

GIRL POWER: FEMINISM, GIRLCULTURE AND
THE POPULAR MEDIA

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This project is an interrogation of three examples from recent popular culture of girlculture, specifically texts that target young female consumers: the Spice Girls, *Scream* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. These examples are fundamentally different than texts from earlier female targeted generic models because they not only reflect the influence of the feminist movement, they work on feminism's behalf. The project's methodology grows out of feminist film theories and cultural studies theories. One chapter is dedicated to each text, and each reading works to reappropriate girlculture texts for a counter-hegemonic agenda by highlighting the moments when each text manages to subvert its mass mediated conservative biases.

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By

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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO GIRLCULTURE

“...She’s interested in nothing now-a-days except nylons and lipstick and invitations. She always was a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up.”

“Grown up indeed,” said the Lady Polly. “I wish she *would* grow up. She wasted all her school time wanting to be the age she is now, and she’ll waste the rest of her life trying to stay that age...”¹

I open this chapter with a quote which reproduces one way young women have been conceived by adults. The problem for the ephemeral ‘she’ in this account shows the double bind for girls in this culture: reduced to victims of the tropes of femininity on one hand, and on the other pathologized for striving to attain a ‘youthfulness’ that can only belong to those who are adolescent/immature (read: thin with little body fat and no wrinkles) and successfully social (read: popular and fashionable). The problem for this girl is too much femininity, but in other conceptions of ‘the girl’ her problem may well be not enough. Barbara Hudson has shown that the category of ‘adolescence’ is subversive of the category of ‘femininity,’ so that girls’ authority figures (teachers and social workers) find fault if in her expressions of her age she steps too far outside the boundaries of femininity via rebellion asserted through dress or behavior.² Thus, a second problem for ‘the girl’ could be not enough femininity. What we have is a category whose boundaries are highly contested, mythologised, and

commodified – both with tangible goods, (“lipsticks and nylons”) and with intangible cultural capital such as a knowledge of fashion or of trends. It is the latter that works to construct a consumer girlculture that works on behalf of real girls’ subjectivities, shaped in part by consumer culture.

For the purposes of this study I will focus on selected case studies culled from late 1990’s pop culture that I contend are examples of girlculture, and explore these as they are exemplified in three specific textual sites: in Chapter Two I will examine the text of the pop music stars the Spice Girls, in Chapter Three the horror films of the *Scream* franchise, and in Chapter Four the Warner Brothers Network television hit *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. I have chosen these three to address a broad range of media so as that I may better demonstrate the prevalence of this phenomenon. Girlculture is not new to the 1990’s, it existed in turn-of-the-century America in the form of a working girls’ culture, and proliferated into the twenties with flapper girls’ culture. The girl, typified by Shirley Temple, played an important role in Depression Era culture as the embodiment of hope, and in the fifties girlculture was identified with bobbysoxers and teenyboppers. Early sixties girlculture was often articulated through popular music fandom, for especially the girl groups and later the Beatles. In the eighties girls were defined by consumption through ‘Valley Girl’ culture or Madonna fandom. In all of these instances a sense of shared girl-identity was articulated through commodified/commodifiable signifiers such as clothing, or records but it was also understood as a less tangible emotional or experiential connection between young women with a set of shared experiences and linguistic tropes. I certainly do not intend to set up these three recent cases, the Spice

Girls, *Scream* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as the only or the purest cases of girlculture as I have defined it for the 1990's. Even so, these three examples combine actual earnings, that is, they have proven mass popularity, but they also exhibit both a debt and a contribution to current feminism (especially in terms of validated feminine knowledge and female solidarity). Thus, they offer the best examples of the current trend for my purposes. I focus on these with the disclaimer that I knowingly am excluding relevant examples from other kinds of media. Books, magazines, cartoons, comic books, and the Internet are all texts which offer more opportunities to apply the notion of girlculture but which I simply don't have the space or the time to adequately research or theorize in this project. A short-list of texts that have been excluded might include, from music: Ani DiFranco, Alanis Morissette, Liz Phair, Jewel, Sarah McLachlan (and her concert franchise the Lilith Fair), Garbage, Sheryl Crow, Björk, Queen Latifa, Salt n' Pepa, TLC, or Mary J. Blige; from television: *Charmed*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, *Ally McBeal*, *Felicity*, *La Femme Nikita*, *Dawson's Creek*, or *Party of Five*, television cartoon programs like the Cartoon Network's *Powerpuff Girls*, or MTV's *Daria*; in print: 1997's *The Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood*, Patricia Cornwall or Sara Paretsky's female centered mystery thrillers, 1998's *Bridget Jones' Diary*, *Bust* or *Jane* magazines, any number of ever changing self-produced 'zines (most famously *Riot Grrrl*); and from the Internet e-zines made by and for young women or female focused resources like the 'girl wide web.'

Indeed, a brief outline of my subject in casual conversation never fails to elicit new potential subjects for study under the rubric of girlculture; a discussion can spin

endlessly merely producing more and more examples. This leads me to two initial conclusions that are relevant enough to fuel the rest of this project: firstly, my contention is that these texts are significantly different from the women's genres of other generations and that other people are noticing not only the changes in the texts but also the proliferation of material related to girlculture. This leads me to my second contention, that this study is absolutely timely and important. An in-depth analysis of at least a few examples of this trend is more useful and necessary than riffing on all of the different potential applications of my subject.

I do not set these texts up as intrinsically political and I am well aware of the danger that Thomas Frank identifies as the "confluence of interest" between American business's entrenched power and (Frank's term) "academic multiculturalists."³ But I would like to suggest that this kind of dichotomy is ultimately useless and divisive. The popular is not essentially revolutionary; I would not make this argument, but texts *are* essentially complex and we can find and use these complexities, even if they appear in unexpected places.

The Audience: Girl Consumers

I begin with the assumption that there is a specific trend taking place in pre-millennial popular culture, a recognition of a young women's market for media commodities. Producers seem to be recognizing a new and more powerful role for the young woman as consumer, but what young women are buying constructs 'femininity' in a new way. Historically there are many cases of retailers and media producers trying to target a women's market. Women's genres and female spectatorship have already been

theorized and explored by feminists and academics. Texts such as romance fiction, soap operas, melodramatic film and fashion magazines⁴ have been thoughtfully and compellingly examined with an eye to the female reader, female character and the mode of address. The problem with these texts is that they tend to take part in a blanket conception of women. Virginia Nightingale articulates this for television audiences, but because I find her interjection relevant to all types of media I will quote her at length.

The experience of reading about women as audiences is reminiscent of reading anthropology. 'Women' are objectifiable, somehow a unified whole, a group. The qualities that divide women, like class, ethnicity, *age*, education, are always of less significance than the unifying qualities attributed to women, such as the inability to know or say what they want, the preoccupation with romance and relationships, the ability to care for, to nurture, others. It seems as though research is about 'other women' not 'me', other cultures, not mine...the family is used to define women and women's culture, in limiting what texts women are offered while at the same time provoking action and activities which can legitimately be called women's culture.⁵

What she says is absolutely true, and part of what this project attempts to do is theorize media on behalf of, and specifically addressed to, young women – addressing at least one of the qualities that she suggests individualize women's experiences.⁶ The audiences that Nightingale theorizes are adult women who are in nuclear families; as a result of this producers tend to construct them in precisely the manner formerly articulated. But what about the young women who are/aren't a part of this family structure? The same strategies of audience address do not work; what speaks to adult women does not necessarily appeal to their daughters.⁷

Even if, as Julia Kristeva would have it, "woman as such does not exist,"⁸ and thus any subcategories thereof, e.g. young women, girls, teenyboppers, do not really exist, the fact remains that the ideal of 'femininity' does. These are not essential types

that can be quantified or controlled, because femininity is a construct not a fact. What this means is that while it is restrictive the category of femininity must remain flexible. The ideal of femininity translates into consumer culture very smoothly, but the problem with consumer culture is that it must always be understood as existing in opposition to and inferior to high culture. Producers and consumers both recognize an ambivalence about a wholehearted affiliation with consumer culture. Ellen Seiter has shown that when the consumable items are marketed toward children there is an even greater ambivalence on the part of adults. On one hand, “consumer culture provides children with a shared repository of images, characters, plots, and themes: it provides the basis for small talk and play, and it does this on a national, even global scale.”⁹ But on the other hand, “parents – usually mothers – are implicated in their [children’s] consumption and often disapprove of their desires...While giving in, adults often harbor profound doubts about the effects of children’s consumer culture today.”¹⁰ Children’s culture, marked by consumables which bridge the gap between public and private space for children, is directly related, if one step removed from, girlculture as I conceive of it. Girlculture directly follows from children’s culture; the marketing strategies change to target young people who may be spending their own money rather than always asking their parents to purchase on their behalf, but the nature of the products, and of the media texts, bears similar constructions. Both create a similar kind of ambivalence for parents and both become purchasable signifiers for a public space on behalf of a culture confined primarily to private, or otherwise protected, spaces.

Women have historically been relegated to the home (private space) and kept out of public space through a gendered division of labor, and through a conception of public space which ranges from inappropriate for women (business or sports) to downright dangerous for women (empty city streets or crowded bars). Girlcultures are doubly safeguarded, firstly as they are intended for young people and must therefore be sanitized, and secondly as they must necessarily traffic primarily in private spaces or spaces which have been made 'safe' for unchaperoned women. Lisa Lewis addresses how, for young women, consumption comes together with sheltered public space to produce the mall. "Middle class adolescent girls who have yet to take on the responsibilities of careers and families experience the leisure side of consumption more fully. For girls, the mall represents a female substitute for the streets of male adolescents."¹¹ Here we have a perfect example of how public space is mediated by consumerism, which works to allow femininity while at the same time deny authenticity.¹²

A final problem comes up in attempting to theorize young women as a group. Young women are not necessarily a subculture, and so if traditional feminist analysis does not adequately address the young woman spectator/consumer than neither do cultural studies accounts of subcultures (most famously Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*) which have historically focused on young working class men. These accounts are rooted much more in opposition to the market and an unproblematic relationship between men and public space. Erica Carter contends that to solve this problem we must reconceptualize the market itself.

Different questions [are] to be asked of the process of consumption itself. Passive manipulation or active appropriation, escapist delusion or Utopian fantasy, consumerism can be all or none of these. The first step in its analysis is *rapprochement*, the dismantling of fronts in the youth cultural struggle, a recognition and reformulation of demands (our own included) for the pleasures which consumerism offers. “Saying yes to the modern world is much more controversial and more provocative than saying no.”¹³

Though consumption is not entirely unproblematic, an ipso facto demonization of the market is; not least because the market has been constructed – with the exception of certain segments – as a primarily feminine space. This analysis aims primarily to take up the “controversial and productive” challenge raised in Carter by ‘saying yes’ to: the Spice Girls, *Scream* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

‘Saying yes’ to these texts does not deny that they are still in many ways problematic – especially in terms of sexualized/fetishized images of women which are often used to add false value to products. These are, for many radical feminists, ‘negative images of women’ and do not belong in an enlightened culture, and a case could be made that ‘negative images’ are at work in all three of these texts.¹⁴ But this dualism really doesn’t fit the bill. Firstly, because it only recognizes the sexuality of the women involved in these texts and not any other aspects of their characters’ discourse or actions. Secondly, because a sexual image is not necessarily a negative one; women can be empowered about their sexuality and not necessarily victims of patriarchal heterosexuality. And thirdly, because (as I will argue in subsequent chapters) there is a subtle difference in these new texts which makes didactic criticism, feminist or otherwise, inadequate for a full evaluation of all the complexities within girlculture texts. Thus, I

intend my yes to be informed, positional, and altogether more flexible than the ‘no’ of advocates for high culture or radical feminists.

I contend that girlculture texts at the millennium are distinct from, yet intimately related to, not only pop cultural texts but also historical, political, countercultural and (occasionally) academic texts which have come before. These texts can evidence a taken-for-granted, seemingly transparent pop feminism; that is, a feminism which, although it takes on board traditional feminist issues – some of which are identified by this quote from Susan Douglas’s book *Where the Girls Are*, “equal pay for equal work; reproductive freedom for women; equal access to the same educational, professional, and financial opportunities as men...and an end to...our national epidemic of violence against women of all ages”¹⁵ – is never called feminism. It is commodifiable but it still bears a linguistic or political debt to the organized feminism which was in the public eye in the early seventies, and whose specter still looms large in pop culture. The ‘feminist’ is the hairy legged man-hater who haunts the phrase “I’m not a feminist but...” and very often her goals were more radical than the examples offered by Douglas (although the list does identify basic issues that most feminists tend to agree on). A ‘Feminist’ is also, though, of another generation, and even if her goals are similar to girls’ goals today, let’s face it, to young girls that image seems outmoded. Current texts seek to engage readers, especially young women, as precisely knowledgeable about the problematics of media images. Thus, they portray female characters in a somewhat new way. Indeed one of the hallmarks of girlculture texts is their insistence on a high degree of textual innovation. Their reflexivity necessitates substantial media literacy on the part of audiences, while

contributing to increasingly self-referential texts. This constructs the girl audience in a new way, as smarter and more media savvy, a generation of girls who grew up not on *Gidget* or *Charlie's Angels* but on Madonna and *Thelma and Louise*.

I don't believe that there has been a revolutionary change in girlculture texts, but it is a notable change and one that deserves attention. This change does not mean that traditional women's genres have been totally abandoned. Romance novels are available in every grocery store; soap operas, afternoon and evening, still air and gain large audiences; melodramatic 'weepie' films – "chick movies" in the popular vernacular – such as *The Horse Whisperer* (1998), or *Message in a Bottle* (1999), still find funding; and the publishers of *Cosmo*, *Elle*, *Allure* or *Glamour* are still making money. The difference is these diversified venues and genres have not only changed target markets, girlculture very often includes and expands these, by mutating them from the inside out.

Girlculture: A New Kind of Text

The culture is right-in-your-face. If it isn't the cartoonish Spices rapping, "Yo I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want," it's that other teen idol, Sarah Michelle Gellar as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, declaring her love to a bewitched bloodsucker before driving a dagger through his heart...What a world: lions and tigers and girls, oh, my! Buffy undoes the undead; Xena destroys barbarians; Michelle Williams breaks hearts on *Dawson's Creek*. The girlish offensive doesn't show any signs of flagging. By some estimates, more than 60 teen-oriented movies are in production or active development, many of them with seriously empowered heroines.¹⁶

Girlculture is a product of my generation and for the generation that follows us. We were born in the last quarter of this century, after the social movements of the 1960's that our parents participated in; born into a service economy (as opposed to one based on manufacturing) which is the product of deindustrialization and 'trickle-down' economics.

My generation is the post-Watergate, post-Vietnam generation. We are characteristically distanced from idealism to a degree unprecedented in American culture. We often assume many of the contentions of the second wave of feminists, but many of us deny being feminists ourselves. 'I'm not a feminist, but...' seems to be many women's rallying cry (at least since the anti-feminist backlash in the eighties). Sources as diverse as Susan Douglas¹⁷ and *Time*¹⁸ magazine have taken note of this trend. The reluctance to don the title 'feminist' has been dubbed post-feminism by some; other younger feminists call themselves the 'third wave' feminists;¹⁹ but those who don the 'but' rather than the feminist moniker are not necessarily so far from personal/political commitments that can only be called feminist. One quote from an interview with Sarah Michelle Gellar posted on the Internet makes this explicit. Gellar states that although she hates the term feminist she still considers herself a "strong female individual."²⁰ Even though she doesn't claim the title, often her performance seems to enact a feminist praxis. Gellar's actions in her star and character (Buffy in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) personae often resonate with feminist implications, from championing the rights of a battered girl in her high school to helping another girl find a job and become independent. While disdaining feminism, icons of girlculture nevertheless articulate some of its tenets.

Girlculture is at once a marketing ploy, a real opportunity for empowerment for the feminist reader, and an everyday circumstance. That is to say that it speaks to something in the lived experiences of real women who perceive, if not the failure of feminism, a change in the ways its traditionally aggressive political stances are relevant to their lives. Girlculture has a fundamental connection to youth and youth cultures and

addresses both women in their thirties and women just entering puberty, albeit on significantly different ground and in different ways. There is perhaps a subcultural aspect to it, but that is the subject for another paper; my investigation of girlculture is and will remain rooted in the western mainstream, but even so what is significant about the girlculture that I want to highlight is that it has feminist *potential*. As it exists within the confines and possibilities of hegemonic controls, girlculture is always in flux; thus I cannot limit it to a singular definition or locate it in one space. Insofar as girlculture is mobile and able to move about within and outside of popular culture, my analysis must also be portable, able to attend it from point to point.

Girlculture is at best equal parts niche marketing phenomenon and grassroots sentiment. One place to begin to locate its inception is in the mid 1990's, as businesses were noticeably putting into action their new small market strategies and looking for consumers in any subcultural space they could find them. Grunge, which appeared on the scene in the early 1990's, was the most prevalent and recognizable application of this strategy. At the same time, in the context of pop culture history, a new kind of hip, powerful, tough woman's image was suddenly on the market and gaining currency. First it was just Cagney and Lacey in the late eighties, then came Roseanne, Thelma and Louise. These were all adult women characters whose decisive, outspoken and empowered stance resonated with implications for feminism on behalf of adult women. Adult women's daughters consumed these texts too, even if post-feminist moms 'weren't feminists but...' they still didn't want their girls growing up to be victimized or overly

dependent; encouraging the consumption of these texts was one way to open up dialogue about the sensitive issues often raised by these programs.

Now, young women consumers seem to be reacting to and creating new images for themselves, and corporations are in place to sell them the accouterments of a new-found sense of powerful identity. This has happened before. Ten years ago, Lisa Lewis studied Madonna and Cyndi Lauper fans in her book *Gender Politics and MTV*, which investigated how girls were responding to music videos produced by female pop stars.²¹ The generation of girls who were Madonna ‘wannabe’ fans (dress-alike fans) at age 10 could go on to become riot grrrls when they were 17, and some did. The notion of a riot grrrl community was initially publicized by the press in 1992 (around the same time that grunge was popular). Riot grrrls were an organic, spatially diverse group of girls who were producing independent [maga]zines out of and through a punk sub-culture. The topics of the zines generally focused on music, a DIY (do it yourself) ethic and the girls’ own sexual, social and political experiences. The motto of the riot grrrl movement was “revolution girl style now!” If corporations were successful at marketing the ‘grunge’ trend, they failed (because of a largely successful press blackout by members of the riot grrrl movement) to successfully commodify the riot grrrls.²² While I am not proposing a one-to-one relationship between Madonna²³ and riot grrrls, I do want to consider how powerful and complex media images of women can be connected to girls’ experiences of fandom and later independent media production. Emmy Kay Montrose, a current member of the all-girl punk rock band Kenickie, says: “I grew up wanting to be Madonna or one of Bananarama, but it wasn’t gonna happen. It really wasn’t gonna

happen. But I could be in Kenickie. So I am...Madonna for our generation is just one of these constant things that has been there since we were really quite small. We're nineteen and I still want to be Madonna."²⁴ This example leads me to suggest that a certain kind of fandom can potentially be experienced as empowering to a young female media consumer, and that perhaps it suggests a model not entirely unrelated to the current generation's Spice Girls or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fandom.

Girlculture necessarily raises issues not only for women but also for young people. The interpolators and sometimes creators of girlculture are explicitly young people.²⁵ But young people's cultural products are in no way transparent; indeed they are absolutely complex. Doreen Massey points out that, "the evidence seems to be that all youth cultures – and not just those more obvious cases such as the children of diasporas – are hybrid cultures. All of them involve active importation, adoption and adaptation."²⁶ The place of young people in culture has not been as extensively theorized as has the place of women; the editors of *Cool Places* discuss the ambiguity in the term youth itself, and they note that when explored, the category of youth has tended to privilege masculinity.²⁷ Possible solutions they suggest could come from using a "'textually mediated discourse' as a new form of analysis of social relations. This concept is capable of explaining how social relations are mediated by the codes of femininity that originate in most public discourses and popular texts which have no single local source or historical agent...the discourses within public and popular cultural texts, such as women's magazines, are organisers [sic] of local relations."²⁸

What I have been referring to as a 'traditional' conception of a female youth audience is exemplified by Kelly Schrum's account of the post-WWII discovery of young women's markets for just such fashion magazines. Fifty years ago the young woman reader/consumer of *Seventeen* (1944-1950) was conceived of as unworldly, and the publication attempted to teach her not only about makeup and fashion – how to be a good consumer – but also to limit her sexuality and teach her the role of 'good' citizen.²⁹ There is a conservative bias in most texts that are pitched to young women audiences and arguably these kinds of impulses still exist, but the power of these discourses has been significantly curtailed and it's not just girls who know it, producers know it too. Susan Douglas charts a change in women's texts for her generation, women who were born in the 1940's. She outlines women's pop culture from the late 1950's to the early 1990's and tracks political changes, i.e. the dawning of the second wave of feminism and relates these changes to a transformation in how young women could read and were reading pop culture texts. She directly connects women's relationship to the mass media to the acquisition of revolutionary politics, and suggests a cycle: as media texts changed, the way women used them to connect with each other changed; when women became politicized, they demanded that media texts change.³⁰ On behalf of this generation's relationship to current media she says,

I don't believe I can insulate my daughter from the mass media, nor do I want to. There are pleasures there for her, ones she already knows and ones she will learn...[I want to] remind her that any time a performer or a cultural form especially loved by young girls is ridiculed and dismissed, she and her friends should not be embarrassed. Instead, they should be suspicious about just who is feeling threatened, or superior, and why.³¹

Douglas' project is very similar to my own. As she points out, discourses which want to limit the pleasures of mass media consumption for young women are absolutely problematic, and are constantly at work setting up ideals for feminine imaging and production. I would add that girl consumers, and increasingly producers, are aware of the schools of criticism from her generation. Such limitation can come from both the left and the right. For example, a text like *Scream* could be considered problematic by conservatives who may find it too sexually permissive, too violent or obscene; but leftists may say that it glorifies violence against women, that it sexualizes violence or that consuming a text like *Scream* is an example of 'false consciousness.' At least some aspects of these texts seem to respond to this kind of criticism so that they address young audiences as knowing consumers who recognize these criticisms as a homogenizing, controlling impulse. Not only that, but the new generation of texts responds in a more complex, knowing way; in the 1970's a text like *Charlie's Angels* was pop culture's response to feminism, and that response was fairly superficial. The response of a text like *Scream* is far more complex. It is endlessly referential, not only to politics and criticism, but also to other popular film, television and music. In one of the film's scenes young people at a party watch a horror movie. One (diegetic) spectator, Randy/Jamie Kennedy, deconstructs the sexual politics of slasher films, while a girl attending the party, Sydney/Neve Campbell, proceeds to have sex upstairs, upsetting the sexual politics that Randy/Kennedy outlined for slasher movies *in a slasher movie*. Sound complex? It is.³² These are not the kinds of texts that we can afford to ridicule or dismiss. The kinds of knowledge that these texts display and assume for their spectators is precisely what

makes the difference for new texts like the Spice Girls, *Scream* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

It is not simply self-reflexivity at play in these texts, but a reflexivity which recognizes some of the problematics of women's texts that came before. And if young women are 'not feminists, but...' they are more aware consumers of patriarchal texts. This does not then mean the "death of feminism" as *Time* magazine would have it;³³ it simply means that feminism is changed, that perhaps young women have outgrown a label they associate with their mothers. But they have not necessarily outgrown the ideals. Sue Turnbull notes:

What the old feminist guard, including the pro-censorship lobby, have failed to take on board is the fact that young women are much less likely to accept the argument that sexual objectification is wrong, or that women are always the victims in heterosexual encounters. Furthermore, this television generation is well aware of the role of parody, irony and fantasy in contemporary culture and highly unlikely to mistake momentary appearances for universal reality.³⁴

Girlculture does not have to exhibit defacto feminism; its images are not necessarily political or powerful simply because they are a departure from traditional modes of depicting women. I will look at these texts and explore potential spaces within them where a reader can carve out these spaces of power for herself so that she can use the popular as a tool rather than ignore it or debase it. Because girlculture as I am examining it is the product of an obviously unjust and unequal corporate web, many leftists will look to 'authentic' countercultural texts which have limited distribution and production resources for subversive or counter-hegemonic spaces. Thus, my project is to find positions for young women, who are consumers of and participants in girlculture, to use

popular texts for counter-hegemonic purposes. To explain how this project proposes to meet such a goal, let me briefly outline my methodology.

Methodology: Feminist Analysis and Cultural Studies

Part of the methodological grounding for this work grows out of my own roots in academic feminism. What is feminism in the first place? In the words of Teresa de Lauretis, “the argument begun by feminism is not only an academic debate on logic and rhetoric...that argument is also a confrontation, a struggle, a political intervention in institutions and in the practices of everyday life.”³⁵ That is to say that it is not only a theoretical exercise but also, and necessarily, rooted in the mundane, an activism rooted in the familiar. This is not an ethnography, but I recognize along with Lisa Lewis, “that being female and having experienced life as a female adolescent contributed greatly to my recognition of female-address-textuality.”³⁶ And indeed, my age and my own investment in, proximity to and participation in girlculture helps me to bring a unique viewpoint to an interrogation of its texts while still undertaking a rigorous academic project grounded by my own expertise in feminist theory and media history. This of course does not make my insight more or less valid than others’, but it does affect how I think through some of the issues raised by girlculture texts.

The issue of culture is rather intangible, but in this examination I plan to use the broadest possible definition of culture borrowed from cultural studies, which includes in culture ‘high’ culture, popular culture and subcultures. I will borrow an articulation of one definition of culture from Ananda Mitra, who says:

...By using the argument that culture is made up of a set of practices, it is possible to claim that culture is, in fact, an ideological construct made up of a set of

material practices that have been established as dominant, natural and normal through the working of a hegemonic struggle.³⁷

As Mitra points out, hegemony, intimately imbedded in culture and thus by extension cultural products, attempts to assert control but is always a struggle. Consequently, if it is a struggle and not a foregone conclusion then there must be points of resistance in culture and in cultural products. Hegemony's work is containment and its work is never done. Girlculture, then, is at once implicated in hegemony and a possible source for resistance to hegemony. The work of this thesis is to find these ruptures and exploit them.

What this brief treatment doesn't begin to address is the theoretical alliance that I make between a particular school of feminism based in psychoanalytic film theory,³⁸ which is particularly grounded in textual analysis, and cultural studies (particularly British cultural studies), whose focus has very often been on ethnographic audience studies and which has very often changed its object from film texts to television audiences. Jackie Stacey, a proponent of the latter, has critiqued the former for a "lack of interest in actual cinema spectators,"³⁹ and she points to studies which focus on female audience members as more valid for feminism than text based accounts.⁴⁰ This raises serious questions for my own work, which wants to break the cardinal rule that Stacey sets up. My project is a textual analysis, not an ethnography, and I will stay tied to feminist psychoanalytic theories which I find compelling; but I also am convinced by cultural studies theorists, and I do not want to let their insights go from my analyses. While I will make fairly extensive claims for texts, I will also make provisional claims for audiences. Indeed, I think that a future ethnographic study of the consumers of the Spice Girls, *Scream* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* would be very fruitful, as all three of

them have very active fan communities as well as more general mass appeal, but that is not my current project. Let me proceed by briefly outlining aspects of the two positions, which are most relevant to my analyses, in some more detail. The following chapters will move back and forth between both schools of thought without returning to the differences between them. While some readers may consider this a weakness in my argument, there are certainly places where the two come together and work from the same goals. Together they enrich each other and enrich my readings of texts.

