

FROM WRITTEN TEXT TO CINEMATIC IMAGES: THE ERASURE OF THE FEMININE VOICE

The germ of the idea for this database, which contains works authored by women and subsequently adapted to film by male directors, took hold in the spring of 2001 during the core seminar for the MALS program, “Food and Film.” The thesis of my final paper for that course, *The Creation of the Celluloid Chef*, arose from a sampling of eleven films¹ in which the central characters are chefs. The paper describes how, when the films are viewed as a group, a pattern in *how* the chefs are depicted emerges. In this sampling, the picture painted of the cinematic *male* chef is one of a connoisseur of taste and/or smell, a true artist whose medium is food, one who creates original culinary works by the dint of his bold, daring and unconventional thinking. He is the master of his craft, author of his own success, and his talents flow from within himself. His sexual appeal and prowess arise from the mastery of his craft and not necessarily from his physical appearance. Depicted in quite a different way, the *female* cinematic chef is projected as a vessel through which inexplicable magic works. Not the author of her creative power, the female chef acts instead as a channel for supernatural forces existing *outside* herself. It is these forces that bestow upon her the gift of culinary inspiration and talent. This pattern in depicting cinematic male and female chefs becomes apparent only when the films are viewed as a group.

A subsequent course, “Film Noir,” brought forth the first thoughts on what happens when literature written by female authors is translated for and adapted to film by male directors, scriptwriters and adaptors. Many “noir” films viewed during this course elicited thoughts about the loss of the female authors’ voice. The question then became whether or not this same pattern existed in other film eras and genres.

Consequently, the idea of creating a database of films based on literature authored by females emerged.

Certainly, as film students know, there are myriad difficulties in translating the verbal (literature) to the visual (film), not the least of which is condensing a novel, with its broad canvas unbound by time, to fit the constraints of the screen's two-hour time period. No film can be so faithful to the literature it is based on or literary author so powerful as to insist on such faithfulness that the literature is depicted without *any* alteration whatsoever. The dictates of both mediums, the written and the cinematic, virtually guarantee alterations of one kind or another. Such changes to the literary to accommodate film's time limitation or the consolidation of characters are not the focus of this research. The intent of this database is to provide a resource so that the adaptation of women's writing to film and its effect on the female author's/main character's "voice" and/or perspective can be researched further. This project is not attempting to answer questions. Rather it is meant to raise them by providing a resource for those who wish to pursue questions related to gender equity in film. For example, what happens when women are absent from, or underrepresented in, the decision making process regarding what elements to keep when translating a written work to film. Do works written by women focus more on character development rather than the elements of plot and action which film is more predisposed to? Do female authors use the role of personal commentator more than male authors? What effect, if any, does the gender of the scriptwriter or adaptor have on such translations? Comparing movies scripted by male and female scriptwriters could be one possible area for future study. Were there peaks in the use of women's literature as a source for films, and were those peaks related to social changes taking place at the time? Which studios relied most heavily on women's literature? What significance, if any, might there

be in the usage of initials (instead of first names) by those working in the film industry? Finally, is there a pattern of predictable changes made to women's literature adapted to film? If there is, what might this pattern indicate?

DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF THE DATABASE

The original intent was for this project to cover the years 1911 to 2007. However, it soon became evident that such the broad scope of ninety-six years needed to be redefined in order to stay within certain time constraints. Consequently, I decided to end the research at an arbitrary cut off point – 1940 - in the hope that others might continue on from that point.

. The database itself was constructed using Microsoft Access, probably not the best choice of software, but the only one of which I have some knowledge. The transaction table (which holds all data collected) includes the title of the literature, author, film title, genre, studio, release date, director, screen or scriptwriter, adaptor and, in the case of silent films, the titler (the person who wrote the *inter-title cards*). (See Appendix 1) In silent films, *inter-title cards* were printed and *filmed text* that, inserted at different points in the film, conveyed either dialogue or information relevant to the narrative.

The information in the transaction table is, in turn, drawn from “master tables” holding information specific to its subject: literature title, author, director, screenwriter, adaptor, genre, and studio. For example: the Literature Table contains the title, author, date of publication and, in the case of short stories, poems or songs and if available, where the piece was published.

