and therefore no longer existed by approximately 1750 B.C. (Campbell 1988, 170). After 1700 B.C., this dominant aristocratic religion of the European sphere corresponded to the hierarchically structured society organised on the basis of patriarchal law. This civilisation, later depicted by Homer, was cemented by the complex law codes of Hammurabi the Great of Babylon (1728–1686) which were created at this juncture in history in response to the needs of increased trade and commerce. Its reforming laws were secular state codes founded upon the idea of citizenship which sought to end the previous blood feuding and personal retributive manoeuvres based on the Old Testament principle of an eye for an eye. The ideologically commissioned symbiotic link between ‘church’ and ‘state’ was already thoroughly consolidated four thousand years ago.

The representation of women in the mythic tales of Classical Antiquity was in response to the historical, cultural, economic and political environment specific to the period. The era’s most popular cultural expression, the Greek epic poems of the Homeric age, were the end product of a long period of gradual accretion during which traditional materials, historical events, legends and folk tales were combined. This process is thought to have covered several centuries, spanning from shortly after the Trojan war in the early thirteenth or twelfth century to the mid–ninth century and possibly up until the sixth century B.C. Greek history is said to have formally begun in the eighth century.
corresponding with the time at which "the Homeric poems probably began to
assume something like their present day form" (Seltman, 53). Therefore the
Greek mythological characterisation of women, as expressed in the Homeric
poems, was informed by many centuries' worth of historical consolidation.

Around 1200 B.C. city states developed out of urban settlements and a
property owning class emerged. At first, a monarchical form of government was
implemented but was then no longer required once the Grecian conquests were
completed. The transition to an aristocracy was soon replaced by an oligarchy.
During the seventh and sixth centuries an autocracy emerged which accorded
favourable treatment to the previously dominated artisans and peasants and
thereby threatened the foundation of the patriarchal hegemony. A democracy
was the final stage of this political development as progressively larger
segments of society received rights of citizenship. This gradual break down of
old geographic and cultural barriers not only fused Greek civilisation into a
single cosmopolitan society but, in so doing, it also necessitated a more
expandable and more easily disseminative methodology by which to maintain
ideological control over the masses. The formulation of the first pure form of
phonetic writing contributed greatly to cultural cohesion due to the fact that the
written word is so much more powerful than oral tradition because “writing
freezes speech” (Postman, 12) and gives it a permanency and resonance (Frye,
1983, 217) that the spoken word is incapable of attaining. (Although it should
not be especially surprising to discover that the invention of writing was due to
economic necessity for accounting purposes.) How this might have more greatly
influenced the “formation of the culture's intellectual and social preoccupations”
(Postman, 9) is obvious.

The fact that the Homeric texts in use today were based on a sixth
century B.C. Athenian version and that a later edition was circulated in the
second century B.C. may not be random as both of these periods saw minor emancipatory gains for women. In the latter part of the fifth century B.C., education was within their reach, they played a role in the courts, there were rumours of a woman poet, a chief magistrate and a scholar. Yet these were still minor advancements considering that women remained without independent status and passed from their father’s tutelage to their husband’s at marriage. Again in the second century B.C. a process of emancipation began wherein women finally retained control of their own property and acquired wealth; there was a decrease in marriage and also in birth rates, and an increase in divorce and personal freedom for women. This short lived period of relative independence was quickly restored to one of female subjugation wherein the unmarried were legally penalised; there was a public outcry for the necessity of increasing the birthrate and the father or husband retained absolute power over the wife, children, slaves, domestic animals, personal property and domestic discipline.

The ideologically ingrained and accepted notion of woman’s intrinsically supportive and male-focused role is eloquently expressed (though possibly unintentionally) by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*:

> Woman, in the picture language of mythology, represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know. As he progresses in the slow initiation which is life, the form of the goddess undergoes for him a series of transfigurations: she can never be greater than himself, though she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending. She lures, she guides, she bids him burst his fetters (116).

Charles Seltman provides an analogous, though less poetic, description of this dominant ideologically structured attitude promulgated via mythological sources detailing the acceptable perimeters of woman’s position within a
patriarchal society in *Women in Antiquity*: “It is, however, certain that the women who held in Athens the deepest respect, regard, trust, and affection of a man was usually his wife, the mother of his children, the keeper and manager of his home” (100). It becomes evident that there has been little change in recorded history as to how patriarchal discourses have delineated women. In order to inculcate the masses and create a collective unconscious of sorts as to the correctness of woman’s oppressive institutional positioning, mythology, which, as previously mentioned, informs all future cultural expressions, provides numerous examples of what is–Muses, Iris, Graces, Demeter–and is not suitable–Sirens, Harpies, Furies, Pandora.

The Sirens are bird women who sing and/or play so alluringly that sailors are drawn off course to their deaths and then devoured. Originating in Greek mythology, they figure prominently in the legends of Jason and the Argonauts and of Odysseus. While Jason and his Argonauts are able to pass the Sirens because the lyre of Orpheus drowns out their singing, Odysseus and his men in Homer’s *Odyssey* sail by safely because Odysseus is strapped to the mast and the crew’s ears are plugged with wax. According to numerous versions of the story, the Sirens perish after Odysseus sails by, possibly at their own hands, fulfilling a prophesy that they will die if a man survives exposure to their song. This sets up the belief that men must resist the advances of aggressive females and that it is the females themselves who are to blame for men’s weaknesses. In other versions, the Sirens are altered from avian to mermaid–like creatures by the Muses as a form of punishment because of the Sirens’ boldness for first challenging and then failing to defeat the Muses in a singing competition. The Sirens are necessarily adversely compared with the Muses who inspire and nurture men in their artistic pursuits. Delineated as evil female demons who use beauty to lure men to their deaths, the Sirens can be
interpreted as expressions of a male fear of female sexuality.

The Harpies are predatory, winged, vulture-like creatures with great talons and women's heads and breasts. In ancient myth they carry off anyone the gods want to disappear while in later legends they swoop down from above snatching food and then vomit or excrete it over anyone left dining below. Their selfish acts of rapacity clearly posit them as symbols of infertility. To the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, the Harpies allegorically represent high priced prostitutes who devour the patrimony of young men. They are negatively portrayed as destroyers of life, the messengers of darkness and the object of masculine fear and hatred. They are unfavourably compared with their sister, Iris, who is considered to be a messenger of light. Iris, like the Muses, is a servant of sorts to masculine desires; she unquestionably responds to the will of the gods and sets in motion their wishes. The Harpies are proverbially associated with gluttony, one of the seven deadly sins, though they are also connected with avarice, another of these mortal transgressions. (Pride, wrath, envy, lust and sloth comprise the remainder of this group.)

The Roman Furies, known as Erinyes or Eumenides to the Greek, are female spirits who are relentless instruments of retributive justice. They are the daughters of Gaia who were born from the earth where it was fertilised by drops of blood from the castrated Uranus. They are forceful, to the point of militancy, and produce no offspring. They are often compared to the Graces, who as personifications of beauty are characterised by their role as spreaders of joy and enhancers of life. The Graces, also known as Charites (charity) advocate moderation in all things and are concerned with manners and culture. While the Muses inspire, the Graces give visibility to artists and poets and thereby apply their products to the embellishment of life. Once again, the 'bad' female is the actively aggressive one who takes from others while the 'good' woman is the
more passive and accommodating one who nurtures and whose sole purpose is to provide for 'man'kind.

Pandora is mythologically considered to be the first mortal woman. As vengeance upon Prometheus for his theft of fire from the heavens, Zeus has her created by Hephaetus and has the other gods provide her with a variety of powers calculated to bring about the ruin of man. One such gift is the ability to provide excessive sexual pleasure. She brings a dowry jar filled with a multitude of evils to her marriage to Prometheus' brother Epimetheus. Upon opening the box out of morbid curiosity, Pandora releases all of the evils onto the earth and leaves only hope trapped inside. She is unfavourably compared with Demeter, the Greek Goddess of the earth, agriculture and of fertility in general, known as Ceres to the Romans. Demeter is the mother, by lassion, of Plutus, the god of wealth, and of Philomelus, the farmer inventor of the chariot/wagon. It can not be a random occurrence that Demeter, the good mother of plenitude produces sons who are aligned with economic prosperity and technological advancements while Pandora, concerned only with her own inquisitiveness and personal gain, is responsible for the world's pestilence and disease. Over the centuries Pandora has become aligned with both Eve and with Lilith, each of whom will be discussed in the following subsection.

Each of the above non-maternal mythological figures and their good mother counterparts are especially important in a discussion of the femme fatale as they set up the archetypes which are to follow throughout the historical continuum. The ideologically encoded message is clear—a good nurturing mother benefits man, allowing him to be prosperous and progressive, while a selfish and single-minded female, concerned only for and of herself, is destructive and abhorrent. While the former is a patriarchal necessity, the latter must be reinscribed within the safe workings of the status quo or destroyed. This
oppressive positioning of women is most readily accomplished by the recurring patriarchal ideological construction and representation of the recalcitrant half of the Infinitely Eternal Feminine—the femme fatale who in all future simulacra will possess the predatory rapacity of the Harpies, the spiteful vengefulness of the Furies, the sexual aggressiveness of the Sirens and the narcissistic curiosity of Pandora.

**BIBLICAL BEASTS: Eve, Lilith, Jezebel, Salome**

The demise of the mythological system of worship was due largely to the diffusion of Christianity which was triggered by an increasing population and a changing economic base. 3 Ironically, it is arguable that Christianity was simply a continuation of mythological structures in that it “contains a great deal of legendary and traditional history” (Frye 1983, 34), and because “churches have been built on numerous sites of pagan cults, and the pagan festivals yielded to the great Church festivals (Christmas, All Saints, etc.) on the same days. Similarly, the gods and heroes of antiquity were transformed into saints of the church, and ancient myths are found to lie at the origin of certain hagiographic legends” (Bonnefoy, 198). But the bible provided what the more loosely structured mythological systems could not—a tightly organized document of societal mores which contained minute details of law codes, administrative procedures and high ethical doctrines. Even though “what you have in the Christian tradition is a coming together of the patriarchal, monotheistic Hebrew idea [...], and the Hellenistic, classical idea” (Campbell 1988, 180), a possible reason why the bible is even yet considered to be a sacred text while the tales of classical mythology are now regarded as fictitious, is its symbiotic association with political institutions and the early and continuous widespread dissipation of
of its canons throughout the civilised world. The influence of Christianity and the bible is inestimable especially in terms of its world-wide cultural conditioning.

The bible’s emergence as civilisation’s most influential representational system was initially necessitated by various internal and external, political and economic crises. In order to secure continued political and strategic unity and economic control of the Mediterranean world, in flux because of military threats from abroad and the demands of an ever increasing population, a more effective means of ideological dissemination was required. Although it effectively altered and possibly contributed to the dissolution of the Roman Empire (thereby losing the battle), it also maintained and actually strengthened a male–oriented social structure (thereby winning the war). The impact of the bible, especially the Old Testament, on contemporary Western thought is actually rather formidable considering the rigid seriousness adopted by many institutionalised Christian and Judaic religion’s literal interpretations of its various versions.

The breadth and depth of biblical influence is evidenced below through a (very) brief history of Christianity. Early Christianity was originally a movement of Judaism and Judaic Christianity remained dominant until the dispersal of the Jerusalem church shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. After a brief period of attempted suppression, Gentile Christianity continued to spread upwards socially and outwards, having reached Britain by the second century. Christianity spread through the Roman empire, survived the fall of the Western empire in 476 and overcame the barbarian invaders by converting them. By the eleventh century, the Western and Eastern Orthodox church had divided, yet the Eastern empire survived as the Christian state of Byzantium until its fall to Islamic forces in 1453 and the Western church under the Papacy contributed much to the development of Western civilisation. Despite many conflicts and
upheavals, including heresies and internal state crises, the fifteenth century's Conciliar movement (the Great Schism) which challenged Papal authority, the sixteenth century's Reformation and counter Reformation which split the Western church into Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, Christianity nonetheless spread to the United States, Africa, Asia, and Latin America via European expansion and missions. With an estimated following of over one thousand million, Christianity is now considered to be the largest world religion which includes numerous sects (e.g. Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons), churches (e.g. Anglicanism, Orthodox, Roman Catholicism), and denominations (e.g. Methodism, Presbyterianism).

Although the Old Testament was compiled from the thirteenth to the first century B.C., no original manuscripts survived so that present versions were based on much later fourth century A.D. sources. The New Testament canon was originally written in Greek during the first century and was finally defined in AD 367 after many textual and interpretive additions and subtractions. The Vulgate, the Latin version of the complete bible using Greek and Hebrew sources was completed in A.D. 382 by St. Jerome. Not only was it the text used for the first printed bible in 1455, known as the Mazarin or Gutenberg bible, but it is also still the authorised Latin text of the Roman Catholic Church. The Authorised or King James version was published in 1611 and became the bible of almost all of the English speaking Protestant sects and is even now regarded as a major force in keeping English relatively unchanged since the seventeenth century. The Revised Version, a revision of the Authorised Version begun in 1870, was published in its completion in 1885. A separate American Revised Version, differing only slightly from the Revised Version, was published in 1901. The Revised Standard which appeared in 1952 was an American version with a modern idiom.
This brief synopsis of the history of the bible and of Christianity is an attempt to illustrate how, with the groundwork firmly set in mythological origins, the "Western subjugation of the female is a function of biblical thinking" (Campbell, 172). From its inception as a complete work, the bible, in its various versions, has influenced the world's population with its decidedly patriarchal ideology. Northrop Frye in his second study of the bible and literature, *Words With Power*, explains how the creation myth of the Christian bible, as part of an ideologically informed mass cultural expression, "is the rationalising of the supremacy of the male" (190). His further elaboration that "[c]learly one intention of the Eden story is to transfer all spiritual ascendancy of [...] pre–Biblical earth–goddess[es] to a symbolically male Father–God associated with the heavens" (191) corresponds with the desire for a hierarchically based patriarchal political and economic infrastructure.

All of the great world religions emerged during the period 500 B.C. to A.D. 600. The linking together of the different centres of civilisation and the ever expanding population was partially enabled by the diffusion of universal creeds which espoused a belief in a single, hierarchically structured spiritual reality, a concept endorsed by all of the major religions. But, starting with Paul's missionary journeys in A.D. 45–64, and later sanctioned by the conversion of the emperor Constantine to Christianity in A.D. 313 and the Roman Empire's acceptance of Christianity as its official religion in A.D. 391, Christianity became the prevalent world religion. By 450, not long after the publication of the Vulgate version of the bible, an organized Christian church existed with a hierarchy of bishops and a full scale framework of patriarchates, provinces and dioceses. The spread of Christianity was aligned with foreign trade which also contributed to cultural exchange, political cohesion and a fairly uniform dissemination of, and adherence to, a patriarchal ideology.
The bible's male-centred belief system is evidenced not only by the creation tale mentioned above but also by so many other specific and general inferences that it is impossible to mention each individually. Instead, the following few pertinent examples of such recycled, constructed, female stereotypes as the barren woman, the virgin mother and the femme fatale expose how the bible, as a means of cultural expression similar to mythology, attempts to justify a patrifocal dominancy. And although certain misogynistic attitudes can be attributed to incorrect translations (e.g. in Genesis 2:18 the Hebrew word ezer meaning helper does not traditionally imply subordination; in much of the Revised Standard Version the Hebrew almah "a young woman of marriageable age," was incorrectly translated as virgin) the document in its entirety expresses a dominant patrilineal discourse which oppressively represents women.