Of Cultural Studies, Meaghan Morris says: “cultural studies involves what Henri Lefebvre once called a critique of everyday life: that is, an investigation of particular ways of using ‘culture,’ of what is available *as* culture to people inhabiting particular social contexts and of people’s ways of *making* culture.”⁴¹ In many ways she echoes de Lauretis’s notion of a political intervention into everyday life. And Stuart Hall, the grandpappy of cultural studies, suggests that when we utilize our own political agendas we must remodel our theory (especially Marxist or radical-feminist theory) so that it no longer is dependent on a massive unitary revolution that galvanizes us all into one. “Throw over the moment of political guarantee that is lodged in that, because then you do not conduct politics contingently; you do not conduct it positionally. You think that someone has prepared the positions for you.”⁴² The former assumption remains problematic because it is based on a unitary construction of identity; it assumes that individuals may be (for example) black or young or a Madonna fan, but their fundamental identities are forged in experiences as members of an oppressed class. Hall reminds us that the multiple aspects in people’s identities cannot be so quickly

transcended and should not be ignored, but instead incorporated into a more effective political strategy.

It is clear where feminism and cultural studies speak to and with each other, on issues such as the one that Nightingale raised earlier in this chapter: 'women' as a unified theorized group doesn't feel related to her experience as a woman. And although Teresa de Lauretis is one of Stacey's favorite targets (a "textual determinist") her work resonates with the same motivation that Hall speaks to. She says, "in becoming a feminist, for instance, women take up a position, a point of perspective, from which to interpret or (re)construct values and meanings. That position is also a politically assumed identity, and one relative to their sociohistorical location, whereas essentialist definitions would have women's identity or attributes independent of her external situation." This is to say that for one to 'do' feminism, to take up a feminist practice, one must take up a feminist politics and a girl-identity contextually and positionally. The three texts that I will focus on (the Spice Girls, *Scream* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) can, and do, accomplish this.

We take meanings from texts to formulate conceptions of ourselves which configure us as both unitary individuals and complex contradictory individuals who wear different 'hats' at different times, so that we may function in an equally contradictory and complex world. Identity is not only individual but communal, formed significantly in the context of a social group as well as individually. Issues of power are never far behind issues of identity, especially when connected to explicitly political categories like gender, race, class or age. Different kinds of discursive power are ultimately tied up with these issues of power. Although the model of hegemonic power generally stays consistent, the

specificities are constantly changing; hegemonic power is shifting and mobile. This is because hegemony is part of capitalism. Capitalists do not just sell products, they use publicity to inflect products with meaning. As John Berger pointed out, “publicity turns consumption into a substitution for democracy. The choice of what one eats (or wears or drives [or what music one listens to, or what TV programs one prefers or what movies one pays to see]) take the place of significant political choice. Publicity helps to mask and compensate for all that is undemocratic within society.”⁴³ Thus, our task is one of appropriation.

One of the methodological tools I rely on to execute this project is genre analysis. Genre is significant for the Spice Girls in terms of pop music as it is opposed to rock ‘n’ roll; film and television genres are important to any analysis of *Scream* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* because both texts utilize established generic codes of horror, action, comedy and melodrama while at the same time reworking them. If hegemonic texts always have the ability to borrow from or assimilate discursive texts and subject positions, then models of resistance may step outside of a dualism by using these texts for a countercultural purpose, by reappropriation. I do not suggest that this is an ideal form of activism. Indeed, I am not at all convinced that consumption is activism, but what I am suggesting is that we are always consumers in an unjust system; we are already complicit in that system’s biases. Why shouldn’t we take back texts and subtexts and use them counter-hegemonically? Perhaps for a youth culture discursive readings or eruptions of the texts past the bounds of hegemony can stand as introductions to activism or serve to validate a previously unheard, unseen perspective. Revolutionary politics do

not generally happen by gestalt; instead, one gradually becomes more and more convinced. As Stuart Hall says, the flaw in previous revolutionary politics was in the expectation that even though, “you make a bungle of politics but “History,” with a capital ‘H,’ is going to fly out of somebody’s mouth....or ‘the Economy,’ is going to march on the stage and say, ‘you have got it all wrong, you know. You ought to be over there: you are in the proletariat. You ought to be thinking that.’...And we are waiting for that moment; waiting, waiting, waiting 200 years for it. Maybe you are waiting for the wrong thing.”⁴⁴ It is possible that some of the spaces where the process of politicization begins are available in popular texts. If they are available then why not use them?

I shall attempt to do just this through a close reading of three popular texts: the Spice Girls, *Scream* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. I explore them in not only their hegemonic implications but also their contradictions, the points of resistance which are not necessarily explicit in the texts but which, through oppositional reading strategies, are available none the less. I contend, as cultural studies models have taught me, that the contradictions and complexities in popular texts provide the tools not only for passive complicity but also for discursive engagement, which subtly but powerfully works to break down the hegemonic impulse of the text(s) and return some of the power of articulation to the reader rather than allowing it to be the exclusive domain of the producer.

In the first chapter, “Girlculture For Sale,” I will examine a popular music text and a global pop culture phenomenon, the Spice Girls. By exploring the discourses that are constantly at play around the girls’ personas, in the press reception, and in the

merchandising of the Spice Girls, I will explore the hegemonic and potentially counter hegemonic readings that are available for the Spice Girls' fans. Prahibha Parmar's 1998 documentary *The Righteous Babes* suggests that feminism has moved out of academia and into the mainstream via rock music, but the piece participates in a long-standing distinction between rock as masculine and authentic, and pop as ersatz and feminine/feminizing. The film's narration goes on to denigrate the Spice Girls as a group that, "cashes in on empty slogans of female power. Today the Spice Girls peddle girl power like a soft drink. Their brand of flighty feminism is being sold as glamour, glitz and image to preteen and teenage girls."⁴⁵ None of the adult women rock stars and feminists interviewed have anything positive to say about the Spice Girls either; Shirley Manson (of the band Garbage), Ani DiFranco, Sinead O'Connor and even the famous second wave feminist Andrea Dworkin take turns denigrating the Girls. The only voice that speaks on behalf of the Spice Girls is a young woman identified as "Katie Wharton, Student." She says,

There are about a million things that I like about the Spice Girls. First of all that they brought attention back to really young girls instead of always the attention being on like 30 year old women and their trials in the home and real women who are struggling. I think that for girls to be interested in feminism and inspired by it, it has to be about really large kind of glamorous, beautiful things, which the Spice Girls are. They're just a miracle.⁴⁶

I think that Wharton's take on the Spice Girls is significant because she is not only speaking as a fan she is also speaking as a young woman – a girl who has few stakes in earlier versions of feminism. Wharton recognizes that young women's place in feminism is still very much ignored. Her voice in amongst all the criticism of the Spice Girls by adult women (although I suspect that this was unintended) works to show how, very

often, young women's voices are denigrated by feminism just as they are denigrated by other kinds of cultural critics, without regard to political affiliation. This kind of criticism assumes that girls are victims of pop culture rather than informed users, and Chapter Two works hard to show how girls can be oppositional readers that can work with and through an (admittedly patriarchal) text.

In Chapter Three, "Final Girl(s) Power," I will examine the popular *Scream* film franchise and its female heroines, Sydney/Neve Campbell and Gale/Courtney Cox, whose characterizations represent a significant departure from the slasher victims of traditional horror films. I utilize a conception of slasher films described by Carol Clover in her volume *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, but I adapt her theories that an ambivalent gendering of the final girl in these films works on behalf of a masochistic male spectator.⁴⁷ In many ways the *Scream* (1996 & 1997) films work hard and very explicitly to undo the 'rules' of chastity and boyishness that have been established for women in this genre. I will look at how the main characters Sydney Prescott/Neve Campbell and Gale Weathers/Courtney Cox work together to undo these constraints placed on the final girl figure, and further consider how their work as a duo is a manifestation of the power of female knowledge and female teams. I also interrogate how the status of these two as young television stars affects a reading of their characters, adding to the discursive power of the tough girl heroines. I also attempt to make some provisional claims, on behalf of the girl spectator who may take pleasure in the final girls' violent acts of fighting back. Mary Ellen Brown addresses this kind of appropriation in her essay "Consumption and Resistance: The Problem of Pleasure."

It is the act of appropriation in the process of consuming and the subsequent use of pleasure to cathect boundaries within which ideological norms can be restructured, if only momentarily, that establishes these particular discursive genres as political. Such situations are political in that in the process women take pleasure into their own hands. They nominate, value and regulate their own pleasure.⁴⁸

I show how the final girls in this slasher film appropriate masculine behaviors on feminine terms, and the female viewers of this particular horror franchise are afforded alternate models for feminine pleasure in a traditionally masculine genre.

In my fourth chapter, “Melodrama and Girlculture,” I look at the television program *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and explore the discursive sites offered by the text, by examining not only the narrative of the program but also the projected personality of its star, Sarah Michelle Gellar. I show how the program works to form a generic hybrid that involves action, comedy, horror and melodrama. These genres work both with and against each other. “The possibility of using genre in this way is, of course, already suggestive. The condition, in each case, of deploying one genre in order to resolve or soften tensions exacerbated by another...” this is possible because genres, as Andrew Britton’s explains in this quote, “represent different strategies for dealing with the same ideological tensions.”⁴⁹ Thus if one of the ideological tensions at play is gender, the four different genres each deal with this tension in different ways, to try and keep it within hegemonic control. Four genres together may deal with the same issue four different ways and thus work to deconstruct each other and explode the conscriptions of gender that they should reinforce. Furthermore, the star of this program, Sarah Michelle Gellar, is violent in a very unfeminine way related to horror and action genres and intended for the reenactment of masculinity. Gellar’s role does what Michel Mourlet writes about

only in terms of men: “to reject this search for a natural order, this zest for effective action, the radiance of victory, is to condemn oneself to understanding nothing of an art that represents the pursuit of happiness through the drama of the body.”⁵⁰ Buffy/Gellar’s characteristic proclivity toward violence and placement at the head of a heroic team takes up this challenge on behalf of girls.

Making this kind of argument takes the small step from the popular to the populist, to look to the massive numbers of consumers of these mass produced texts to find their revolutionary potential. I do not take the tactic that consumers have needs which control the output of corporations. It is a given that the texts produced by the extra-national, transnational corporations are hegemonic, used to sell products to consumers and consumers to advertisers, but there are discursive pleasures available to readers of these texts nonetheless. Setting the legitimate discursive sites outside and above the popular and the consumable reasserts a hierarchy which feeds back into hegemony, and additionally risks disproportionately alienating and discrediting female and young readers. I am not yet willing to relinquish all control of the meanings of texts to corporations and mainstream producers nor am I willing to hand interpretation over to anti-corporate crusaders, left or right wing activists. As Stuart Hall succinctly put it, “...marginality has become a powerful space. It is a space of weak power but it is a space of power, nonetheless.”⁵¹ In the following cases it is sometimes the space of Girl Power.

CHAPTER TWO

GIRLCULTURE FOR SALE:

THE SPICE GIRLS

This is not to suggest that female ‘pleasures’ at this point are automatic, as though teenybopper music was merely a conspiratorial vehicle for teaching young girls the required cultural cues of ‘femininity’. Rather, it is the striking form of the teenybopper’s style that throws into clear relief the struggle that goes on daily in pop music (as elsewhere) to distribute and position sexual powers according to prescribed cultural and social patterns...The teenybopper girl was never simply the imposed product of cultural and commercial forces anxious to position her in a certain manner. Such forces had to continue working through the ambiguous passage of concrete female pleasures as much as on them.⁵²

If we accept Stuart Hall’s reiteration of Karl Marx’s statement, “until we move away from the notion of this singular, unitary logic of capital which does not mind where it operates, we will not fully understand it,”⁵³ we are led to the understanding that the fundamental nature of capitalism is contradictory, and that by their connection to this contradictory system capitalist products are necessarily contradictory as well. I suggest that nowhere is this going to be more apparent than in transnational media products that must uphold the foundation of global hegemony. But, as Hall suggests, while they do this cultural products may also simultaneously work against it, not only in their ‘native’ context but also in global dissemination. Ana Lopez sagely points out, “popular culture forms may present attempts at social control, but they also have to meet the real desires of real people.”⁵⁴

The phenomenon of the Spice Girls, a late nineties ‘girl group’ featuring five young British women, is just one example of this scenario. Individually the Spice Girls are: Baby Spice/Emma, Sporty Spice/Mel C, Posh Spice/Victoria, Scary Spice/Mel B and Ginger Spice/Geri – although Geri has since left the group. One of the main questions that arises out of the debate between the popular and the desires of real people, is what is present in the Spice Girls’ music and public persona that speaks to an audience, what, “real desires of real people” could they be meeting? Could the answer to this question speak not only of the power of global capitalism’s hegemony but of listener’s power and the potential for political change? I will use the case of the Spice Girls in their home country of Britain as well as abroad, primarily in the United States, to argue that they wield an unique kind of discursive as well as hegemonic power and the negotiations of this power by readers are potentially complex. I treat them somewhat more optimistically than other feminists have done. For example, this quote from the narration of Prahibtha Parmar’s recent video on women and feminism in rock, *The Righteous Babes*, writes off the Spice Girls entirely.

With their cut-price glamour and their girl-gang next door attitude, the Spice Girls are more about product sponsorship than liberation. Their relentless girl power slogan was nothing more than a marketing device bought and sold by record company suits. Girl Power Spice Girls’ style is cartoonish and does little more than dare girls to pierce their tongues and throw a few high kicks.⁵⁵

I would like to submit though that there may be more to it than that, and if nothing else such denouncement of the Spice Girls also works to discount their disproportionately young female demographic by suggesting that they are cultural dupes.

Even though the Spice Girls are crassly consumerist products they do articulate an individualistic kind of feminism; this is not the feminism of academics or revolutionaries but neither is it necessarily to be discounted. This raises the question of what exactly feminism is in the late 1990's, and how does it work in relationship with the consumer girlculture that the Spice Girls are a part of? If feminism helps form the basis of a certain kind of identity formation, then does the commodification of the signs or tropes of feminism necessarily disenfranchise the fundamental discursive location of Feminism? The point is to look at the audience for, not only the Spice Girls, but also mass produced 'teenybopper' music in general; and to really listen to the messages that this audience of primarily young women are responding to, to find the discursive spaces of traditionally discounted and maligned music. It is in this space that girlculture takes its shape and learns how to relate to other mass culture texts and the lived experiences of political realities.

If we once again follow the model set up by Stuart Hall, we can look to the moment of articulation of a politicized feminine identity: "in the course of the search for roots, one discovered not only where one came from, one began to speak the language of that which is home in the genuine sense, that other crucial moment which is the recovery of lost histories."⁵⁶ This moment sets up a politicized space, transient as it may be, from which to speak of identity based on difference/différance. I submit that the text of the Spice Girls can begin to locate this space, especially for young women, and that this potential power must not get lost in the multitude of discourses that swirl around the at once disparaged and admired Spice Girls.

In and around the issue of identity swirls the question of nation and nationality. In and around the text of the Spice Girls moves the issue of Britain and Britishness. From Geri Halliwell's Union Jack dress, to Mel C's obsession with football, to Victoria's insistence on her connection to the aristocracy, the issue of nationality is inescapable when one looks at the Spice Girls. Perhaps some of the power of the enactment of these discourses can be related to a reaction to a larger influx of immigrants to England's shores and into the cities. The relentless focus on national identity could also be related to the fears that come with joining the European Union and what losses a new European, rather than a comfortable British, identity will entail. But perhaps the most interesting piece of the Spice Girls' relentless Britishness is its incredible redemptive power. Along with several other synchronous pop culture events, notably the success of the music group Oasis, the deification of Diana, Princess of Wales, upon her death and the success of the pseudo-British secret agent Austin Powers, giddy trendspotters are pointing to a second "British invasion."⁵⁷ Significantly, these texts stand in counterpoint to a notion of Britishness that was altogether less hip even five years ago when other nations on the British Isles were getting all the attention. The Scots had a tremendously popular William Wallace (thanks to Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*) to claim, the Irish had *Riverdance* and a constantly dramatic/dramaticised political history, all of which capitalized on a growing interest in and connection to things and music Celtic⁵⁸ by affluent white Americans (among others). England had the dubious honor of governing and sometimes suppressing these two romantic states and a long history as a colonial power, but until very recently it did not have significant pop cultural capital as a hip identifier. Not since

the Beatles had things British been so cool. Newer, younger Prime Minister Tony Blair is milking the phenomenon for all it is worth, and has even appropriated the title of a flavor of American Ben & Jerry's ice cream, "Cool Britannia," to christen and utilize this trend. Even the royal family has gotten on the bandwagon; Prince Charles was goosed by a Spice Girl in May of 1997, thus assuring positive ratings in the tabloids for several weeks to come.⁶⁰

Theorists on globalization and the global media may ask how can we look to a pop cultural phenomenon like the Spice Girls – especially the Spice Girls since they are so aggressively British, and not see the specter of western imperialism in their transnational countenances and mass marketed products? Writers like Herman and McChesney suggest that because capitalism unilaterally attacks the rights and privileges of the masses, only a mass and unilateral counter-offensive may offer any hope of staving off the horror of corporate media culture. In their words,

Fundamental economic analysis of media processes suggest that commercialization of the media will be detrimental to the public sphere...the positive benefits to society of a well developed public sphere (an informed citizenry, a better working democratic order, possibly even greater social stability) are 'externalities' to private owners, who cannot capture revenue from these social benefits and therefore do not take them into account in programming. This is a case of 'market failure...'⁶¹

I believe that this is a partially useful analysis but it leaves no opportunity for resistance outside of a massive unitary revolution.

Masoumeh Ebtekar, a writer and politician in Iran, believes that this kind of mass mobilization will grow out of a connection of religion and politics in the form of Islamist fundamentalism as it is practiced in Iran. She suggests that this is necessary, not only for

Iran but also for the rest of the world, in order to combat the social ills which lead directly out of corporate media products. She still sees an example of market failure but on different terms than those of Herman and McChesney; spiritual terms rather than leftist terms. She looks to pop cultural texts such as the Spice Girls as prime examples of the bankruptcy of corporate cultural texts,⁶² and I suspect that Herman and McChesney may join her in her condemnation of the mass marketed pop music phenomenon.

What does it mean when leftist intellectuals and religious fundamentalist leaders are in collusion? I submit that this case suggests that neither group is really listening to the people any longer, and if these individuals do not speak as the people but to the people or for the people then neither one of these conceptions of the Spice Girls can be of much material use for activists – save to rob them of hope. The fact is that the Spice Girls do exist and furthermore they are hugely popular, especially among young women and men. I believe a more useful political strategy is one that is more flexible, a strategy that can accept the Girls on their own terms in their own context and work from that point, toward a rearticulation of the Spice Girl's music which is counter-hegemonic. I'll come back to this point but let me recount first the arguments that intentionally or unintentionally fall into this kind of hierarchical linear logical model.

Music has been, and is, one of the foremost sites of identity formation. In my personal experience I know that I look at people's CD collections and book shelves as tangible evidence of locations of personal and political commitments. Myself along with many other members of my generation have learned to do this. Why not? While it is relevant, the point is not that these items are almost always mass produced consumable-

purchasable items. An equally significant point is that they are identity signifiers and community signifiers. More and more personal connections and political connections are made through pop cultural texts. This happens not only with music but with TV shows, authors, movies and magazines. As David Morley and Kevin Robins point out in their discussion of nationality and nation, pop cultural texts can also be sites of popular memory. They write about a “TV event” (an idea easily translatable to a music event, or a film event) that galvanized a national community so that it reached, “a ‘critical mass’ at which it was simply necessary for people to watch the programme if they were to be able to participate effectively in the public debates that were generated the daily conversation.”⁶³ I would argue that the text of the Spice Girls is a larger international instance of this same phenomenon. Their doings are very often “media events” and their ubiquity endorsing products and decorating packages, as well as singing, around the world suggests that the Spice Girls’ message and their music should be studied by international media theorists. If these texts are always and already politicized sites of identity then why not appropriate them for a leftist agenda from the corporate transnational machine which sells them? What other option do we have but to do this?

With this issue in mind I suggest that the reasons to discount the Spice Girls and treat them as an unimportant phenomenon are the same reasons that they should be taken seriously and embraced not necessarily on the terms of corporate transnational business interests but on the terms of serious revolutionaries. There are four general areas that I will focus on in order to work through not only how the Spice girls have been denigrated but also how they may be recuperated: (1) they are a commercial product, a marketing

device, not ‘artists’; (2) their audience is young girls; (3) the Spice Girls are Pop and not Rock; (4) they are feminine not feminists.

Commercial Product

The Spice Girls creation myth goes something like this. A prominent record company (Virgin Records) and producer decided they wanted to put together a moneymaking girl pop group; so they listed an audition advertisement. Out of all the women who auditioned five were chosen: Geri, Victoria, Emma, Mel B and Mel C. They became fast friends and fired the producer very shortly afterwards, taking on a new producer – Simon Fuller “Svengali Spice” (as dubbed by the press). Fuller helped to mold and shape them into not only a pop music powerhouse but also a brand name that got attached to any product that was willing to pay for their endorsement *and* share a percentage of the profits. The Girls were in the tabloids all the time, but they functioned as a unit rather than as individuals. Eventually they fired Fuller and took over their own management and promotions. Does this represent the dream of the independent business women?

Much of what is and is not in this creation myth is a factor in why the Spice Girls do not get treated like a traditional rock band but rather as pop icons – a separate and *unequal* category. Although part of the motivation behind the creation of the group was, “manufacturing a distaff equivalent of the smooth skinned boy-toys splattered over the UK pop charts,”⁶⁴ the historical predecessors of the Spice Girls were the brainchild of earlier power-producer, Phil Spector. What Joanne Gottlieb and Gayle Wald call, “the trivializing model of the Phil Spector-type “girl groups,””⁶⁵ I would like to consider in

slightly less reproofing terms. Susan Douglas has suggested that girl groups mattered to girl consumers because:

While girl group music celebrated love, marriage, female masochism, and passivity, it also urged girls to make the first move, to rebel against their parents and middle-class conventions, and to dump boys who didn't treat them right. Most of all, girl group music – precisely because these were groups not just individual singers – insisted that it was critically important for girls to band together, talking about men, singing about men, trying to figure them out. What we have here is a pop culture harbinger in which girl groups, however innocent and commercial, anticipate women's groups, and girl talk anticipates a future kind of women's talk.⁶⁶

Douglas injects her reading of the girl groups with larger political issues so that we may have a more nuanced understanding of these issues in their relationship to politics. Girl groups must be understood, in her estimation, as neither feminist nor absolutely devoid of feminist potential, stuck in a fifties-style political naiveté. By the same token, I believe that the Spice Girls phenomenon can be figured in to a larger political and cultural arena and reconsidered in a more complex fashion.

The issue of the Spice Girls' audition is often cited to prove that the Girls' connection is not legitimate since they didn't know each other before they were chosen as members; they are discounted as merely the beneficiaries of the "whirling cycle of prefab fame."⁶⁷ There was not the intrinsic, organic connection that grows out of playing together in a garage or in dingy, empty clubs simply for the love of the music (not that there's mythmaking going on with these kinds of narratives!). Instead the Spice Girls are clearly corporate shills only in it for the money, with an authenticity factor of nil. This is pithily illustrated by *Spin* magazine who echoing *Entertainment Weekly*, dismiss the

Spice Girls by assigning them to the category of “prefab combo,” in that publication’s sketch of the history of ‘teenybopper’ music.⁶⁸

The authenticity issue is a slippery one since it operates on an entirely subjective basis and gets trotted out by the music press in order to add legitimacy to the kinds of music that are often already endowed with some respect. This is related to the issue of Rock versus Pop that I will discuss in a later section. Audiences and critics, even though we are all complicit in the media industry’s machinery, demand a kind of emotional authenticity – of cultural, national, or gendered identity for example – from bands that is not asked of other kinds of media producers. But the grounds for authentic gendered identities are necessarily false. Femininity is always a performance.

Thus the doubly gendered nature of the Girls’ performance is dismissed, whereas the textual performance of a band like the Sex Pistols (masculine, angry, working class, costumed), a band whose creation is similar to the Spice Girls’, is taken very seriously indeed. The Sex Pistols’ manager Malcolm McLaren cut original member Wally Nightingale from the band because he was too clean-cut and replaced him with Johnny Rotten. Rotten suggested another substitution, Sid Vicious for Glen Matlock, because in the words of Rotten, “he [Matlock] was so clean and had that look, like he had never gone without a meal.”⁶⁹ What emerges in these two examples is a picture of a band whose public image was as carefully crafted as any pop group, favoring image over a problematic authenticity. Instead of vilification the Sex Pistols are celebrated and regularly cited as the beginning of a new era in Rock music. Iain Chambers states in his examination of the Sex Pistols and the British punk movement at large that, “at the

outset, it was less internal musical effects and more punk's dramatic public style that aroused so much attention."⁷⁰ It is clear though, that the identical statement could be made in reference to the Spice Girls, for it was not their musical innovations which propelled them to stardom but their outrageous "public style" which launched them as reviled and admired icons. Indeed, legitimating the Sex Pistols as an authentic expression of class rage in the late seventies is as problematic as glorifying the Spice Girls as an authentic feminist voice for the late nineties – while the latter seems to be patently outrageous, the former is very often held to be self-evident. The Spice Girls are neither transparently feminist nor exclusively commercial, just as, "punk did not directly represent the sonorial rebound of class, neither was it merely a glib commercial ruse, a vulgar con dreamed up by the Sex Pistols's manager Malcolm McLaren."⁷¹

A common focus in the popular press is not on the Spice Girls' music, but on their appearance and clothing. Take for example *Time* magazine's introductory article on the Spice Girls, written just as their first album was being released in the United States.

Reviewer Christopher John Farley says,

one watches the Spice Girls because they *are* fit. All five are toned, energetic and attractive, though not overwhelmingly lovely...The unspoken messages Americans will probably get from this music are these: *Hello, we're sexy British gals! Let's make music fun again!*⁷²

Farley does eventually get around to talking about the album as a kind of an after-thought. The quote not only makes a prediction about what American audiences will think but it is in fact a suggestion, not descriptive but prescriptive. This is what American audiences should think; thus, this kind of journalism works to discredit the Spice Girls before listeners have a chance to decide for themselves. Discourses like these

are set into action immediately not because the music is inconsequential but because it is in the corporations' interests to make it seem so, to prematurely undo any subversive readings that may come from finding pleasure in a group whose rallying cry is for 'Girl Power!'