The primary research source for this database was the *American Film Institute's Catalog of Feature Films*, listing of American Feature Films, Volumes F1, F2 and F3, covering 1911 through 1940. The American Film Institute's website in the section devoted to the catalog, describes

[t]he mandate of the *American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films* [as] recover[ing] and organiz[ing] data that will document the history of the art of the motion picture in the United States entries in the AFI Catalog have also become significant historical and socio-cultural documents. AFI strives to attain the highest possible level of accuracy for its entries

Unmatched in its level of comprehensiveness and detail, the AFI Catalog is a unique filmographic resource, providing information on every feature-length film produced in America or financed by American production companies. Detailed entries on cast, crew, plot summaries, subjects, genres and historical notes are included for each film.

(<http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/about.aspx?s=&bhcp=1>)

While the information currently contained in this project's database comes solely from AFI's hard copy editions, it is also available online to AFI members. The publication of the printed editions of the AFI Catalog of Films ended with the volume covering 1961-1970 (AFI did not publish a catalog for the years 1951-1960). While the Institute's work to recover and organize the information on films continues, information from 1970 forward will only be available from the online catalog. While AFI's shift to digital records is understandable, making subsequent corrections to the data easier, it should be noted that a very tangible *something* is lost in the transition of the catalog from hard copy to digital. From a researcher's point of view, there simply can be no substitute for

examining catalog hard copies page-by-page, as was done for this project. Just as reading a book and viewing a film are different experiences, there are differences between leafing through the *American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films* and searching the catalog digitally. With the digital catalog, one searches for *specific information* based on prepackaged choices offered by the AFI (film title, director, etc). Gone is the ability to sift through the alpha listing of films (grouped by decade) one film at a time looking for answers to questions *of the researcher's design*. Also lost is the history of the aforementioned corrections AFI made, corrections which, in and of themselves, may contain information important to future researchers. For instance, in the volume covering years 1911-1920, the literature a film is based on was set apart from the rest of the film's information. Beginning with the volume for years 1921-1930, this information is blended in with the film's synopsis. Additionally, over the years, these synopsis become longer, more in depth and containing greater detail, a fact reflective of both how much information AFI uncovered and the growing intricacies of the narratives told.

One of the first obstacles encountered in this research was determining the gender of not only the author of the literature on which a particular film was based, but also the gender of those involved (director, et al.) in transforming the literary to the cinematic. Oftentimes, women and men used only initials, a practice which could indicate a deliberate masking of gender. Or, names that are typically considered masculine or feminine today were read as just the opposite in the early twentieth century. One source found to be most helpful in untangling the knotty question of gender identification was the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com). A general search of the internet itself (through Google) was also found to be helpful. Undetermined was whether male aliases were used by female writers and if so, to what

degree. Additionally, with regards to names, where female writers from the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century used their married names, those names were listed in the database.

Another obstacle encountered was the listing of multiple authors for a particular work where at least one author was female. If AFI listed the female author first – thus considered the primary author – the literature was included in the database. If the female author was listed second, the literature was omitted from the database on the presumption that she wasn't the primary author. In addition to having multiple authors, literary works sometimes went through a literary metamorphosis. The *AFI's Catalog of Feature Films* provides a film's genealogy, listing all the literature the film was based on. For instance, a play is listed as the primary source for a film, but that play in turn was adapted from either a novel or short story (secondary source). In such cases, if the primary source for the film is authored by a female, the film was included in the database and the secondary source is listed as well; if the primary source is authored by a male, even though the secondary source was authored by a female, that film was not included. An example of this is Austin Strong's play *A Good Little Devil* which was adapted from Rosemond Gerard and Maurice Rostand's play *Un Bon Petit Diabolo*. Because Strong is considered the primary author, this listing is not included in the database. Another anomaly noted is the changing of a literary work's title by the author herself. An example is D. W. Griffith's film *Way Down East* taken from author Lottie Blair Parker's play of the same name. Parker's play was originally entitled *Annie Laurie* but when Parker copyrighted her work in 1897, the title was changed to *Way Down East*.ⁱⁱ

There are also instances in which films are based upon characters created by female writers, yet the stories for these films were written by the studio's scriptwriters

and not the author who created the character. The *Andy Hardy* movies (there were seven made between 1938 and 1958) is a case in point. The character of Andy Hardy is the creation of Aurania Rouverol, yet the movies weren't based on stories written by Rouverol.