In the Genesis narrative of the Old Testament, Abraham (12–24), his son Isaac (25–36) and his grandson Jacob (37–50) are the key male family head figures considered to be the progenitors and pioneers of biblical faith known as the patriarchs. Each of these men's primary wives, Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel, respectively, is a barren woman (11:30, 25:21, 29:31) to whom God ultimately sees fit to provide the gift of a child (21:2, 25:21, 30:22–23). (Sarah is ninety years old by this time!) This event is the pivotal point of each narrative and permits the story to advance and history to continue. From the very first book of the bible, not only is it common practice for a wife to give a maid servant to her husband to bear his children if she is not physically able to do so, but fertility is posited as a gift from God while barrenness is a curse. Furthermore, the family in the biblical period was clearly patrilineal and patrifocal in which the male head had absolute rights of disposition over his children and wife. At marriage, the woman left the control of her father to enter the dominion of the head of the
family into which she was marrying. In this system, women had no direct access to power or decision making and were inevitably subordinate. Women did not hold property and were viewed as economically inferior.

This position is verified and enforced by numerous illustrations in which women are presented as evil and therefore not worthy of power or even equality. In *The Gospel According to Woman* (1986), Karen Armstrong explains that “[t]he conventional diatribes against women list the wicked women of antiquity, starting with Eve and working through to Delilah and Jezebel, [in order to] show that women have always been the ruin of men” (70). According to Joseph Campbell in *The Power of Myth* (1988), the reason why Eve in particular, and women in general, are held responsible for man’s fall is because “[t]hey represent life. Man doesn’t enter life except by woman” (48). Actually, Eve’s greatest sin is not so much that she disobeys the word of God but rather that in so doing, she involves Adam and then because “the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked,” they become afraid and hide their sexual differences (Genesis 3: 7–10). This event, described as the Fall, is paramount in how certain translations of biblical doctrines position woman as culpable for man’s ejection from paradise and is utilised to justify “the instituting of a patriarchal society” (Frye, 1992, 208) which is made explicit in Genesis 3:16 when God states to Eve “your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.”

Although Northrop Frye acknowledges that “[a]s we should expect, the femme-fatale is sometimes associated with Eve after the Fall” (1992, 220), he also succinctly exposes the paradox of using Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden to justify male superiority:

Theologians and commentators have been so anxious to emphasize this point [that after Eve took the initiative in the fall, the
supremacy of the symbolically male is reflected in the supremacy of the sexually male in human society which God predicts will be the main result of the expulsion form the paradisal state.] that they have largely overlooked the central role of women [...] and the fact that patriarchal societies are explicitly said to be the consequence of sin. Man falls as woman, that is, as a sexual being, hence woman would have to be the central figure in the restoration of the original sexual and social state (1992, 192).

Moreover, Frye details how “[a]ccording to Paul, Christ is the second Adam, reclaiming the Eden that Adam lost, and in traditional Christianity the Virgin Mary is a second Eve, bringing about the redemption of man by giving birth to the redeemer. [...This] however, suggest[s] only that man is redeemed by or through woman, not that humanity is redeemed as woman” (1992, 192). But because androgyny and/or virginity is the state prior to knowledge of sexual differentiation, the image of a virginal mother (i.e. Mary) is the one most conducive to the perpetuation of a patriarchal ideology.

Within such a male infrastructure it is not unexpected that Eve, and by extension all women, are relegated to their biological capabilities and can only be redeemed by the pain of childbirth. Although God merely punishes woman for her disobedience in the Old Testament, stating “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; and in pain you shall bring forth children” (Genesis 3: 16), its interpretation in the New Testament is much more explicit and detrimental to women’s position in society. In 1 Timothy 2: 11–15 Saint Paul dictates “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was informed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.” The massive impact of such a doctrine cannot be underestimated considering that Paul is
regarded as the most effective missionary of early Christianity and the church's first theologian and that more than one-fourth of the entire New Testament is attributed to him.

A woman's fertility is also associated with man's prosperity in the bible because woman's childbearing is aligned with man's agricultural livelihood (Genesis 3: 17–18). Woman's redemption through childbearing can therefore be seen to metaphorically allow for man's productiveness. This is literally the case as well because by having women biologically oppressed by a reduction to mere population maintainers they are excluded from economic advancement and independence. The corollary of this is, of course, that an infertile woman poses a threat to male authority and progress and can not be tolerated. The ideal woman, according to Proverb 31:10–31, is a non-sensual wife who is strong, competent, able to succeed economically within a familial setting, family centred, and always acting for the provision of her household.

Women who do not fulfil the requirements of the optimal woman, and are thereby detrimental and often fatal to men, both literally and figuratively, are amply depicted in the bible. Reflective of patriarchal fears of potential ruptures in its hegemony the bible reconstitutes the characteristics of mythology's Pandora into the Christian Eve, discussed above, and the Jewish Lilith and, more generally, the personality traits of the Sirens, Harpies and Furies within Jezebel, Salome, Delilah and Judith. They embody the prerequisite qualities of the femme fatale's selfish and predatory greed and curiosity, her sexual aggression, and her retributive drives. These women are assertive, independent, self willed individuals whose refusal to acquiesce to Christian authority validates their depiction as heretical evils who are not to be emulated.

Jezebel (1 and 2 Kings) is a Phoenician princess married to King Ahab. She incites her husband to sin against God through her devotion to the
Phoenician god Baal and her desire to suppress the worship of Yahweh. Her disregard for Israelite custom and her ruthless use of power make her a formidable adversary of the prophet Elijah. As retribution, Jezebel is pushed from a window and physically decimated by the populace.

In the Gospels according to Mark (6:17–28) and Matthew (14:3–11) Salome is identified only as the daughter of Herodias. Her dance before her uncle/step-father Herod Antipas so pleases him that he promises to give her whatever she desires. Salome requests the head of the imprisoned John the Baptist on a platter at her mother's prompting. Herodias desires the death of the Baptist because he has condemned her marriage to Herod, her first husband's brother. In later interpretations, because Salome is the sexually provocative instrument leading to the saint's death, she is deemed responsible for her mother's motives and for Herod's overactive hormones.

Although the Christian bible fails to provide a truly demonic female figure, Lilith of traditional Judaic legend possesses what might be considered monstrous qualities. In cabalistic myth, she is the first wife of Adam who is created separately from him. She is considered to be the first feminist in that she challenges Adam's authority as head of the household, and leaves him because he is too stubborn to compromise. Then, according to legend, God attempts to make up for the fiasco by creating Eve from Adam's rib so that there will never be any doubt as to man's superiority over women. Arguably, Lilith's exclusion from the Christian tales and the Judaic transformation of Lilith into a demon says a lot more about male fears of a truly self-sufficient woman than it does about male supremacy.

Other treacherous biblical women include Delilah (Judges 16:4–21) and Judith. While Delilah, having discovered the secret of Samson's great strength, cuts off the seven locks of his hair in order to betray him to the Philistines who
then gouge out his eyes, Judith captivates Holofernes with her beauty and then
decapitates him. Considering that decapitation, the putting out of eyes and/or
the cutting of hair are each symbolically representative of castration, these
femmes fatales are literally, figuratively and psychologically harmful to male
autonomy.

The negative delineation of each of these biblical femmes fatales
combined with the clear pronouncement that fertility is the answer to spiritual
salvation indubitably situates women in an oppressive and subordinate
position. The enduring ideological power of the Church as expressed through
the bible will impact on all future Western generations and will eventually help
to inform cinematic representations of women. The patriarchal indoctrination of
much of Occidental civilisation, though thorough, requires intermittent
refortification at various pressure points in the historical continuum; the
emergence of feudalism and later of capitalism as the major social and
economic base structures of the Medieval and industrial worlds are two such
stress spots.

MEDIEVAL MONSTERS: Guinevere, Morgan Le Fay, Nimuë

Although its institutional control was threatened throughout the Middle
Ages, the Church's doctrines were nonetheless maintained by various
institutional and representational means. The collapse of international trade
and of the Roman Empire, in addition to the Germanic barbarian invasions of
the first half of the Middle Ages, were overcome by the development of local
government, economic self-sufficiency, the Christianisation of the invading
tribes and the beginnings of feudalism. The manorial system's fusion of the
Roman estate economy of late antiquity with the German system of property
ownership (both favoured the owner's complete authority over property and people) provided the preconditions for the development of feudalism. Because feudalism was a system based primarily on land and involved a hierarchy of authority, rights and power that extended from the monarch downward, the former free peasants became serfs of the large land owners and were therefore no longer subject to control by an overt form of central authority. Therefore, increased ideological control became necessary as the feudalistic system became the main form of social stratification in Medieval Europe.

The second half of the Middle Ages experienced the advent of the modern world's institutions. Large scale transportation and communication were reestablished and made possible the establishment of great cities and the production of goods for exchange rather than for local consumption. Due to these advancements and their subsequent creation of a prosperous middle class of merchants and artisans, the Church lost much of its temporal authority to secular rulers although it continued to provide the Medieval world with the sort of structure that the Roman Empire had previously supplied. Furthermore, it was still quite able to disseminate its ideological biases, and therefore maintained its more subtle, yet more manipulative, control through various other means. Though eventually unsuccessful, the politically motivated Crusades of 1096–1291, in which Christians from Western Europe stormed the East under the guise of religious duty, were nonetheless useful in spreading the doctrines of the Church. The enforcement of the death penalty for heretics under the Papal Inquisition begun in 1231 in both Germany and France and the sale of Indulgences in the Late Middle Ages were both rather extreme, though effective, methods of institutionalised religious control.

These historical manoeuvres were ideologically fortified by the emergence of the stories of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. As
some of history's most enduring myths and legends, these tales quickly became and today remain part of the collective unconscious (e.g. Excalibur (John Boorman, 1981), First Knight (Jerry Zucker, 1995)). The various versions of the Arthurian tales, produced at different moments in Medieval history, promoted connected, though slightly specified, ideological doctrines in accordance with the specific needs of the socio-historic environment.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's 1136 creation of the historical, fifth century warrior figure of Arthur in his History of the Kings of Britain coincided with the need to promote the warrior spirit of the Crusades. Chrétien de Troyes composition of his great chivalric courtly romances between 1160 and 1190, which sanctioned a system of chivalry (prowess, loyalty, generosity, courtesy), and courtly love (devotion to the ideal of womanhood, abject humility, complete loyalty, and veneration of his beloved) was derived from the socioeconomic environmental needs of feudalism. Spanning from A.D. 1215–1235, the Vulgate cycle not only marked the shift from verse to prose in Arthurian writing, but it simultaneously became more historical and more religious and the focus shifted from the courtly knight romances to the Grail quester. According to Troyes the grail was most probably a mythic food producing vessel. In Robert de Boron's completion of Troyes' unfinished Perceval fifteen years later it became the vessel of the Last Supper used to catch Christ's blood. This transformation of the grail from a mythic container which produced food for sustenance into a Christian chalice which provided spiritual nourishment was undoubtably influenced by the continued religious zealotry of the Crusades. Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur (1469) was once again concerned with the ideals of Medieval chivalry, especially religious chivalry, which promoted piety, temperance, chastity, adherence to the Church first and to the king second and was particularly concerned with the veneration of the
Virgin Mary. Coming at the very end of the Middle Ages and hovering on the doorstep of the Age of Transition, this reversion to ideals of contained and benevolent femininity was possibly a reflection of patriarchal fears of the rapidly changing socioeconomic environment. Various crises, including the alteration from barter to a money economy and the beginnings of early capitalism, the decline of the patriarchal feudal system because of the change from labour services to rents, and the challenge to the patricians for control of the city, all demanded a restabilisation of patriarchal mores and boundaries.

As manifestations of male fears of possible fissures in its domination, the Arthurian tales recycle mythological and biblical female stereotypes whose character traits can be located in Guinevere, Morgan Le Fay and Nimuë. Each of these Arthurian women embody a direct violation of Christian and therefore male authority through their sexual assertiveness, avarice, arrogance, excessive inquisitiveness and/or vindictiveness. Their eventual destruction or resitution within acceptable perimeters is an attempt to negate their initial power and illustrate the error of their, and all independent women’s, ways.

Though Guinevere is not entirely evil, her barrenness and adulterous love affair with Lancelot is societally destructive in that it causes the breakdown of the predominantly male round table. As a redemptive measure she becomes a nun helping to illustrate the Christian belief in female self-sacrifice to male institutional authority.

Nimuë, also known as the Lady of the Lake, Nina, Niviene and Vivian either bequeaths Excalibur to Arthur and later receives it back from him or enchants Merlin with spells he has taught her and sometimes even kills him. Yet behind all of her personae, Nimuë is a powerful Goddess figure who has far more control over either Merlin or Arthur than is acceptable.

Morgan Le Fay (Morgain, Morgana) is Arthur’s most formidable enemy.
She attempts to destroy both him and the Round Table by initially stealing Excalibur and upon its recovery, is responsible for the permanent loss of its scabbard which protected its wearer from all wounds. She becomes obsessed about her physical appearance and uses charms learned from Merlin to keep herself young looking. Morgan is also associated with the aggressive, warmongering, lustful, Celtic battle goddess Morrighan.

Although the Medieval period's Arthurian tales are not as rich or as complex in their representations of femmes fatales as those of classical mythology or of the bible, they nonetheless continue to reflect an ongoing male fear of the independent and powerful female. And, as usual, the ideological struggle within patriarchy to maintain control over female sexuality in Medieval times is perpetuated by negatively delineating possible liberated womanhood.

FIN DE SIÈCLE FANTASIES: Mythical, Biblical and Medieval Reincarnations.

The majority of the literary and static visual representations of the femme fatale in the fin de siècle of the nineteenth century are directly informed by mythological, biblical and/or Medieval sources. It is not surprising that she emerges in almost overwhelming numbers in the mid to late nineteenth century, considering the increased population, and the technological, social and political shifts of the era. These various, though connected, disturbances in the cultural fabric play havoc with the stability of male dominancy.