Interestingly, since their introduction and well documented success, many of the accounts of the Spice Girls' popularity in the corporate press are fixated on the earning potential and the very real proceeds that the Spice Girls have already pulled out of their success. Articles in *Newsweek* and *Forbes*⁷³ herald the arrival of a new force in popular music, but the power they proclaim is not the power of the music itself, it is the massive marketing opportunities for transnational corporations to cash in on the newest moneymaking sensation. But the issues that are on many listeners' minds are not net profits and dividends of performers, but the dancibility of a song or its lyrics. In terms of a 'liberal' argument, the least these facts lend themselves to is the massive economic power of the Spice Girls. In the terms of liberal feminism the Spice Girls could stand as exemplars, women who have not changed the system so that it benefits everyone but rather, taken a large slice of the unequal pie for their own. How does this fit in with an image of a group of 'trifling' women, traditional forms of power? It seems to take the very real accumulation of monetary power amassed by the Spice Girls and use it as proof of the inconsequentiality of the band and their music. That is, the writers have savvily changed the focus of their articles from the usual examination of lyrics, musical structure or fan reaction and instead examine their business tactics suggesting that the former is so obvious as to be beneath notice. Fans notice however. *Forbes* connects part of the Spice

Girls' tremendous success with the very young was due to the presence of the Internet in many nuclear family households which yielded 100,000 Spice Girls related hits on one search. They suggest this also speaks to a change in modes of identity formation from nationality, religion or ethnicity to consumption:⁷⁴ I am what I buy. Although it may be wishful thinking to suggest that all consumers feel this way all the time, the fact that it is true more often now than it was even 10 years ago (and certainly more than it was 50 years ago) is significant in terms of new types of communities and new signifiers of identity – especially for individuals who were born within the last 10 to 20 years, and when we talk about youth cultures we are unequivocally working within this time frame.

As Angela McRobbie, a prominent theorist on young women's culture and popular culture, has stated in regards to the issue of being a consumer of mass produced texts of and about feminized occupations such as dance and music in popular culture:

Indeed, it is women who do the bulk of consuming, and this can only mean that either women ignore the address made in these adverts to male sexual desire, or else they slide into somehow participating in the pleasure on offer...It rivals you, flatters you and degrades you. Still to stress the degradation is thought to deny the pleasure, is to miss the opportunity of exploring further vital features of women's culture. What I am suggesting then, is that the process of viewing or looking at women performing in some way, from the point of view of a woman, demands more theoretical and concrete analysis, part of which would have to entail an interrogation of the form and nature of both the pleasure and the pain which this involves.⁷⁵

I have quoted McRobbie at length here to second her suggestion that trotting out the usual suspects of feminist theory, such as masochism or scopophilia, is not always adequate to the task of understanding the pleasures of the popular and the potential discursive powers of those pleasures.

The Audience Is Young Girls

Benjamin Svetkey writing on pop culture for the popular press in *Entertainment Weekly*, describes a Spice Girls concert with fairly typical condescension and horror:

The sound of 10,000 hysterically screaming preteen girls is so startling it can send the popcorn flying out of your lap. By the time the group finally lands on the stage at 8:30 p.m. – arriving via a special-effects rocket ship – the screeching is so loud and high pitched that the dogs as far away as Bensonhurst are stuffing cotton into their ears.⁷⁶

What is present in Svetkey's humorous account is a joke at the expense of young girls. The implication is that young women have hideous taste and that their expression of it is terrifying to both man and beast. What is hiding in his mock fear is a real fear connected directly to the fear of the 'masses' that Andreas Huyssen⁷⁷ and Morag Shiach⁷⁸ both identify. It is linked to the Frankfurt School conception that popular culture, specifically popular music, would suck the soul and the political organizational power out of the working classes.

The issue of the Spice Girls' youthful audience is one of the most significant in the swirl of discourses that surround them. Young women's communities and opportunities for self-expression are still far more limited than are those for boys. Most of the studies of youth sub-cultures define adolescent and youthful rebellion in relation to an unspoken masculinity.⁷⁹ Girls' (counter)cultures very often have to take place, not in a dramatically public zone of city streets, but privately and in the home: revolution from the bedroom. Historically, studies of youth sub-cultures have focused on young men in public spaces and excluded young women's experiences. Very often these studies valorized behavior that was sexist or racist and decontextualized it by not looking at the

boys' family contexts and the gendered relationships within the home.⁸⁰ This discounting of girls' cultures is linked to a discounting of the home space, but recent cultural studies work would suggest that the home, the ultra-local spaces, are exactly where we should look to see the intricacies of globalization at work. Doreen Massey has suggested that geographies of youth cultures are necessarily global within their local contexts.

The spatial openness of youth cultures in many if not all parts of the world is clear. Across the world even the poorest of young people strive to buy in to an international cultural reference system: the right trainers, a T-shirt with a Western logo, a baseball cap with the right slogan. Music draws on a host of references which are fused, rearticulated, played back.⁸¹

Massey suggests a necessary globality to youth cultures around the world, and she points to music as one aspect that helps to construct this community. Ostensibly, the music she refers to is the mass marketed, mass produced popular music which is marketed to kids around the world and in different contexts must necessarily carry with it different meanings to different localities. Even music that is patently corporate and hegemonic, like that of the Spice Girls, may offer new opportunities for different kinds of resistance to girls around the world.

The bedroom has been generally characterized as a space that offers little potential for resistance. For instance, an example from Marion Frye's work quoted in Allison Blunt and Gillian Rose offers a dramatic example of a woman who tried to create a cartography of resistance – that is she tried to map the different spaces in her home where she could get angry. “She discovered the pattern was very simple and clear. It went with the floor plan. She could get angry quite freely in the kitchen and somewhat less freely and about a more limited range of things in the living room. She could not get

angry in the bedroom. Anger. Domain. Respect.”⁸² This is the cartography of a grown woman, a married woman. The cartographies for young women are necessarily different. Both, Mary Celeste Kearney⁸³ and Marion Leonard⁸⁴ have situated young women’s resistance squarely in their bedrooms by looking at young women zine producers in the ‘riot grrrl’ movement. Although Spice Girls fans are not generally the same girls who publish riot grrrl zines, the opportunities young women have to carve out spaces for their own resistance are roughly commensurate. The opportunity for girls to carve out a space for themselves in a reading of text is the same; if some girls choose to do it through the production of their own zines and some girls do it by listening to the Spice Girls, who are we to say that one is more valid than the other? As one girl producer sees it, “anything that makes girls feel better about themselves is good. I think the Spice Girls are cool. – Carla DeSantis, editor in chief, *Rockgrl* magazine.”⁸⁵

Pop Versus Rock

The categories of Pop and Rock are not entirely transparent. The differences between the two are so normalized as to seem self-evident but they very often tend to be subjective classifications carrying evaluative implications. Part of the problem arises from pop’s tendency to be both an economic categorization (the pop music charts contain simply the albums that have the highest sales in the country) and a musical style. The musical style of ‘pop’ is much more difficult to pin down; it is related to a popular music industry that has been operating in the United States for almost 150 years in different guises and includes styles as diverse as Rock ‘n’ Roll, Country and Western, Tin Pan

Alley, or Jazz and Blues.⁸⁶ This means that while rock can reasonably be called pop music the reverse is not true, music that is labeled 'pop' is not necessarily rock.

Norma Coates' article, "(R)Evolution Now,"⁸⁷ looks to the gendered nature of pop music vs. rock music as representative of a hierarchy which takes the 'real' intangible sense of music from the heart which characterizes the category of rock music and sets it up as more valuable, therefore masculine. She suggests that the way women's music is devalued is often to call it pop rather than to recognize the power and skill of female musicians and songwriters in the same way that male musicians are validated. She points to the existence of the category "women in rock" as one that excludes women from power rather than including them, because it set up rock as a category that women have to be added to rather than one that women are always already present in. Her analysis is useful when one looks at performers like Patti Smith or the Breeders, but it ultimately is inadequate because it doesn't challenge the fundamental assumptions behind the distinction between rock and pop in the first place. She uncritically takes part in what Simon Frith problematizes as, "the common sense of rock."

Rock 'n' roll was from the start, then, constituted not simply as music but also as knowledge. To be a rock fan is not just to like something but also to know something, to share a secret with one's fellow fans, to take for granted the ignorance of non fans....The common sense of rock, to put this another way is that its meaning is known thoughtlessly: to understand rock is to *feel* it.⁸⁸

Coates' article rather suggests that this fundamental binary opposition is valid and that what is not valid is the exclusion of women from the more valued location. Thus her analysis cannot accommodate bands like the Spice Girls, or even Madonna and Janet

Jackson, because they are unproblematically located in the category of pop. According to Coates' argument there is no discursive power to be found in their music.

Music critics, no matter their political affiliation, have as little control over popular responses to cultural products as do corporate interests. The music industry essentially gambles on what it thinks will sell well and be successful enough to make money. Because music (especially music) often evokes such a visceral emotional response which ties directly into its consumption as a marker of identity, critics and fans alike call upon a sense of the 'real' to signify that this mass marketed cultural product is more valid than another. For example, even performers like Tori Amos, Liz Phair or PJ Harvey will be seen as intrinsically more valid because they are, in this line of logic, more 'real,' even though they also are women performers whose stardom is built on sexualized images and music recorded, marketed and distributed by corporate media conglomerates. Groups like the Spice Girls will uncomplicatedly be placed in the category of 'pop,' which is connected to a sense of falseness and thus may be written off. For example Dave Marsh, music critic for *The Nation*, says of Rock versus pop, "it's not that rock fans automatically reject crass commercialism – millions of Kiss and Bon Jovi fans prove otherwise – but at least the music is supposed to be self-generated crass commercialism, not the prefab bargain-store crap provided at K Mart."⁸⁹ This is not only an arbitrary distinction, but, because of the implied hierarchy that it brings along, it effectively cuts off points of connection that could be used discursively for leftist activism. It discounts the popular and the thousands of fans that popular music claims,

then privileges the white, male dominated world of Rock. What's so progressive about that? By buying into this distinction we are shooting ourselves in the foot.

Feminine Not Feminists

Laura Mulvey suggested that images of women in popular media, especially in the Classical Hollywood Cinema, are presented as sexualized and fetishized, with a male spectator in mind. She identifies the facilitation of the 'male gaze' as a key aspect of dominant cinema and suggests that the imaging of women not as individuals but as objects whose place is to decrease the castration anxiety created for male viewers.⁹⁰ A feminist critic does not have to look very hard to find sexual fetishes in the images of the Spice Girls; Baby Spice (Emma) invariably with a lollipop in her mouth comes immediately to mind, or Scary Spice (Mel B) the animalized – always wearing tiger or leopard prints – black Spice Girl. All of the Spice Girls really fit into sexual stereotypes; the girl-jock Sporty Spice (Mel C), the stuck-up rich girl Posh Spice (Victoria) or the saucy red-head Ginger Spice (Geri) round out the list. But, since the publication of Mulvey's essay, critics have been trying to find the locations of pleasure and power for the female viewer which must also be in a text.⁹¹

Granted, the Spice Girls' personas are not necessarily countercultural ideals, their hypersexualized celebrity make it all too easy to ignore any political potential. Their image certainly does not fit in the strict sense of a political vanguard who is positioned against the ruling class in a series of sets of perfect dualistic oppositions. This model is once again a reformist, individualistic, 'liberal' ideal rather than a collectivist,

revolutionary ideal. The Spice Girls' suggestions as to what girl power really is and how to have it are ultimately individualist.

Girl power is people power – it means being positive, believing in yourself and living your life with fun. “You have to work hard, but go for it!” That’s Emma’s advice to girls with big ambitions. “If you want something badly enough, you will get it.”⁹² Be proud of your race and colour – it’s who you are! Do exactly what you wanna do and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise! If you haven’t got it fake it! Too short? Wear big high heels, but do practice walking!⁹³

We may choose to see the possibility in this for something of a populist solution. The suggestion of politics through consumption is not a new idea but the way it is practiced by the Spice Girls is new. The individualism of the solutions and the cursory nature of their advice is to some degree mediated by the collectivity of their delivery. A reader may notice for instance that although the phrases are individual quotes they are not attributed to any one girl. The group behaves like a single unit with multiple aspects rather than a group of individuals; each of the aspects is respected and valued for its difference but its absolute cohesion is never in question.

After Geri Halliwell left the group Benjamin Svetkey interviewed the remaining four Spice Girls and came face to face with the unifying force of Girl Power. His frustration is telling. ““There are no hard feelings. We wish her all the luck in the world. We are totally behind her.’ That’s Posh Spice speaking but it could be any of the Spice Girls. Each says the same thing – sometimes using the same exact words – when separately asked about Halliwell.”⁹⁴ They resist stereotypes of catty infighting. Svetkey and other reporters faced with the same phenomenon are frustrated by the consistency and, dare I say it, solidarity of the Spice Front. Isn’t solidarity the cornerstone of leftist activism? Why not take a lesson where you find it? If the Spice Girls exhibit total

solidarity in the public eye, then the same young girls at the concert whom Svetkey later goes on to revile are seeing a very effective model at work.

On one hand you would think that feminists would be happy about the success of the Spice Girls. In terms of a call for ‘positive images’ of women, the Spice Girls certainly fit the bill. They are Benneton-diverse, personally and financially successful and they articulate what can only be called feminist catch phrases like ‘Girl power!’ So what’s wrong with that? On the surface it seems fine until it is combined with the earlier arguments that I outlined on why we should not take them seriously. If I return to Hall, it seems clear that positive images are not adequate to the task of articulating a full and politically useful identity; he instead pulls away from the category of ‘positive images’ and requests not negative images but complex images.⁹⁵

Most of what comes out of the discussion in the popular press of the image of the Spice Girls is the issue of costuming and of their self-presentation. As the former Ginger Spice, Geri Halliwell says of her costumes, “I used to dress like a drag queen.”⁹⁶ This statement seems to me especially telling because it addresses the heart of the issue of the performance, of a gendered identity. All of the Spice Girls dress like drag queens. What does it mean when young women dress like men who are dressing like women and talk about the presentation of themselves, not in relationship to ‘real’ women, but in relationship to ‘fake’ women? There is some serious gender play going on. Mary Ann Doane has talked about the production of a gendered identity in terms of a masquerade. She says:

masquerade is not recuperable as transvestitism precisely because it constitutes an acknowledgment that it is femininity itself which is constructed as a mask – as the

decorative layer that conceals non-identity...The masquerade, in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance.⁹⁷

Thus the Spice Girls' overproduction of feminized/fetishized identity can ultimately be read as distancing itself from the trap of gendered power rather than necessarily reinstating it. For young consumers of texts, then, the message does not have to be so didactic and the subject position does not always have to be masochistic. They may even try emulation in order to appropriate some of the 'girl-power' for themselves; thus the multitudes of products branded with the Spice Girls label can at least be partially recuperated from the control of corporate interests and can be read against the grain as a kind of rebellion rather than a capitulation to the role of conspicuous consumer. As Barbara Hudson points out, "for teenagers [and younger] who have not yet entered the labour market the only possible resistance or rebellion is through the adoption of particular styles of consumption, of which dress is the most easily accessible and the most noticeable."⁹⁸

I would like to round out my argument by briefly recognizing its similarity to the work that was done on Madonna in the mid-eighties and which was subsequently criticized.⁹⁹ Although there are superficial similarities between this analysis and that work which was done a decade ago – I would like to map out the differences between this piece and its predecessors most notably John Fiske's reading of Madonna in *Reading the Popular*, published in 1989.¹⁰⁰ Some of the most significant differences are present in the objects of study themselves; while Madonna is only one individual, the Spice Girls operate as a collective unit. This makes a massive difference in that while the political implications of Madonna's transgressions can be rationalized as 'personal,' the collective

transgressive actions of the Spice Girls must necessarily be read as organized, much less individualistic and thus a more desirable pop-political model. The early articulations of the two subjects also hold significant differences. While Madonna's earliest image was that of a "boy toy," an image which she implicitly subverted, the Spice Girls' rallying cry was for "girl power!" setting up explicitly feminist terms which worked to subvert an implicit patriarchy.

While my work and Fiske's both posit a potential for young women's empowerment through identifications with pop-culture texts, I work very hard in this piece to recognize that these counter-hegemonic readings are not automatic, whereas Fiske's argument is much more absolute. He states, "her adolescent girl fans find in Madonna meanings of femininity that have broken free from the ideological binary opposition of virgin: whore. They find in her image positive feminine-centered representations of sexuality that are expressed in their constant references to her independence, her being herself."¹⁰¹ I avoid this kind of absolutism because it doesn't acknowledge that subversion and reinvestment in different aspects of culture can be taking place at the same time in one text. At the same time that I recognize a connection between my own work and Fiske's work on Madonna I also acknowledge that other theorists have already been critical of the Madonna-as-feminist-icon project; bell hooks has pointed out that Madonna problematically retains her cultural cachet by, on one hand, appropriating from marginalized groups, e.g., "the cultural debt that she [Madonna] owes black females...[and her] appropriation from black male culture."¹⁰² On the other hand Madonna continues practices which remain racist/sexist/heterosexist; "Madonna fans

who are determined to see her as politically progressive might ask themselves why it is she completely endorses those racist/sexist/classist stereotypes that almost always attempt to portray marginalized groups as “defective.”¹⁰³ hooks’ point remains valid in relationship to the Spice Girls; certainly any participant in popular culture would be – to different degrees – susceptible to both of these charges, but the Spice Girls are admittedly profoundly ambivalent feminist icons. The trick is to not set up a text as absolutely subversive or absolutely problematic. hooks knows this; even while she is being ruthlessly critical of Madonna she acknowledges some of the subversive aspects of her performance. I also concede the multiplicity of texts, and while I do not wish to overstate the case of the Spice Girls’ feminist potential, I do think that they are more significant than they have been given credit for.

Because consumers are complicit in an unjust economic system does not mean that they are perfectly happy with all of its implications. We cannot entirely discount the pop cultural because of its economic ties. It is reductionistic to diminish a cultural phenomenon to an economic one; this mistake has been made many times in the past and has only served to isolate the left from the very people that it sought to speak about and speak for. In fact this very linguistic interpretation is representative of the problematics of such a subject position, for it attempts to set itself apart from and above the popular and the people; but an effective critic must not only speak as a critic but also as a part of the audience. As Trinh Minh Ha, an author and ethnographic filmmaker, has suggested, one should not speak about but speak nearby.¹⁰⁴ The critic or the ethnologist is, then, no longer trying to contain or to control her subjects’ meanings or readings. With this subtle

move I may move my own politics away from the liberal and into the realm of the radical and revolutionary through the use of the text of the Spice Girls rather than denying the text of the Spice Girls.

CHAPTER THREE

FINAL GIRL(S) POWER:

SCREAM

A strong prima facie case could be made for horror's being, intentionally or unintentionally, the most self-reflexive of cinematic genres. From titles and posters to images of eyes, and from tales of blindness or paravision to plots involving audiences looking at (audiences looking at) horror movies, horror talks about itself.¹⁰⁵

In this chapter I want to explore recent popular film and its relationship to girlculture by briefly undertaking a reading of the 1997 film *Scream*. This film is important in terms of girlculture because it not only features a cast of the new guard of Hollywood's young women stars, but also reworks the horror genre with specific opportunities for the female spectator. Chapter Three will undertake a textual analysis of *Scream* (and to a lesser extent its sequel, *Scream 2*) in terms of textual, subtextual and extra-textual issues that are relevant to issues of female audiences and girlculture. I will begin by briefly sketching the plot of the film and highlighting some of its major stars.

The 1997 film was directed by horror movie legend Wes Craven (director of such slasher classics as *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) and *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988)). *Scream*'s stars were Neve Campbell (television's *Party of Five*), Courtney Cox (television's *Friends*), David Arquette and Drew

Barrymore – that is TV stars and low grade film stars. It kick-started the star status of its writer, Kevin Williamson, who after *Scream* hit got a television hit with *Dawson's Creek* and then two more film hits, *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and *Scream 2*. This made him one of the most profitable writers in Hollywood and created (in the eyes of producers) youth-audience name-brand cachet for his scripts. The plot of the film is essentially this: a serial killer is stalking teenagers in a sleepy northern California small town. The murders seem to be related to the rape and murder of Maureen Prescott, a local woman, the year before. Maureen Prescott's daughter, Sydney Prescott/Neve Campbell,¹⁰⁶ is the main target of the killer, but he kills others along the way, including Casey Becker/Drew Barrymore and her boyfriend Steve, Principal Himbry, and Sydney's best friend Tatum Riley/Rose McGowan. A "cheesy tabloid reporter", Gale Weathers/Courtney Cox, is following the story; she also reported on Maureen Prescott's rape and murder the year before which Sydney/Campbell witnessed. During that story Gale/Cox demonized Sydney in the press, calling her a liar and saying that Sydney was responsible for sending an innocent man (Cotton Weary/Liev Schreiber) to prison. Suspects for the new spate of murders include Billy Loomis/Skeet Ullrich, Sydney's boyfriend; Stewart Macher/Matthew Lillard, Tatum's boyfriend; Deputy Dewey Riley/David Arquette, Tatum's brother; Neil Prescott, Sydney's father; and Randy/Jamie Kennedy, a horror movie buff. The killer operates by first calling his victims from a cellular telephone outside their homes, questioning them on their knowledge of scary

movies and then cutting them up with a hunting knife. The killer uses a voice modifier on the telephone and wears a Halloween costume when he attacks.

Scream is an important film in terms of the business of the film industry. It helped kick start Hollywood's recognition of young woman audiences. Studios and producers were forced to come to terms with a young audience and their spending power. *Scream*'s release and runaway success provided proof that young women audiences wanted to see new kinds of images of themselves. More importantly for the executives, girls were willing to spend their money on them.

Just how thoroughly moviemakers had neglected that appetite first became starkly evident in December 1996. Producer Lynda Obst, for one, remembers the month, because that's when her old-fashioned romantic comedy *One Fine Day* – which test screened well on the strength of the stars George Clooney and Michelle Pfeiffer – got blindsided by *Scream*. “All of a sudden this movie that wasn't on the radar of any of the dinosaurs around, myself included, opened really big,” says Obst... The horror movie brought in teen-to-twentysomething crowds that skewed far more female than those for the eighties slasher flicks of the *Friday the 13th* variety.¹⁰⁷

Clearly, producers are interested in purchasing power, not girl power; but in a capitalist economy these two things are very often difficult to separate ideologically. Indeed, an overly starry-eyed cultural critic could miss the clear continuity of business development; producers want to develop a young female audience who get trained as consumers and become loyal to brands, developing purchasing habits that they carry into their adult lives. Part of what influences consumer choice is a sense of consumption's relationship to identity; consumer choice is normalized as personal choice based on ideology. While I am not suggesting that consumption is a political act (far from it) there are two issues that I would like us to take very seriously in relationship to *Scream*.

Firstly, because there is an easy slippage between consumerism and democratic freedoms – especially in the United States – let’s not underestimate consumers as ignorant, apolitical dupes and assume that they are all happy with the status quo. Indeed we are all consumers and complicit in the economic system; ‘consumer’ is a category that includes all of us, willing or otherwise. Therefore, it is not impossible that consumer choices (in this case the cost of a movie ticket) may in some ways respond to political inadequacies. We should not discredit these choices therefore by assuming that because they are consumer choices, not political acts, they don’t speak to political issues or reflect (in this case) young women’s dissatisfaction with hegemonic constraints. As Isabel Pinedo puts it in her book, *Recreational Terror*, “while not explicitly advocating widespread social change, the [slasher] film does offer a *politics of direct action* in which women join forces to fight back in self-defense and win.”¹⁰⁸ Secondly, as I will show, there is something fundamentally different about the text of *Scream* that lends itself to politicized readings, not only in how it portrays women but in how it changes the horror genre and how it addresses its female spectators.

Slasher Films/Final Girls: An Overview

Carol Clover, author of *Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, opened up a new line of analysis for the horror film genre when her book was published in 1992. Because her work is so influential and extensive I would like to take time to outline her argument about horror film in general, and the slasher sub-genre specifically, then work through how different conceptions of gender in horror relate to the powerful girls in *Scream*. Clover breaks down the general category of horror into slasher

films, occult films and rape-revenge fantasy films.¹⁰⁹ I will use Clover's model to analyze some of the potential readings for the *Scream* horror franchise, which came out five years after Clover's book was published. *Scream* is a film that manages to mediate some of the implications for women characters in horror films and for the female spectator. *Scream* is an appropriate film for the project as its demographics show a propensity to attract large numbers of young women. When I speak of female spectatorship I of course am not referring to 'real' women viewers, but rather to how the text constructs a viewing position for the feminine – what spaces are available at the level of the text, rather than at the level of the audience. This echoes Teresa De Lauretis's insistence that there are several layers of meaning inscribed within the categories of "woman as bearer of economic, positive value, and woman as bearer of semiotic, negative value, of difference,"¹¹⁰ and woman as actual subject, 'real' women.

Clover begins by suggesting that her focus is not on the female spectator at all but rather on the implications of horror spectatorship for its primary viewers, young men. Although Clover avoids analysis of potential meanings for female viewers I would like to attempt to extend her argument and make some provisional claims for female spectatorship, especially in regard to female viewers of *Scream*. My analysis will primarily focus on woman as bearer of negative semiotic value, of difference; but woman as subject and woman as object will also briefly be addressed.

Clover's basic claims are these:

- Horror films are victim identified, therefore the masterful 'male gaze' does not fully explain the viewing pleasures for young male viewers.¹¹¹
- Horror films often engage a pre-Victorian/Freudian understanding of gender, a one-sex model rather than a two-sex model. In this system genders are

identified by activities rather than biology, as physiology is supposed to be equivalent but housed in different areas of the body.¹¹²

- The active female agent in horror narratives is not exclusively heroic, but a double figure, the victim-hero, who acts only after extreme and torturous provocation.¹¹³
- Young male viewers don't necessarily or exclusively identify with the 'masculine' (the attacker, almost always male) subject in the film, but can also switch identification and identify with the 'feminine' (the attacked, almost always female) subject.¹¹⁴ Thus, inasmuch as sadistic pleasures are available to the male viewer who cheers for the killer (she does not dispute this popular claim), masochistic pleasures are also available to the male viewer who identifies with and cheers for the female victim when she finally fights back.¹¹⁵
- Because horror films rank as the lowest of low culture they have the least investment in cultural hierarchies; they historically have had more freedom to explicitly question hegemony in a way that mainstream, big budget films cannot.

The films *Scream* (1997), *Scream 2* (1998) and (to a lesser extent) *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1997)¹¹⁶ are extraordinarily self-aware narratives. They at once exist in the realm of the slasher film as well as comment on or reference other (slasher) films¹¹⁷ and the rituals and rules of the genre. To show how *Scream* both fits within and changes the rules of the slasher genre I will to begin with a textual analysis of the *Scream* franchise. I will examine the film within the terms established by Clover, but I also want to propose that there is more going on in the film in terms of gender than can be adequately addressed by Clover's study. The questions I am interested in are, firstly, what is it about the *Scream* franchise specifically that necessitates a re-reading of Clover? How and where does *Scream* depart from and rework the slasher formula? Does its status as a more mainstream film take away from any of its subversive potential? What about the female viewers of slasher films in general but specifically of *Scream* and

Scream 2; absent from Clover's formulation entirely, what pleasures are available to them in these texts?