AFI entries that listed only the author but not the title of the literature upon which a film was based were excluded from the database on the premise that there would be no way of finding the literature in order to do a comparison between the written work and the film. However, those AFI entries missing the date of publicationⁱⁱⁱ, or name of director or screenwriter, were included since such omissions would not affect locating the work.

A few of the early female directors who brought women's literature to the screen and the number of these films that they directed were: Ida May Parke (3), Lois Weber (4), Francis Marion (1)^{iv}. This database also includes a number of female scriptwriters (142 out of a total of 572 scriptwriters), titlers (11 out of 63) and adaptors (67 out of 220), who worked on films based upon women's literature. The number of women working in films listed in this database does not reflect all the women working in the industry during the years surveyed for this project. Since the film industry's inception, the number of women involved in film production was at its highest in the early years. Alley Acker, author of *Reel Women: Pioneers of the Cinema 1896 to the Present* underscores this, quoting Anthony Slide "During the silent era, women might be said to have virtually controlled the film industry." (Acker, xvii) Ray Browne, in his review of Acker's book, observes

For the 90 years of the life of the film industry women have held positions as directors, producers, editors and technicians but their roles and work have remained virtually faceless and nameless... (94)

By the late 1920's, the number of female directors had dropped to just one – Dorothy Arzner, who ceased directing in the early 1940's. Consequently, for the time period covered by this database, the lack of female directors makes a comparative study between how male directors and female directors chose to interpret women's literature close to impossible. However, one film in Arzner's oeuvre, *Christopher Strong*, based on a novel written by Gilbert Frankau, offers a singular opportunity for just such a comparison.

BOOK-TO-FILM - - A NEW CREATION

Once any piece of literature is adapted to fit the film medium, it becomes a new creation on a number of levels. First because, as previously noted, the two media (writing and filming) call upon different tools to tell a story. These tools require a reconfiguring of the written so that it "fits" film's requirements. Secondly, whereas a written work springs from a single author, or, in some cases, two authors, a film is most often a collaboration *between those working in different film disciplines*. However, and particularly in cinema's early years, the film's existence is credited to just one 'author,' typically the director. While there is a desire for "a singular origin," an "auteur approach [that confers] author-status on" the director, and more recently actors, "scriptwriters have never enjoyed this status" (Hartley 22), and yet scriptwriters and adaptors are large contributors to the film narrative. All those involved in the creation of a film should rightly be considered a film's "author," as they all contribute to creating something new, something different, from the written text that is the film's genesis.

From the scriptwriter's condensing and coalescing of a novel into 90 to 120 pages to the director's implementation of the script, at which point the director's style and use of mise-en-scène are injected, and ending with an actor's personal

interpretation of a character, the intricacies of filmmaking often leads the spirit of an author's work off onto another path. George Bluestone writes that "film-makers have written into their story...are characteristically theirs and not that of [the author]" "leav[ing] behind the author's most characteristic signature, her style" (113). It is no wonder that a struggle between the book's author and those involved in making the film over whose perspective will prevail often takes place behind the camera.

In the case of *A Raisin In The Sun* (1961), it was Sidney Poitier's point of view which triumphed over the director's and fellow cast members as well as the author's. Lorraine Hansberry's play made the crossover to film with the original Broadway cast, and Poitier's view of his character, intact. Poitier envisioned the character of Walter Lee (the son) as the linchpin of the piece whereas Hansberry, a feminist writer, wrote *A Raisin In The Sun* (1959) with the mother as the pivotal character. When the play was in rehearsal, both the actress playing the mother, as well as the director, agreed with the author's point of view. By Poitier's own account,

[I] perceived the [piece] as being best when it unfolded from the son's point of view [and I] argued that position I prevailed, I guess, because I was considered the principal player who was responsible for getting the piece mounted. (150)

Poitier carried more clout, therefore his opinion in both the play and film versions won out.