During the nineteenth century there were great advancements in technology which fostered a materialistic viewpoint, developed bourgeois modes of life, and made possible the creation of large imperialistic states. After the Enlightenment, the face of the world was shaped by the Industrial and various political revolutions. The political revolutions replaced the feudal state
with a democratic class society which allowed for the establishment of forms of
government based on freedom from the influence of the state, freedom of
property, free competition and trade, and guarantees of personal liberty and
political equality. Emanating from England, and initiated in the seventeenth and
eighteenth centuries by the development of new instruments for observation
and measurement in collusion with the advancement of technical processes,
tools and instruments, the Industrial Revolution replaced existing methods of
production and made possible mass production for a world-wide market. These
technological and scientific advances, concomitant with the legal and social
emancipation of the individual, capitalistic industrialization and the massive
increase of population (in Europe, the population expanded from approximately
69 million in 1500 to 188 million in 1800) changed the material, social and
intellectual conditions of life fundamentally and irrevocably.

One of the effects of the Industrial Revolution was “the economic rise to
power of the middle classes, which was an integral feature of the development
of the mercantile–industrial society of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,
while creating new wealth, also created a new pattern for social relationships
[... t]hese adjustments, in turn, led to the establishment of a fundamentally new,
massively institutionalised, ritual–symbolic perception of the role of woman in
society” (Dijkstra, 5). There was indeed a significant change in the status of
women in the later part of the nineteenth century. In Britain, the issue of votes for
women was raised in the British Parliament in 1867, John Stuart Mill’s 1869
publication of The Subjugation of the Rights of Women drew attention to
women’s iniquitous social position, and the Married Women’s Property Act,
passed in 1870, established minimum legal rights for the wife, independent of
her husband (Bade, 23). The first cervical cap was invented in Germany by
Friedrich Adolphe Wilde in 1838. In Holland, the first birth control clinic was
opened in 1882 (Greer, 167). In the United States women were also achieving some semblance of equality by the 1890s, a far cry from her lack of legal, professional or educational standing in the 1820s. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s battle for women’s suffrage and other reforms during much of the 1800s, an increase of women in the labour force due to changing demographic and industrial patterns, the 1848 admission of a woman into a medical school and into a law school in 1869, the founding of Radcliffe (Harvard), Barnard (Columbia), Vassar and Smith as women colleges within the major male universities in the late 1800s, and the 1890s creation of the National American Women’s Suffrage Association (NAWSA), Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), and the National Council of Women all contributed to the perception that women’s appropriation of male privileges was somehow nullifying male power.

Not everything was progressing in favour of female emancipation and equality. The fact that the legal system still deemed it necessary to maintain control over women’s reproductive functionings is evidenced in Congress’ passing of the Comstock law in 1873 which banned the dissemination of pornography, abortion devices, and “any drug, medicine, article, or thing designed, adapted, or intended for preventing conception” (Banner, 17). (It is curious that pornography was lumped together with reproductive controls.) This was, of course, reinforced by the Church who, then as now, stood in opposition to contraception or women having control over their own sexuality and reproductive functions. The publication of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical theories in the early 1900s perpetuated the falsity that “women could attain emotional stability only through domesticity and motherhood. Women who worked denied their deepest needs and risked being unable to experience love or sexual satisfaction. This, in turn, threatened the family, and, according to the
most apocalyptic thinkers, the whole of Western civilisation" (Banner, 213).

As with the other periods discussed above, ideological renegotiation of the possible rupture in the stable functioning of the patriarchal infrastructure was disseminated through the period's cultural products. The turn of the century witnessed an unprecedented plethora of femmes fatales in literary and visual art forms. Typically, images of the fatal female were complemented by the vast numbers of nineteenth century conventional mother and child images.

According to Bram Dijkstra in *Idols of Perversity*, to the turn of the century male, the femme fatale was "perfectly representative of the New Woman who, in their eyes, was seeking to arrogate to herself male privileges, refused the duties of motherhood, and was intent upon destroying the heavenly harmony of feminine subordination in the family" (309). Giovanni Segantini's *The Wicked/Evil Mothers* (1894) best expressed the fin de siècle's attitude toward sterile, unproductive, and thereby destructive and degenerative women. His painting, "in which, like withered, dry leaves, these nasty women, with nonexistent children gnawing like an evil conscience at their uselessly voluptuous breasts, are seen twisting and turning in the wind, caught in the sterile branches of barren trees, mere empty shells of what they might have been had they not forsaken their sacred duties of motherhood to pursue their lascivious private pleasures" (Dijkstra, 94) was generally interpreted as "a warning to the 'new woman' desiring an independent life, freed from the shackles of marriage and motherhood. [...It] tells of the punishment inflicted on women who deny their biological role of motherhood" (Bade, 19).

By refusing to be oppressed by her biology, the sexually independent and assertive female is able to acquire the means of economic and, subsequently, political power within a democratic society. The woman who does not see her primary task as the production of new life, of children, is seen
to be "cheapening the paradise of her warm womb and making it into a cold Pandora’s box of economic evils" (Dijkstra, 366). Therefore, non-maternal female sexuality evidenced by women’s small but important gains over their own bodies and reproductive rights instils an irrational fear in the collective male psyche regarding his position at the top of the power structure.

There is a slight increase in the level of nastiness of the fin de siècle’s depictions of the femme fatale compared with those of mythological, biblical or Arthurian tales. Figures like Judith or Salome who were only marginally evil in their original incarnations become doubly monstrous in their nineteenth century reincarnated forms. In many of her fin de siècle manifestations the femme fatale is often depicted as synonymous with death. It is possible that this is due in part to the fact that, in addition to women’s advancements in social, political and economic arenas, men also literally felt threatened by women sexually. In the later part of the nineteenth century, economically independent and sexually promiscuous women were generally prostitutes, many of whom carried fatal pulmonary and venereal diseases. Because the men of the time could veritably be annihilated through a business transaction with one of these ladies, it was interpreted as yet another reason why women should not have economic or sexual freedom. Additionally, sterility was now also negatively associated with prostitution because many of these ladies were rendered barren due to the effects of some of the venereal diseases. And once again the female rather than the male is held responsible.

Moreover, there was a population fluctuation due to the effects of industrialisation which was combined with the need for even larger numbers of male workers in order to keep up with production. As with all previously discussed epochs, this depletion or additional demands of men in the society due to economic alterations, war and/or disease created an unequal ratio of
women to men in the population. Previously, men had always managed to
maintain the upper hand in this sexual imbalance via some form of polygamy.
Reflective of the social mores of Greek and Roman Classical Antiquity, the
mythic tales depicted the goddesses and mortal women as forever being raped
and impregnated by the gods which contributed to a constant repopulation of
the planet. In the bible, as mentioned above, men were encouraged to mate
with another woman if their primary wife could not conceive in order to
perpetuate the family line. In chivalric times adulterous romance was one of the
basic codes of Medieval courtly love. But, by the turn of the century, because
monogamy was the only socially acceptable practice, men now felt threatened
by women who, because they held the upper hand in the sexual imbalance,
were envisioned as excessively predatory.

The fin de siècle's obsession with women as head hunters exposes this
male fear of emasculation and castration. The image of the femme fatale in so
much of the literary and visual work of this period is also aligned with the image
of women engaged in narcissistic, autoerotic, self sufficient activities or images
hinting at lesbianism, masculinised women and Amazons. All of these portray
the negative effects of viragous females entering into the realm of male
supremacy. Women who do not conform to the ideal of womanhood, epitomised
in the figure of the femme fatale, and reflected in such figures as Delilah, Judith,
Lilith, Pandora, Salome, Sirens, Harpies, and Furies are considered to be
traitors to humanity and are depicted as such. As with all previous
manifestations, these fin de siècle femmes fatales are negatively delineated as
arrogant, predatory, unmerciful and erotically overwhelming.

Delilah is a popular fin de siècle femme fatale and is realised in painting,
sculpture, Camille Saint-Saëns' 1877 opera, and in literature by
Sacher-Masoch who alludes to her by name in the sadomasochistic classic
Venus in Furs (1883). In each of these depictions, Delilah's dominating and emasculating capabilities are emphasised.

Judith is represented in verse and prose, in sculpture and in paintings by more than half a dozen prominent artists including Gustav Klimt (1901) and Frank von Stuck. She is always presented as assertive, self assuredly smug and often with a hint of sexual satisfaction on her face.

Lilith is depicted in several paintings and in literature, including work by Gabriel Rossetti, George MacDonald and is prominent in Goethe's Faust. In much of this work she is often associated with the predatory Lamia who, in classical mythology, is either a fearful child snatcher and murderer or literally a maneater who lures men to her bed, copulates with them and then drinks their blood and eats their flesh.

Pandora is reincarnated in Frank Wedekind's 'Lulu' plays—Earth Spirit (1895), Pandora's Box (1903) and Death and the Devil—which will provide the inspiration for Alban Berg's opera Lulu and G.W. Pabst's 1929 film Pandora's Box. Lulu as Pandora and/or Eve is a free spirit, "the epitome of ego, [...] a one sided selfish creature" (Mueller in Wedekind, 20) who, as a consequence of her overt sexuality, is eventually disembowelled by Jack the Ripper.

Salome is represented in more than a dozen and a half paintings between 1870 and 1908 including major pieces by Gustave Moreau (1876) and Gustav Klimt (1901). She also appears in numerous literary pieces including work by Flaubert (1870), Oscar Wilde (1871) and Mallarmé (1896), in a musical adaptation of the Wilde play in Richard Strauss' 1905 opera and in dance in Florent Schmidt's ballet. According to Bram Dijkstra "[i]n the turn of the century imagination, the figure of Salome epitomised the inherent perversity of women" (384). Ernest Newman's 1958 reading of Strauss' operatic version of Oscar Wilde's play says more about Newman's own attitude toward women than it
does about the content of the narrative: “Other poets before Oscar Wilde had shown us what happens when the female mind, prone at times to perversities of sexual emotion and hysteria, escapes for a while from the ordinary constraints upon conduct imposed by social convention: [...] in the case of Salome all that Wilde did was to anticipate some of the darker pages of the case books of the psychiatrists” (376–377). Once again, the female is denounced, this time due to psychological imperfections, for her attempt to escape from male–determined, socially imposed conduct.

The preponderance of fin de siècle art work depicting aggressive and predatory mythological females like Sirens, Harpies and Furies or women as evil temptresses in paintings with religious or Medieval themes are too numerous to list individually. Suffice it to say that “[i]n the eyes of many fin de siècle males, woman had become a raving, predatory beast, a creature who preyed on men out of sheer sadistic self–indulgence” (Dijkstra, 234). Due to industrialization, technological advancements, the dissolving of many societal boundaries and women’s gradual attempts at sexual balance, men, who now envisioned themselves as an endangered species, represented women as culpable.

The femme fatale, as an ideologically informed artifact is, as usual, substantially represented in the predominant art form of the period. Oil painting allows “all of its elements [...] to be seen simultaneously. The spectator may need time to examine each element of the painting but whenever he reaches a conclusion the simultaneity of the whole painting is there to reverse or qualify his conclusions. The painting maintains its own authority” (Berger, 26). Considering that “the art of any period tends to serve the ideological interests of the ruling class” (Berger, 86), it is both anticipated and an absolute necessity (to patriarchy) that the paintings of the fin de siècle delineating the inherent
evilness of the femme fatale as a symbol of independent and barren womanhood is able to maintain said ‘authority.’

Patrick Bade’s slender observation on the fin de siècle’s visual representations of the femme fatale, *Femme Fatale: Images of Evil and Fascinating Women*, offers several valid comments, though some are rather suspect. Typical of the work as a whole, his concluding paragraph is more of the same, though his final sentence is blatantly erroneous:

Male dominance, which has endured since the beginning of civilisation, was becoming increasingly precarious [with the advent of the Women’s movement]. The first phase of the struggle ended with the enfranchisement of women. After an interval of more gradual change, the pace has again quickened. The reluctant and anxious male is once more under siege. What is left of his dominance is increasingly threatened and undermined. In the meantime women have become more articulate and men can no longer give vent with impunity to their fears and prejudices. Whatever the outcome of the struggle it will not be recorded in the art of our age with the partiality of the nineteenth century. In the painting and the poetry of the nineteenth century the femme fatale endures as one of the most powerful images of a troubled age. But in the present period of social revolution she is no longer, as she was for [Walter] Pater [in a review of *La Gioconda*] ‘the symbol of the modern idea’ (39).

In fact, after, at the very least, four thousand years of cultural ideological indoctrination, by the age of rapid societal transformations and the era of ‘mechanical mass reproduction,’ of the twentieth century, the image of the femme fatale is so clearly established in the collective unconscious as a societal evil that it is only expected that she emerge once again as a ‘symbol of the modern idea.’ According to Bram Dijkstra, “[b]y the first decade of the twentieth century, anti-feminine attitudes, often accompanied by a wholesale espousal of misogyny, had become the rule rather than the exception in both Europe and the United States” (398).
The above historical contextualisation attempts to illustrate that the succeeding analyses of the femme fatale's cinematic representations in the twentieth century do not exist in a vacuum, but rather that they are a perpetual, once and future, symbol of male fears of female independence and autonomy.
Notes to Chapter 2


4. Although the Medieval period spans from the end of Classical Antiquity to the Renaissance (A.D. 1450), it is not about to be invariable, but for the function of this work it will be considered two units, split at A.D. 1000. Arthurian references utilised, though not specifically documented, include Norris Lacy, Ed., *The Arthurian Encyclopedia* (New York: Peter Bedrick, 1987).
The first portion of the twentieth century experienced numerous momentous cultural, economic, political, social and technological advancements and alterations. The invention of cinema as a new means of visual representation, the impact of the two World Wars and the establishment of the United States as a major economic and political world power were the congruent events which most directly impacted on the continuation and amplification of the image of the femme fatale. Because technology and expansionism had so rapidly accelerated the pace and scope of the civilized world, thereby weakening the stability of the male-directed hierarchical system, the need for, and the means of, disseminating the dominant patriarchal ideology also required superior expedition and range. Cinema was just such an apparatus.

Walter Benjamin, in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" explains that "[i]n the case of films, mechanical reproduction is not, as with literature and painting, an external condition for mass distribution. Mechanical reproduction is inherent in the very technique of film production. This technique not only permits in the most direct way but virtually causes mass distribution. It enforces distribution because the production of a film is so expensive" (244). Therefore this latest form of mass cultural discourse is a perfect vehicle for widespread dominant ideological indoctrination which emerged, according to Benjamin, simply because it was a
necessary complementary event in the historical continuum: "The history of every art form shows critical epochs in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard, that is to say, in a new art form" (237).

Jean-Louis Baudry in his 1970 essay "The Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" details how film is at once an extension of the various other means of mass societal representation, in terms of the diffusion of the prevalent ideological canon, and also how it is something much more than anything which has come before:

The specific function fulfilled by the cinema [is] as [a] support and instrument of ideology. [...] It is an apparatus destined to obtain a precise ideological effect, necessary to the dominant ideology: creating a phantasmatization of the subject, it collaborates with a marked efficacy in the maintenance of idealism. Thus the cinema assumes the role played throughout Western history by various artistic formations. The ideology of representation (as a principal axis orienting the notion of aesthetic 'creation') and specularization (which organizes the mise-en-scène required to constitute the transcendental function) form a singularly coherent system in the cinema" (295).