Clover identifies the grandfather of modern horror as Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho*. She says of the slasher sub-genre's history,

we have, in short, a cinematic formula with a twenty-six year history, of which the first phase, from 1960 to 1974, is dominated by a film clearly rooted in the sensibility of the 1950s [*Psycho*], while the second phase, bracketed by the two *Texas Chain Saw* films from 1974 and 1986, responds to the values of the late sixties and early seventies.¹¹⁸

I will posit that a third generation of slasher films was kicked off with *Scream* in 1997. Since the publication of this book in 1992, we have seen the triumphant return of horror films to the theaters but this time by the major studios and featuring bigger (usually up and coming television) stars than those who were featured in the second generation of slashers.¹¹⁹ *Scream* ushered in this new spate of horror films by proving the audience and profitability of the genre for a new generation of teens. Since its release in 1997, films like *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Scream 2*, *Halloween H2O*, *The Faculty*, *Disturbing Behavior*, *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Psycho* (a 1998 reconstruction of the 1960 original), and *Carrie 2 The Rage* have been released with some success by the major studios. These films have, to different degrees, responded to their slasher forbears. Although the *Scream* franchise is the focus of this examination, as it most explicitly exposes and plays with the slasher conventions, films like *Psycho* (1998), *Halloween H2O* and *Carrie 2 The Rage* clearly hearken back to slasher 'classics' in a manner different from but analogous to the *Scream* franchise.¹²⁰ Because of this horror renaissance in the major studios I would like to propose that we view the latest

group of films as the start of a third generation of horror. Trendspotting aside, new horror as typified by *Scream* changes some of the rules¹²¹ of the slasher film as the genre enters its third phase; the rest of this chapter will look at what these changes could mean.

Sexuality: This Time She's Not a Virgin

The slasher film is identified by specific generic tropes. Its most important features are: a recognizably human killer; a location that is 'not-home';¹²² and a "Final Girl," the female figure who survives the film and (at least temporarily) vanquishes the killer. Clover suggests that at least part of the reason why young male viewers identify with and cheer for the Final Girl figure is that she is sexually ambiguous, gendered not as a woman but like a young boy by her name and unfeminine interests. Of all the factors outlined by Clover the most significant in terms of *Scream's* narrative and the stakes of this analysis is that of the Final Girl. I will show that it is through the intentional reworking of the Final Girl figure that *Scream* is most successful at changing the stakes for women in horror narratives and audiences.

Clover states, "sexual transgressors of both sexes are scheduled for early destruction. The genre is studded with couples trying to find a place beyond purview of parents and employers where they can have sex, and immediately afterward (or during the act) being killed."¹²³ *Scream* works hard to break this moralistic requirement. The film's narrational character, Randy/Kennedy, sanctimoniously recites his version of the rules of the slasher genre: he says that only virgins are allowed to outsmart the killer in a horror movie, and he sighs gratefully at the end of the film, "I never thought I would be so happy to be a virgin!" Yet the film cross-cuts between a scene from *Halloween* which

is playing on television and which follows these rules [it arguably helped to establish them in the first place] to a scene taking place concurrently in the master bedroom where Sydney/Campbell agrees to have sex with Billy/Ullrich. Sydney/Campbell is not ultimately punished for her active sexuality by the narrative or the camera, although the text leads us to believe that she will be. Just after sex the killer enters the master bedroom and attacks Billy/Ullrich apparently stabbing and killing him (following the rules of the slasher). Sydney/Campbell narrowly escapes. What we learn later is that Billy/Ullrich isn't dead at all, he is in fact in collusion with the other killer. He is finally punished by Sydney/Campbell, not for his sexual status but for his emotional duplicity. Slasher morality is intentionally and explicitly undone here; although this undoing is important for young male viewers of horror, what I am most interested in is how this profits the slasher's female viewers. It accesses new codes for evaluation of inappropriate behavior. Sydney/Campbell is the character that motivates the narrative, not the killer and not another, male, hero figure. Not only does Sydney/Campbell control the gaze, but because she knows the codes of media so well she intentionally subverts them on behalf of the female spectator. This is evident when she responds to Randy/Kennedy's comment, "Careful. This is the point where the seemingly dead killer comes back for one last scare." As Billy/Ullrich sits up to demonstrate Randy's/Kennedy's prediction Sydney/Campbell shoots him through the forehead. "Not in my movie," she says.

Clover admits that the slasher film punishes both genders for sexual transgression, but she shows that women are punished more graphically and that their deaths take up far more screen time. Thus, there is still, in the second generation of slashers, a sexual

double standard at play. Men are punished/killed quickly or off screen whereas the deaths of women are lingered over and shot explicitly.¹²⁴ Moreover, though characters of both sexes are often killed as a result of sexual transgression, second generation slashers often killed women simply because they were women. For example, in *Halloween* Annie gets strangled in her car (as a kind of prelude to the attack on Laurie/Jamie Lee Curtis) because she is a woman. *Scream*, on the other hand, seems to adopt a more ‘equal opportunity’ death policy where men and women can both be killed – not as punishment but simply to move the plot along. Arbitrary female deaths are at least matched by arbitrary male deaths, so that immediately following the grisly decapitation of Sydney/Campbell’s best friend, Tatum/McGowan, Gale/Cox’s cameraman Kenny is killed in the news van. His throat is slashed and he is left bleeding on top of the van, his blood obscuring the windshield. The same applies to *Scream 2*, where the arbitrary death of Cici/Sarah Michelle Gellar at the sorority house is matched by the murder of Randy/Kennedy in the news van. Casey Becker/Barrymore and her boyfriend Steve are both killed in the opening scene of *Scream* on seemingly arbitrarily grounds, and *Scream 2* opens with the abrupt murder of the savvy Maureen Evans/Jada Pinkett and her boyfriend Phil Stephens/Omar Epps.¹²⁵

I say seemingly arbitrarily because I suspect that a kind of transgression is still being punished. No longer exclusively sexual or exclusively violent, the opening scenes of both *Scream* films are multilayered and can be read as an address to female/marginal viewers of horror. The initial layer is clearly an introduction to the film that we are about to view. It sets up the parameters of the narrative, establishing the killer, his modus

operandi, and the extraordinary self-reflexivity (of the film itself as well as the killer) that the narrative will continue to address.

The secondary layer is referential and reverential, the first of many inside jokes addressed to the indoctrinated viewer who knows his/her film history, or who does as Maureen Evans/Jada Pinkett does in *Scream 2*: “I read my *E-Weekly*.” Killing off the biggest stars (Drew Barrymore in *Scream* and Jada Pinkett in *Scream 2*) in the first part of the films is cinematic allusion to *Psycho*, which traded on the star cachet of Janet Leigh to add to the shock of her death in the beginning of the film.¹²⁶ Hitchcock acknowledged this when he said, “it’s rather unusual to kill the star in the first third of the film. I purposely killed the star so as to make the killing even more unexpected.”¹²⁷ This Hitchcockian trick is well known cinematic lore. Almost forty years later, Wes Craven’s films trade on the same surprise, but the nature of the pleasure is now changed; it is not exclusively a masochistic shock but also an intellectual pleasure for the literate viewer who catches this, the first of countless narrative, visual and literal allusions. The pleasure is of knowledge as much as it is of fear.

But, it is the tertiary layer of meaning that is most significant for the female viewer specifically; because, I contend, this section is a direct reference to her agency and the transgressive pleasures afforded her as a viewer of horror. Casey/Barrymore is punished not for her sexual activity (as Marion Crane was) but for her lack of viewer activity and her lack of knowledge. Casey’s/Barrymore’s death and the death of her boyfriend are predicated on her knowledge or lack of knowledge of scary movies. He asks her, “Do you like *scary* movies?” A trivia game between killer and victim both

builds suspense and predicates the death of Steve. The question that Casey/Barrymore gives the incorrect answer to is, “who was the killer in *Friday the 13th*?” It is something of a trick question, for the killer in the first film was not Jason, as in all of the *Friday the 13th* sequels, but Mrs. Voorhees, Jason’s mother. Female killers are few and far between in slasher films; although feminine traits are often coded as aberrant and made monstrous. Barbara Creed explores this tendency in horror in her book *The Monstrous-Feminine*. She states, “woman *is* represented as monstrous in a significant number of horror films.”¹²⁸ The psychotic urge, unmediated by defensive necessity, is rarely attributed to a woman. This offers the female viewer one of her few opportunities to explicitly activate the active, sadistic gaze that is routinely attributed to male viewers. This moment, and this scene in *Scream*, explicitly set up the question of female agency in terms of knowledge and identificatory object choice, which will be an issue for the girls in the rest of the films. When Casey/Barrymore gets this question wrong she is not the one who gets killed; it is her boyfriend. The symbolic punishment for misunderstanding of women’s power is significantly meted out on the head of a young man.¹²⁹

Sydney Prescott and Gale Weathers: Not Your Average Final Girls

I will argue that *Scream* further innovates the slasher formula by presenting not one Final Girl, but two. The characters of Sydney Prescott/Campbell and Gale Weathers/Cox work together at the end of both films to defeat a team of killers. Although they incorporate some of the significant features of the second generation, *Scream*’s final girls update the Final Girl – just as *Halloween* reworked *Psycho*’s formula and created her. Clover identifies the final girl through her experience and knowledge.

She is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again. She is abject terror personified. If her friends knew they were about to die only seconds before the event, the Final Girl lives with the knowledge for long minutes or hours. She alone looks death in the face, but she alone also finds the strength either to stay the killer long enough to be rescued (ending A) or to kill him herself (ending B).¹³⁰

Scream intervenes and changes the formula again. This description of the Final Girl is relevant to both Sydney/Campbell and Gale/Cox at the end of *Scream* and *Scream 2*.

Although the story is unequivocally Sydney/Campbell's, Gale/Cox wades through corpses and is attacked and terrorized by the killers all the way through to the end. As with the buddy formula, the two are an unlikely pair who don't like each other but ultimately are forced to work together to vanquish the killers; and together they challenge Clover's statement that, "she alone looks death in the face."

Whereas in the model slasher film the Final Girl will scream and cry and run until she is forced to finally take action, *Scream's* Final Girl, Sydney/Campbell – although she knows when to run – also knows not to take any shit and how to fight. She knows that gratuitous displays of phallic power, whether they take the form of harassing phone calls or physical attacks, are absolutely bankrupt. This is why when Sydney/Campbell gets her first call from the killer she does not cringe or hide; she calls him on his own grandiose image of his power.

[Sydney and the killer are talking on the phone. The shot is a constant one of Sydney as she moves around the house.]

Killer: The question isn't *who* am I, the question is *where* am I.

Sydney: So where are you?

Killer: Your front porch. [Gong!]

Sydney: Why would you be calling from my front porch?

Killer: That's the original part.

Sydney: Oh yeah? Well I call your bluff. [unlocks front door, walks onto front porch.] So where are you? [Camera pans around, nothing is visible.]

This moment is significant because it establishes a Final Girl with a feminist sensibility, one who refuses to allow power games played on the phone, or anywhere else, to intimidate her. The scene also validates her intuitive knowledge; she thinks the killer is bullshitting her and she calls his bluff; after he attacks her and she has Billy/Ullrich arrested she is ultimately proven right as he is unmasked as one of the killers at the end of the film.

It is almost as though second generation horror can't quite bear to be responsible for its own transgressions. Slasher films, like *Halloween* or the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* allow women to be the final heroic characters of the film, but only one girl and only because she has to fight to survive. As a reward for this worthy project, then, the second generation slasher film gives itself leave to butcher all of the other women who pass through its narrative, mediating the power and the action of the one, the Final Girl. Like the lessons in solidarity and sisterhood that a girl viewer could learn from the Spice Girls (see Chapter Two) the Final Girl figure in *Scream* gets an injection of subversion through sisterhood by producing a tough girl team that works for and with each other to defeat the killer. At the level of plot, it looks like Sydney/Campbell will be killed by Stewart/Lillard and Billy/Ullrich but Gale/Cox heroically appears just in the nick of time.

[The boys have a knife to Sydney's throat and they are explaining how their plan is like a movie. They will end up looking like heroes because they framed Sydney's father for the crime.]

Gale: Here's an ending for you. The reporter, left for dead in the news van, comes to, stumbles upon you two dipshits [Billy and Stewart], grabs the gun and saves the day.

Sydney: I like that ending.

The success of the narrative is predicated now on not an individual woman, extraordinary and significantly boyish, but on the cooperation of two women who together stab, shoot and electrocute the two killers into oblivion. This moment is also notable because it is one of the many instances in *Scream* that utilizes very self-referential language, not only does it rework the figure of the Final Girl, it talks about itself reworking the figure of the Final Girl. This moment is an example of how the film explicitly works on behalf of the female spectator. Sydney/Campbell is speaking for and speaking as one of the girls in the horror audience who want to see active female characters fighting for each other, and significantly not even bound by a sentimentalized friendship.

One of the main problems the text poses for its male characters is, in psychoanalytic terms, that of overidentification: Billy Loomis overidentifies with his mom, Stewart overidentifies with Billy, Cotton Weary and Mickey are both obsessed with seeing their own image in the media and Benjamin Willis (the killer in *I Know What You Did Last Summer*) overidentifies with his daughter. The suspicious male characters in this text have not successfully completed the oedipal project and this codes them as horrific or terrible.¹³¹ A brief extract from Sandy Flitterman-Lewis's description of how the Oedipus complex works may help to set up what is at stake for these characters in psychosexual terms.

In Freud's view, the Oedipus complex marks a decisive moment in the child's development, for it defines the individual's emergence into sexually differentiated selfhood...The parent of the same sex becomes a rival in the child's desire for the parent of the opposite sex. The boy gives up his incestuous desire for the mother because of the threat of punishment by castration perceived to come from the father. The child copes with this threat by identifying with his father (he

symbolically becomes him). He thereby learns how to take up a “masculine” role in society.¹³²

Understood in the terms of psychoanalytic theory, the men in question have not been able to successfully jump through the requisite unconscious hoops and replace their sexual object choices, and thus, they are dangerous. Overidentification is primarily a feminine and feminizing act, and these characters are significantly overidentified with the feminine. Billy Loomis/Ullrich is too close to his mother; he kills because he feels abandoned by her. His problem is with an incomplete oedipal separation. His object choice is aberrant because it *is* his mother rather than a substitute for his mother. Stewart’s/Lillard’s problem is related; he also has an unsatisfactorily completed oedipal project. His sexual object choice is not a substitute for his mother, but it is another man (a substitute for the father) Billy/Ullrich.¹³³ Cotton Weary/Liev Schreiber and Mickey/Timothy Olyphant are both consumed with their own images and seeing their own images reflected in the media. Mickey is obsessed with the spectacle of his trial and Cotton with his story being on the news. Ben Willis is so incestuously overidentified with his daughter and the prospect of losing her in *I Know What You Did Last Summer* that he is psychotic.

Of the five men only Cotton Weary is not a mass murderer. Even if he is not a murderer, he is a deeply ambivalent figure at best and, in *Scream 2* he functions as a false front who is a believable substitute for the ‘real’ killer. And if he is an inadequate killer, he is also an inadequate hero. Although he manages to shoot Mrs. Loomis/Laurie Metcalf at the end of *Scream 2*, saving Sydney/Campbell’s life, it is her action – she agrees to do an interview with Diane Sawyer and him – that makes him pull the trigger.

His own overidentification with the media makes him 'weak' and makes him question the rightness of killing Mrs. Loomis/Metcalf. Thus, although the text allows for powerful and active female figures it compensates with weak, ineffective male ones. In many ways the film still works within a binary system which promotes 'masculine' action over 'feminine' immobility and displaces these qualities on the bodies of opposite genders. However, I don't think that this project is entirely successful, and this summation doesn't adequately address all of the issues at work in the characterizations in *Scream* and *Scream 2*. This is complicated because 'masculine' action is not always valorized.

First of all, the male killers in the *Scream* films are not inactive – not in the way that the 'good' male characters are like Randy/Kennedy or Deputy Dewey/Arquette. The killers' motivations for action are flawed, caused as they are by the men's overidentification, but they are still unequivocally active figures. Furthermore, women's action is not validated invariably. Mrs. Loomis in *Scream 2* is arguably an active woman figure, but she is overidentified with her son. Her actions and existence stand in for another equal opportunity policy that is at work in the *Scream* texts. If, as Clover has said, the second generation of horror reflects the political issues of the 60's and 70's, then *Scream*, as the prototype for the third generation, could be read as reflective of an eighties/nineties style affirmative action policy. If girls can be tough and save the day then a woman can also be tough and psychotic. How she is psychotic still falls within the boundaries of feminine monstrosity as they are defined by Creed, "when woman is represented as monstrous it is almost always in relation to her mother and reproductive functions."¹³⁴ What is significant about the monstrous mother is that the kind of

femininity that she represents is not based on a relationship to the phallus, her lack; “the womb signifies ‘fullness’ or ‘emptiness’ but always it is its own *point of reference*.”¹³⁵ Thus in *Scream* the active female is neither abjectly horrifying nor is her action directly related to penis envy, a phallic lack. Furthermore, female action is made ambivalent in the figure of Gale Weathers/Cox. She is a classic castrating bitch whose control over the phallus (camera) makes her an uneasy object for identification and one who subverts the easy dichotomized syllogism that I suggested earlier: girls = active = good, versus boys = inactive = bad.

Stars

In terms of the two Final Girls, the two subjects that I am most interested in interrogating are Courtney Cox and Neve Campbell, I think the star status of the two actresses compellingly mediates against reading their characters as symbolically male. Clover says that in horror the Final Girl, “is a physical female and a characterological androgyne: like her name, not masculine but either/or, both, ambiguous.”¹³⁶ The name point is only true in Sydney’s case, but more significantly I think the star personae of these two women undo the conscriptions of the Final Girl, allowing her to be not only physically female but characterologically female as well. Some of the ideological work that is done by these two star personae is to bring not just metaphorical power (i.e. the spiritually “strong woman”) to the female image but physical power too.¹³⁷ Although the physically powerful woman is not unheard of in film, she has most often been theorized as doomed for her gender transgression (*Thelma and Louise*) or symbolically male (Ripley in *Aliens* and Sarah Conner in *Terminator 2*).

Although this will not be an extensive reading of the stardom of either Neve Campbell or Courtney Cox I would like to briefly address how their status as television and (to a lesser degree) film stars works in conjunction with the characterizations in *Scream*. Neve Campbell's persona in her film characters has thus far been one of a transgressive girl (a witch in *The Craft* and an ingenue in *Wild Things*). She is identified as a person who is stronger, emotionally, than the people around her and less willing to follow the conscriptions of traditional femininity. The character for which she is best known, Julia Salinger on Fox's *Party of Five*, steadfastly refuses to do what she is supposed to do; she makes her own mistakes and her own way while standing by her family. Julia's brother on the program recently commented, "Julia is the strongest of all of us." Stars' images, as Richard Dyer has pointed out, are mediated ideologically not only by the individuals themselves and their image in the media outside of their roles (stars as stars), but also by the characters that they play in narratives (stars as signs).¹³⁸ Thus conceptions of Neve Campbell as Neve Campbell the star interact with the character Sydney Prescott played by Neve Campbell and each is informed by the other. Because, outside of her roles in films and television, Campbell is seen as feminine¹³⁹ not masculine or even necessarily tomboyish, the equation of Final Girl as symbolically male, standing in for a kind of pre-pubescent boy, no longer works.

The conception of a virginal, boyish Final Girl works best when, as in the very low budget films of the seventies and early eighties, the actress who plays her is fairly unknown and whose image can accommodate such ideological baggage because she brings none of her own symbolic signification with her (as sexy, as an adult woman etc.).

The same issues apply if we accept that Gale Weathers/Courtney Cox is a kind of Final Girl herself. Cox is best known for her role as Monica Gellar on ABC's *Friends* – a hyper-feminine character known for her uptight, somewhat obsessive-compulsive but ultimately maternal behavior. Outside *Friends* she is known for her real-life romance with David Arquette. Her star persona works with the character of Gale Weathers to make an attraction to the Deputy Dewey/Arquette character almost inevitable and to make the character's ambitious story hunting fit with a Monica-esque obsessive personality. Significantly none of these characterizations (Courtney Cox as Courtney Cox, Courtney Cox as Monica Gellar or Courtney Cox as Gale Weathers) fits within the necessary limitations of the Final Girl gender ambiguities. Courtney Cox is no androgyne.

Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking 1975 essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,"¹⁴⁰ sets up the parameters with which Hollywood films must deal with women. Mulvey stated that, because of the male viewer's castration anxiety caused by seeing a woman on screen (her body's phallic lack threatening his own phallic power), the only way narrative film can incorporate women is through two distancing techniques: sadistic-voyeurism or scopophilic-fetishization. Female subjects in films, and thereby the female viewers that identify with them, are thus passive bearers of the male gaze and their pleasure as viewers is predicated on either masochism and/or a transsexual identification with the male protagonist. Since the publication of this hypothesis over twenty years ago, Mulvey's theory has been examined by filmmakers and theorists alike (including Mulvey herself who came back to it).¹⁴¹ Arguably it is most applicable to

classical Hollywood cinema, and as filmmaking has evolved it has become less and less applicable. Still, as a seminal work and a model starting point Mulvey's contentions are absolutely relevant to this discussion, especially regarding a genre that deals not with metaphorical violence to women but literal violence against women. Clover tests the theory of the male gaze in horror using the example of the British film, *Peeping Tom*:

Of course, horror films *do* attack their audiences. The attack is palpable; we take it in the eye... On one side is the killer's (or monster's) predatory or assaultive gaze, with which, as in *Peeping Tom*, the audience is directly invited to collude – at least formally and at least temporarily. Such gazing is repeatedly associated with the camera (either as theme or device), and it is resolutely figured as male (when the assaultive gazer is a woman, she is either not really the gazer, as in *The Eyes of Laura Mars*, or not really a woman, as in the 'telekinetic girl' films)... On the other side is the reactive gaze. It too is associated with the cinematic or televisual apparatus – but as its object, not its subject... The reactive gaze too is resolutely gendered – but as feminine, not masculine... The body through whose slashing Hitchcock wanted to sensationalize the "body" of the audience is that of a woman. In *Peeping Tom*, to be on the receiving end of the camera is to be feminine by definition.¹⁴²

In relation to this, both Sydney/Campbell and Gale/Cox manage to redirect the male gaze, that is the assaultive gaze, in very interesting ways. Gale Weathers/Cox is never the passive subject of the male gaze but is a literal director of the phallic gaze; that is, she directs her cameramen what, when and how to shoot. This is interesting in terms of Clover's description and use of *Peeping Tom* as a model for the male masochistic gaze. As she describes the plot, *Peeping Tom* features a male protagonist, Mark, who is a cameraman who has a specially equipped camera apparatus which he uses to first sexualize, then terrorize, then kill his female victims. His motivation for doing this, though, is that he had formerly been the subject of his father's camera/gaze, and thus his use of the camera-as-weapon (the sadistic assaultive male gaze) was actually a

manifestation of his ultimately masochistic (reactive feminine gaze) psychology.

Gale's/Cox's direction of the camera has no such mediation. In terms of the mediation that Clover refers to in *The Eyes of Laura Mars* (Laura Mars is a photographer who seemingly holds the male gaze), the gaze is symbolically denied Laura Mars because her 'assaultive gaze' is ultimately attributed to a man. Gale/Cox character is a director and author (she had written a book about Maureen Prescott's murder), not passive but ultra-aggressive. She is not ultimately punished for this appropriation¹⁴³ (she lives through both films); rather, she is triumphant as one half of the vengeant Final Girl duo.

Sydney's/Campbell's subversion of the gaze is more subtle. Because her character is media savvy and understands the rules, not only of horror movies¹⁴⁴ but of the male gaze as it is practiced by the media, she exploits the rules for her own purpose. The best example of this takes place when Sydney/Campbell is accosted by Gale/Cox in an alley after she has been attacked by the killer. An extensive description of this scene will be useful in understanding this point.

[LS of the outside of the police station, a press frenzy. Deep focus allows us to see Gale and Kenny standing outside the front of the station.]

Gale: Isn't there a back way out of this place?

Kenny: Down the alley I think. [Camera pans down into the alley and focuses on the back door as it opens. Dewey, Tatum and Sydney are exiting. Dewey walks into the background, Tatum and Sydney in MCU.]

Dewey: You guys just stay here, I'm going to go get the car. Don't move. Don't make a sound.

Gale: There she is. [Cut. MCU Gale.] Sydney! Hi. Some night, huh? What happened? Are you okay?

Tatum: [Cut. 2 Shot, MCU Tatum and Sydney.] She's not answering any questions, all right? Just leave her alone.

Sydney: No. I mean, it's okay. She's just doing her job. Right Gale?

Gale: [Cut. SRS.] Yes, that's right.

Sydney: [Cut. SRS.] So, how's the book?

Gale: [Cut. SRS. Other reporters have followed, they form a throng behind Gale.] Well, it'll be out later this year.

Sydney: [Cut. SRS.] I'll look for it.

Gale: [Cut. MWS, Gale screen left and reporters gathered behind her, Sydney screen right, Dewey's patrol car pulls up behind her.] I'll send you a copy. [Sydney turns, punches Gale in the face. Gale falls into Kenny. Other cameras click and flashes explode. Cut. Sydney grimacing, turns and walks to car.] Bitch.

Kenny: Nice shot! I mean, the camera got a nice shot.

Dewey: Where'd you learn to punch like that?

This scene is particularly significant because it incorporates both Gale/Cox as the phallic woman director and Sydney/Campbell subverting Gale's/Cox's power.

Sydney/Campbell appears to be the unwilling, passive subject of the male/phallic gaze, assaulted by the castrating woman and victim of the media, but she refuses to follow the power differentials implied by the hierarchy of media producers and consumers.

Although Tatum/McGowan accedes to the traditional construction by offering a "no comment" response on behalf of Sydney/Campbell, Sydney/Campbell goes her one better; she uses Gale/Cox's phallic power against her, appropriating it for herself. She changes the rules of interviewer/interviewed by interrogating Gale/Cox. Rather than responding to her questions, Sydney/Campbell begins to ask her own. This is especially significant in regards to Mulvey's conception of the male gaze because it sets up within a seemingly traditional female object of the gaze and masochistic female subject a literally resistant spectator/subject, and explicitly inscribes the potential for this kind of dramatic resistance for the female viewer. On one hand we have the appropriation of the male gaze by Gale/Cox with no narrative repercussion (she triumphantly survives the film) or gender mediation (Gale/Cox is resolutely an adult woman). On the other, we have the subversion of the male gaze, again without narrative repercussion (Sydney/Campbell is

not killed) and without gender mediation (Sydney is not the ‘telekinetic girl,’ her power is of a different order entirely). This, I would like to suggest, is extremely significant in terms of constructing a sadistic female viewer who identifies, not as a man as Mulvey constructs the male gaze, *but as a woman*.

Can female viewers be sadistic viewers by the same logic? I think they can. As Isabel Pinedo suggests:

The slasher film creates an opening for feminist discourse by restaging the relationship between women and violence as not only one of danger in which women are objects of violence but also a pleasurable one in which women retaliate to become the agents of violence and turn the tables on their aggressors.¹⁴⁵

I think that part of the reason that *Scream* is especially successful in this project is because it changes the traditional mode of address. The audience is not as easy to toy with in the late 1990s as it was in 1960. *Scream* makes changes in fundamental horror movie ‘script.’ Significantly, the film never features the POV shot of the killer’s subjectivity that makes the audience collude with his sadistic gaze, the one that feminist critics found such fault with. Clover points out that the second-generation films problematize this gaze by making it shaky and rendering it untrustworthy,¹⁴⁶ but *Scream* dispenses with the subjective killer-cam entirely. Although crediting this as a symbolic dispensation of the male gaze in horror is probably overstating the case, it is fair to say that the changes that *Scream* has wrought on the genre of slasher films has changed the authorial voice in these texts. Many authorial voices are at work in this film, most significantly the two stars’ Neve Campbell and Courtney Cox as well as writer Kevin Williamson’s and director Wes Craven’s. The two stars personas work, in this case, on

behalf of the female spectator to delegitimize some of the most obviously misogynistic tropes of second generation horror by rendering them unbelievable or unthinkable.