Poitier further states that his intent was to "play the drama . . . the way I believed it *should* be played," stating that this "didn't require changing the words, only making a fundamental change in the attitude of the individual." (152) Poitier acknowledges that

[t]he playwright's sympathies were completely against me. She saw the play as weighted toward the mother; that's how she'd written it . . . she

wrote a play about a matriarch faced with this dilemma. But in that formulation, the son is just a ne'er-do-well. (156)

Poitier's emphatic opinion of his interpretation of Hansberry's play effectively silenced her voice, perspective. Poitier's vision prevailed over Hansberry's point of view. It can be argued that in some way, with Poitier's change, Hansberry is no longer the sole author of *Raisin*, that she shares authorship with Poitier. Though it is true that all actors bring a part of themselves to every role they play, in this case Poitier didn't simply build on, embellish, what Hansberry wrote. He created something entirely different and the audience experienced the play through Poitier's eyes, not Hansberry's.

Certainly, female filmmakers adapt works authored by male authors from their subjective viewpoint as well. However, as has been noted, female representation in Hollywood is not even close to that of male representation, even today. Therefore, what is viewed on screen is predominately the subjective view of one gender.

Central to this project is the preliminary observation that when any type of writing – be it song, play, short story, novel – authored by a woman is translated to film by male directors, et al, the door is open to the likelihood that the *voice* of the author or central female character will be diminished or erased.

For instance, one film viewed in the previously mentioned Film Noir class, was Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940) based on author Daphne Du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* (1938). Although producer David O. Selznick insisted Hitchcock adhere to the novel, and on the face of it Selznick's wishes were followed, there are subtleties that shift ever so slightly the novel's depiction of the heroine. Du Maurier's tale is told from the perspective of the main character and in that character's *voice* (Du Maurier never names the novel's heroine; the title *Rebecca* refers to the dead first wife). Yet, although Alfred Hitchcock's film opens with the main character's voiceover expressing her

innermost thoughts, just as the novel does, the heroine's voice quickly fades away taking with it the personal insight the novel offers the reader. What remains is Hitchcock's visual representation of the heroine, a representation which is the director's (and scriptwriter's) interpretation of the novel. Reading the novel and watching the film, one comes away with two different views of the heroine. Whereas the novel allows the reader to be privy to the heroine's innermost conflicts, her extreme shyness and lack of self-confidence, and charts her growing outspokenness and courage to act, Hitchcock turned Du Maurier's heroine into a caricature of the original.

No other scene in the movie version illustrates this better than when Max and the heroine are waiting the arrival of the heroine's employer, Mrs. Van Hopper, so they can announce their engagement and the heroine's resignation from her job. At the first knock on the door, the heroine skitters (and there is no better word to describe the action) to screen right, behind the closed door in an attempt to hide.

In the novel, the heroine's confrontation with Mrs. Van Hopper played out very differently. Max delivered the news of the couple's engagement alone, without the heroine present. He then goes off to confirm Mrs. Van Hopper's travel arrangements, leaving the heroine to face her employer alone (Du Maurier 57-58). The heroine's description of the paralyzing fear that engulfs her as she walks into Mrs. Van Hopper's sitting room makes her accomplishment of the task all the more striking. The fact that she confronted Mrs. Van Hopper, albeit not as successfully as she would have liked, illustrated what she was capable of and foreshadowed what she would be called upon to do in the future.

A second film, *Reckless Moment*, based on the abridged version of *The Blank Wall* by Elizabeth Sanxay Holding published in *The Ladies Home Journal* (1947),^v is another example of the erasure of the author's/heroine's voice. The heroine's name is

Lucia and in both the abridged version and subsequently published novel, as with the novel *Rebecca*, the reader is privy to the heroine's thoughts, feelings and reasoning. Written from a third-person point of view, *Holding* takes the reader inside Lucia's mind and heart, revealing a woman conflicted by her responsibilities to family and her yearning to be more than just a mother. Yet, the film opens with a male voice-over, a distractive element that draws attention away from the decidedly female perspective of *Holding*'s work. Unlike Hitchcock with *Rebecca*, director Max Ophuls refrains from transforming the cinematic Lucia into a distorted version of her literary counterpart. This Lucia is as strong and determined as her literary counterpart. But, like the nameless heroine of *Rebecca*, the viewer doesn't see inside this Lucia, doesn't witness her inner turmoil over her growing awareness that she is more than a wife and mother. The male voiceover at the beginning of the film in essence signifies the muting of the author's feminine voice. Unlike Hitchcock, Ophuls' signature directing style, comprised of deep focus shots, long takes and complex mis-en-scènes, translates into more realistic screen images, yet at the same time it contributes to the distancing of the viewer from Lucia's internal struggle with her frustration over the demands of her family. Sixteen years before Betty Friedan debunked the "vision of the happy modern housewife" (224), *Holding*'s Lucia voiced her conflicted feelings. The elimination in the film of Lucia's point of view in the form of her "voice" erases Lucia's growing sense of discontent, and her introspection as evidenced in the written text. In the *Ladies Home Journal* version, Lucia's thoughts, printed in italics, have the effect of underscoring her discontent