Evidently, the ideological power of cinema is more than capable of countering the unpredictability of any number of massive societal fluctuations in the twentieth century. Moreover, cinema is especially conducive for patriarchal ideological dissemination because of the multiplicity of its mechanisms. The authority of its visual magnetism, classical narrative trajectory and the fact that "[i]n a film the way one image follows another, their succession, constructs an argument which becomes irreversible" (Berger, 26), combined with the new medium's absolute demand for extensive dispersion, make it a perfect global vehicle for patriarchal ideals. Right from cinema's inception, these doctrines are filtered through a predominantly American sensibility because American films
are viewed by audiences world-wide more than any other nation's product. (Even prior to World War Two, foreign markets made up 50% of the major studios' total income.)

From the outset, colonial America was a male-oriented and male-structured nation. Its Protestant/Christian ethical disposition, intact with patriarchal bias, was determined over two centuries previously in 1620 when "on the Mayflower itself several books were included as cargo, most importantly, the Bible. [...] It is understood that the Bible was the central reading matter in all households" (Postman, 31–32). It is not therefore surprising to encounter the filmic perpetuation of the delineation of women as one or the other of the two halves of the Eternal Feminine as it is merely an extension of the previous thousands of years worth of Occidental conditioning. Due to the immediate and possibly volatile societal alterations of the twentieth century, the image of the femme fatale was recycled as an ideological contrivance from cinema's inception, though not persuasively so until the forties and fifties. Like the child in the home of the Three Bears, the dominant patriarchal ideological network tested and then abandoned the too overt sexuality of the Vamp (too hot) and the too covert asexuality of the Androgyne (too cold) to concentrate upon the perfect balance of sexuality of film noir's femme fatale (just right).

**VIRAGOUS VAMPS AND ASEXUAL ANDROGYNES**

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the United States experienced massive growth in industry, technology, business and capital. The population increased by almost 300% in just over fifty years and rose from 31.3 million in 1860 to 91.9 million in 1914 (including the immigration of over 21 million). The number of workers grew by 700%, the rate of production by 2000%
and investment capital by 4000%. The general (theoretical) progress of
democratisation continued regardless of the practice of prevalent racial and
sexual discrimination and massive capital imbalances. (In 1913, 2% of the
American people earned 60% of the national income.) Attempts to stabilise this
inequality through the bitter struggles of Union organisations to increase wages,
the government's initial attempts to confront the monopolies and exploitation
and the continued fight for women's suffrage merely caused greater agitation
and confusion in the patriarchal base structure. Still firmly entrenched in a
Victorian mentality, there was little need for extensive supplementary
ideological control other than that already provided by the institutions of
business, religion, the law and governmental politics.

This is evident in the fact that the initial failures of the women's suffrage
movement "were partly due to vigorous anti-suffrage opposition. In the late
nineteenth century, local anti-suffrage groups, often headed by socially
prominent women, had appeared. In 1911 they united to form the National
Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women. The
organization gained political support from three powerful groups: the liquor
industry, which was afraid that suffrage for women would bring prohibition; the
political bosses, who were fearful that women would vote for reform politicians;
and the Catholic Church, who staunchly believed that a woman's place was in
the home" (Banner, 88). Because of the fear that women's right to vote would
destroy the traditional social institutions which supported male control "[t]he
anti-suffrage argument played on all the standard fears: if women voted, they
would hold office; if women held office, they would leave the home, break up the
family, and take power away from men" (Banner, 89). In 1914, no doubt as an
attempt to squash women's desires to escape the bounds of traditional roles
and perhaps to compensate her for her subservient position in society, every
second Sunday in May was henceforth officially declared Mother's Day.

And, for safe measure, the newest means of ideological proselytising did offer the public a personification of the dangers of excessive female sexuality in the figure of the Vamp. The Vamp was an extreme predecessor to the authentic cinematic femme fatale who represented "the fatal woman who has the power to lure man to his doom through sexual excesses" (Kuhn 1990, 409). She was, in fact, "the mother of the femmes fatales, the Mysterious Women, the Impenetrable Bitches of later generations" (Rosen, 61). But although she was most definitely a Siren and the fallen Eve or Lilith, her overt sexuality was too extreme to be of any realistic ideological use. Her completely manufactured persona both on screen and off was, in fact, sex personified; she was "the ultimate exaggeration of aggressive female libido" (Rosen, 69). The American Vamp's 'otherness' was represented through her exoticness. She was either played by European actresses such as Pola Negri, or stories of her foreign heritage were fabricated by the studios, as in the case of Theda Bara. Between 1915 to 1918 Theda Bara vamped it up in forty films. She even appeared in a very early cinematic example of the femme fatale in the 1911 silent film The Siren's Song as a singer who lost her voice from a curse put on her by her father. This is rather apt considering that women are often denied a voice by the patriarchal infrastructure.

These evil women were, of course balanced with the girl next door types, personified by D.W. Griffith's perpetual virgins—Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish and Mae Marsh. The dominant power's decision to recycle these stereotypically dichotomous Eternally Feminine qualities is not surprising considering that the social and cultural conditions of the time were so similar to those experienced during the other major historical stress points previously discussed. By the conclusion of America's involvement in the First World War (19 April 1917–11
November 1918), the casualties (of 4,743,826 U.S. combatants serving: 53,313 battle deaths, 63,195 other deaths, 204,002 wounded) tipped the sexual power ratio in women's favour. Moreover, several feminist advancements in political and economic arenas were obtained by the mid–1920s: "[n]ot only had women been enfranchised, but during the First World War, as the economy expanded and men left their jobs for battle, women were promoted to the skilled–labor and administrative positions that had previously been held by men" (Banner, 125). In 1917, Margaret Singer, the pioneer in birth control reforms, published The Birth Control Review. (Nevertheless, it would take her another twenty years to achieve the legalization of birth control.) "In 1919 the prohibition amendment [...] gave the impression that women had the power to reform society" (Banner, 125). The coup d'état was, of course, the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment on 18 August, 1920 which gave women the legal right to vote. The effect of these events and the combined efforts of many of the women's committees, federations and leagues, formed in the late teens and early twenties, which successfully decreased the number of discriminatory marriage and property laws, and repeal laws prohibiting women from serving on juries or holding office was that "[b]y the mid–1920s it had become a matter of belief, proclaimed by press and radio, businessmen and politicians, that women had in fact achieved liberation" (Banner, 141).

But, although there had been some improvements in women's position, the reality of the situation was much different than that imagined. Because "few additional women entered the work force during the First World War [...] as the United States participated in [it] for only nineteen months" (Banner, 202–3) it did not have a sizable or lasting impact on women's employment and therefore women were easily reinscribed into their more traditional roles in the twenties. Because the newly emancipated suffragette believed that she had finally
attained political and intellectual power and authority, the feminist movement was left divided and unfocused during much of the twenties. And because the emaciated flapper was only concerned with social and sexual power she offered intrigue and sexual excitement without threatening the perimeters of larger institutions (Haskell, 44). In fact, the 1921 presidential election was won by Warren Harding with his "return to normalcy" campaign, which incidentally was engineered by William Harrison Hays, the soon to be Public Relations head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America and enforcer of the infamous Production (Hays) Code (Koppes, 13–14). The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), first put before Congress in 1923 which stated simply that "men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction," would never be ratified. Overall, the general prosperity of this decade and the mass mentality of traditional conformity nullified the need for any additional large scale ideological indoctrination through mass popular discourses. However, in the later part of the 1920s, "[t]he premise that women had achieved liberation [which gave] rise to a new anti–feminism, although it was never stated as such" (Banner, 142) did produce a few carefully constructed cinematic morality tales.

F.W. Murnau's 1927 silent melodrama, Sunrise, is about an evil city woman (Margaret Livingston) who lures away the husband (George O'Brien) of the good country wife and mother (Janet Gaynor). The opening title--"This is the story of a man and his wife and is of nowhere and everywhere, you might hear it anywhere and at any time"--posits the dominant ideologically constructed universality of this film and its characters. The good woman is, as always, aligned with nature and purity while the evil woman is associated with the city and industrialization. This common representation of the good woman = nature and bad woman = culture is a dogmatic and prevalent patriarchal ideological
erection. Because women might attain the means to equality with access to the male-oriented and male-dominated domain of cultural achievements (e.g. technology, business, industry), the woman who is exposed to, and has benefited from, its effects must be represented as destructive and evil.

G.W. Pabst's 1929 silent German film, *Pandora's Box* (Die Büchse der Pandora, aka Lulu) starring Louise Brooks concerns a woman who murders her lover, becomes a prostitute, consorts with her lesbian lover—the Countess Geschwitz—and is eventually murdered by Jack the Ripper. This modern version of the Pandora myth once again refabricates the devastating nature of a woman in control of her own sexuality.

The negative repercussions of the inordinate prosperity of the twentieth century's first three decades, such as women's attainment of power, is equated with such excessive sexuality. These aggressive women are therefore detrimentally depicted in the popular artistic expression of film and are either destroyed or dismissed because of their transgressions or ultimately revealed to be less attractive than the traditional wife and mother type of female.

The onset of the depression brought newer and different problems and thereby necessitated appropriate ideologically formulated cultural representations of women. On 25 October 1929 the New York stock exchange collapsed due to an over-extension of the credit market. Industrial stocks fell from 452 in 1929 to 58 in 1932 and industrial production dropped by 54% between 1929 and 1932. The number of unemployed in America rose to 15 million. Because of the depression and the intensification in competition for jobs, women who were employed were seen to be taking work away from men. By the mid-thirties eighty-two percent of the population felt that wives should not work if their husbands have jobs. Furthermore, a majority believed that laws should actually be passed to prohibit wives from working (Gluck, 8). The
patriarchally envisioned detrimental consequences of the overwhelming destitution of the thirties, such as women attaining economic power at the expense of men, was equated with masculinised female sexuality. Therefore, the filmic representation of the femme fatale changed in the 1930s. Instead of the overt sexuality of the Vamp, the most memorable man eaters—Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich—were strangely androgynous. Both the Swedish Greta Garbo and the German Marlene Dietrich had deep foreign voices, were unusually tall and had broad shoulders—attributes which were optimised in their films.

Typical of much of her work in the thirties, Dietrich's final collaboration with Joseph von Sternberg was the 1935 The Devil is a Woman in which her character proclaims "men are my slaves—and glad to be." Garbo starred in such films as Flesh and the Devil (1927) and Mata Hari (1931), a biopic of the famous female spy of World War One who uses sex to procure secret information. Its publicity poster screamed "men worshipped her like a goddess, only to be betrayed by a kiss." Unfortunately, most of Dietrich's and Garbo's films end with these strong, independent women finally succumbing to a man, thereby reaffirming the patriarchal attitude that all a woman needs to be a real woman is the love of a strong man and that marriage, with the possibility of children, is all that really matters in life.

Although it is difficult to adequately ascertain the extent to which the introduction of the Motion Picture Production Code in 1930 and the creation of the Catholic Legion of Decency in 1934 affected and altered filmic representations of women's sexuality in the confines of this study, it is important to note that these regulatory systems, heavily enforced between the mid-1930s and mid-1950s, were very much informed by a patriarchal Judeo-Christian ethical and political agenda. In fact, in The Films of the Fifties: The American
State of Mind, Andrew Dowdy explains how “[b]ack in 1930, using the Ten Commandments as a guide, the Production Code was drafted by Father Daniel A. Lord with the assistance of publisher [of The Motion Picture Herald] Martin Quigley” (81), a prominent Catholic layman who wanted to “harness the movies’ power over American culture and morals” (Leff, 9). In 1934 the head of Studio Relations at the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, William Hays, an ex–Republican national chairman, the former Postmaster General and an elder of the Presbyterian church, converted the Studio Relations office into the Production Code Administration (PCA) and appointed staunch Catholic Joseph Breen as Production Code Administrator. All movie treatments and scripts now had to be submitted to Breen and Member studios were obligated to pay a $25,000 fine for releasing a picture that violated the Code. Association members could now bar all pictures lacking the Production Code Seal from their theatres (Leff, 52). Furthermore, in Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War Two Movies, Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black detail how

[t]he Code, a blend of Roman Catholic morality and bourgeois propriety, imposed sharp restrictions on the movies’ treatment of a wide range of subjects. Central to the code was its insistence that wrongdoing [...] was to be shown as always being punished in the end, and that the sympathy of the audience should never lie with the wrongdoer. Exposure of flesh was sharply curtailed, as was the discussion of sexual matters. Men and women could not be shown in bed together even if married. Abortion, homosexuality and even birth control [...] could not be mentioned. Profanity was forbidden, as was a long list of popular slang terms. Religion always was to be treated respectfully. The Code also had a conservative political effect [...] it admonished movie makers to uphold established political and judicial institutions. Crime and corruption were shown as individual aberrations, not systemic problems (15).
The Production Code is an explicit example of how patriarchy's governing system oppressively delineates women (and any marginal group). By initially stabilising its ideological doctrines in its institutional networks, it is then able to filter these same codes through its popular cultural discourses. The Code's demand to safeguard the family ("The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld."), its restrictive position on sexuality ("Sex perversion or any inference to it is forbidden."), sexual activity ("In general, passion should be so treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser emotions.") and reproductive control, its institutionalised religious philosophy ("No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith.") and statute to maintain the political and judicial status quo ("Correct standards of life shall, as far as possible, be presented. [...] When right standards are consistently presented, the motion picture exercises the most powerful influences. It builds character, develops right ideals, inculcates correct principles, and all this in attractive story form.") culminates in a perpetuation of a dominant patriarchal ideological indoctrination of the nation. Moreover, its "compensating moral values" in which "wrongdoing must be punished in the end" parallels and/or fortifies a typical classical Hollywood narrative trajectory (to be discussed in more detail in the succeeding subsection) which precipitates and/or legitimates the ultimate fictional destruction or recuperation of such unconventional, and therefore unacceptable, women as the sexually assertive, independent and barren femme fatale.

And although the Vamps, independent evil city women and Androgynes of the first portion of this century possessed many of the femme fatale's deadly mythological characteristics of pride, avarice, lust or wrath, because the demand is not yet fully activated, the proportions are slightly amiss. American involvement in the Second World War and the restrictions of the Hays Code
were about to necessitate a much more insidious delineation of women. As Foster Hirsch notes in *Film Noir: The Dark Side of the Screen*, “the anti–woman bias that runs through American films [and Western history] reaches an apotheosis in noir” (20).