This is a change from Hitchcock's authorial conception of the audience.

Hitchcock wanted to sadistically punish the viewers. He explicitly acknowledged this attitude toward audiences, often he conceived of them as passive dupes. He says of *Psycho*,

Psycho has a very interesting construction and that game with the audience was fascinating. I was directing the viewers. You might say I was playing them like an organ....It was rather exciting to use the camera to deceive the audience.¹⁴⁷

Wes Craven and Kevin Williamson's text wants to have an 'in' joke with the audience, as fellow fans of horror. Whereas Craven's work, that is the *Scream* franchise specifically, is still in some ways an assault on the audience, it is a more self-aware assault; it *mostly* follows the conscriptions of the slasher but from an entirely new angle. The author of this text sees his audience not as dupes or victims, as Hitchcock did, but like coconspirators who are intimately involved in the construction of the narrative, winking and nudging at their own masochistic fantasies. I agree with Clover that young males are still the primary object of the slasher film's address,¹⁴⁸ even in the self-aware third generation of horror, but this loosening up of the mode of address offers more and more space for female viewers to maneuver. Liev Schreiber, who plays Cotton Weary (the accused killer of Maureen Prescott) in both films, says this about his own viewing pleasures when he watched *Scream*:

[Watching] *Scream* I . . . I got scared a lot, I got scared a bunch of times but it was different. It was . . . it appealed to . . . most of these horror movies are so primal, its all about death and fear, and you know, when a movie like that involves your intellect its in a funny way, it distracts you from being afraid.¹⁴⁹

That is to say, the mode of address in the *Scream* franchise at once distances the viewer from the violence and speaks to the audience as part of the audience, as one of us. It is an ironic, distancing mode of address. Now, what we have is a text whose production team radically and explicitly challenges the power differential between reader and writer. The writer speaks not as the Author, the all knowing, all powerful who enjoys torturing the (his) audience, but as the writer who speaks as a fellow viewer. This is not entirely new to horror. Clover's analysis also recognized that, "horror film characters are forever watching horror movies."¹⁵⁰ But the difference is, *Scream* is not a 'low' text of the order of the kinds of films that Clover focuses on. It is a very mainstream film featuring well-known stars. Indeed Clover bemoans the recession of the small "off Hollywood" horror industry which, she contends, "take[s] the kind of brazen track into the psychosexual wilderness that made horror in the seventies and eighties such a marvelously transparent object of study."¹⁵¹ Perhaps in psychosexual terms this is something to get upset about, but for the viewer who is not a Freudian theorist, for the viewer who is maybe not even a feminist, for the young woman viewer at the multiplex who is happy to see a girl kick ass on her own terms, I don't think horror's move into the mainstream is so awful.

Horror's status as a "low" genre does probably help it make connections to another low status form – television. It's true that not only *Scream* but many films in the third generation of horror feature television stars rather than current film stars. Part of the reason is certainly economic; television stars command much lower salaries to perform in films, and although teen audiences are industry executives' new targets, the films that are being produced are still small, fairly inexpensive projects. Although many of these have

been horror films, the new spate culls from any and all genres hoping for a hit. *Entertainment Weekly* has been reporting on this trend since 1997 and has recently dubbed the films a category unto themselves, “teensploitation films.”¹⁵² Trying to be the next *Scream* (which grossed over 100 million dollars) these films feature stories about high school and sex in any setting, not necessarily in that order. Television’s star producer Kevin Williamson is also Hollywood’s hot writer as a result of his scripts, which have consistently connected with the youth audience. Williamson’s cachet comes from his television success with the Warner Brother’s network program *Dawson’s Creek*, and it’s the stars from this program and other teen-oriented television programs that propel the new teensploitation films. I will take up this issue further in relation to television and girlculture texts in Chapter Four where I will explore the issues surrounding another of the WB’s programs, the girl-focused *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Films Cited In Chapter Three:

<i>Carrie</i>	1976. Brian DePalma
<i>Carrie 2 The Rage</i>	1999. Robert Mandel & Katt Shea
<i>Disturbing Behavior</i>	1998. David Nutter
<i>The Faculty</i>	1998. Robert Rodriguez
<i>Friday the 13th</i>	1980. Sean S. Cunningham
<i>Halloween</i>	1978. John Carpenter
<i>Halloween H2O</i>	1998. Steve Miner
<i>The Hills Have Eyes</i>	1977. Wes Craven
<i>I Know What You Did Last Summer</i>	1997. Jim Gillespie
<i>I Still Know What You Did Last Summer</i>	1998. Danny Cannon
<i>Nightmare on Elm Street</i>	1984. Wes Craven
<i>One Fine Day</i>	1996. Michael Hoffman
<i>Peeping Tom</i>	1960. Michael Powell
<i>Psycho</i>	1960. Alfred Hitchcock
<i>Psycho</i>	1998. Gus Van Saint
<i>Scream</i>	1996. Wes Craven
<i>Scream 2</i>	1997. Wes Craven
<i>The Serpent and the Rainbow</i>	1988. Wes Craven

CHAPTER FOUR

MELODRAMA AND GIRLCULTURE:

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

I've always been a huge fan of horror movies. And I saw so many horror movies where there was That Blond Girl who would always get herself killed. I started feeling bad for her. I thought it's time she had a chance to take back the night. And so the idea of *Buffy* came from just the simple thought of: a beautiful blond girl walks into an alley, a monster attacks her and she's not only ready for him, she trounces him.

– Joss Whedon, producer, writer and director of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*¹⁵³

I want to round out my readings of girlculture by choosing for my final subject a teen drama broadcast on the Warner Brothers Network (the WB), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The WB has broadcast *Buffy* for three seasons and it stands as one of its exemplary success stories, that network's "signature show"¹⁵⁴ in the estimation of the greater television industry. The WB, a startup network, has only been broadcasting since 1995¹⁵⁵ but it has found success targeting a youth market, especially young girls;¹⁵⁶ and its *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is a relevant program for me to include in a study of girlculture, not only in terms of its primary audience but also in terms of the text itself. As with the other chapters, I will undertake a rigorous textual analysis highlighting possible points of resistance, that are either figured into the text itself or that can be

inserted into the text by readers who utilize, in Stuart Hall's terms, an 'oppositional code.' "He/she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference."¹⁵⁷ This text is ideal for an oppositional reader, both at the level of text and subtext, as it offers potential for counter-hegemonic readings. Indeed, note how in the opening quote Whedon uses explicitly feminist language like 'take back the night' in his description of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and aligns the program with a political agenda. The text is not completely unproblematic as a result of this producerly impulse, of course, but it is certainly worth examining in greater detail; I'll begin by contextualizing it in terms of network affiliation and its place in the network broadcasting industry.

Network, Audience, and Criticism

The WB started around the same time that another newcomer, the United Paramount Network (UPN), put in a bid for national network status. For a while there was significant competition between the two; since that time the WB has pulled ahead of UPN in the ratings primarily because of its successful bid for the American youth market. *Entertainment Weekly* reports that, "there are 37 million 10- to 19-year olds right now, and that number will soar to 42 million in the next decade...With this population explosion comes a hungry horde of consumers itching to spend what amounts to \$82 billion per year in disposable income."¹⁵⁸ A report on the changing state of television by National Public Radio asserts that television audiences are becoming more fragmented,

especially with the influence of cable networks, and currently are less concerned with mass markets than targeted markets. NPR reports that the WB has successfully exploited a niche market strategy by following Fox's model from the late eighties: targeting younger and younger consumers. *All Things Considered* asserts that the WB's advertising time is now a "must buy" for producers trying to attract young people.¹⁵⁹

The WB has found its most dramatic success with its hour-long dramas like *Dawson's Creek*, *7th Heaven*, *Felicity*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Their recipe? Young attractive stars, a scholastic setting and lots of angst. Or, as Tim Cavanaugh colorfully puts it, earnestness:

Keri Russell's [star of *Felicity*] very neck muscles seem to radiate an earnestness worth of *Felicity*'s Flaubertian namesake, but she's already getting long in the tooth and had better move fast if she wants to join the Holmes/Gellar/Ullrich/Love Hewitt¹⁶⁰ mafia currently remaking Hollywood in its own wrinkle free image.¹⁶¹

Cavanaugh's point is well taken. A big part of the formula for success in the new youth market is primarily, youth (or at least immaturity) and secondarily the ability to communicate sincerely some of the misery of being a teenager. Although Cavanaugh calls for the programs to stop taking themselves so seriously, I suspect that this is a big part of what is attractive about the programs in the first place. Teenagers don't want to be sneered at by lofty producers; if there's any sneering to be done, the WB shows sneer at grown-ups. Says Joss Whedon in *Entertainment Weekly*, "Teenagers today have really keen bulls--- detectors...they can smell a lie like a fart in a car," when asked about the dangers of talking down to the savvy teen age audience.¹⁶²

I shall spend a moment addressing the text of the program itself now that its context has been established. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* began broadcasting in 1996. It was created by producer/director/writer Joss Whedon, based on the 1992 film of the same title which he wrote and directed.¹⁶³ The program features a core cast of six: Sarah Michelle Gellar plays Buffy Summers, a teenage vampire slayer; Nicholas Brendon plays Xander Harris, a dorky guy who likes Buffy; Alyson Hannigan plays Willow Rosenberg, Buffy's best friend and girl-genius; Charisma Carpenter plays Cordelia Chase, the popular girl at Sunnydale High School; David Boreanaz plays Angel (formerly Angelus), Buffy's love interest and a once-evil vampire whose human soul has been restored to him; and, finally, Anthony Head plays Rupert Giles, Buffy's British "watcher" and the school librarian.¹⁶⁴ The premise is that Sunnydale, a sleepy California town where the action is set, is actually built on a 'hellmouth,' a literal portal between the nether world and our own; because of this, demons, monsters, witches, warlocks, werewolves, and vampires all are drawn to Sunnydale. Buffy's job is to keep the supernatural population down, while trying to keep her grades up and her profile low. The genre of this program is difficult to pin down as it includes aspects from prime-time soap operas, sitcoms, action-adventure and horror.¹⁶⁵

I want to ground this analysis in one specific episode of the series. The episode I will look at and continue to return to is titled "Homecoming."¹⁶⁶ I choose to focus on this episode because it showcases the program's multigeneric focus and balance of episodic and serial storytelling strategies. This episode was broadcast early in the current season, so it works both in relationship to the series' history and to establishing the primary

issues of the current (1998-1999) season. Buffy/Gellar and Cordelia/Carpenter are competing against each other for the title of Homecoming Queen and at the same time an evil vampire (Mr. Trick, played by K. Todd Freeman) sets the two of them up as the quarry in a trophy-hunt. Several sub-plots run through the episode as well (the importance of which I will explore further later in this paper): Willow/Hannigan and Xander/Brendon begin having an affair, Buffy/Gellar is secretly aiding and abetting Angel/Boreanaz who has returned to Sunnydale, and Faith (a second slayer, played by Eliza Dushku) continues to involve herself in Buffy's life. In this chapter, as in the last, I speak of characters and actors simultaneously by referring to them as character/star. I choose to render characterizations in this format because star personas significantly influence and color readings of characters; thus I will continue to insist at the level of nomenclature throughout this analysis that each character be understood as related to an extra-diegetic star text.¹⁶⁷

Television is ad driven; it is not a public service, nor is it a free service. It is a moneymaking industry; networks don't just sell commercial time to advertisers, they sell audiences to advertisers; that is, they sell us, the viewers. The market that the WB sells is a youth demographic. Robert Goldman addresses the problematics of selling viewers in terms of (fashion) magazine consumption. His work is not only applicable to magazine consumers; it is directly related to how television constructs its audience as a commodity. He states, "when women buy a magazine, they become part of a "package" the magazine has sold to companies that advertise in its pages. Women readers, as potential consumers, are marketed to media buyers just as other goods are sold."¹⁶⁸ When young

people/young women watch programs on the WB, then they, willingly or no, become part of the “package” that the network has sold to its advertisers.

How *Buffy's* audience as envisioned by network executives and advertisers is evidenced by the kinds of advertising which is injected into the program. A brief look at the goods advertised during the broadcast of “Homecoming” (recorded by me on 02-02-99) can better make this point. I will provide first a list of the advertisers, and then briefly address what I think is significant about these (and the absence of other) products buying *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* ad time, as well as what I think they say about the demographically constructed viewer of the WB's “new Tuesday.”

- *Simply Irresistible* (Sarah Michelle Gellar film, 3 times)
- 1-800-COLLECT
- Wendy's: Monterey Ranch Chicken Sandwich (2 times)
- Almay: Stay Smooth Lip Color (featuring Duff)
- 7 UP
- United States Navy
- MacDonald's: Big Mac
- Children's Motrin
- Miracle Whip
- *Dawson's Creek* (WB series)
- *Rushmore*
- *Charmed* (WB series)
- Salon Selectives
- Duracell: Duracell Ultra
- Kentucky Fried Chicken: popcorn chicken
- *Zoë, Duncan, Jack and Jane* (WB series)
- Taco Bell: Baja Gordita (2 times)
- Bally Total Fitness
- AT&T: cellular service
- *Message in a Bottle*
- L'oréal: Le Grand Curl (featuring Liv Tyler)
- 10-10-220 (featuring Dennis Miller)
- *Felicity* (WB series)

Clearly the corporations who buy time during *Buffy* think that its viewers spend money on cosmetics (3 ads), phone services (3 ads), movies (5 ads), and food (8 ads).¹⁶⁹ These are things that teenage girls are notorious for spending their time and money on; look in any young woman's magazine and you'll find similar kinds of advertisements. Equally clearly, the WB is trying to use its signature series to increase the popularity of other WB programs (4 ads). Notable exceptions to this list are car and domestic product (diapers or laundry detergent) advertisements, which traditionally spend more money on television advertising than other industries, or alcohol/beer advertisements which are most often found during programs marketed to young males (i.e. sports programming). Also telling is the kind of films that were advertised: romantic comedies, traditionally women's films – 'chick movies'. Of these, *Simply Irresistible*, the film that strives to enlarge Gellar's star persona into the cinematic realm, is notable for its repetition as it is shown three times during the hour. Finally, the show lacks advertisements for video game hardware and software which figure largely during other programs on the WB. This means that while, as I will continue to argue, it is possible for young women to participate in a subversive, counter-hegemonic, empowering girlculture through consuming the text of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the network and its advertisers are also working to construct a gender-entrenched, obedient group of consumers whose connections with each other go no deeper than brand loyalties.¹⁷⁰

Location on the WB also sets *Buffy* apart in terms of (a lack of) 'quality' cachet. Since the network is so new, its programming does not gain the kind of respect that would follow from being the product of a major network (ABC, NBC, CBS); but this

lack of quality cachet may also be conducive to generic experiments so that the program's hybridity helps to establish an experimental and innovative evolving network personality. Even without a major network behind it, the series has enjoyed critical success and a cult following since its beginnings. One of the things I find most interesting about *Buffy* is the amount of critical response it has garnered, especially from adults in very mainstream outlets.¹⁷¹ I feel the need to separate myself from these critics, not only as an academic but also as a young woman viewer. Much of their adulation seems to be not only proscriptive, that we should take the program seriously (i.e. take the pleasure out of it and treat it 'seriously'), but also evidence of a frantic subcultural identification by a white male power elite. I think in some ways this reflects the subversive potential of *Buffy*. The program is successful at supplying an identificatory group pleasure as well as an individual pleasure, and insofar as this helps to articulate a hip girlculture it also sets this up as a subculture to which membership is enviable. Many of these enthusiastic reviews take a glowing, yet ultimately apologetic, tone to express not only a sense of guilt over a bad – low culture – object choice but a sense of guilt as an adult male. As Richard Dyer suggests this is a common reaction to 'entertainment' as it is unproblematically constructed in relationship to a subculture.

We find a celebration of today's peasantry – black people, or the 'feminine', or queers (though not the black bourgeoisie, or actual ordinary women, or people calling themselves lesbian or gay) as the embodiment of this inchoate pleasure. In other words, whatever the theorization, there is a recourse to a notion of an unsocialized pleasure.¹⁷²

Dyer's description refers to critics that utilize a subcultural identification without actually identifying with or granting any agency to actual members of the subculture. The

reviewers who glorify Buffy often seem to do this by adopting a notably apologetic tone.

Take for instance this quote from Tom Carson in *Esquire* magazine:

C'mon, this society messes over adolescent females in all sorts of ways, from denying them equal time in classrooms to inculcating body images that lead the average thirteen-year-old to fret that Barbies are *way* too plump...Call me a traitor to my demographic, but I think it's great that these days girls are getting fresher, livelier, flat-out better TV shows than their parents or older siblings.¹⁷³

Or consider this from Dr. David Graeber, an anthropologist who uses a metaphor borrowed from *Buffy*. "Today's rebellious youth, rather, are reduced to struggling desperately to keep hell from entirely engulfing the earth. Such, I suppose, is the fate of a generation that has been robbed of its fundamental right to dream of a better world."¹⁷⁴

Help! I'm choking on sanctimonious good intention. These critics speak from a lofty pinnacle above young women but also *for* young women – they are only able to do this by keeping young women from speaking for themselves. My generation isn't so far away from the generation that these two men highlight, but the pleasures of this text as I want to look at them go beyond the guilt that Whedon confessed to in the opening quote and that Carson and Graeber echo. Although I agree with them about some of the pleasures available in the text, I will speak to places in the texts which allow for significantly counter-hegemonic readings, but as a 'feminine' feminist reader who is not willing to be spoken for.

I want to look into, specifically, a melodramatic identification that is at work in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* but which is simultaneously colored by the other genres referenced by *Buffy*, including horror, action and comedy. The pleasures of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are familiar pleasures. Familiar pleasures are not necessarily problematic

though, genres are effective because they stay within specific narratives and tropes.

Thomas Schatz describes the pleasures of generic consumption: “A genre film represents an effort to *reorganize* a familiar, meaningful system in an original way.”¹⁷⁵ And as

Caren Deming points out regarding women’s genres, “it is not enough to see television as empty ritual. We must understand that originality can not exist without repetition.

Repetition is the background (a set of occurrences) that makes originality (one event) visible.”¹⁷⁶ This is to say that the familiar pleasures of the soap-opera-style melodramatic narrative gain new currency through the injection of aspects of other genres and an updated ‘image of women,’ but the significant pleasures for women’s/girls’ identification are based in melodrama. This is not to say that because pleasure is rooted in melodrama that the political significance is stripped from the series; indeed I think that it is precisely because of its connection to melodrama, enriched by multiple genres, that *Buffy* is important.

In the next section I want to examine in more detail the ways in which *Buffy* relates to other genre programming. I will take time to elaborate on the potential meanings of these connections. A textual analysis of *Buffy* would not be complete without a discussion of how it combines aspects from television and film genres, not only horror, but also sitcoms and action genres.

Genres: Horror, Action and Comedy

Buffy can be recognized, initially, in its relationship to a long history of horror film narratives and specifically stories about vampires.¹⁷⁷ Joss Whedon asserts *Buffy*

was created to recast the role of “that blonde girl” in horror movies. She fits Randy Rasmussen’s portrait of classic horror’s heroines.

Dressed in white, symbolically reeking of virtue and innocence, the stereotypical heroine of a classic horror film is little more than bait dangled before a lascivious monster or mad scientist...Fashioned by a male-dominated film industry, she is pushed and pulled by conflicting male fantasies of protection and predation. Enticed by her prolonged peril, we are absolved of our guilt by the inevitability of her salvation and the villain’s punishment.¹⁷⁸

What of course is so new and wonderful about Buffy is that her inevitable salvation usually comes from her own prowess rather than that of a hero figure. But if Buffy/Gellar stands in direct opposition to her victimized predecessors some of the characters around her fit still fit nicely into narrative tropes from horror film. Her foes, the vampires, fit into a cinematic tradition that contains, according to Ken Gelder, as many as three-thousand vampire films whose vampire characterizations speak less to a novelistic conception of the original vampire Count Dracula than to each other. The discourses that swirl around the figure of the vampire, “concerning Law and disorder, civilization and Nature, the natural and the deviant, are given a particularly sexual inflexion [sic] in vampire films.”¹⁷⁹ Buffy/Gellar’s watcher, Mr. Giles/Head, belongs to the category of ‘experts’ who are at their most heroic in 1950s invasion-horror films and the vampire sub-genre as described by Andrew Tudor; Giles/Head has both “the dry scholasticism and eccentricity” of the traditional anti-vampire expert and he is also “forcefully heroic and knowledgeable”.¹⁸⁰ Thus, *Buffy* features archetypes who are always already reflexive of their own roles via one-hundred years of film history and whose relationship, to both a larger context of horror and society, is one that labors to refigure and politicize these archetypes.

What ties this program most meaningfully to horror is its participation in the political project outlined by Robin Wood in his essay, “An Introduction to the American Horror Film.”¹⁸¹ Wood suggests that the horror film helps to articulate a connection between the repressed (in psychoanalytic terms) and the oppressed (in Marxist terms), thus showing how repression is materially relevant – rather than abstract and ungrounded as it often seems to be in psychoanalytic accounts. According to Wood, “What escapes repression must be dealt with by *oppression*.”¹⁸² He identifies four areas that traditional horror works to repress: (adult) sexuality, bisexuality, the feminine/female sexuality, and the sexuality of children.¹⁸³ What is important about these categories is that as they relate to *Buffy* (and also in interesting ways to *Scream*, see Chapter Three) is that the program works to de/reconstruct them on behalf of the female viewer. The program plays with sexuality by setting up the main characters as sexual beings but because of their youth, a border-space between adult sexuality and the sexuality of children is established so that some of what is repressed in each is broken down and mediated by the permissive category of ‘youth’. I will go on to discuss later in this chapter how the feminine operates in *Buffy*, on the subject of female sexuality we should take time here to briefly recognize that – as in the *Scream* franchise – active female sexuality is not punished. When Buffy/Gellar and Angel/Boreanaz have sex in the second season it is the male who is punished for his transgression; Angel/Boreanaz loses his soul and has to be killed by Buffy/Gellar, rather than the more traditional opposite. Examples like this one (especially in relation to the examples from *Scream* in Chapter Three) suggest to me an

intentionally reformed notion of female sexuality in pop culture representations taking place through, although not necessarily exclusive to, the horror genre.

And, finally, in terms of bisexuality the program is rife with homosexual, usually lesbian, subtext. The relationship between Faith/Dushku and Buffy/Gellar features a notable amount of sexual tension. In “Homecoming” Faith/Dushku plans to be Buffy/Gellar’s date to the dance after Buffy/Gellar gets dumped by her boyfriend.¹⁸⁴ Buffy/Gellar’s catfight with Cordelia/Carpenter hearkens back to the queer friendly readings given to the catfights between Alexis and Krystal on *Dynasty*. Plus, Willow/Hannigan’s evil vampire alter-ego (who exists in the alternate reality of a demon realm) is explicitly bisexual. When, in “Doppelgängerland” (3ABB16), the *other* Willow/Hannigan is released into Sunnydale by a demon trying to regain her powers, evil alterna-Willow/Hannigan¹⁸⁵ prompts the real Willow/Hannigan to say, “I think the vampire me is a little bit gay.” Significantly, though, the real Willow/Hannigan keeps Buffy/Gellar from killing the alterna-Willow/Hannigan and instead works a spell to send the latter back to the demon realm where she belongs. Not only can all of these situations fall under the category of a taboo bisexuality, which the horror genre helps to free, they can also be considered examples of high camp which explode normalized gender roles and compulsory heterosexuality.

If melodrama is a format that speaks to a gendered feminine audience, as many of the theorists that I will cite have indicated, then to complete the analytical dualism (not an entirely unproblematic aim) there must be a gendered masculine format. John Fiske conceives of this opposition in terms of connecting genre and gender to programming

which is more episodic, with more narrative closure and less opportunity for oppositional reading pleasures. He roughly figures action programs such as ‘cop’ shows as forms of masculine programming and melodramatic soap operas as forms of feminine programming.¹⁸⁶ *Buffy* is interesting to me because in many ways it manages to incorporate aspects of both genres into its narrative.¹⁸⁷ The aspects that I identified in my earlier description of “Homecoming” as major plot lines, Slayerfest 98 and the Homecoming Queen race, are the discrete story elements which relate to Fiske’s conception of episodic masculine television.¹⁸⁸ These narratives are exclusive to the individual episode, whereas the aspects which I identified as subplot work their way through all or some of the other episodes in the manner of serials. Indeed the action sequences in *Buffy* are almost always related to the episodic plot, motivated by its events rather than by any of the melodramatic subplots.¹⁸⁹

The action genre configures masculinity through specific tropes and figures it in relation to a heroic team (*The A Team* in Fiske’s example), but in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* both the tropes of masculinity and the heroic team are significantly altered. I will discuss how *Buffy* creates sensitive male characters in terms of the melodrama; for the moment let’s concentrate on the heroic team, and some of the implications for masculinity and the meanings of the action genre itself in *Buffy*. The six core characters act collectively as the heroic team yet Buffy/Gellar is established as its unequivocal leader; she is the best fighter and she is literally ‘the chosen one.’ But as the leader of the action team she creates a problematic, because she no longer fits into the ‘ideal’ male hero figure which Fiske discusses in terms of Hannibal/George Peppard on *The A Team*,

a figure who was described as both mature and masculine. He is described in terms borrowed from the “Hite Report” as, “self-assured, unafraid, in control and autonomous or selfsufficient, [sic] not dependent.”¹⁹⁰ Although these same descriptors could be applied to Buffy/Gellar, they would necessarily be mediated by feminine descriptors as well (i.e. “selfsufficient, [sic] not dependent and pretty”). Buffy/Gellar’s leadership breaks down one of the requirements of the masculine television project, “the absence of women”¹⁹¹ which is further disrupted by the insertion of two more female characters: Cordelia/Carpenter and Willow/Hannigan. It displaces the aggressive performance of masculinity onto the body of a young woman – taking away both the maturity and the masculinity of Hannibal/Peppard – and effaces any possibility for the male bonding which is supposed to take place within the hero team, replacing it with feminine emotional bonds, which are enacted through meaningful dialogue as often as they are enacted through action.¹⁹² The team also functions as a surrogate family because of the articulated emotional bonds and as a result the idea of ‘family’ is ruthlessly deconstructed. The nuclear family which traditionally exploits and effaces female labor is remodeled, precisely to demonstrate the importance of women’s work and the ways in which the ‘family’ absolutely relies on her identity as a central figure. Not only does *Buffy* set up a ‘family’ as a fighting team, it also sets up a family in the workplace similar to workplace sitcoms of the 1970’s, most notably *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. At the same time it also involves aspects of the supernatural which ties it to the magicoms of the 1960’s.

Shows such as *Bewitched* and *I Dream of Jeannie*, were termed ‘magicoms’ because their main female characters had supernatural powers. Sherrie Inness dismisses any subversive potential in these shows by stating that they, “promoted the idea that a woman, even a powerful witch, should stay at home and take care of the house while her man was out earning a living.”¹⁹³ This explanation is more applicable to *Jeannie*, though, than it is to Samantha of *Bewitched*; Susan Douglas works to complicate a reading of *Bewitched* by connecting it to a larger social context of a burgeoning feminist movement.

Sam – was passive and active, flouted her husband’s authority yet complied with the role of suburban housewife, was both conforming and rebellious: she gave expression to traditional norms and prefeminist aspirations. The show hailed young female viewers by providing, and seeking to reconcile, images of female equality – and, often, even images of female superiority – with images of female subordination... While the show reaffirmed the primacy of traditional female roles and behaviors, it also provided powerful visual representations of what many young women would like to do if they just had a little power: zap that housework and a few men as well.¹⁹⁴

Douglas’ description of Sam’s role is also relevant to a conception of the dual role of Buffy/Gellar. The latter too can comply with traditional norms, such as running for Homecoming Queen, but she can also stand in and, “do what many young women would like to do if they just had a little power”: kick some authoritarian ass. And, just as Samantha had her mother and her matriarchal line for support, Buffy/Gellar is connected to a female community that she draws strength from: other slayers like Kendra/Bianca Lawson and Faith/Dushku, her mother, and most significantly her witch-best friend Willow/Hannigan.¹⁹⁵ This relates to an inscribed female community that has been a part of all of the texts that I have analyzed in this project (the Spice Girls, & *Scream*) and which operates as one of the most subversive aspects of these examples. Rather than

setting these women up as exemplary and isolated individuals the texts inscribe powerful women within powerful female teams and relationships.

While magicoms were part of the sitcom tradition of early television featuring nuclear family based issues, *Buffy* also has some connection to a seventies sub-genre of ‘quality’ sitcoms like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show (MTM)*. *MTM* comedies, exemplified by the work of writer James L. Brooks, change the focus from issues of the nuclear family to ‘lifestyle issues’ and characterization from static to dynamic, creating characters who changed and grew throughout the run of the show.¹⁹⁶ Jane Feuer says that *MTM* set up a family of coworkers rather than the traditional nuclear family of previous sitcoms:

In many respects, the family of co-workers represented a progressive alternative – in its integration of the public and domestic spheres, in its emphasis on reciprocity within independence, and its valuing of the collective experience of the ensemble. For the spectator, especially the ‘new woman’ audience for which the programme had a special meaning, the family in the mirror was a Utopian one that deserved to remain together.¹⁹⁷

I think that we can usefully look at the friendship collective of *Buffy* as this kind of “family of co-workers,” only in this case their work entails fighting the subterranean supernatural elements that threaten their community (which ties them to the heroic team of the action genre). The threat to the family, as Feuer identifies it in episodic sitcoms, comes from outside the family, whereas in serial narratives the threat to the family comes from inside the family itself, potentially (and subversively) also setting up a scenario that can serve as a criticism of the nuclear family.¹⁹⁸ The threat to the work-family in *Buffy* comes from both places: from within, as with the competition between Buffy/Gellar and Cordelia/Carpenter; from outside, as with the attack upon the two by Mr. Trick/Freeman.

Thus, *Buffy*'s narrative includes aspects of both episodic and serialized genres it falls into, and helps refine, the new category of 'dramedies.' Its drama comes from a relationship to melodramatic narrative. I will round out my generic reading of *Buffy* by considering its relationship to the melodramatic, specifically the soap opera genre, and the gendered implications that follow from this connection.

Genre: Prime Time Melodrama

Melodrama has long been a feminized genre and it has always been associated with low culture. In the mid-nineteenth century, melodramatic plays were successful but disrespected when opposed to the high art of dramatic theater. 'Penny dreadfuls' were compared to serious literature, and found wanting. At the turn of the century, melodramatic films found popularity among the working class, particularly women. Later, melodramatic serials were developed by radio broadcasters for a daytime domestic (female) audience. Because of the audiences that they draw and an (accused) lack of quality inherent in the form, melodramatic narratives, no matter what medium they appeared in, were and are denigrated to this day. One modern counterpart to historical melodramatic narratives is the soap opera. Although not all melodramas are soap operas, all soap operas are melodramatic, both are considered low culture. The differences between soap opera and melodrama are slippery but what I want to try and do is show how a generic affiliation – like *Buffy*'s affiliation with soap operatic narratives – can work in terms of a melodramatic identification. In this next section I want to briefly outline the work of several feminist television theorists who investigate and reassess television soap operas. I will then show how *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s narrative fits the

definition of a soap opera and consider what this might mean for the girl viewer's identification with the program.

Michelle Mattelart explains that the (American) soap opera is traditionally broadcast during the day in order to follow the conventional nuclear-family schedule. Programming that is intended for women audiences is broadcast during the day because it is assumed that the men in the household will be away at work, the kids will be away at school and the women will perform the unpaid labor that capitalism is predicated on.¹⁹⁹ Tania Modleski has analyzed soap operatic narratives in terms of domestic labor and pointed out that women's domestic work and daytime television programming has the same kind of 'flow.' Daytime television programs, in accordance with domestic labor, "tend to make repetition, interruption and distraction pleasurable."²⁰⁰ Annette Kuhn, in her work on "Women's Genres," says that, "narratives motivated by female desire and processes of spectator identification [are] governed by [a] female point of view...not only do soaps never end, but their beginnings are soon lost sight of."²⁰¹ These three theorists begin to recast the connection between constructed femininity, narrative patterns and domestic space in terms of feminism, thus recuperating the positively feminine aspects of a negatively feminized genre. What we begin to get a picture of are programs that target women through unique forms of spectator address and a unique, unending, constantly interrupted, complex narrative style. John Fiske, too, has explored the format used in melodramatic television. He borrows a list of eight generic characteristics of the soap opera from M.E. Brown:

1. Serial form which resists narrative closure
2. Multiple characters and plots

3. Use of time which parallels actual time and implies that the action continues to take place whether we watch it or not
4. Abrupt segmentation between parts
5. Emphasis on dialogue, problem solving, and intimate conversation
6. Male characters who are “sensitive men”
7. Female characters who are often professional and otherwise powerful in the world outside the home
8. The home, or some other place which functions as a home, as the setting for the show.²⁰²

This list is instructive. I will compare it to *Buffy*'s narrative to show how *Buffy* has a fundamentally melodramatic form. Although *Buffy* is not a daytime soap I will show that its narrative is certainly soap-operatic.

Buffy exhibits (#1) “a serial form which resists narrative closure.” Although individual episodes have primary plotlines that are sutured at the end of the hour, it also features ongoing plotlines which continue and are not meant to be resolved. Returning to my example of “Homecoming,” the subplots which I identified are examples of this serial form. Angel/Boreanaz's relationship with Buffy/Gellar was established in the first season of the program; although the couple have gone from lovers, to mortal enemies (Buffy/Gellar killed Angel/Boreanaz at the end of season two)²⁰³ and back to lovers, their relationship is never resolved. The fact that, in “Homecoming” Buffy/Gellar is helping Angel recuperate but has not told her circle of friends – and does not plan to tell them – of his return, harkens back to 1998's season finale when Angel/Boreanaz lost his soul and became evil. If the kids find out that he is back they will want to kill him again but Buffy/Gellar's love for him makes her protect and comfort him.

This is only one of the sub-plots at work in the episode. Another is the incident in Willow/Hannigan's bedroom; Willow/Hannigan and Xander/Brendon share a romantic

kiss but try to belittle the moment by calling it a “clothes fluke” and suggesting that their attraction to each other was due entirely to their formal attire. It stands as an example of (#2) “multiple characters and plots”. In this case the “fluke” begins a sub-plot that will run for several episodes and threaten the relationships between Willow/Hannigan and her boyfriend Oz/Seth Green, and Xander/Brendon and his girlfriend Cordelia/Carpenter. Ultimately it throws their group dynamic (the fighting team/the work family) entirely out of balance. The major plot of the episode – Slayerfest 98 – involves several new characters, some like Mr. Trick and the Mayor who will continue for many episodes and some, like the German hit men, will not live through the episode. Not only does this example show another one of the multiple plots at work in *Buffy*, it also manages to involve the various, sometimes seemingly extraneous characters in the program.

Although *Buffy* is a weekly program and cannot directly parallel time (#3) as daily soaps can, it still follows ‘real’ time, especially for teen audiences, by plotting its schedule along a school calendar. The third season opener episode was set on the night before the kids’ first day back at school (3ABB01 “Anne”), and the season has roughly followed an academic schedule, with “Homecoming” in the fall and two Christmas specials during the holidays (3ABB09 “The Wish” and 3ABB10 “Amends”). Because the kids are seniors this year, *Buffy* has also featured significant sub-plots based on the potential separation of the group upon graduation. Several sub-plots have incorporated traditional high school milestones, like taking the SATs (3ABB08 “Lover’s Walk”) establishing independence in relation to one’s parents (3ABB01 “Anne”) or getting a driver’s license (3ABB06 “Band Candy”). Notably, these are the same milestones that

ultimately lead to adult independence and separation from the social/familial group; thus, they are inscribed with a bittersweet melancholia even as they are celebrated.

The way that the program is shot and edited is also related to soap operatic forms. For instance *Buffy* features “abrupt segmentation between parts” (#4). In “Homecoming” linear, invisible editing is eschewed for a less event-motivated style of editing and a more plot motivated editing style. Cuts function not only in terms of invisible editing but also, from scene to scene, to indicate the events are taking place simultaneously, and cuts seem to occur arbitrarily. They set up multiple narratives within the episode so that they may interact with each other and motivate the characters. For example, when Buffy/Gellar and Cordelia/Carpenter begin an argument in the cafeteria, which ends with Buffy/Gellar challenging Cordelia/Carpenter in the race for Homecoming Queen, there is an abrupt L-cut (short voice over that starts just before the image cuts). Mr. Trick’s/Freeman’s voice intones, “competition . . .” over an image of Buffy/Gellar’s face, as he introduces Slayerfest 98 to the demonic competitors. The scene change takes place to indicate that while the girls have set up one kind of competition the bad-guys have set up another, and while the two narrative events are taking place at the same time their relationship is unclear. True to the spirit of soap operas, the program’s rapid oscillation, via unmotivated edits between multiple narratives, can only be fully understood by the initiated reader, the fan who knows the different characters and sub-plots and who can keep up with the diverse connections.

The Homecoming Queen competition sets up conflicts of interest for Buffy/Gellar’s friends, and this conflict inspires much discussion among them, chiefly

between Willow/Hannigan and Xander/Brendon. These two spend the entire episode agonizing over the clash between Cordelia/Carpenter and Buffy/Gellar, as well as agonizing over the kiss that they shared. Two such scenes occur in Willow/Hannigan's bedroom and both of these are focused on (#5), "dialogue, problem solving, and intimate conversation." The scenes between Buffy/Gellar and Angel/Boreanaz, as well as the scenes in Mayor Wilkins/Harry Groener's office, are almost always examples of soap opera style 'intimate conversation,' the former romantic and the latter scheming. The discussions in Willow/Hannigan's room also show how open Xander/Brendon is to both emotional involvements and a tradition of feminine speech which marks him as a "sensitive" man. Indeed a lack of ability to make this kind of conversation and articulate an emotional involvement in *Buffy* marks characters as precisely monstrous.²⁰⁴

The three significant male characters on the program, Xander/Brendon, Giles/Head and Angel/Boreanaz, can all be typified as (#6), "male characters who are 'sensitive men.'" Xander/Brendon is characterized by his loyalty to his friends, a self-deprecating wit and a lack of sexual bravado. One third season episode (3ABB14 "The Zeppo") played with Xander/Brendon's character by having him attempt to be macho – by getting a car and hanging out with the school's tough-guys (who ended up being zombies) – only to prove that although he could be tough, ultimately he remains content to be the 'sensitive guy.' Both Giles/Head's and Angel/Boreanaz's sensitive characteristics are predicated on their love of Buffy/Gellar, paternalistic love in the former instance and romantic love in the latter. They are both figured as men who had been tough in the past but who have ultimately reformed. Angel/Boreanaz was a vicious

Irish vampire (see episodes 1ABB07 “Angel” or 3ABB04 “Beauty and the Beasts”) and Giles/Head was a James Dean-esqe rebellious teen (see episodes 2ABB08 “The Dark Age” and 3ABB06 “Band Candy”), but both have mended their ways to become the sensitive men who work to help Buffy/Gellar save Sunnydale from its demons and vampires. Oz/Green, Willow/Hannigan’s boyfriend, is a slightly different case; he functions as a more laconic, more macho addition to the core group of six. His limited emotional engagement colors him as the least sensitive of the core members of the group. Because in the terms of the program this is monstrous, his ‘masculinity’ must be literally contained. Oz is caged up in the library for three nights out of the month because he *becomes* a monster, a werewolf in the show’s most direct reference to the 1950’s horror of adolescence films that focused on male subjectivity.²⁰⁵ Part of *Buffy*’s relationship to girlculture is defined by the way it accesses but does not centralize its generic predecessors when they cannot encourage a ‘familiar’ set of concerns.

In many ways I think that (#7), “female characters who are often professional and otherwise powerful in the world outside the home,” is the most obviously relevant characteristic in terms of *Buffy*’s narrative. Significantly, Buffy/Gellar is most powerful in traditionally dangerous places for women. The dark and empty city streets, the woods, the graveyard and the dirty recesses of a nightclub are the spaces where Buffy/Gellar inflicts the most damage. Here, she outfights and out-thinks all of her opponents backed up by her heroic team. Indeed, one may be tempted to argue that *Buffy* depicts ‘positive’ role models for women. The female characters on *Buffy* are some of the toughest and

smartest girls on television. Buffy herself fits Sherrie Inness' description of one of the new pop culture 'tough girls.' As Inness describes the tough girl role,

Her tougher and more masculine image suggests that a greater variety of gender roles are open to women; at the same time, however, her toughness is often mitigated by her femininity, which American culture commonly associates with weakness...Tough girls are in with a vengeance, and they have proven to be quite a lucrative commodity as the latest media sensation. Tough girls are one example of the tendency of media moguls to push the limits of what is acceptable to represent, especially if they think that pushing the limits might help, and not hurt, profits.²⁰⁶

Certainly this is true of Buffy; it was Joss Whedon's explicit intention to create just such a figure who could redeem 'That Blonde Girl' (see his quote that opens this chapter). My preceding discussion of the WB's network's success also points to how such a representation could find its way onto network television at all, and how it has in reality managed to help profits.²⁰⁷ I don't know that I entirely agree with Inness's contention that the tough girl's power is mediated by her femininity – at least not in a negative sense. In the case of *Buffy* I think that Gellar's toughness is often shown to be enriched by her 'feminine' knowledge rather than depleted by her femininity. For instance, in the pilot episodes of the series, (1BAA01 & 1BAA02) "The Harvest," Buffy/Gellar's obligations as a vampire slayer are aided by her girlish, "keen fashion sense." She recognizes a boy in the club as a vampire because his outfit is, "carbon dated. Only someone living underground for the last twenty years could think that look was in." Granted, this moment is meant to be humorous but it also works to break down the strict dualism of toughness and masculinity that Inness' work sticks to. When Buffy/Gellar challenges the vampire in the next scene, she is not less tough because she quips that his ensemble looks like, "Menudo," just before she kills him.²⁰⁸

If we return to the third season episode “Homecoming,” *Buffy*’s willingness to expand gender roles is even more explicit. Buffy/Gellar and Cordelia/Carpenter are attacked by the hunters in their formal dresses; their action in these scenes is not mediated by a symbolic masculinity – tomboyism as in second generation slasher films (see Chapter Three) or Ripley-style (*Aliens*) crossdressing – nor is it delegitimated by their femininity. Indeed, the show speaks to this issue constantly, as Buffy/Gellar is very often conflicted, as she is in “Homecoming,” about her role as a slayer and how it fits in with her own notion of her femininity and her identity. Furthermore, the kind of action that each girl takes is relative to her abilities, but both are shown to be tough albeit in different ways. Buffy/Gellar’s dispatching the female vampire (with the handle of a spatula!) is shown to be equally as effective as Cordelia/Carpenter’s verbal reprimand which scares off the male vampire: “In the end Buffy’s just the runner up and I’m the Queen! You get me mad, what do you think I’m going to do to you?” I find this moment especially significant since it seems to validate the power of female speech. Cordelia/Carpenter’s speech is often powerfully cruel, thus terrible, but in this case her speech is recuperated as a force of good. Cordelia/Carpenter’s speech is not the equal of Buffy/Gellar’s physical prowess, but nonetheless it is a force to be reckoned with.

Finally, *Buffy* is set in Sunnydale High School, the space that acts as (#8) “the home, or some other place which functions as a home, as the setting for the show.” This is significant not least in terms of symbolism – as many critics have been quick to note the high school = hell metaphor.²⁰⁹ Joss Whedon also acknowledges it:

Sunnydale High is based on every high school in America because so many kids feel like their school really is built on a Hellmouth. What makes the show

popular is the central myth of high school as horrific. The humiliation, the alienation, the confusion of high school is taken to such great proportions that it becomes demonic.²¹⁰

The horror of modern high school helps to forge the teen team into a kind of family unit. The refigured home space of the high school serves as social space and a base of operations. The kids have access to the school building at all hours of the day and night, and their activities begin and end in the library. They sleep in the stacks; Oz gets caged up in the book return during the full moon; Buffy/Gellar, Giles/Head and Faith/Dushku train in its foyer and Willow/Hannigan uses its computers. All of the tools the team needs are stored in the library. Giles/Head's books (which they must use to research the different kinds of monsters they face) are kept there, along with all of the weapons. The space is coded as almost exclusively their own because none of the other students ever bother to visit the library. Because the work team is, in these terms and in this space, cast as a kind of family unit with Giles/Head as the father and Buffy/Gellar as the fearless leader, it also functions in traditional television within long established boundaries that I discussed earlier in relation to sitcoms and the action genre. Here the library has a triple function which helps the elements of the different genres work together; it is coded as home because it is where the family comes together and re-establishes the bonds between its members. When the group dynamic is threatened, the library is also the space where the battles are fought. The group's emotional bonds are the relationships that produce the soap operatic narrative and predicate the possibility of melodrama in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Ien Ang has proposed possible feminist models of identification with melodramatic characters who are not necessarily 'positive' images of women but who nonetheless evoke strong emotional responses and connections from their fans. In her essay "Melodramatic Identifications," she sets up the parameters in which this model operates. She points out that, "what the role/image approach tends to overlook is the large *emotional involvement* which is invested in identification with characters of popular fiction."²¹¹ Real women, she goes on to suggest, must make choices about how they (re)construct their own femininity, and these choices come with consequences. "Fantasy and fiction then, are the safe spaces of excess in the interstices of ordered social life where one has to keep oneself strategically under control."²¹² Melodramatic identification is set up here as a kind of safety valve of female identification, where women/girls can sympathetically and symbolically experience different interpretations of femininity and escape the possible real-life aftereffects of acting on them. Thus, in the case of *Buffy* girls can experiment with identifying as a bitch (Cordelia), a witch (Willow), or a superheroine (Buffy). The text sets up scenarios whereby not only the emotions of characters (which are far more complex than the caricatures I suggested) are available for fantasy commiseration.

Continuing with the example of "Homecoming," I want to use a specific example from the text to tease out how this works in the case of one episode. Throughout the narrative the competition between Buffy/Gellar and Cordelia/Carpenter for Homecoming Queen has been mirrored by the competition orchestrated by Mr. Trick/Freeman, the so-called Slayerfest 98. As the girls jockey for position in their circle of friends and the

school they are doubled by a narrative metaphor, that of the bloodthirsty villains who are competing in Slayerfest 98 in order to kill Sunnydale's two slayers, Buffy/Gellar and Faith/Dushku. At the level of narrative, a metaphor of high school popularity/beauty contests as destructive works to break down more homogenized readings of these events as unproblematic or natural, and at the same time to construct the act of female competition as external to femininity. Viewers can choose to identify with any of the characters and be rewarded not only with powerful emotional cues (school popularity, romance, cat-fights, deception) but also with action scenes. The final segment of the show depicts Cordelia/Carpenter and Buffy/Gellar being hunted by two vampires, one demon, two hit men and a psychotic trapper – all of whom the girls vanquish as a team. As they make their way into the dance, dirty and disheveled, Cordelia/Carpenter comments, "What with all that we've just been through tonight, this whole who-gets-to-be-Queen capade seems...." Buffy/Gellar interjects, "Pretty damn important!" And Cordelia/Carpenter emphatically replies, "Oh yeah."

This moment works on a number of levels on behalf of the girl viewer. Firstly, it refuses to make light of the female form of competition between the two girls, or validate the masculine style of competition, the Slayerfest, more than the homecoming race. If we look at these two plots as mirrors of genres this moment becomes symbolic of the entire show. Let the homecoming queen storyline stand for a melodramatic, serial style of narrative and let the Slayerfest storyline stand for an action-adventure, episodic narrative. Buffy/Gellar's pithy summary, "Pretty damn important," becomes a comment on the show itself. The melodramatic aspect of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* texts are also,

“pretty damn important.” Indeed, melodrama is, for the girl viewer, not simply important, it is essential.

Melodramatic identification can work to recognize patriarchy – or any of the other social structures that make up women’s lives under capitalism, racism, classism, ageism, heterosexism etc. – as a force that is out of their control, but one which is still worth fighting against. Even more subversively, the conditions of the fight are predicated on a series of power reversals so that young women (and sensitive men) fight against authority figures and are most successful in concert with each other, collectively rather than individually, in spaces which are traditionally taboo. Ang states,

in other narratives pleasure comes from the assurance and confirmation of a happy end – as with the romantic union of a man and a woman in the formulaic ‘they live happily ever after’, involvement with a character like Sue Ellen [from *Dallas*, a prime time soap opera] is conditioned by the prior knowledge that no such happy ending will ever occur. Instead, pleasure must come from living through and negotiating with the crisis itself...I would argue that such moments, [of identification with Sue Ellen] however fleeting, can be experienced as moments of peace, of truth, of redemption, a moment in which the complexity of the task of being a woman is fully realized and accepted.²¹³

Buffy too is predicated on the understanding that none of the characters can ‘live happily ever after.’ All of the romantic unions are in different ways impossible. Buffy/Gellar’s with Angel/Boreanaz must never be consummated, since the one time they made love Angel/Boreanaz lost his soul and became a ruthless killer – not to mention the fundamental fact that he is a vampire and she is a vampire slayer. Nonetheless the couple continues to be romantically involved. Narratives such as these are not only melodramatic but, because of their impossibility, melancholic: “when the mourning process stalls and the subject refuses to come to terms with the loss, melancholia

ensues.”²¹⁴ Walter Metz describes melancholia as a necessary component to melodrama, but potentially subversive of traditional femininity by (especially aggressive) humor.²¹⁵ As a result of its connection to sitcoms and aggressive action genres Buffy literally embodies the figure of ‘aggressive humor,’ this blueprint for subversion fits the show’s narrative to a T.

The cast of *Buffy* supplies opportunities to ‘try on’ different subject positions and emotions, but through the frames of several different generic codes at once. The program is different from a soap opera like *Dallas* because it simultaneously enacts melodramatic generic codes along with the generic codes of horror, action and comedy. This is crucially important because it reveals an essential assumption made by the producers of the text. If generic codes are like contracts between viewers and producers that agree to reorganize familiar systems in new ways,²¹⁶ then the producers assume that an enormous number of textual systems are familiar to young female viewers. By using them all at once the text simultaneously utilizes and deconstructs the different kinds of identifications, robbing them only of their sovereignty not their pleasures. So that, for instance, while a melodramatic identification may allow the girl viewer to identify with the emotional independence that Buffy/Gellar asserts when she tells Angel/Boreanaz in “Homecoming” that she is seeing someone new, the same viewer may also identify with her violent assertion of herself (and subversion of masculine action and horror paradigms) in one of the fight scenes. The same viewer may also identify with Buffy/Gellar’s wisecracks, which at the same time assert her femininity and expose “patriarchal social structures.”²¹⁷

Buffy features a conspiratorial mode of audience address similar to that of *Scream*. By doing this, the text can take for granted the no-longer-surprising conclusions of earlier textual analysis which revealed (gasp!) that texts were steeped in, for example, racism and sexism. Sue Turnbull discusses this issue as it relates to a number of her students,

as it emerged, these Media Studies students already seemed to know how to read these texts and what was expected of them in a course called Women and Media. This prior knowledge, which entailed an assumption of what they imagined as acceptable feminist critical positions with regard to the media, revealed the 'lie' in their rejection of feminism ["I'm not a feminist but..."].²¹⁸

Buffy creates spaces in its text that operate in this mode; the taken-for-granted knowledge about political issues and generic codes offers the reader pleasure in collaboration with the producers. I end my thesis with an analysis of *Buffy* because it is such a rich text, it embodies many of the feminist discourses which are also threaded through the Spice Girls or the *Scream* franchise. Thus, as a final example of girlculture *Buffy* is involved in reconstructing the next generation of women's discourses in popular culture; such a project isn't without implications for feminism. If producers and audiences seem to be working from an initial familiarity with feminist discourses, such a situation should make the interjections of feminist criticism all the more relevant. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* producer, Joss Whedon, may not be a feminist but he talks the talk, ("I thought it was time she had a chance to take back the night..."²¹⁹), and the star may not be a feminist but she walks the walk.

"Feminism sort of has a negative connotation. It makes you think of women that don't shave their legs," explains SMG, the 21-year-old actress who plays Buffy with a kicky aplomb. "But feminism is just about not being weak. It's about being able to take care of yourself. ...Just because you might care about what you look like or what the opposite sex thinks of you, it doesn't make you not a feminist." Does Gellar consider herself a feminist? "I hate the word," she replies,

almost apologetically. “Do I consider myself a strong female individual? Uh-huh. Can I take care of myself? Yeah, sure.”²²⁰

What I think Sarah Michelle Gellar’s quote speaks to is the ways in which the text of *Buffy* speaks to a ‘post-feminist’ generation, as members of the post-feminist generation. Rather than bemoaning the loss of feminist politics by young women, those of us with a political agenda are better served if we take such a program on its own terms and recognize how it can speak on behalf of feminist issues without exaggerating or romanticizing that ability. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* does not have to be read as feminist propaganda, it is not always an ideal text. This analysis is not an attempt to put it on a pedestal. Nonetheless I think *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is reflective of an exciting change in popular culture and can help to create a space for identifications based on a kind of embodied activism that grows out of feminine relationships. Feminism is not dead; some of its values have been assimilated into popular culture. Although many will cry that this necessarily waters them down (this is almost certainly true) the fact remains that there is a level of discourse and awareness around issues like sexuality or female solidarity which belies their revolutionary roots. The issues have changed over the last three decades as have the way young people learn to relate to them. What young women do with pop culture texts can help to reassert their own power and establish connections between girls. If this is the case then why not take seriously the new ways that feminist, and other political issues, are being addressed so that we can speak with young people instead of for young people. Discourses are constantly in flux, and it is our job to see the potential spaces of power in these changes rather than denigrate the popular and demand an outmoded authenticity.