**FILM NOIR'S FEMMES FATALES**

Analogous to all of the previously discussed reappearances of the femme fatale, her resurrection in the 1940s and 1950s films noirs was also directly and inherently related to its historical contextualisation and the ideological requirements of the patriarchal infrastructure. The representation of the femme fatale in the noir universe was informed by dominant ideology's interpretation of women's elevated position during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Additional access to social, political and economic advantages, combined with an increased rejection of the traditionally subordinate role of wife and/or mother within an institutionalised family situation enabled women to acquire the means of economic and political power. These advancements were assessed as possible ruptures in the stable functioning of the patriarchal infrastructure which viewed them as appropriations of male privileges and, as such, required ideological renegotiation. This was once again effected through the mythologically informed negative delineation of the barren femme fatale as arrogant, avaricious, malicious, licentious and generally lethal to men's position of power. It should therefore be no surprise that Joseph Lewis' 1950 *Gun Crazy* with Peggy Cummins as Annie Laurie Starr was originally entitled *Deadly is the Female* or that the working title of Robert Wise's 1947 *Born to Kill* starring Claire Trevor as Helen Trent was *Deadlier than the Male*. 
Furthermore, although specific characters from mythology, the bible and Arthurian romances were not necessarily reincarnated in toto in the films noirs, all of their peculiarities—the emasculating sexual aggressiveness of the Sirens, the Furies' wrathful, retributive sense of justice, the gluttonous rapacity of the Harpies and Pandora's narcissistic curiosity—were evident in abundance. There were even a few instances in which previously discussed mythic, biblical and Arthurian personalities were explicitly indicated: the ultimate destructive impact of Gabrielle/Gaby Rogers' (Lily Carver) obsession with the 'Great Whatsit' in Kiss Me Deadly (Robert Aldrich, 1954) clearly positions her as a twentieth century Pandora; the unmistakable conflation of the Grail Quest with the investigation of the woman is indicated by Velma's alias Mrs. Grayle (Claire Trevor) in Murder, My Sweet (Edward Dmytryk, 1944); and Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) in Sunset Boulevard (Billy Wilder, 1950) is determined to make her screen comeback as Salome.

In fact, many of the film noir's femmes fatales embody all of these mythic traits; Norma Desmond and Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck) in Double Indemnity (Billy Wilder, 1944) are each exemplary incarnations of the legendary femme fatale. Neither woman has biological children and each one's obviously barren stature and non-traditional familial situation positions her as eminently pitiful or detestable: in Sunset Boulevard Joe Gillis (William Holden) is initially mistaken for an undertaker who has come to bury Norma's dead 'baby,' a pet monkey, and Phyllis has allegedly murdered her step-daughter Lola's real mother in order to marry Mr. Dietrichson for his money. Each femme fatale is contrasted with a sweet, young, virginal, ideal woman: Joe's obvious affection for Betty Schaefer (Nancy Olson), a fellow screenwriter and Walter's camaraderie with Lola Dietrichson (Jean Heather) are depicted as the healthier of their relationships with women. Both Norma and Phyllis are ultimately
responsible for the death of their male partner: Norma shoots Joe as he attempts to leave her for the final time and Phyllis shoots Walter although she is unable to pull the trigger a second time. Both women are presented as Sirens who, as the sexually assertive forces in their relationships, emasculate their men by controlling them and depriving them of their autonomy: Norma, who has already disposed of three husbands, one of whom—Max (Erich von Stroheim)—remains her butler, hires Joe to rewrite her screenplay of “Salome” and eventually sets him up as her gigolo, smothering him with clothes and money while Phyllis seduces Walter into devising a plan to murder her husband in order to collect on the insurance money, the whole while scheming to dispose of Walter himself as soon as she is through with him. Both women are depicted as exceptionally vain and arrogant Pandoras, often posing and primping in front of mirrors: Norma is surrounded by photographs and portraits of herself, spends her recreation time watching old silent films of her performances claiming “we had faces then,” and undergoes a lavish beauty regime to prepare for her comeback. Norma’s Fury–like maliciousness is made clear when she phones Betty to inform her of where and how Joe lives and her attempt to keep Joe to herself through her suicide attempt exposes her Harpie selfishness.

The threat that these mythologically informed and patriarchal ideologically constructed femmes fatales posed to male supremacy and identity, as exemplified by Sunset Boulevard’s Norma Desmond and Double Indemnity’s Phyllis Dietrichson, is suitably summarised by Frank Krutnik in In A Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity although his emphasis on the power of the male within the noir narrative is problematic:

The hostility directed towards women in the ‘tough’ thrillers testifies in a very acute manner to problems within men—for these
feared, but fascinating, women tend to represent conflicting currents within male identity. The incoherence which marks the aims and motivations of the femme fatale arises from the conflicting desires which the hero projects onto her. In these narratives, the sexual woman becomes one of the principal vehicles for the hero's own self-definition. [...] It becomes clear [...] that the woman would never be able to wield such power over the hero if he did not allow her to do so (by submitting to seduction). Not only do such heroes quite clearly have problems in 'relating' to women but they also subject them to a chaotic process of overvaluation (of their sexuality) and devaluation (of their subjectivity). Consequently, they find it difficult to stabilise their own identities. The femme fatale is often a scapegoat [...] for a more extensive and much less easily acknowledged erosion of confidence in the structuring of masculine identity and the masculine role (63–64).

And, although a number of other factors are also responsible for the overwhelming atmosphere of alienation and despair which permeate the noir universe, all of these divergent elements have their roots in the fear of a breach in the patriarchal power structure. Even though the impact of the investigations of the House Committee on Un–American Activities (HUAC) can be held partially responsible for the fatalistic overtones evident in so many of the films noirs, both HUAC and the noir universe's immoderate paranoia are firmly entrenched in a yearning to restore a 'Victorian' sense of orderliness within a world seemingly devoid of moral absolutes, absolutes which solidify a dominant male order. The anxiety created by this absence of clear boundaries and polarities which have always situated the male in a position of power is reflected in the film noir's nihilistic thematics and oppressive stylistics while patriarchy's desire to repair this rupture in the social fabric is mirrored in noir's classical Hollywood narrative trajectory whose resolution is dependent upon the reinstitution of the femme fatale within pliable perimeters.

John Tuska in Dark Cinema erroneously claims that "[n]oir men who choose to live dangerously, which is to say, outside the traditional role assigned
to them by the patriarchy, are subject to destruction no less than is the femme fatale. It is, in short, as much a closed world for men as it is for women" (216). Considering that any transgression was, as Tuska himself states, due to slippage outside of the "role[s] assigned to them by patriarchy," men must necessarily emerge victorious in the big picture. Tuska is no doubt alluding to such male characters as Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) in Double Indemnity. But as in most noirs in which the male protagonist meets his death because of his involvement with the femme fatale there is always another representative of the patriarchal order who, like Barton Keyes (Edward G. Robinson), escapes her charms, survives and thereby maintains the male-powered infrastructure. In fact, it is rather appropriate that Neff and Keyes both work for a traditionally patriarchal institution, namely the Pacific All Risk Insurance Company.

The masculine code of honour fortifying the patriarchal 'old boys' network is predicated in what is considered to be the first film noir, The Maltese Falcon (John Huston, 1941), when Sam Spade (Humphrey Bogart) tells Brigid O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor) "Yes angel, I'm gonna send you over. [...] You're taking the fall. [...] When a man's partner is killed he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him. He was your partner and you're supposed to do something about it." A male's conspiratorial allegiance with another male, any other male, even one he doesn't like personally, must outweigh any affiliation he has with a woman if his favoured position is to be preserved.

Similar to the effects of the sexual imbalance brought on by war and/or disease experienced in previously discussed historical stress points, American men in the late 1940s perceived themselves to be victims due to their sex because of the high casualties of the Second World War (07 December 1941–31 December 1946) (of 16,353,659 U.S. combatants serving: 292,131
65

battle deaths, 115,185 other deaths, 670,846 wounded). Because the war and men's absence from the homefront, either temporary or permanent, directly or indirectly allowed for many advancements in economic, political and social arenas for women, females and feminist accomplishments were somehow held responsible for the destabilisation of the male-oriented hierarchy. Because this created one of those moments in the historical continuum when fixed societal patterns were uncertain, the ideologically constructed image of the femme fatale was once again necessary. Men's disdain towards women and the male fear of the possibly destructive (or at least irritating) problems inherent within a sexual power imbalance is best expressed by Johnny (Glenn Ford) when he says to Gilda (Rita Hayworth) in Gilda (Charles Vidor, 1946): “Statistics show that there are more women in the world than anything else—except insects.”

This sexual imbalance in the population and women's transition into traditionally male-dominated areas played havoc with the American male psyche and created a climate of disorientation, a threat to patriarchal dominance and consequently a male desire to reestablish a normal social structure. The male belief that he was being forced into a position of possible redundancy because of the fluctuation and modification of women's position and her challenges to traditional patterns is mirrored in the film noir's thematic, cinematographic and narrative representation of women in a world which seems out of traditional male control. Men's fear of women's possible attainment of equality and how best to deal with it is not so subtly expressed by Rip Murdock (Humphrey Bogart) in Dead Reckoning (John Cromwell, 1947) when he says to Coral Chandler (Lizabeth Scott), “Women should come pocketsized and only be allowed to become full-sized when men want them to be. All other times they should be kept in a man's pocket.”

This twentieth century threat of autonomous women is reminiscent of a
Western European fin de siècle–type of sensibility which regarded females as 
vain to a fault, aggressive, predatory and often lethal. It is not therefore 
surprising that each of the following directors who utilised the image of the 
femme fatale were born and/or educated outside of the United States, many of 
whom originated from, or spent their formative years in Vienna, Hungary or 
Germany: 2 Michael Curtiz (Veda Pierce (Ann Blythe) in Mildred Pierce (1945)), 
Fritz Lang (Kitty Marsh (Joan Bennett) in Scarlet Street (1945), Alice Reed 
(Joan Bennett) in Woman in the Window (1945), Debby Marsh (Gloria 
Grahame) in The Big Heat (1953) and Vicki Buckley (Gloria Grahame) in 
Human Desire (1954)), Rudolph Maté as Director of Photography (Gilda (Rita 
Hayworth) in Gilda (Charles Vidor, 1946)), Lewis Milestone (Martha Ivers 
(Barbara Stanwyck) in The Strange Loves Of Martha Ivers (1946)), Otto 
Preminger (Diane Tremayne (Jean Simmons) in Angel Face (1953)), Robert 
Siodmack (Kitty Collins (Ava Gardner) in The Killers (1946), Terry Collins (Olivia 
De Havilland) in The Dark Mirror (1946), Rose Given (Hope Emerson) in Cry of 
the City (1948), Anna (Yvonne De Carlo) in Criss Cross (1949) and Thelma 
Jordan (Barbara Stanwyck) in The File on Thelma Jordan (1950)), Edgar Ulmer 
(Vera (Ann Savage) in Detour (1945), Virginia Cartwright (Sally Eilers) in 
Strange Illusion (1945) and Eden Lane (Barbara Payton) in Murder is My Beat 
(1955)), Billy Wilder (Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck) in Double 
Indemnity (1944), Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) in Sunset Boulevard 
(1950) and Lorraine Minosa (Jan Sterling) in The Big Carnival (1951)). 

Other notable noir directors partial to the femme fatale were either raised 
and/or artistically trained within an European milieu: Edward Dmytryk 
(Velma/Mrs. Grayle (Claire Trevor) in Murder, My Sweet (1944)), John Huston 
(Brigid O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor) in The Maltese Falcon (1941)), Jacques 
Tourneur (Kathie Moffett (Jane Greer) in Out of the Past (1947)), Orson Welles
(Elsa Bannister (Rita Hayworth) in *The Lady From Shanghai* (1948)) and Robert Wise (Helen Trent (Claire Trevor) in *Born to Kill* (1947), Margaret (Fay Baker) in *The House On Telegraph Hill* (1951) and Helen (Gloria Grahame) in *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959)).

Several important femmes fatales employed by American directors include: Ellen Berent (Gene Tierney) in *Leave Her To Heaven* (John Stahl, 1945), Cora Smith (Lana Turner) in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Tay Garnett, 1946), Coral Chandler (Lizabeth Scott) in *Dead Reckoning* (John Cromwell, 1947), Rosa Moline (Bette Davis) in *Beyond the Forest* (King Vidor, 1949), Annie Laurie Starr (Peggy Cummins) in *Gun Crazy* (Joseph Lewis, 1950), Irene Neves (Gloria Grahame) in *Sudden Fear* (David Miller, 1952) and Gaby Rogers/Gabrielle (Lily Carver) in *Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1954).

The anxiety produced by these independent women which permeates the noir universe is visually expressed through the noir appropriation of an European flavoured style, especially that of German Expressionism's oddly angled shots and chiaroscuro use of light and shadow. The stipulations of the very American inspired Production Code (discussed above in the preceding subsection of this chapter) provided institutional augmentation.

The woman of the 1940s and 1950s posed an immediate threat to the traditional American way of life and therefore to male supremacy. The Second World War necessitated an approximately sixty percent influx of female workers into the labour force during the war years (Hartmann, 365). In fact, "more than 6 million women went to work for the first time during the Second World War. The proportion of women in the labour force increased from 25 percent in 1940 to 36 percent in 1945. This increase was greater than that of the previous four decades combined" (Banner, 202–3). According to Marjorie Rosen, "[b]y 1943 more than 4,000,000 women were employed in munitions work alone. An
additional 15,000,000 joined in the labor force, doing such formerly masculine jobs as coal mining, operating mechanical hoists and cranes, swinging sledge, sorting ore, greasing machines and firing and cleaning antiaircraft guns" (201). Not only were women quite capable of carrying out previously male–demarcated tasks, they actually were considered to be more efficient: “the industrial world was shocked—and occasionally dismayed—that women, now 36 percent of the labor force, worked faster than men, required less supervision, had fewer industrial accidents, and did less damage to tools and materials” (Rosen, 201). These circumstances radically altered the preconceived divisions of labour whose rigid guidelines firmly situated women within the confines of the family as mothers and wives and the men outside as providers. This disruption in the social hierarchy released women from previously adhered to traditional roles and expectations and allowed her to exist outside or beyond the strict confines and safety of the familiar functions of wife, mother, daughter, sister, mistress or whore. Because women now constituted a major component of the work force and thereby had access to independent financial security they were subsequently seen as subversive to male superiority and a threat to patriarchal dominance. According to Frank Krutnik in In A Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity, “[t]he means of [women] securing money runs counter to the masculine economic system and threatens the security and predominance of male desire” (251).