In this, my final chapter, I have asserted that the generic hybridity of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is essential to the formation of its subversive potential. Through all three of my textual analyses I have argued that a kind of textual innovation is the hallmark of girlculture texts which are currently popular. I have argued that through a deep reading of the Spice Girls, *Scream* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* it is possible to identify moments where the text can work counter-hegemonically on behalf of a female viewer in the language of the popular. These texts *can* establish a space for a girlculture which can be not only commercial but, ideally, used toward political ends. It may be the ‘master’s tool’ but if such a tool is available, then I advocate finding better ways to use it.

CONCLUSION

Feminist theory has traditionally looked to women's culture for its objects rather than to girlculture. Part of the importance of this project is that it begins to rectify this situation on behalf of girlculture objects and girl consumers. This project does not stand alone though, there has been significant academic work done on popular culture that is marketed to and primarily consumed by young women, and it is in addition to this body of work that I envision this project. A quick inventory of such work is exemplified by projects such as *Gender Politics and MTV* (1990) by Lisa Lewis, or Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava's book *Gender and Generation* (1984), both of which focus on young women's issues and popular subjects. This study owes these writers a great debt because it grows out of and speaks to this pioneer work. More recently, my project fits with the work of Mary Celeste Kearney on zines in her 1998 article titled "Producing Girls"²²¹ as well as her very recent work "When *Gidget* Gets Girl Power: Female Adolescence in 1990's Television"²²² which speaks to many of the same issues that this study does. Sherrie Inniss's two books, *Tough Girls* (1999) and *Delinquents and Debutantes* (1998) are also a big part of the recent work on girlculture. But I think that my work is most related to and fits best with the work of Susan Douglas, who's 1994 *Where the Girls Are* articulates an interaction between girlculture that became women's popular culture and grew into a feminist politics.

When I speak of girlculture texts in general I include my three subjects, the Spice Girls, *Scream* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, but it is important to keep in mind that these

are only representative samples of a growing popular culture trend. As the new generation of baby boomers grow up and acquire more and more purchasing power corporations continue to court their market potential. Girl consumers will continue to be targeted by these producers, via any and all means. I listed in Chapter One a litany of examples of corporations targeting the young women's market in all of the media industries: female pop stars like Jewel or Shirley Manson, who participate in female concert franchises like the Lilith Fair; network television programs for girls like *Buffy*, *Dawson's Creek* or *Charmed*, and cable network programs like the *Powerpuff Girls*; extremely lucrative teen films like *She's All That* or *Cruel Intentions* have attained some of the top box office earnings for 1999 (thus far); and the internet caters to all of the different girls who may be fans of some or all of these products with fan web rings, e-zines and the Girl-Wide-Web. We have a bonafide trend on our hands, and as academics it is important for us to recognize its significance and potential.

My theoretical groundings certainly grow out of my connection to psychoanalytic feminist film theory articulated by writers like Laura Mulvey, Mary Ann Doane and Tania Modleski. Their work is an example of the kinds of significant feminist theory which established feminism as an important and rigorous academic discipline to interrogate women's issues. In the case of media studies, feminist academics chose to focus on texts which were consumed primarily by women. This work is also very often grounded in the Classical Hollywood cinema, and my interjection involves trying to apply these ideas to much more recent texts whose female audiences skew much younger. I have shown how these texts are significantly different than those from the Classical

Hollywood generation, not least because they reflect the post-modern impulse of speaking to a common memory of reruns and classic genres.

Recent history is, at least partly, a history of popular culture and girlculture texts talk about themselves in this context. Consumers of these texts must evince incredibly high media literacy to make sense of the layers of references and inside jokes that make shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and movies like *Scream* so complex. Much of what these new texts exhibit is a willingness to expand and combine existing genres to create new hybrid-genres which I argue are greater than the sum of their individual parts. Indeed I believe that this work begins to show how a playful, ironic, multi-generic text enacts a different mode of address, what I call in Chapter Four a “conspiratorial mode of address.” For this mode of address to work the consumer must have a massive amount of cultural capital to draw on; girlculture texts rely on a taken-for-granted media literacy which constructs a new kind of spectator. This spectator is expected to collude with the texts, to actively make connections along with producers. These texts also draw upon recent history and politics. I have shown how popular culture subjects can acknowledge and articulate a mainstreamed feminism even while they disavow any connection to the feminist title. This is a feminism that is performed while at the same time it is denied.

In some ways what I’m trying to do is locate a progression of politics. Rather than bemoan the loss of a certain kind of feminism I look at how feminism has changed and where it can still be recognized working in concert with the goals of the second wave of feminism. I want to see leftist politics moving forward and recuperate some of the political gains which have been assimilated. I remain very dissatisfied with the promise

made by Marxism and radical feminism, their conception of the revolution which will instantaneously politicize people. Stuart Hall talks about this flawed logic and I quote him in Chapter One. Activists in the sixties, seventies and eighties were successful in convincing folks of the exclusion of women, of sexual minorities, of people of color from popular discourses, but the exclusion of young people still has yet to be consistently addressed in a similar kind of activist terms. Katie Wharton's comment in Chapter One, "they brought attention back to really young girls..."²²³ although she is talking about the Spice Girls specifically, highlight young people's exclusion from political discourses in general, in this case feminism. Because feminist theory very often speaks about adult women's issues, it can belittle the interests and political issues for girls. Since my interest is in a continuing feminism my work chooses to closely examine the texts consumed by girls and take them very seriously on behalf of a feminist agenda. I don't think that feminists are totally innocent of participating in a project which can denigrate young women. I think they are implicated in the question raised by Susan Douglas when she asks "who is feeling threatened, or superior and why?"²²⁴

I think that in these texts one can find political content where they least expect it. Young women who are members of a prepackaged audience – the WB's, or Virgin Record's, or Dimension Picture's – can still subvert hegemonic texts they consume. And as Douglas has suggested their fandom can work on behalf of feminism into the future as well as right now. I have shown in Chapters Two, Three and Four that the girlculture texts of, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Scream* and the Spice Girls respond to feminism and can be used as a part of a feminist project. Hall explains in "Encoding/Decoding" that

readers are not a part of textual anarchy, you can't read anything into a text, the message has to be put there by a producer (intentional or not).²²⁵ *Buffy*, *Scream* and the Spice Girls all speak to feminism, can be used for feminism and are performative of a kind of feminism because they all exhibit: women's collective action, referentiality to women's place in pop culture history by referencing or reworking genres for/by women, a reworking of sexuality and a renegotiation of space on behalf of women/girls.

In the case of the Spice Girls, they exemplify solidarity and collective action in the way they deal with the press and present themselves to the public. Their relationship to pop culture history is through a strong similarity to the girl groups of the early sixties produced by Phil Spector. Their sexuality is expressed through fetishistic costumes, like those of Madonna, but arguably these are (partly) for themselves and for girl audiences. Finally, they wreak havoc on public/private space dichotomies because they inhabit a business realm and intentionally undo the solemnity of public space when they enter it. In the case of *Scream*, the final girl duo exemplifies collective action, and this also reflects pop history by reworking the slasher genre, moving it into the third generation of horror. *Scream* remakes sexuality by undoing the repressive, puritanical impulses of other slasher movies and it reworks the public space of the movie theater for a horror audience which "skews more female."²²⁶ In the case of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* a girl-led action team that doesn't exclude other girls and features 'sensitive' men embodies a kind of female solidarity; *Buffy* also reflects pop history as it incorporates a multitude of genres, and reworks dramedy, action and horror while it insists on a melodramatic structure. *Buffy* modifies sexuality by addressing bisexuality with Willow's character

especially, and undoes repressive sexuality by allowing Buffy/Gellar to be sexually active – and responsible. Finally *Buffy* adapts space through its ‘take back the night’ ethos which reworks the public spaces that Buffy/Gellar and her team fight in. *Buffy* also works on behalf of young girl viewers in the nuclear family home space who arguably have learned not to have the same problem of feeling guilty for the time that they take to consume media texts that adult women melodrama consumers do. This project works to find a space in popular culture where such assimilated political issues are still active but whose significance has changed for younger women. Girlculture can work to “raise the bar” in some ways in terms of post-feminism, that is it can help to find the feminism in post-feminism, and ideally make feminism meaningful for the next generation. One way to do this, I argue is through the shared female perspective evinced by girlculture texts.

Admittedly these texts are imperfect, their limitations should not be discounted. Indeed these are corporate products, they are not intentionally radical texts. I do not seek to deny the hegemonic bias of the media productions of transnational corporations like Virgin Atlantic, Buena Vista Pictures (the distributor of *Scream* and *Scream 2*, owned by Disney) or Warner Brothers. Certainly even while these texts speak to feminist issues they still comply with homogeneous racial codes which seek to ‘whitewash’ texts, and beauty-myth codes which comply with the politics of youth so that the stars of such texts must necessarily be slim, young and attractive. Additionally, the Spice Girls, *Scream* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are all the well-recognized products of male producers, that is to say that they are not somehow organic feminist texts which grew out of the work of girls themselves or even adult women media producers. This of course raises questions

about the ability, intention or investment that male producers such as Simon Fuller, Kevin Williamson or Joss Whedon have in articulating a genuinely subversive text, and also raises question about a possible connection between the problematic endeavor of male critics that I discussed in Chapter Four. Certainly these men have each gained a tremendous amount of power in their industries through their profitable association with and articulation of girlculture. This is a serious issue, and a forceful argument against overvaluing these kinds of texts. But at the same time, I also think that the authorial power of the male producer is somewhat mediated by the jurisdiction of the female stars' personas which also act to construct readings sympathetic to feminist politics – and in at least one case, the Spice Girls, the female stars have taken over the production process entirely, firing their male producer/manager. Such criticisms are further mediated by the style of audience address that is employed by texts like *Buffy* or *Scream* which involve readers in the construction of texts and meanings which are multilayered and complex rather than overly simplistic and easily discountable. In this way producers can work to speak with young people as fellow fans and pop culture consumers, they don't necessarily attempt to speak for young people as the critics do.

I chose to work on issues of girlculture because I am implicated in both its consumeristic impulses and its counter-hegemonic potential. I am a participant in and a fan of girlculture, even as I am at the same time a critical observer. What I have observed throughout the researching and writing of this piece is a phenomenon that continues to grow. This week, as I reflect on my larger project and work a conclusion the larger corporate project marches on. Mattel, the toy manufacturer who is responsible for Barbie

Dolls has quietly cornered the girls' computer software market. According to NPR's *Morning Edition*, in addition to Mattel's own line of Barbie software, the corporation has acquired the two largest girls' software manufacturers: Purple Moon, which they bought out in 1998 and this week The Learning Company (which makes the popular "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?" games), giving Mattel an eighty percent market share in the girls' software business.²²⁷ On a smaller scale my local mall is also a site where I can find evidence of the growing recognition and commodification of girlculture. Girls' entry into public space often takes place through the consumer spaces of malls. Malls are regulated and made safe to such a degree that parents who would not allow their daughters to spend time unchaperoned on city streets or in urban public space *will* allow their daughters to experiment with independence in the sanitized, enclosed and regulated spaces of their local malls.²²⁸

My mall in Texas now features a new kiosk called Just Chicks.²²⁹ Just Chicks features clothing and accessories for the girl who is a participant in and a fan of sports; they carry items such as tee shirts which extol the virtues of girl athletes who participate in cheerleading, soccer, volleyball, softball, golf, track and field and other seasonal sports. Just Chicks also features sport oriented hair 'scrunchies' and elastics, key chains and barrettes.²³⁰ I engaged the attendant in a casual conversation and she reported her primary customers were girls between eight and thirteen, moms and grandmothers; older high school girls, she said, seemed to be more interested in 'serious' sports items and were not the kiosk's primary customers. One of the most interesting features of Just Chicks is their mission statement, which is formatted like a poem rather than a business

plan. I won't reproduce it entirely, but a sample of the lyrical manifesto may help to illuminate its unique nature:

This catalog was inspired by
the dreams of many girls.
Girls who realize their time has come,
girls who expect more.

The world is changing and requiring
us all to reinvent ourselves.
To take on more leadership roles while
still being true to our feminine nature.²³¹

Amy Penland-Jones, President of Just Chicks, Inc., and author of the manifesto seems to be responding to some of the same issues which I have taken up throughout this project. While she certainly romanticizes the “world changing” and a naturalized “feminine nature,” but I find the direct address to her girl customers interesting because it exhibits a proselytizing impulse, with the intention of bringing new feminists and non-traditional kinds of femininity into the fold. Conveniently the acquisition of this new identity comes complete with purchasable signifiers to advertise the conversion. This transparent address does not attempt to connect with consumers in the same ironic, post-modern way that the media texts I have examined do, but the new franchise aims to capture the same girl consumer with somewhat altered tropes of a feminine identity. If a ‘scrunchie’ decorated with soccer balls intended for ‘girl-jocks’ who wish to rearticulate their femininity through sports – typically the domain of boys – is typical of how the commodification of both femininity and feminism are taking place, then the challenge is to go beyond indignation at the appropriation of feminism; it is important for us to recognize the potential as well as the threat. Our task is to treat both the product and the

consumer thoughtfully and recognize the complexities which are at work in capitalist products.

This is a project which works to take girlculture texts which have yet to be fully studied seriously, and find in them the seeds of feminism while recognizing the contributions from earlier feminist projects. These texts do not meet the same standard of ‘authenticity’ in the same way that zines, or fan communities do, but I propose that these texts are still potentially very useful for feminism and have more relationship to feminism than we might like to think. Mainstreaming does not and should not absolutely de-legitimize feminist potential. The end of Laura Mulvey’s essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” calls for avant garde cinema (culture) as a ‘cure’ for the problem of power differentials in traditional texts. She says, “the first blow against the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions (already undertaken by radical film-makers) is to free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment.”²³² But I think it is possible and necessary to find objects in both the popular and the avant garde. Failing to do so is problematic because it reinstates a dichotomy between high and low culture and only allows the political to live in the former. This can only restore the problem of the revolutionary, making academics or critics the only legitimate revolutionaries and proving that real consumers of mass marketed texts are dupes or victims of Marxist false consciousness. I have shown how and where we can bridge the gap between academic theory and pop so that they can work toward a common goal.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE:

- ¹ Lewis, C.S. *The Last Battle*. 1956. New York: Collier Books, 1970. 135.
- ² Hudson, Barbara. "Femininity and Adolescence." *Gender and Generation*. Ed. Angela McRobbie. London: McMillan, 1984.
- ³ Frank, Thomas. "Why Johnny Can't Dissent." *Commodify your Dissent: the Business of Culture in the New Gilded Age*. Eds. Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1997. 44.
- ⁴ See Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 1984. Tania Modleski, "The Rhythms of Reception: Daytime Television and Women's Work," or Annette Kuhn, "Women's Genre's" or Ros Ballaster, Margaret Beetham, Elizabeth Frazer and Sandra Hebron, "A Critical Analysis of Women's Magazines." All are available in *Turning it On: A Reader in Women and Media*. Ed. Helen Baehr and Ann Gray. New York: Arnold, 1996.
- ⁵ Nightingale, Virginia. "Women as Audiences." *Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular*. Ed. Mary Ellen Brown. London: Sage Publications, 1990. 25. Italics added by me.
- ⁶ Of course this has its limitations. The category 'young women' doesn't get at any other differences between young women, such as, but not exclusive to, class, race, nationality or sexuality. It almost certainly homogenizes the group 'young women' to upper middle class white American girls but while I recognize this problematic I also recognize that, this is (a) how advertisers and producers also tend to treat the category of 'young women' and that (b) an over scrupulous commitment to specifying different subgroups within the category could stall my analysis before it begins.
- ⁷ Although, because it is not always specific to girls' experiences does not mean that feminist theories of spectatorship are never useful for theorizing young women spectators. Young female spectatorship is still a kind of female spectatorship, and furthermore it is skewed toward young women who will grow up to become the very adult women they may define themselves in opposition to now. I will be relying on much 'adult' feminist theory in my later chapters, often because these pieces are still very much relevant and stand as seminal works.
- ⁸ Kristeva, Julia. "Woman Can Never Be Defined: Interview with *Psych et. Po.*" *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*. Ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron. New York: Schocken Books, 1980. 137-141. This is probably what Kristeva is most famous for pointing out, and she did it on many occasions. The essay I am most familiar with is cited here but a study of her work reveals that this idea was fundamental to much of her thinking. See also *The Kristeva Reader*, Ed. Toril Moi.
- ⁹ Seiter, Ellen. "Children's Desires/Mothers' Dilemmas." *The Children's Culture Reader*. Ed. Henry Jenkins. New York: New York University Press, 1998. 297.
- ¹⁰ Seiter. 298.
- ¹¹ Lewis, Lisa. "Consumer Girl Culture: How Music Video Appeals to Girls." *Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular*. Ed. Mary Ellen Brown. London: Sage Publications, 1990. 100.
- ¹² See also Meaghan Morris. "Things to do with Shopping Centers." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Simon During. New York: Routledge, 1993. 295-319. She provides an analysis of how similar discourses around consumption and public space work in relationship to adult women.
- ¹³ Carter, Erica. Alice in the Consumer Wonderland: West German Case Studies in Gender and Consumer Culture." *Gender and Generation*. Ed. Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava. London: McMillan, 1984. 191. Italics Carter's.
- ¹⁴ Although this somewhat epigrammatic description of radical feminism is not entirely representative of the many different theories supported by radical feminists. See also the writings of: Andrea Dworkin, Adrienne Rich or Mary Daly for examples of radical feminist work.
- ¹⁵ Douglas, Susan. "I'm not a Feminist but..." *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*. New York: Times Books, 1994. 272.
- ¹⁶ Labi, Nadya. "For the Next Generation, Feminism is Being Sold as Glitz and Image. But What do Girls Really Want?" *Time*. June 29, 1998. 61.

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- ¹⁷ Douglas, Susan. "I'm not a Feminist but..." *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*. New York: Times Books, 1994. 269-294.
- ¹⁸ Bellafante, Gina. "Feminism: It's all About Me!" *Time*. June 29, 1998. 54-60. The caption on the cover read, "Is Feminism Dead?"
- ¹⁹ See Rebecca Walker's anthology of third wave feminism: *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.
- ²⁰ Mendelsohn, Jennifer. "The Sexiest Vampire Slayer alive – TV's "Buffy" Leads a New Wave of Intelligent [sic] Chills." Reprinted article on:
http://members.tripod.com/~Little_Willow/castarticles.html
- ²¹ Lewis, Lisa. "Fandom, Lived Experience, and Textual Use" and "Five Fan Events." *Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1990. 149-214.
- ²² For more information on zines or the riot grrrl movement see: Kearney, Mary Celeste. "Producing Girls: Rethinking the Study of Female Youth Culture." *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures*. Ed. Sherrie Inness. New York: New York University Press, 1998. 285-310. Leonard, Marion. "Paper Planes: Traveling the New Grrrl Geographies." *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. Eds. Tracey Skeleton & Gill Valentine. New York: Routledge, 1998. 101-118. Gottlieb, Joanne and Gayle Wald. "Smells Like Teen Spirit: Riot Grrrls, Revolution and Women in Independent Rock." *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*. Ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose. New York: Routledge, 1994. 250-274. Or better yet, subscribe to some of the zines. They usually don't cost more than \$1-\$2 and they very articulately speak for themselves.
- ²³ Other powerful women stars and characters in the mass media in conjunction with the political notions of feminism, which have leaked or been assimilated into the mainstream, also cannot be downplayed.
- ²⁴ Interview with Kenickie from *The Righteous Babes*. Produced and directed by Prahibha Parmar. Distributed by Women Make Movies. 1998. Even though the evidence is circumstantial, I still like entertaining the connection between Madonna and riot grrrls – think about the 'wannabe' Spice Girl fans of this decade. What kind of "girl style revolution" (part of the riot grrrl manifesto) could they come up with?
- ²⁵ Although arguably the category of youth has been enlarged so that it can accommodate people in their thirties. This concession seems to have been made based on behavior and appearance for singles. The hit Fox dramedy *Ally McBeal* is a perfect example of just such an adult girlishness. Other examples might be the star personas of Meg Ryan, or Sandra Bullock.
- ²⁶ Massey, Doreen. "The Spatial Construction of Youth Cultures." *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 1998. 122-123.
- ²⁷ Skelton, Tracey & Gill Valentine. "Introduction." *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 1998. 16-17.
- ²⁸ Skelton & Valentine. 18-19.
- ²⁹ Schrum, Kelly. "Teena Means Business: Teenage Girls' Culture and Seventeen Magazine 1944-1950." *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures*. Ed. Sherrie Inness. New York: New York University Press, 1998. 134-163.
- ³⁰ Douglas, Susan. *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*. New York: Times Books, 1994.
- ³¹ Douglas. 306.
- ³² See Chapter Three for a more in-depth analysis.
- ³³ Bellafante, Gina. "Feminism: It's all About Me!" *Time*. June 29, 1998. 54-62.
- ³⁴ Turnbull, Sue. "Dear Anne Summers: 'Microfeminism' and Media Representations of Women." *Wired-Up: Young People and the Electronic Media*. Ed. Sue Howard. London: University College London Press, 1998. 161.
- ³⁵ De Lauretis, Theresa. *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.
- ³⁶ Lewis, Lisa. *Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. 8.

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- ³⁷ Mitra, Ananda. *Television and Popular Culture in India: A Study of the Mahabharat*. London: Sage Publications, 1993. 47.
- ³⁸ Some examples are theorists like: Tania Modleski, Mary Ann Doane, Laura Mulvey or Teresa de Lauretis.
- ³⁹ Stacey, Jackie. *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 35.
- ⁴⁰ Stacey identifies theorists like David Morley, Dorothy Hobson, Ann Gray, Janice Radway and Ien Ang as academics whose work is more useful than those who she calls “textual determinists.”
- ⁴¹ Morris, Meaghan. “A Question of Cultural Studies.” *Back to Reality? Social Experience and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Angela McRobbie. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997. 43.
- ⁴² Hall, Stuart. “Old and New Identities.” *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*. Ed. Anthony King. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 63-64.
- ⁴³ Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation in association with Penguin Books, 1972. 149.
- ⁴⁴ Hall, Stuart. “Old and New Identities.” *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*. Ed. Anthony King. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 63.
- ⁴⁵ *The Righteous Babes*. Produced and Directed by Prahibha Parmar. Distributed by Women Make Movies. 1998.
- ⁴⁶ Interview with Katie Wharton, Student. *The Righteous Babes*. Produced and Directed by Prahibha Parmar. Distributed by Women Make Movies. 1998.
- ⁴⁷ Clover, Carol. *Men Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.
- ⁴⁸ Brown, Mary Ellen. “Conclusion: Consumption and Resistance – The Problem of Pleasure.” *Television and Women’s Culture: The Politics of the Popular*. Ed. Mary Ellen Brown. London: Sage Publication, 1990. 210.
- ⁴⁹ Britton, Andrew. “Stars and Genre.” *Stardom: Industry of Desire*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. New York: Routledge, 1991. 204.
- ⁵⁰ Mourlet, Michel. “In Defense of Violence.” *Stardom: Industry of Desire*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. New York: Routledge, 1991. 234.
- ⁵¹ Hall, Stuart. “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity.” *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*. Ed. Anthony J. King. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 34.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO:

- ⁵² Chambers, Iain. *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985. 125-127.
- ⁵³ Hall, Stuart. “The Local and the Global.” *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*. Anthony King Ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 30.
- ⁵⁴ Lopez, Ana. “The Melodrama in Latin America: Films, Telenovelas, and the Currency of a Popular Form.” *Wide Angle*. #7, v3. 1985. 5-13.
- ⁵⁵ *The Righteous Babes*. Produced and Directed by Prahibha Parmar. Distributed by Women Make Movies. 1998.
- ⁵⁶ Hall, Stuart. “Old and New Identities.” *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*. Anthony King Ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 52.
- ⁵⁷ 20/20 did a piece on this broadcast 11/22/98.
- ⁵⁸ Producers even tried to sell Wales as the same kind of romantic, Gaelic location in the film *The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill but Came Down A Mountain* but the image didn’t sell as well in

relation to the Welsh. See Timothy Taylor's insightful account of the trend for all things Celtic in the introduction to his book *Global Pop*.

- ⁶⁰ One example, of many, comes from *People* magazine. "Spice Girls paid lip service to Prince Charles - note the telltale smooch marks - at the Prince's Trust gala in Manchester, England. Geri, who furtively squeezed his Royal Highness's behind, later sized up the royal rear: 'it was not bad.'" "Star Tracks." *People Weekly*. 5/26/97. 7.
- ⁶¹ Herman, Edward S. & Robert W. McChesney. *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism*. Washington: Cassell, 1997. 136-137.
- ⁶² New Perspectives Quarterly. "Iran Faces the Spice Girls." *New Perspectives Quarterly*. V15, 33, 1998. 50-56.
- ⁶³ Morley, David & Kevin Robins. "No Place Like Heimat: Images of Home(land) in European Culture." *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*. Eds. Erica Carter, James Donald, and Judith Squires. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993.
- ⁶⁴ Bernstein, Jonathan. "Exposure: Sex and the Single Girls." *Spin*. March 1997. 24-25.
- ⁶⁵ Gottlieb, Joanne and Gayle Wald. "Smells Like Teen Spirit: Riot Grrrls, Revolution and Women in Independent Rock." *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*. Eds. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose. New York: Routledge, 1994. 254.
- ⁶⁶ Douglas, Susan. "Why the Shirelles Mattered." *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*. New York: Times Books, 1994. 97.
- ⁶⁷ Svetkey, Benjamin. "Tour Divorce" *Entertainment Weekly*. July 17, 1998. 21.
- ⁶⁸ Fields, Gaylord. "Teen Idolatree." *Spin*. September 1997. 88-89.
- ⁶⁹ Szatmary, David. *A Time To Rock: A Social History of Rock 'n' Roll*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1996. 257-258.
- ⁷⁰ Chambers. 180.
- ⁷¹ Chambers. 181.
- ⁷² Farley, Christopher. "New Girls on the Block." *Time*. 3 February, 1997. 68.
- ⁷³ See two articles by Victoria Chambers in *Newsweek*: "It's All About the Benjamins," (02-02-98) and "It's a Spice World. Again," (11-10-97). In *Forbes* see Richard Morais's "What I Wanna, Wanna, Really Wannabe," (09-22-97) and Peter Newcomb's "The Music Never Stopped," (03-24-97).
- ⁷⁴ Morais, Richard. "What I Wanna, Wanna Really Wannabe." *Forbes*. 09-22-97. 190.
- ⁷⁵ McRobbie, Angela. "Dance and Social Fantasy." *Gender and Generation*. Eds. Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava. London: Macmillan, 1984. 138-139.
- ⁷⁶ Svetkey, Benjamin. "Tour Divorce?" *Entertainment Weekly*. #441, 1998. 25.
- ⁷⁷ Huysen, Andreas. "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other." *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*. Ed. Tania Modleski. Bloomington: Indiana UP 1986.
- ⁷⁸ Shiach, Morag. "Feminism and Popular Culture." *Critical Quarterly*. v33 #2, 1991. 37-46.
- ⁷⁹ Hudson, Barbara. "Femininity and Adolescence." *Gender and Generation*. Eds. Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava. London: Macmillan, 1984. 31-53.
- ⁸⁰ Valentine, Gill, Tracey Skelton & Deborah Chambers. "Cool Places: An Introduction to Youth and Youth Cultures." *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. Eds. Tracey Skelton & Gill Valentine. New York: Routledge, 1998. 16.
- ⁸¹ Massey, Doreen. "The Spatial Construction of Youth Cultures." *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. Eds. Tracey Skelton & Gill Valentine. New York: Routledge, 1998. 122.
- ⁸² Blunt, Allison and Gillian Rose. *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Post-Colonial Geographies*. New York: Guilford Press, 1994. 2.
- ⁸³ Kearney, Mary Celeste. "Producing Girls: Rethinking the Study of Female Youth Culture." *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures*. Ed. Sherrie Inness. New York: New York University Press, 1998. 285-310.
- ⁸⁴ Leonard, Marion. "Paper Planes: traveling the new grrrl geographies." *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. Eds. Tracey Skelton & Gill Valentine. New York: Routledge, 1998. 101-118.

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- ⁸⁵ *Seventeen*. "Quote Unquote." March 1998. 178.
- ⁸⁶ This is a painfully limited list, a caricature of styles and categories.
- ⁸⁷ Coates, Norma. "(R)Evolution Now? Rock and the Political Potential of Gender." *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*. New York: Routledge, 1997. 50-64.
- ⁸⁸ Frith, Simon. "Introduction." *Facing the Music: A Pantheon Guide to Popular Culture*. Ed. Simon Frith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988. 4-5.
- ⁸⁹ Marsh, Dave. "U2's Crash: Why Pop Flops." *The Nation*. August 25/September 1, 1997. 19.
- ⁹⁰ Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Movies and Methods: Volume II*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. 303-314. (originally published in 1975).
- ⁹¹ Even Mulvey herself later published a follow up article called "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'" inspired by *Duel in the Sun*."
- ⁹² Quoted from *Teen* magazine. "Fashion Slant: The Style, Sass and Sound of the Spice Girls." 1 March 1997. 72.
- ⁹³ From Virgin's Spice Girls web page. "Tips and Hints." <http://c3.vmg.co.uk/spicegirls/tips+hints>
- ⁹⁴ Svetkey, Benjamin. "Tour Divorce?" *Entertainment Weekly*. #441, 1998. 21.
- ⁹⁵ Hall, Stuart. "Old and New Identities." *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*. Anthony King Ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 60.
- ⁹⁶ Wright, Christian. "Cover Story: The Artist Formerly known as Ginger." *Allure*. November 1998. 195.
- ⁹⁷ Doane, Mary Ann. "Film and the Masquerade: theorizing the female spectator." *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 25.
- ⁹⁸ Hudson, Barbara. "Femininity and Adolescence." *Gender and Generation*. Eds. Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava. London: Macmillan, 1984. 40.
- ⁹⁹ This section owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Shanti Kumar who initially suggested that I consider how my project fit in with the earlier work on Madonna and directed me to both the Fiske and the hooks pieces.
- ¹⁰⁰ Fiske, John. "Madonna." *Reading the Popular*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989. Fiske's piece was followed by a flurry of similar work on Madonna. More of it is available in *The Madonna Connection: Representational Politics, Subcultural Identities, and Cultural Theory*. Ed. Cathy Schwichtenberg. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1993.
- ¹⁰¹ Fiske. 104.
- ¹⁰² hooks, bell. "Madonna: Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?" *Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Text Reader*. Ed. Gail Dines and Jean Humez. London: Sage Publications. 30. Indeed if Madonna were to start recognizing cultural debts she wouldn't be able to stop with a black community. She would also owe debts of gratitude to gay men ("Vogue"), Spanish culture ("La Isla Bonita"), Hindu traditions (in 1998 she was wearing a bindi and painting henna designs on her hands and feet) and Japanese clothing styles (now she's wearing kimonos).
- ¹⁰³ hooks. 31.
- ¹⁰⁴ Trinh Minh Ha. *Reassemblage*. Distributed by Women Make Movies. 1985. The exact quote is: "I will not speak about. Just speak nearby."

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE:

- ¹⁰⁵ Clover, Carol. *Men Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. 168.
- ¹⁰⁶ Throughout this paper I will be referring to character name/star name in this format. I will explore the issue of stardom later in this chapter, but because I believe the star influences the reading of the role, I want to indicate in the text how the characterization is always inflected with the star's image.
- ¹⁰⁷ Daly, Steve. "The Frat Pack." *Entertainment Weekly*. 04-24-98. 28-29.
- ¹⁰⁸ Pinedo, Isabel Christina. *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. 95.

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- ¹⁰⁹ Clover. 5. This is most clearly typified by the way Clover chooses to organize the book. She separates each sub-genre into a distinct chapter. She does not explicitly deal with vampire films as a fourth sub-genre but an interesting analysis is certainly possible for another researcher to consider how vampire films do and do not fit in with the boundaries established in the other sub-genres. It is not the main focus of this chapter but I will look again at this question in Chapter Four when I discuss *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.
- ¹¹⁰ De Lauretis, Teresa. *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984. 19.
- ¹¹¹ Clover. 8.
- ¹¹² Clover. 16. This is a somewhat esoteric point but one that Clover continues to return to. Although she relies heavily on Freudian theories and cinema-psychoanalysis she points to an older pre-modern sensibility in humans based in legend and folklore. She contends that the "one sex model" does not contradict psychoanalysis but instead underwrites and adds to the kinds of understandings that we can make out of horror narratives.
- ¹¹³ Clover. 17.
- ¹¹⁴ Clover. 5.
- ¹¹⁵ Clover. 20.
- ¹¹⁶ Released in 1997 and 1998 respectively by Buena Vista Pictures. Produced by Dimension Entertainment.
- ¹¹⁷ A short list of films explicitly referenced by the dialogue of *Scream* looks like this: *Hellraiser*, *The Evil Dead*, *Terror Train*, *The Town that Dreaded Sundown*, *Prom Night* (this one is a favorite), *I Spit on Your Grave*, *Candyman*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Howling*, *Silence of the Lambs*, *ET*, *The Bad Seed*, *Psycho*, *Carrie*, and *All The Right Moves*. Visual references made by the film include: *Clerks* (the video is sitting on top of the VCR in Stewart's house), and *Halloween* (which is the film that the kids are watching at the party).
- ¹¹⁸ Clover. 26.
- ¹¹⁹ Arguably, the only star in the second generation films is Jamie Lee Curtis who was a subcultural icon to slasher fans but attained mainstream recognition only after participating in other genres. In *Scream*, Randy/Kennedy locates this moment in 1985 when Curtis first exposes her breasts in the film *Trading Places*.
- ¹²⁰ Indeed, one could even look to all slasher films as a series of sequels to *Psycho*. Clover says on page 26, "the spiritual debt of all the post-1974 slasher films to *Psycho* is clear, and it is a rare example that does not pay a visual tribute, however brief, to the ancestor." It is significant that not only do the films share visual imagery but characters too. For example, Sam Loomis from *Psycho* was followed by Dr. Loomis in *Halloween* who was referenced by Billy Loomis' one of the killers in *Scream*. Literal bloodlines are also followed as Janet Leigh, the original slasher victim in *Psycho*, collaborated with her daughter Jamie Lee-Curtis, the prototypical second generation slasher victim/Final Girl from *Halloween*, on the third generation slasher *Halloween H2O*.
- ¹²¹ "Don't you know the rules?!" demands Randy/Kennedy, in the climactic scene of *Scream*. "There are certain rules that one must abide by in order to successfully survive a horror movie. For instance, number one: you can never have sex! Big no-no! Big no-no! Sex equals death okay? Number two, never drink or do drugs. The sin factor, its an extension of number one. And three, never, ever, ever, under any circumstances say, 'I'll be right back.' Cause you won't be back....See you push the laws and you end up dead. Okay, I'll see you [Stewart] in the kitchen with a knife." Randy/Kennedy at once echoes some of Clover's 'rules' and at the same time alters them. (Rumor has it that Kevin Williamson read Clover's book before he wrote *Scream* and thus, some of the reworkings in the film are directly related to Clover's theories. Although this is a tantalizing theory there is no direct evidence to support it.)
- ¹²² Clover. 23-24.
- ¹²³ Clover. 33.
- ¹²⁴ Clover. 34.

- ¹²⁵ Although admittedly the deaths of both Casey/Barrymore and Maureen/Pinkett are more drawn out than those of their boyfriends, I wonder how much this could have to do with a kind of ‘fake out’ of the part of the text, setting up the films within the established conscriptions of horror only to deconstruct them and then reconstruct them.
- ¹²⁶ *Scream 2* takes the allusion one step further, Maureen/Pinkett watches the faux-film *Stab* which opens with the Casey Becker character (Heather Graham) about to take a shower. This segment of *Stab* contains a short series of shot by shot references to 1960s *Psycho*.
- ¹²⁷ Truffaut, Francois. *Hitchcock*. New York: Touchstone, 1983. 269.
- ¹²⁸ Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1993. 7.
- ¹²⁹ One who is literally coded in the mise-en-scene as a viewer. He is tied to a chair set facing the sliding glass doors, a symbolic stand-in for the screen or the Lacanian mirror, gagged but not blindfolded and forced to watch the preliminary work of his immanent death as the girl who could save him cowers next to a television. A masochistic figure if ever there was one.
- ¹³⁰ Clover. 35.
- ¹³¹ This is another debt to *Psycho*. In the film, Norman Bates was so overidentified with his mother that he acted as though he was his mother, a woman who Norman killed because he believed she was threatened by Norman’s sexual attraction to other women. Norman took on his mother’s persona and attire when he was psychotic.
- ¹³² Flitterman-Lewis, Sandy. “Psychoanalysis, Film, and Television.” *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*. Ed. Robert C. Allen. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987. 205-206. I use aspects of psychoanalytic theory here and in other sections of this chapter as it bears a strong historical connection to feminist film criticism, but I do not use it uncritically. Although I think it entirely applicable to this example I recognize Freudian and Lacanian theories as inadequate to a full theorization of feminine sexuality and inadequate in terms of global/universal relevance.
- ¹³³ Randy says to Stewart in *Scream*, “you are such a little lapdog [Billy’s].” And he says of Stewart in *Scream 2*, “he was a homo-repressed mama’s boy!”
- ¹³⁴ Creed. 7.
- ¹³⁵ Creed. 27-28. Italics Creed’s.
- ¹³⁶ Clover. 63.
- ¹³⁷ The figure of the physically tough woman is not unknown in pop culture texts. Figures like Sarah Conner in *T2*, Ripley in *Aliens*, the heroines of *La Femme Nikita* and *Thelma and Louise*, and even Buffy Summers in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (see Chapter 4) came before.
- ¹³⁸ Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. London: BFI Publishing, 1986.
- ¹³⁹ See any of her fan sites on the Internet.
- ¹⁴⁰ Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Movies and Methods II*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. 303-314.
- ¹⁴¹ Mulvey, Laura. “Afterthoughts on “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” Inspired by *Duel in the Sun*.”
- ¹⁴² Clover. 202-205.
- ¹⁴³ She is seemingly punished though. She drives the news van into a tree and is left for dead. This is but one of the red herrings thrown up by the text, though.
- ¹⁴⁴ Early in *Scream* Sydney delineates what *she* identifies as the rules of horror, “they are all the same. Some stupid killer, stalking some big-breasted girl, who can’t act, who’s always running up the stairs when she should be going out the front door. It’s insulting.”
- ¹⁴⁵ Pinedo. 6.
- ¹⁴⁶ Clover. 186.
- ¹⁴⁷ Truffaut, Francois. *Hitchcock*. New York: Touchstone, 1983. 269 & 277.
- ¹⁴⁸ Clover, 23.
- ¹⁴⁹ Interview with *Scream 2*’s cast and crew. Supplement to *Scream 2* home video. Dimension Pictures Home Video. 1998.

¹⁵⁰ Clover. 167.

¹⁵¹ Clover. 236.

¹⁵² Young, Josh. "They're All That." *Entertainment Weekly*. 03-12-99. 20-29.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR:

¹⁵³ Whedon, Joss. Interview episode #1. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* home videos. Fox Home Video, 1998.

¹⁵⁴ Schlosser, Joe. "Twentieth Rolls out the Hours." *Broadcasting and Cable*. September 21, 1998. 75.

Although the WB has followed up its *Buffy* success with other teen dramas such as *Dawson's Creek*, *Felicity* and *7th Heaven*.

¹⁵⁵ Jacobs, A. J. "Staking a Claim." *Entertainment Weekly*. 421. 03-06-98. 23.

¹⁵⁶ *Broadcasting and Cable* states that WB's programming, "grab[bed] the number one rating among teens.

Among girls 12-17, it's the season's top rated show." Stroud, Michael. "WB tops UPN season to date." *Broadcasting and Cable*. February 23, 1998. 41.

¹⁵⁷ Hall, Stuart. "Encoding, Decoding." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Simon During. New York: Routledge, 1993. 103.

¹⁵⁸ Nashawaty, Chris. "Teen Steam." *Entertainment Weekly*. 405. 11-14-97. 31.

¹⁵⁹ "All Things Considered." National Public Radio. 02-03-99.

¹⁶⁰ Kati Holmes of the WB's "Dawson's Creek," Sarah Michelle Gellar of the WB's "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," Skeet Ullrich of *Scream*, and Jennifer Love Hewitt of Fox's "Party of Five."

¹⁶¹ Cavanaugh, Tim. "Earnest Goes to Camp." *The Met*. #49. 12-09/16-98. 16.

¹⁶² Nashawaty. 31.

¹⁶³ *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. Twentieth Century Fox. Written/Directed by Joss Whedon. Starring, Kristy Swanson & Luke Perry.

¹⁶⁴ The character Oz/Seth Green, both a werewolf and Willow/Hannigan's boyfriend, is arguably the newest member of the core group. He didn't join the show until midway into the second season (2ABB15 "Phases") but he has functioned as a permanent member of the team since that time. Since he is such a new addition I do not include him fully into the conception of the program's mainstay characters.

¹⁶⁵ A good example of this comes from the Internet Movie Database, which lists four categories, "comedy/horror/action/drama," for the television program since it neatly fits into none. [www.imdb.com/Title/?%22Buffy+the+Vampire+Slayer%22+\(1997\)](http://www.imdb.com/Title/?%22Buffy+the+Vampire+Slayer%22+(1997)).

¹⁶⁶ Episode 3ABB05. First broadcast 11-03-98. Written and directed by David Greenwalt. Mutant Enemy Productions, 1998. Rebroadcast 02-02-99.

¹⁶⁷ This is tremendously important to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in at least one very obvious way. The character Buffy Summers played by Kristy Swanson in the 1992 film version of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (also written and directed by Joss Whedon) is absolutely a different character than Buffy Summers played by Sarah Michelle Gellar in the television series. Although medium may influence the different readings slightly, I would argue that fans' knowledge of the star texts of each of the two actresses has the greatest effect on the reading of the character Buffy Summers. Indeed the program and the characterizations are very much tied to a lively fan culture which has spawned no less than four web rings (one of them focused entirely on Alyson Hannigan) each including numerous fan sites, fan fiction, a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* magazine and a collector's culture that in different ways explore and expand readings of the stars and the episodes. In many respects the style and scope of the fan culture around Buffy reflects fan cultures around programs like *The X-Files* or *Star Trek*. *Buffy* is even directly tied to the latter by the reoccurring character of Principal Snyder played by Armin Shimerman who also plays Quark, a reoccurring character on *Star Trek Deep Space Nine*. I shall insist on referring to all of the characters in this manner, character/star, even those who like Freeman or Shimerman who have less visible star personas, but star personas which are, nonetheless, important to a subcultural fandom which grows up around character actors and affects readings of their work.

- ¹⁶⁸ Goldman, Robert. "Constructing and Addressing the Audience as Commodity." *Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Text Reader*. Ed. Gail Dines and Jean Humez. London: Sage Publications. 88.
- ¹⁶⁹ The food advertised is primarily fast food and/or high fat convenience food which works to create a dialectic between the investment that other ads, like those for makeup or fitness, and the program itself articulate as important – a thin perfected body achieved by exercise – and what the fast food ads articulate as important – constant consumption and the pleasures of food.
- ¹⁷⁰ A transparent example of an advertiser's attempt to do just this can be found in 7UP's "are you an Un?" campaign (one of this series was, significantly, broadcast during this program). The commercials set up young 'alternative' protagonists, connected only by their mutual love of 7UP, in opposition to slapstick authority figures 'the syndicate' who chase the youths but ultimately fail to keep "the Uns" from consuming this revolutionary beverage.
- ¹⁷¹ For instance see: Tucker, Ken. "Ouija Broads." *Entertainment Weekly*. 11/06/98. 59-60. Tucker, Ken. "Best of 1998: Television. #1 *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Entertainment Weekly*. 12/25/98 & 01/01/99. 124. Carson, Tom. "Girlie Shows." *Esquire*. January 1999. 34-37. Graeber, David. "Rebel Without a God." *In These Times*. December 27, 1998. 29-30.
- ¹⁷² Dyer, Richard. *Only Entertainment*. New York: Routledge, 1992. 6-7.
- ¹⁷³ Carson, Tom. "Girlie Shows." *Esquire*. January 1999. 36. Italics Carson's.
- ¹⁷⁴ Graeber, David. "Rebel Without a God." *In These Times*. December 27, 1998. 29.
- ¹⁷⁵ Schatz, Thomas. *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Studio System*. New York: Random House, 1981. 19.
- ¹⁷⁶ Deming, Caren J. "For Television-Centered Television Criticism: Lessons from Feminism." *Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular*. Ed. Mary Ellen Brown. London: Sage Publications, 1990. 47.
- ¹⁷⁷ Although not exclusively vampires. The 'hellmouth' device in the narrative allows for the inclusion of all different types of monsters from all walks of horror; demons, witches, and zombies are some other popular monsters that are attracted to the hellmouth.
- ¹⁷⁸ Rassmussen, Randy L. *Children of the Night: The Six Archetypal Characters of Classic Horror Films*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998. 7.
- ¹⁷⁹ Gelder, Ken. "Vampires and Cinema: From *Nosferatu* to *Bram Stoker's Dracula*." *Reading the Vampire*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 93.
- ¹⁸⁰ Tudor, Andrew. *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989. 113-115. Head's Mr. Giles is comparable to Peter Cushing's 1958 portrayal of Professor Van Helsing.
- ¹⁸¹ Wood, Robin. "An Introduction to the American Horror Film." *Planks of Reason: Essays on Horror Film*. Ed. Barry K. Grant. Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1984. 164-200.
- ¹⁸² Wood. 166.
- ¹⁸³ Wood. 167-168.
- ¹⁸⁴ This is only one small example in the excessively lesbian coded characterization of Faith/Dushku. In fact Faith's recent changing of loyalties puts directly into a historical conception of powerful, but ultimately ambivalent or evil, lesbian characters like Mrs. Danvers in *Rebecca*, or Theodora in *The Haunting*.
- ¹⁸⁵ Nomenclature borrowed from the episode summary found on the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* web site, www.Buffy.com.
- ¹⁸⁶ Fiske, John. "Gendered Television: Masculinity." *Television Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1987. 198-223.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Buffy* is not the first program to ever do this though. Fiske suggests programs like *Miami Vice*, *Hill Street Blues*, and *Cagney and Lacey* as examples of programs that begin this process.
- ¹⁸⁸ Fiske. 198.
- ¹⁸⁹ This is mediated by episodes which are drawn from the ongoing subplots, for instance the episodes dealing with Angel/Boreanaz's soul (or lack thereof) and his relationship to Buffy/Gellar. These build on fans' knowledge of the serialized subplot between the two but it still works in terms of episodic plot

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- closure, and the action in these (at least one battle between Angel/Boreanaz and Buffy/Gellar) is motivated by the episodic events.
- ¹⁹⁰ Fiske. 200.
- ¹⁹¹ Fiske. 202.
- ¹⁹² Fiske. 212.
- ¹⁹³ Inness, Sherrie. *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999. 49.
- ¹⁹⁴ Douglas, Susan. *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media*. New York: Times Books, 1994. 133-134. Interestingly enough magicoms seem to have made a triumphant comeback in the late 90s. And though *Buffy* fits into this category only marginally other programs like the WB's *Charmed* or ABC's *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* fit very nicely. Is there something more going on in the late 90s that connects the broadcasting industry's conception of their female audience now to the female audience of the early 60s?
- ¹⁹⁵ This is further elaborated in the stars' images, outside of *Buffy*, Hannigan and Gellar are reported to be good friends. This works to reinforce the representation of female community at work in the show. The two have been spotted together on a number of occasions; one photo of the duo was published in a 1998 *In Style* magazine, and they even went to the 1998 MTV music awards together.
http://members.tripod.com/~Little_Willow/smgarticles.html
- ¹⁹⁶ Feuer, Jane. "Genre Study and Television." *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*. Ed. Robert Allen. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987. 153.
- ¹⁹⁷ Feuer, Jane. "Narrative Form in American Television." *High Theory/Low Culture: Analyzing Popular Television and Film*. Ed. Colin McCabe. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. 110-111.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 133-114.
- ¹⁹⁹ Mattelart, Michele. "Everyday Life." *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Eds. Charlotte Brunson, Julie D'Acci & Lynn Spigel. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. 23-31.
- ²⁰⁰ Modleski, Tania. "The Rhythms of Reception: Daytime Television and Women's Work." *Turning It On: A Reader in Women and Media*. Eds. Helen Baehr and Ann Gray. New York: Arnold, 1996. 109.
- ²⁰¹ Kuhn, Annette. "Women's Genres: Melodrama, Soap Opera and Theory." *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Eds. Charlotte Brunson, Julie D'Acci & Lynn Spigel. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. 15.
- ²⁰² Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1987. 179-180. Quoting from, M.E. Brown. "The Politics of Soaps: Pleasure and Feminine Empowerment." *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*. 4:2, 1997. 1-25.
- ²⁰³ Indeed, such an implausible return from death is a hallmark of the soap opera. The traditional criticism that soaps are irredeemably implausible in these kinds of ways is actually mediated by the supernatural elements that allow for even more impossible plot twists than *Buffy's* daytime counterpart.
- ²⁰⁴ Take for example Faith/Dushku, who has functioned as an ambivalent character at best throughout the season, and who has finally crossed over to 'the dark side' so to speak through her blasé response to her accidental killing of a human. Her inability to mesh with the core group emotionally, to *talk* about her feelings or her role as a Slayer has allowed her to go to work for the demonic Mayor and work against the protectionist goals of the group.
- ²⁰⁵ This may be partially mitigated by the fact that he is the newest of the core group of characters, his newness may keep him from fully integrating into the family dynamic.
- ²⁰⁶ Inness, Sherrie. *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999. 5-6.
- ²⁰⁷ Although in the case of the WB it is still an issue of limiting deficit rather than increasing profits, the new network is losing money, \$96 million in 1996 and \$87 million in 1997. Stroud, Michael. *Broadcasting and Cable*. 02-23-98. 44.
- ²⁰⁸ Buffy/Gellar's wisecracks in fact fit very nicely into a 'masculine' action-adventure hero tradition that is typified by stars like Bruce Willis in *Die Hard*, Mel Gibson in *Lethal Weapon*, or Arnold

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- Schwarzenegger in *Terminator 2*. It is the subjects of her witty repartee which are new. In this example Buffy/Gellar disparages a lack of feminized knowledge – in this case fashion – whereas in the previous form any relationship to the feminine would be cause for denigration. One example of this formula is available in *The Rock*. Sean Connery's machismo is set up in opposition to an effeminately gay hairdresser who earns nothing but Connery's contemptuous wisecracks.
- ²⁰⁹ Same guys: Carson, Tom. "Girlie Shows." *Esquire*. January 1999. 34-37. Graeber, David. "Rebel Without a God." *In These Times*. December 27, 1998. 29-30.
- ²¹⁰ Whedon, Joss. Interview with the director, commenting on 1BAA01, "The Harvest." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* home videos. Fox Home Video, 1998.
- ²¹¹ Ang, Ien. "Melodramatic Identifications: Television Fiction and Women's Fantasy." *Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular*. Ed. Mary Ellen Brown. London: Sage Publications, 1990. 83. Italics Ang's.
- ²¹² Ang. 86.
- ²¹³ Ang. 82.
- ²¹⁴ Metz, Walter. "Another being we have created called 'us'": Point-of-View, Melancholia, and the Joking Unconscious in *The Bridges of Madison County*." *The Velvet Light Trap*. #39. 1997. 19.
- ²¹⁵ Metz. 28-35.
- ²¹⁶ Paraphrased from Schatz. 19.
- ²¹⁷ Metz. 31. "In Freud's tendentious jokes, women are always the object of the exchange between a male jokester and a male auditor. But, argues Mellencamp, when women become the subjects of the joke-telling process, the object – the butt of the joke – becomes "patriarchal social structures."
- ²¹⁸ Turnbull, Sue. "Dear Anne Summers: 'Microfeminism' and Media Representations of Women." *Wired Up: Young People and the Electronic Media*. Ed. Sue Howard. London: UCL Press, 1998. 158.
- ²¹⁹ Whedon, Joss. Interview episode #1. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* home videos. Fox Home Video, 1998.
- ²²⁰ Mendelsohn, Jennifer. "The Sexiest Vampire Slayer alive – TV's "Buffy" Leads a New Wave of Intelligent [sic] Chills." Reprinted article on: http://members.tripod.com/~Little_Willow/castarticles.html

NOTES TO CONCLUSION:

- ²²¹ Kearney, Mary Celeste. "Producing Girls: Rethinking the Study of Female Youth Culture." *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures*. Ed. Sherrie Inness. New York: New York University Press, 1998. 285-310.
- ²²² Kearney, Mary Celeste. "When *Gidget* Gets Girl Power: Female Adolescence in 1990's Television." West Palm Beach: Society for Cinema Studies Conference, 1999.
- ²²³ Interview with Katie Wharton, Student. *The Righteous Babes*. Produced and Directed by Prahibha Parmar. Distributed by Women Make Movies. 1998.
- ²²⁴ Douglas, Susan. *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*. New York: Times Books, 1994. 306.
- ²²⁵ Hall, Stuart. "Encoding, Decoding." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Simon During. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- ²²⁶ Daly, Steve. "The Frat Pack." *Entertainment Weekly*. 04-24-98. 28-29.
- ²²⁷ *Morning Edition*. Washington DC: National Public Radio, 05-12-99.
- ²²⁸ As I acknowledged in Chapter One other theorists on girlculture have made this point before and have made it better than I, see Lisa Lewis' work on consumer girlculture as it relates to the mall. Lewis, Lisa. "Consumer Girl Culture: How Music Video Appeals to Girls." *Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular*. Ed. Mary Ellen Brown. London: Sage Publications, 1990. See also: Lewis, Lisa. *Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1990.
- ²²⁹ Many thanks to Dr. Diane Negra who alerted me to existence of the new business.

²³⁰ To see their full on-line catalogue see: www.justchicks.com.

²³¹ Penland-Jones, Amy, President Just Chicks, Inc. “Just Chicks Mission Statement.” The mission statement is available on the Just Chicks web-site (www.justchicks.com) or in person from the kiosk attendant.

²³² Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Movies and Methods Volume II*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. 315.

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