Many factors precipitated by the war such as later marriage, an increase in divorce rates (from 6/1000 in 1935 to 18/1000 in 1945), smaller families, more effective methods of contraception, exceptionally low fertility rates, and childlessness by choice each equated into more consecutive years in the work force and therefore better access to economic power. Basically, in any given historical period, women who have children later in life, or not at all, are better
off financially and have higher living standards. Susan Bianchi in Women in Transition explains that "a reduction in the childbearing time span can significantly minimise interruptions in a woman's educational or working career and thus increase her long-run economic assets" (74). Furthermore, "[r]eductions in fertility mean that women have more opportunities to pursue alternatives to the mothering role" (Bianchi, 83). Such an independent and probably barren female is an obvious threat to patriarchal autonomy and must be punished and reconstituted in a position of subservience. An ideological representation of this sort of figure, in the image of the femme fatale, illustrates to the masses her inherent destructiveness.

As with all previously analysed historical epochs' delineations of women in their respective popular cultural discourses, "[t]here are [also] two basic kinds of women in film noir [....] the femmes fatales and the loving wives and mothers. The femmes fatales are interesting, intelligent, and often powerful, whereas the wives and mothers are dull and insipid. Notwithstanding, it is the latter variety which is the ideal role prescribed for women. The femme fatale is best characterised by her self-interest, while her opposite is capable of total devotion to a man" (Tuska, 202). The femme fatale, lacking the selfless devotion of the nurturing kind of woman, refuses to be defined in relation to someone else, and is therefore represented as selfish, narcissistic and noxious.

This vindictive patriarchal attitude, both within and outside the noir world, intimated that it is the females' fault for massive societal decay evidenced by the potential dissolution and disappearance of the customary family structure. This post-war situation displaced the male from the helm and was a menace to the ideological infrastructure as a whole. Analogous to the message inherent in Rita Hayworth singing "Put The Blame On Mame" in Gilda, Phyllis Dietrichson being "a little more rotten" than Walter Neff in Double Indemnity, Brigid
O'Shaughnessy “taking the fall” in The Maltese Falcon and Mildred Pierce being “the only one left out in the cold in Mildred Pierce, working mothers in the 1940s were deemed responsible for the growing rates of juvenile delinquency, illegitimacy and family instability in general as America moved into the 1950s (Hartmann, 373). According to Lois Banner in Women In Modern America “the anti–feminism of the post–war 1940s held women responsible for society’s ills–either because they were failures as mothers or because they had left the home for work” (212). Ironically, Philip Wylie’s accusation in Generation of Vipers (1942) that domineering wives and mothers were emasculating their husbands and sons and thereby creating a nation of soft, effeminate men in effect placed women in a no–win situation.

This masculine fear of feminine usurpation through aberrations in the family unit is visible in the overwhelming absence of a 'normal' family situation in the noir film. In “Woman’s Place: the Absent Family of Film Noir,” Sylvia Harvey adeptly explains that “[i]t is the representation of the institution of the family, which in so many films serves as the mechanism whereby desire is fulfilled, or at least ideological equilibrium established, that in film noir serves as the vehicle for the expression of frustration” (23). In the rare instances when this idyllic patriarchal state is included (e.g. The Big Heat, Mildred Pierce), or alluded to having at some point existed (e.g. Double Indemnity), its destruction alone provides more than ample justification to instigate the male protagonist’s actual or attempted, direct or indirect, destruction of those forces which have provided a female with the access to such disruptive power.

Katie Bannion (Jocelyn Brando) in The Big Heat, is the perfect example of the ‘good’ woman who defines herself in relation to others, living solely through and of her husband, Dave Bannion (Glenn Ford) and their children. She takes sips of his beer and drags from his cigarette never allowing herself
sole access to even these small items and is so good with the finances that she even "manages to buy steak on his policeman's salary." She is exemplary of the ideal woman of Proverbs 31 discussed in chapter two—strong and competent, (which is not to be confused with independent), able to succeed economically within a familial setting, family centred, and always acting for the provision of her household. Her murder, and subsequently, Dave's lost position of patriarchal authority within the hegemony of the nuclear family unit, drive him to track down and eradicate that which has deprived him of his 'rightful' status. Bannion's obsessive inquiry leads him to the explosive sexuality of femme fatale Debby Marsh (Gloria Grahame) whose life is forfeited in the process of the investigation as she becomes the receptacle of the criminal identification and thereby the one who must suffer the consequences.

Because the family functions as one of the ideological foundations of Western industrial society, it is a necessary institution for the continuation of patriarchal control. The previously discussed concept of the oppressive nature of reproduction and socialisation as it pertains to the representation of the mother and the family is elucidated by Sylvia Harvey:

the family is the arena that is sanctified by society for the reproduction and preliminary education of children. In the free labour that it requires the mother to perform in raising the child, the family serves to legitimate a whole series of practices that oppress women. Moreover, in its hierarchical structure, with the father as the head, the mother as subservient, and the children as totally dependent, it offers us a legitimising model or metaphor for a hierarchical and authoritarian society" (24).

Because the femme fatale is conspicuously barren and as such defines herself through and of her 'self' and not through a husband or children she is a visible threat to the ideological functioning of the family and what it symbolises. Almost
all of the femmes fatales listed above in this subsection have ambitions beyond marriage and child rearing, a few even going so far as to abort a child in order to attain their desires (e.g. Rosa Moline (Bette Davis) in Beyond the Forest and Ellen Berent (Gene Tierney) in Leave Her To Heaven).

World War Two’s precipitation of the fluctuations in the structure of the family due to the massive movement of women into the labour force provoked “an emphasis on the importance of marriage and motherhood [which] became widespread in the late 1940s and the 1950s” (Banner, 211). Mildred Pierce offers excellent illustrations of both the ideologically desirous and threatening woman. Mildred (Joan Crawford) divorces her husband and successfully pursues a business career, opening a chain of restaurants. The death of her youngest daughter Kay (Jo Ann Marlowe) and the offensive behaviour of her eldest daughter Veda (Ann Blythe) are shown to be due to the fact that Mildred is not adhering to traditional mothering codes. Resolution is established when Mildred, after losing everything, exits from a legal building with her former husband, stepping past a woman on her hands and knees scrubbing its floor. She is now reinstated in a customary wife position within a familial setting and is therefore no longer a threat to any of the traditionally male-dominated institutions.

As mentioned above, the potential fissure in the patriarchal infrastructure as expressed by the initial instability within the noir universe is partially exposed through the application of anti-traditional visual and narrative means. 3 All of these stylistic and thematic choices combine to create a noiresque vision which is not only analogous to the disturbed mental state of the film’s main male character but also of the post Second World War male, each of whom exists in a morally and structurally ambiguous world. The film noir’s utilization of particular stylistics which reflects the post World War Two social, cultural, political and
ideological sense of confusion and uncertainty includes numerous disquieting lighting, camera and compositional choices.

Indicative of this sense of nihilistic sensibility and fear of a lack of stability, the film noir prefers high contrast, low key lighting which causes strong shadows and oblique shafts of light to intrude into the frame as compared with the customary more balanced effect of high key lighting. Moreover, because actors and settings are given equal lighting emphasis, it creates a fatalistic, hopeless mood.

The film noir's use of atypical camera techniques further emphasises a disoriented sense of the world. A greater depth of field, which demands that equal emphasis be given to all aspects of the frame, is employed in many noirs making the world of the film a closed universe and the characters in it appear inefficent. The frequent use of a wide angle lens not only produces a greater depth of field, but it also had certain distorting characteristics which made objects bulge out when shot in close-up. The film noir's abrupt and jarring cutting style combined with its sparing use of camera movement, its obtrusive and disturbing choker close-ups, bizarre and extreme angles and its withholding of establishing shots all create tension and discomfort.

The compositional decisions in film noir are also designed to unsettle, jar and disorient the viewer in correlation with the disorientation felt by the noir hero, and by extension, by the American male. In order to represent a world which is never stable or safe and is always threatening, customary balanced two–shots and harmonious triangular three–shots are rare; instead, film noir utilises bizarre off–angle compositions of figures placed irregularly in the frame to create compositional imbalance. Moreover, as opposed to the traditional Hollywood horizontal framing, there is a noir preference for vertical and oblique lines which tend to splinter a screen, making it restless and unstable. The use of
tight framing creates further compositional tension by making ceilings seem unusually low, small spaces appear even more cramped and characters appear claustrophobically located within the frame. The typical film noir also prefers to move the scene cinematographically around the actor rather than have the actor control the scene by physical action in order to emphasize his initial victimisation.

All of these above stylistic choices, especially when combined with the tendency of the female to dominate the male in the frame, presents a visually threatening environment, not unlike that imagined by the mid-twentieth century American male. As a reflection of the American male's loss of authority and societal disenfranchisement due to the advanced position of women within the social environment of the 1940s and 1950s, the femme fatale is held accountable for the male protagonist's subordinate compositional position and tragic deterioration within the noir universe.

And although the use of the male voice-over in many films noirs appears to impose a 'voice-of-God,' authoritative narrator, because it is often situated within a flashback structure it "loses some of its control over events which are locked in the past" (Kaplan, 16). The failure of the typically omnipotent voice-over within a noir milieu is effectively applied to Double Indemnity by J. P. Telotte in Voices in the Dark: The Narrative Patterns of Film Noir:

despite the sense of authority a voice-over almost inevitably projects, here its partial and embedded character casts a shadow of doubt on [Walter] Neff's [(Fred MacMurray)] narration. And that shadow reasserts a dual potential here, for both the straight and the spiralling trajectory of discourse. When combined with the seductive images of Phyllis Dietrichson [Barbara Stanwyck] as the typical, erotic, threatening female of film noir, this dislocation [...] emasculates the narrative's dominant masculine voice (44).
Noir's predilection with the first person, voice-over narration situated within a flashback structure both of which inform its complex (a)chronological order combine to reinforce a mood of fatalism, disorientation and nihilism. In fact, according to Telotte, in

a film like *Sunset Boulevard*, with its cynical retrospection emanating from the corpse of writer Joe Gillis [(William Holden) ...] we sense no nostalgia for the past—indeed, for a life already gone, even wasted—but a persistent, even paradoxical desire to speak when the very possibility for speech has long been denied or overlooked. Having harnessed his writer's talents to the past in the person of faded film star Norma Desmond, in effect having silenced his own voice by selling out to a silent screen actress, Joe finally, belatedly [...] has his say.[...] The resulting narrative stands witness to the self's impelling desire for a voice even in death (15–16).

The culmination of these narrative elements, suggesting the threat represented by the femme fatale's powerful sexuality, results in an unstable, distorted and ominous environment for the male. This parallels the returning American soldiers' sentiments that they may have sacrificed the 'best years of their lives' only to have benefited the women on the homefront. Subsequently, they are compelled to reassert their collective voice and superior position in the social stratum.

The application of the noir motif of the doppleganger further emphasises the male's postwar sense of confusion as to the boundaries of female functioning. Like his World War Two veteran counterpart, the noir protagonist can not be certain of, or rely upon, his accustomed image of the female. In most of the films noirs the duplicitous nature of the femme fatale is exposed by her visual splitting or doubling either through lighting and mirrored reflections (e.g. *Double Indemnity* and in almost all other noirs), photographs (e.g. *Sunset Boulevard*) and paintings (e.g. *Laura, Woman In The Window*) or by the
thematic suggestion of a connection between characters with shared traits (e.g. Debby Marsh and Bertha Duncan in *The Big Heat*) or the fact that many of the femmes fatales are known by more than one name (e.g. Gabrielle/Gaby Rogers in *Kiss Me Deadly*, Velma/Mrs. Grayle in *Murder My Sweet*). In order to provide the male with a more stable and secure patriarchal arrangement, the female must be made whole again or destroyed. This, like all of the other factors which reaffirm male domination, entails subversion of the female form.

As mentioned above, the film noir's detective film narrative pattern superimposed upon its progression through a classical Hollywood narrative structure provides another apparatus by which to examine the representation and treatment of the femme fatale in the noir universe and, by extension, the underlying ideological doctrine which informs it. The detective film mandates an investigation of a crime whose solution, though thwarted by various elusive tactics, always culminates in the eventual identification of the criminal complete with the appropriate consequences of this identification (Bordwell, 64–70). In the film noir this investigation shifts focus from the actual transgression to the implicated woman, particularly her conspicuous sexuality. The film noir probes these secrets of the femme fatale because, as stated in the introduction, the "ideological struggle within patriarchy [depends upon its ability] to maintain control over female sexuality and to assimilate [any possible] liberating manifestations" (Kaplan 1978, 1). The structuring of the narrative and the placement of the woman within said narrative exposes the dominant sexual and political ideologies which inform and construct the representation of the femme fatale.

Film noir's particular tack on classical Hollywood narration's "movement of the plot [...] from an initial state of equilibrium—which is ruptured by an event or 'enigma' that sets the narrative in action—towards a new equilibrium which
constitutes a resolution of the initial enigma and a closure of the narrative” (Kuhn 1982, 29), situates the woman as the enigma that instigates the narrative thrust, and as such, it is she who must be recuperated in order to successfully complete the film's discourse. This dominant ideological sense of realignment necessitating the female's eventual placement in a subordinate position in the film's resolution is concisely consolidated by Annette Kuhn in Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema:

woman may thus have to be returned to her place so that order is restored to the world. In classical Hollywood cinema, this recuperation manifests itself thematically in a limited number of ways: a woman character may be restored to the family by falling in love, by 'getting her man,' by getting married, or otherwise accepting a 'normative' female role. If not, she may be directly punished for her narrative and social transgression by exclusion, outlawing or even death (34–35).

The film noir's femme fatale endures just such a procedure and punishment. She typically experiences a process of ordeal, victimisation by a male, and eventual reconstitution within her 'rightful' position of complete docility in order to appease the patriarchal power structure.

In the majority of the noir films, the female attempts to obtain, or has already appropriated, the means of power. This means of power, namely money, when viewed as the symbolic phallus, is an explicit emblem of male carte blanche. Femmes fatales Debby Marsh (The Big Heat), Phyllis Dietrichson (Double Indemnity), Gilda (Gilda), Brigid O'Shaughnessy (The Maltese Falcon), Kitty Marsh (Scarlet Street), Norma Desmond (Sunset Boulevard) and Coral Chandler (Dead Reckoning) all possess, or are in the process of acquiring, this instrument of control. Transgression into this male realm of power is often made explicit through the female's possession and adept handling of a gun which is
an emblem of her 'un'natural phallic power. Because she inverts the power
dynamics within male–female relationships, the femme fatale must be
recuperated into a traditional subservient position. Whether by dementia (e.g.
Norma Desmond in Sunset Boulevard), mutilation (e.g. Debby Marsh in The Big
Heat), murder, either at the hand of, or because of, the male 'hero' (e.g. Debby
Marsh in The Big Heat, Phyllis Dietrichson in Double Indemnity, Kitty Marsh in
Scarlet Street, Coral Chandler in Dead Reckoning), being turned over to the
'authorities' (e.g. Brigid O'Shaughnessy in The Maltese Falcon), or replacement
in a traditional compliant wife role (e.g. Gilda in Gilda), the female is forced to
pay for her transgressions against the male system in her attempt, successful or
otherwise, to obtain the means of power. In this manner, the film noir also
satisfies both its detective film narrative mandate that some form of retribution
be made for criminal activity and its classical Hollywood narrative demand that
there be a return to the initial state of equilibrium in which the enigma is
revealed and rendered harmless. This supposed state of balance, within a
patriarchal ideological mode, is necessarily prejudiced in favour of the male
simply because “[p]atriarchal culture relies upon the maintenance of a
gender–structured disequilibrium” (Krutnik, 75).

As a point of fact, Brandon French in On the Verge of Revolt: Women in
American Films of the Fifties claims that American men in the post Second
World War world held women responsible for the failures of the government and
business, and her subsequent failure to meet his expectations of repayment for
sacrificing the best years of his life established her as a symbol for his
disappointment in America as a whole (xix–xx). The female was therefore guilty
of a crime for which she must be punished in order for 'man'kind to be made
whole again. In an attempt to restore his position of authority in a world which
has slipped out of his control in his absence, the patriarchal infrastructure
retracted many advances women had made in the economic arena: 25% of women were dropped from the factory jobs they have so recently acquired resulting in an overall 6.8% decrease from 1944 to 1947 in the female civilian labour force; there was a reduction in female earnings; and there was a loss of labour union protection through a shift back into traditional female positions (Hartmann, 373). All federal funds for daycare facilities were discontinued in 1946 and, to add insult to injury, a 1944 Women's Bureau study indicated that 80% of the women who were employed during World War Two actually wanted to continue in their jobs after the war ended (French, xvii; Banner, 206).

But, things are not necessarily as bleak as either these statistics or the femme fatale's reconditioning imply. In *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*, Annette Kuhn offers a possible positive interpretation of the femme fatale and the limitations of ideological proselytising:

> Perhaps the only thing that can be concluded with any degree of certainty is that, structurally and thematically, the classic Hollywood narrative attempts to recuperate woman to a 'proper place.' This attempt may not always be successful, though, particularly in cases where the narrative sets up questions that cannot be contained by any form of closure. Such excess of narrative disruption over resolution has been seen as signalling Hollywood’s intermittent failure to contain women within the confines of the classic narrative structure. An interesting case of persistent narrative excess in Hollywood cinema is exemplified by the film noir genre of the 1940s. In films noirs, whose narratives are typically structured around crime and its investigation by a detective figure, it is very common for a woman character to be set up as an additional mystery demanding resolution, a mystery independent of the crime enigma (Kaplan 1978). In many films noirs, in fact, the focus of the story may shift between the solution of crimes and the solution of the woman-question. However, if only because of the way in which enigmas are constituted in films noirs, there is a tendency to narrative excess inbuilt in the genre. This excess often centres precisely on the inability of the narrative to cope fully with the woman-question. As a genre, film noir is, historically speaking, very much part of the dominant cinema and yet at the same time it contains the potential, within its own
characteristic narrative structure, to subvert the textual organisation of dominant cinema. This internal contradiction is a point at which are directed a number of feminist readings of films. These readings are aimed exactly at exposing some of the ideological operations and contradictions embedded in the textual practices of dominant cinema (35).

Therefore, if the cinematic femme fatale can be interpreted as an “excess of narrative disruption over resolution” her twentieth century incarnations, though still ideologically manipulative, need not be wholly negative. This means that although a dominant patriarchal ideology disseminated through the multiplicitous medium of cinema continues to perpetuate the notion of the inherent destructiveness (self and otherwise) of independent and barren womanhood in the figure of the femme fatale, it will necessarily fail in its attempt to indoctrinate American society as a whole. So while both the noir universe and that of postwar America appear to have adroitly restored the patriarchal power structure, neither is fully successful. Even the 1950s projection of the woman—as—homemaker image could not negate the fact that by 1955, “the proportion of women in the work force exceeded the highest level reached during the war” (French, xiv). Nevertheless, as the final chapter will elucidate, the (still) dominant patriarchal infrastructure continues to utilise the figure of the femme fatale in its popular cultural discourses during the subsequent decades of the twentieth century in an attempt to main/ob/re–tain its position of power.
Notes to Chapter 3


CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

The Contemporary Femme Fatale:
A Necessary Evil?

The latter portion of the twentieth century, from the conclusion of the Second World War to the present, was at least as chaotic a period in the history of the United States as the eras discussed in chapters two and three. And as with each of the other stress points in the historical continuum, this period sustained a multitude of cultural and technological accelerations and modifications. The impact of the Vietnam War, the rise (and fall (?) of the United States as the most powerful nation in the world and the numerous advances made by women (real or imagined) in social, political and economic realms eventually culminated in a reemergence of the femme fatale in this century's concluding decades. Paradoxically, the rapid technological breakthroughs and impact of computer technology, television, video capabilities and advanced forms of mass communication (Internet, e-mail, faxes) which indirectly allowed for the femme fatale's continued and expanded representation also contributed to the further blurring of traditional societal boundaries and a general cultural paradigmatic shift known as postmodernism that mandated her most recent cinematic emergences. This "new stage of multinational corporate capitalism and [...] all the new electronic and computer technologies circularly producing and proliferating" (Kaplan, 180) in the eighties and nineties provided both the means of, and when combined with the belief that women's advancements had become a liability, an impetus for, disseminating the patriarchal ideological message that the barren, independent woman is inherently abhorrent,
pernicious and, especially in her most recent incarnation, generally psychotic. During this post Second World War period women experienced a number of advances and almost as many setbacks regarding control over their own bodies, sexuality, and social, political and economic autonomy. The increase of women in the labour force, later marriages, a growth in the divorce rate, smaller families, higher levels of education, more effective methods of contraception (the pill and the intrauterine device (IUD) became widely available in the 1970s), new reproductive technologies (in-vitro fertilisation, artificial insemination, embryo freezing and experimentation, gene manipulation, mother surrogacy) and legalised access to abortion (“Roe vs. Wade” 1973) were concomitant events, all of which were connected to lower fertility rates. Because, as previously mentioned, reductions in fertility mean that women have greater opportunities to pursue alternatives to the mothering role and thereby pose a threat to a male-oriented hierarchical infrastructure, issues concerning sex and reproduction have always been controlled by patriarchally dominated and informed government regulations, legal restrictions and religious doctrines. Moreover, because the use of contraception throughout history has been negatively associated with illicit and immoral sexual encounters (i.e. to prevent transmittance of venereal disease) and mental inferiority (i.e. the once common practice of sterilising mentally ‘retarded’ persons) it is not unanticipated that the infertile femme fatale is constantly represented as excessively sexually promiscuous and bordering on maniacal.

Although there were minor eruptions in other mediums, the figure of the femme fatale did not appear again in a considerable cinematic concentration until the eighties and early nineties for several connected reasons. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the United States was catapulted into the position of the leading nation in the world because of its possession of the atomic monopoly
which provided it with the power to shape international affairs. Furthermore, because birth rates in the 1950s were at an all time high (the baby boom), women were, at least superficially, incarcerated within traditional divisions of labour. During the next few post–war decades, the United States also experienced unprecedented political expansionism and economic affluence. Because of the aggressive position in which this placed America during the 1950s through most of the 1970s, institutional dissipation of its dominant principles was enough to maintain ideological control without requiring intense surreptitious supplementation in its cultural discourses.

Instead, films and television programs (e.g. Father Knows Best (1954–1960) and The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet (1952–1966)) of the fifties offered the public the safe virgin–mother half of the Eternal Feminine and by refusing to stray very far in its representation of women from “the entrenched ideology of womanhood–namely, piety, purity, domesticity and submissiveness” (Kaplan, 24) helped to fortify a conventional sexual breakdown. The femme fatale did emerge in both television and music of the sixties and early seventies but in such small quantities as to be almost invisible. Batman’s (1966–1968) Cat Woman (Julie Newmar, Lee Ann Meriwether, Eartha Kitt), who is foiled time and again in her various appearances and in one episode, after she has been caught in her attempt to attain a large sum of money, even states that the love of a good man like Batman might be the only thing that could tempt her to follow a straight and narrow path, and the Siren (Joan Collins) of another episode who is destroyed by the Odysseus–like Batman are diluted and almost comical versions of the authentic femme fatale.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, as a result of any number of factors including the impact of television, the Vietnam War, the collapse of the studio system and the removal of the Production Code among others, music,
supposedly a non-conformist medium offering alternative ideologies, became the most popular cultural discourse, and as such was prone to reiteration of dominant doctrines. Due to this period's inception of massive societal upheavals, it is not unexpected that the femme fatale emerged here in songs by such diverse recording artists as the Velvet Underground ("Femme Fatale," "Venus In Furs," (Lou Reed, 1967)) and Tom Jones ("Delilah," (Reed/Mason, 1968), "Daughter of Darkness" (Reed/Stephens, 1970)). Similar to many of the films noirs, sympathy is positioned with the male in the 'narrative' of "Delilah" even though it is the woman who is destroyed, or in this case, murdered: "She was my woman and as she deceived me I watched and went out of my mind. That girl was no good for me but I was a slave that no man could free." Because of the strength of the 'old boy's network' and women's relatively innocuous status within it, the fifties, sixties and much of the seventies did not require plentiful or entirely accurate reincarnations of the femme fatale.

But then, in the 1970s and 1980s, economic growth faltered and eventually slowed to near zero in most industrialised countries resulting in world-wide inflation. These economic problems were augmented by the physical and psychological impact of the Vietnam War (04 August 1964–27 January 1973) in which over 8,744,000 American men served. According to the U.S. Department of Defence, the United States sustained 47,368 battle deaths, 10,799 other deaths, 153,303 wounded and an unknown number of missing combatants. The long term damage of the abysmal failure of this war to the American (especially male) collective psyche would not even begin to be assuaged until 1991 with the relative success of the Persian Gulf War (16 January 1991–06 April 1991) which, with 467, 539 who served (including women), incurred only 148 battle deaths, 145 other deaths and 467 wounded.

Moreover, between 1970 and 1980 the percentage of women in the
experienced labour force grew from thirty-eight to forty-three percent which followed from the fact that fifty-eight percent of the workers added during the decade were women. During the seventies women also increased their representation among most major occupational groups. A very significant enlargement, from nineteen to thirty-one percent, occurred in the proportion of managers who were women. Another large growth took place among women as technicians, jumping from thirty-four to forty-four percent between 1970 and 1980. (Bianchi, 161). Although these increases did not mean that women now had the same occupational distribution as men (hardly!) this growth in certain trades was nonetheless interpreted as detrimental to male autonomy.

Several other advances in women’s positions did little to alleviate this growing sense of victimization. Not only was there a fifty percent growth in divorce rates between 1960 and 1981 and an all time low fertility rate of 1.8 average births per woman in 1980, below that needed for natural replacement of the population and a drop from a high of 3.8 in 1957 (Bianchi, 82), but the proportions of childless among ever-married women under 30 were almost as high in 1980 as they had been in 1940 (Bianchi, 65). Moreover, “[t]he postwar upswing in fertility [which can be accounted for by] the rising incomes of men, [and] the decline in the 1980s [which] can be explained by increases in women’s wages and labor force participation” (Bianchi, 54–55) prompted a harsh response from patriarchy’s institutional and cultural production networks.

The 1970s and 1980s also provided women with some of the most progressive legal and governmental decisions regarding control over their own bodies and reproductive systems, but they were consequently witness to some of the most violent personal, vindictive religious and immediate governmental and legal reactions to said same advancements. In 1973 abortion was legalised
nationally based on the ruling in the "Roe vs. Wade" case in which the Supreme Court cited the right to privacy in reproductive matters, and over the next few years safe and legal abortion services became available. Unfortunately, in response to these events, many states where strong antiabortion sentiment existed immediately began to pass state laws restricting abortion rights. Other reactions included the 1975 organisation of parishioners to combat abortion by Catholic bishops, the first reported case of arson at an abortion clinic and the Supreme Court's allowance for states to cut off Medicaid funding for abortions in 1977 and the first known bombing of an abortion clinic in 1978.

Following, and perhaps initiated by, the numerous assaults experienced by the American (male) ego during the 1970s, including the catastrophe of the Vietnam War, the embarrassment of Republican President Richard Nixon's (1969–1973) impeachment (09 August, 1973) and pardon by Gerald Ford (1974–1977) and the years of relative liberalism and passivity concerning foreign and domestic policy of Democrat Jimmy Carter's term (1977–1981), a whole new era of right-wing American conservatism was inaugurated by the reign of Republican President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989). He was elected president with the help of anti-choice forces because he promised to support the induction of abortion opponents to the Supreme Court. In eight years as president he filled more than half of the seats on the federal bench and chose three Supreme Court Justices. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), a proposed Constitutional amendment prohibiting the denial or abridgement of a person's Constitutional rights because of sex, first introduced in Congress in 1923, and finally passed in 1972, failed to obtain the necessary thirty-eight state ratification by its 30 June 1982 deadline. In 1984 abortion proponents released a manipulative and deceptive 'documentary' entitled The Silent Scream and abortion providers were subjected to eighteen bombings, six cases
of arson, six cases of attempted bombings or arson, twenty-three death threats, and nearly seventy clinic invasions and acts of vandalism. In 1985 antiabortion violence continued with four bombings, eight cases of arson, ten cases of attempted bombing or arson, and one hundred and twenty-seven other criminal acts. In 1986 President Reagan made January 19th National Sanctity of Life Day, and Randall Terry organized Operation Rescue (OR), a plan for widespread blockades designed to shut down abortion clinics. In 1988 the Reagan administration prohibited family planning clinics receiving federal funding from offering abortion counselling or referrals. In this same year the abortifacient RU 486 began to be marketed in France, but anti-choice pressure on drug companies blocked its testing in the United States. Also in 1988 George Bush won the presidency on an anti-choice platform and appointed two Supreme Court Justices during his term (1989–1992). In 1989, in “Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services” case, the Supreme Court imposed various restrictions on abortion granted in the “Roe” case, including a prohibition on using public facilities to perform them, although it did indicate its willingness to guarantee the basic right to legal abortion. Anti-choice state legislatures immediately began enacting new abortion restrictions and considered legislation to ban abortion outright.

Indicative of the fact that issues concerning abortion in particular, and women’s control over their own bodies and sexuality in general, have always been about political and religious patriarchal oppression rather than about moral, ethical and personal choice, Catholic bishops hired a public relations firm to mount an anti-choice campaign in 1990. In this same year, New York Cardinal John O’Connor threatened to excommunicate Catholics who supported legal abortion and the Supreme Court sanctioned rules that prohibited federally funded family planning programs from providing abortion
counselling or referrals. In 1992, although the Supreme Court reaffirmed a woman's basic right to abortion in "Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey" it nonetheless allowed for significant restrictions including a mandatory waiting period and requirements for counselling that discouraged women from having abortions. By this time, access to legal abortion had steadily declined and during the year at least two persons were shot down in clinics, sixteen clinics were set afire, five were burglarised, one was bombed and one hundred and sixteen were vandalised.

Regardless of the multitude of these institutionalised assaults via governmental, legal and religious systems during the eighties and into the nineties, the perception that women had made massive advancements in sexual, political, social, and especially economic arenas provoked an eruption in patriarchy's ideologically informed cultural discourses as well.

The plethora of Hollywood's noiresque thrillers of the 1980s and 1990s attests to the perceived exigency for supplemental ideological (re)indoctrination. This latest cluster of neo-noirs embraces femmes fatales who are fundamentally quite similar to their noir counterparts. Janey Place's description of the forties' femme fatale in "Women in Film Noir" is readily applicable to her contemporary incarnations: "Often the original transgression of the dangerous lady of film noir (unlike the vamp seductress of the twenties) is ambition [...] This ambition is inappropriate to her status as a woman, and must be confined. [...] Independence is her goal, but her nature is fundamentally and irredeemably sexual. [...] The insistence on combining the two (aggressiveness and sensuality) in a consequently dangerous woman is the central obsession [...] which must be repressed and controlled if it is not to destroy [the male]"

(46–47). Strangely enough, though most of her personality traits remain unchanged, the intensity of them is greatly amplified. The contemporary femme
fatale exudes in surplus all of the lethal mythologically informed characteristics; the emasculating licentious of the Siren, the Furies' malicious retributive sense of justice, the avaricious rapacity of the Harpie, and Pandora's narcissistic and destructive curiosity are presented with unparalleled force in such representations as Alex Forrest (Glenn Close) in *Fatal Attraction*, Bridget (Linda Fiorentino) in *The Last Seduction*, and Margaret Welles (Ellen Barkin) in *Bad Company* that they lack the many nuances and much of the derisive humour of their forties' counterparts.

Other neo-noirs of the eighties and nineties include several classic noir remakes (e.g. *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Bob Rafelson, 1981), *Out of the Past* as *Against All Odds* (Taylor Hackford, 1984), *The Big Clock* as *No Way Out* (Roger Donaldson, 1987)), a number based on the work of Jim Thompson (e.g. *After Dark, My Sweet* (James Foley, 1990), *The Grifters* (Stephen Frears, 1990), *The Kill-Off* (Maggie Greenwald, 1990)), and various others (e.g. *Delusion* (Carl Colpaert, 1991), *Femme Fatale* (André Guttfreund, 1991) and *Shattered* (Wolfgang Peterson, 1991) and *Desperate Hours* (Michael Cimino, 1990)).

Many of these contemporary noirs have femmes fatales who, either actively murder, convince a male to murder for her, or are at least suspected of murdering, their male victims in an attempt to acquire money and/or power (e.g. *Body Heat* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1981) a semi-remake of *Double Indemnity*, *Black Widow* (Bob Rafelson, 1986), *The Hot Spot* (Dennis Hopper, 1990), *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992), *Body of Evidence* (Uli Edel, 1993)); directly threaten the sanctity of the nuclear family (e.g. *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987), *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* (Curtis Hanson, 1992), *Disclosure* (Barry Levinson, 1994)); or are self-centred, greedy and exceptionally manipulative (e.g. John Dahl's *Kill Me Again* (1989), *Red Rock West* (1992),...
and The Last Seduction (1994) (the femme fatale Bridget is described by an acquaintance as a 'self-serving bitch'), and Disclosure (Barry Levinson, 1994) and Bad Company (Damian Harris, 1994)). As in the noirs of the 1940s, there is once again an attempt to reaffirm a disrupted masculine order and in several of these films there is an actual diegetic attack on masculine identity (e.g. in The Last Seduction Mike Swale (Peter Berg) has accidentally married a transvestite and now desperately desires to reaffirm his masculinity to himself and to Bridget Gregory/Wendy Kroy (Linda Fiorentino)), often through the threat of lesbianism (e.g. in Basic Instinct Catherine Tramell (Sharon Stone) is involved in a same-sex relationship and in Black Widow a female government agent (Debra Winger) investigates the femme fatale (Theresa Russell)). Undoubtedly, largely due to the absence of any overtly restrictive censoring system such as the Hays Code or the Legion of Decency, the modern femme fatale's explosive sexuality is amplified one hundred fold (especially in all of John Dahl's films, Body of Evidence and Bad Company).

Adrian Lyne's Fatal Attraction (1987) is the ultimate patriarchally inscribed reaction to the tumultuous events of the previous decade. E. Ann Kaplan in Motherhood and Representation explains the film's insidiousness:

Fatal Attraction is perhaps the clearest example of the new ideological construction of the family as in opposition to the 'liberated' career woman. 'Liberation' in most Hollywood films still means 'sexually promiscuous.' Glen [sic] Close is shown at the start of the film as an independent career woman, who objects to being made a sex object, but who, in turn, has intense sexual desire and drive. The female spectator is invited to identify with the figure at the start of the film, only to have this identification sickeningly wrenched away as we watch Glen Close turn into a monster of horror film proportions before our eyes. We are now forced to identity with both the besieged husband and abused wife and, finally, with the wretchedly tortured child. Glen Close, the repressed underside of the nuclear family becomes intolerable. Like the ghastly mutations of science fiction and horror genres,
she must be eliminated at all costs, as the representative of everything that threatens the biological nuclear family. Like those mutations, she keeps returning in ever more vile forms, with ever more monstrous purposes, until finally, together, husband and wife manage to eradicate her. The sanctity of the nuclear family returns, albeit badly scarred: the wife has had to resort to an undesirable violence, contaminated by Glen Close; the child is damaged. Nevertheless, the trio reconstitute their little community once evil (the liberated woman) is exorcised (Kaplan, 198–199).

As always, the return of family values begins with the death of the barren femme fatale. The sexually aggressive, sterile and ultimately psychotic Alex Forrest (Glenn Close) directly threatens the family unit and, by extension, the hegemony of the male within it, and as such her annihilation is presented as justifiable and necessary. While the male in these neo-noirs is presented as "nothing worse than likeably confused, misguided or blinded by desire (Michael Douglas in Basic Instinct, William Hurt in Body Heat, or Willem Dafoe in Body of Evidence)" (Williams, 109), the nineties' femme fatale, like her forties counterpart, is "murdered, rendered symbolically powerless, or unconvincingly married off" (Kuhn 1992, 154). In fact, the message of Basic Instinct is that all Catherine Tramell "ever needed to put her on the right track was a good heterosexual seeing to" (Williams, 106). The femme fatale's typical recuperation within a more patriarchally pliable position encounters a couple of notable exceptions in this new era of noir, including Matty Walker (Kathleen Turner) in Body Heat and Bridget Gregory (Linda Fiorentino) in The Last Seduction, although the sympathy of the audience is directed toward the dim, duped male in each case (Ned Racine (William Hurt) in Body Heat and Mike Swale (Peter Berg) in the Last Seduction).

The numerous malicious institutional (legal, governmental, religious) and cultural reactions documented above, based on an assortment of interconnected erroneous assumptions including the existence of equality
between the sexes and women's en masse movement into traditionally male
dominated occupations are, in fact, disparately proportional to the actual state of
affairs. According to the Bureau of Census nearly 90% of all women in 1983
have still become mothers by the age of 40 which no doubt contributes to the
fact that in this same year working women did not earn as much as working
men. Women who worked full time, year round averaged about $14,000
compared with $22,000 for men (Bianchi, 169). Moreover, according to the
1989 song, "Beautiful Red Dress," by American performance artist Laurie
Anderson "for every dollar a man makes, a woman makes sixty-three cents.
Now, fifty years ago that was sixty-two cents. So, with that kind of luck, it'll be
the year 3, 888 before women make a buck." Evidently, economic equality is still
a long way off.

Nonetheless, even the minor deterioration of orthodox structures
triggered such reactions as Michael Medved's 1992 Hollywood Vs. America
(originally a lecture entitled "Hollywood vs. Religion.") which reads like a
handbook for the newest face of the American Right epitomised by the
personalities of Newt Gingrich and his soul mate Rush Limbaugh. In fact,
Limbaugh, Cardinal John O'Connor (anti-choice advocate who in 1990
threatened to excommunicate Catholics who supported legal abortion),
Christianity Today and Christian Parenting Today each provided endorsements
for Medved's very traditional stance on what 'ought to be' presented in
mainstream cinema. Medved essentially suggests a return to the stipulations of
the Production Code (which was officially eliminated in 1966 and was replaced
by a rating system, which, with minor alterations is still in effect today) whose
"very existence reminded moviemakers of the need to work within broadly
accepted standards of decency and good taste" (282). Medved, expectedly,
petitions for cleaner language, less sex and violence and a return to family
values.

The election of Democrat Bill Clinton, the first unequivocally pro-choice president, only inflamed such conservative responses. His attempts to introduce many progressive policies and to liberalise and modernise American society unfortunately only lead to the public ‘blaming’ his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, for bullying him into what the public considered to be radical decisions. Regardless of, and perhaps due to, many of Clinton's attempts to liberalise women's rights (among other groups) the reactions of the general public and religious and legal institutions were extreme and intensified.

In 1993, the year following Clinton’s election, clinic harassment across the country escalated: hate mail and harassing phone calls increased by over thirty-five percent from the previous year, nearly twice as many bomb threats were made and there were ten times as many death threats to clinic workers. In January 1993 Clinton lifted several federal restrictions on abortion. Two months later, an abortion doctor was murdered in Pensacola, Florida and while the killer is convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment, both a Presbyterian minister and a Catholic priest publicly condoned the killing as justifiable homicide. In 1994 a federal judge with a record of supporting women’s rights was finally appointed to the Supreme Court and, perhaps in response to this decision, more than eighty state level bills restricting abortion were introduced around the country. In May of 1994, Clinton signed the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, which prohibited the use of force, threats or physical obstruction to interfere with a person trying to enter or leave an abortion clinic. Two months later, in July, three persons were shot, two fatally, outside a Pensacola abortion clinic. In August Clinton dispatched federal marshals to protect abortion clinics around the country and in October testing of RU 486, now called mifepristone, began in the United States. The following
month Republicans swept midterm elections creating anti-choice near-majorities in both houses of Congress and more than two thirds of state assemblies now had anti-choice majorities. In December two people were killed and five wounded in Brookline, Massachusetts. In 1995 the Republican led Congress began a campaign to roll back abortion rights gained under Clinton.

As part of the neo-conservatism of the 1990s, the male-directed representational system offered Disclosure (Barry Levinson, 1994). This exemplary backlash film twists and inverts such issues as affirmative action, sexual harassment and women's oppression by manipulatively employing the language of the left, the marginalized and feminism to impart the ideologies of the right, the centre and patriarchy. The ironic aspect of it all is that it actually exposes the fact that the femme fatale, Ms. Meredith Johnson (Demi Moore) is merely a pawn of the patriarchal power structure.

At one point in Disclosure, Tom Sanders (Michael Douglas) questions how it is that women are oppressed?, how he's supposed to be the patriarchal, evil, white, male oppressor?, when men are dropping like flies because they comprise at least eighty percent of suicides in America. His little diatribe irrationally suggests that women are somehow responsible for these events and that these incongruous items are in some way even remotely connected. And while the other two major killers of men—heart disease and prostate cancer—and the huge number of white, middle class, white collar men who have been 'made redundant' in the past two decades also have little, if anything, to do with women's actions, men nevertheless appear to believe that they are the victims of some woman-driven conspiracy. Clearly, Tom Sanders voices the concerns of patriarchal ideology.

Analogous to all of the previously discussed historical periods in which
the male power structure believes itself to be under siege due to aggressive female advancements, the dominant governing bodies of the eighties and nineties introduced restrictive statutes and fortified their positions by stereotypically and manipulatively representing women as either a good, nurturing, virginal mother, or as a bad, independent, sexually assertive and barren female, each of which is equally oppressive. E. Ann Kaplan's concluding statements in her book *Motherhood and Representation* regarding the position and representation of the mother is equally as applicable to the image of the femme fatale, her dichotomous counterpart:

For women, one of the most subordinated and fetishised positions has been that of 'mother.' Once this position is opened up as only part of any specific woman's subjectivity, not the all-consuming entirety of it; once any specific woman is seen to be constituted 'mother' only when interacting with her child; once 'mother' is no longer a fixed, essentialised quality, then women may be freed from [...] patriarchal ideologically imposed] discursive constraints and burdens" (219).

Throughout civilised history, the image of the femme fatale is utilised as an ideological contrivance, occurring in the cultural discourses of various historical epochs in an attempt to quell any social change considered to be threatening to the patriarchal infrastructure. When stress points in the historical continuum occur, either because of massive cultural alterations and/or improvements in women's social, political and economic position, which destabilise previously clearly demarcated boundaries and/or call into question patriarchy's position of authority, its ideological network responds with reactive statutes and doctrines through its institutions (legal, governmental, religious) and with the negative image of the femme fatale in its cultural productions (myth, religion, art, drama, literature, film).
But, fortunately for women, such ideological indoctrination is not always wholly successful. This is due to a number of factors including the inherent contradiction of the very political ideologies which structure the majority of Western civilisations, especially that of the United States. The attempt to combine the fundamentally incompatible beliefs of a true democracy, which demands political and social equality for all persons, and patriarchy, an institution in which power is held by and transferred through males, allows for ideological fragmentation, thereby enabling the infiltration of subversive philosophies. The male order's resolvable need to control, recuperate or dispose of the femme fatale need not supersede her initial representation in each of her incarnations as independent, powerful and desirable. Moreover, although her most recent embodiment in film carries with it the potential to amplify patriarchal ideological global indoctrination, it nevertheless also offers some positive avenues for feminist sedition when the cinematic femme fatale is interpreted as an "excess of narrative disruption over resolution" (Kuhn 1982, 35). And ultimately, while the femme fatale can be pessimistically interpreted as a necessary evil for patriarchal exploitation, as a symptom and symbol of male fears of female equality which resurfaces at those periods when the smooth workings of the patriarchal social infrastructure are under stress, she can also be auspiciously deciphered as a emblem of inveterate feminist endeavours.
Notes to Chapter 4

1. Almost all of the information on birth control, especially that on abortion, is culled from Katie Monagle, "How We Got Here," Ms., May–June 1995, 54–57. For additional information on the history and ethical considerations of women’s access to birth control see Germaine Greer, Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).

2. It is regrettable that an analysis of the diversity of the femme fatale’s appearances in such twentieth century mediums as television, video games, comics, advertisements, etcetera lies beyond the specific focus and scope of this thesis although a scene in a recent May 1995 episode of the now-defunct animated series entitled The Critic which contains a billboard for a deadly cigarette called “Phlegm Fatale” deserves mention for its humorous tack on the subject.
WORKS CITED