"Why is it 'housewife?' What would I call myself if we lived in a hotel? Nobody ever puts down just 'wife,' or even just 'mother.' If you haven't got a job, and you don't keep house, you aren't anything, apparently. I wish I was something else...I wish I was a designer, for instance." (115)

The silencing of Lucia's voice in the film has the effect of shifting the narrative focus from Lucia's growing awareness that she is trapped in a life over which she has little

control to Martin Donnelly's attraction to her. Lastly, there is the virtual elimination of a key character from the written versions.

In the novel, Lt. Levy, a character who appears in Holding's eighteen mystery/detective novels^{vi} acts as one side of the juggernaut (Nagle, the blackmailer being the other) bearing down on Lucia's domestic tranquility. Levy acts as a counterpoint to Donnelly, and also to Lucia's growing awareness of, and unhappiness with, her lack of autonomy and control. However, in the film, Lt. Levy's role is collapsed into one of minor consequence. Though it is probable that paring down Levy's role in the film reflects time considerations, minimizing Levy's presence has the effect of strengthening Nagel's role as villain, thus making him the lone wolf hunting Lucia and in turn, heightening Donnelly's protective stance. In the end, the only personification of a male rescuer left, relative to Lucia's female in need of rescue, is Martin Donnelly.

It is ironic that the film makes these changes, leaving Lucia basically unaware of Donnelly's feelings for her (until the climax) whereas Holding tells the story in quite a different way. In Holding's version, Lucia is well aware of Donnelly's feelings for her and, by extension, for her family, as well as her growing feelings for him. In the film, the threat of danger to Lucia and Donnelly's need to protect her supersedes the conflict growing in Lucia over her personal life.

However, the altering of an author's voice, a literary work's perspective, is by no means limited to male adaptors of female literature. For the film *Christopher Strong* (1933), director Dorothy Arzner and Katherine Hepburn had different ideas of how the novel should be depicted. According to *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures*, when Hepburn, playing Lady Darrington, "challenged [Arzner's] directorial choices," Arzner "went to Selznik and threatened to quit the film" if her choices weren't

adhered to (F3: 349). Arzner, who had by that time been working and directing in Hollywood for over ten years, prevailed over Hollywood newcomer Hepburn.

Arzner's directorial choices for *Christopher Strong* exhibit the same dynamics, the same shift of focus or reinventing of the hero/heroine as previously attributed to adaptations created by males. Arzner, with a script written by Zoe Akins (both members of the small group of women working behind the camera in Hollywood at that time), reverses the focus of the novel, *Christopher Strong* (1931), whose title is also the name of the main character, Sir Christopher Strong. Like *The Blank Wall*, the novel *Christopher Strong* is written in third person though, unlike Holding's novel, Frankau wrote in third person omniscient, thus allowing him to give voice to the thoughts of all his characters and not just those of Sir Christopher.

Arzner began her career in Hollywood working for William De Mille, brother of Cecile B. De Mille. Starting out by typing his scripts, within six months, Arzner was working in the cutting room, editing films and quickly rose to chief editor. In two years, Arzner edited fifty-two films and her breakthrough came in 1923 when she edited Rudolph Valentino's epic *Blood and Sand* (1922). After she edited *Old Ironsides* (1926), Paramount named Arzner "director." Between 1927 and 1943, Arzner directed seventeen feature films for which "she chose actresses whose screen presences expanded beyond the two-dimensional boundaries of the script. Her women were never meek nor boring, her protagonists bravely fought no-win battles...." (Acker, 25) Arzner's expertise went beyond editing and directing. She is credited with the industry's first "boom microphone" after she suggested to the sound man on the set of *Wild Party* (1929) that he "attach a fishing pole to the microphone and . . . follow the actors around" rather than have the actors come to the stationary microphones to deliver their lines (Acker, 25).

In all the movies Arzner directed, her female characters are “intense, daring individuals who seem to be slightly altered replicas of [her own] personality” (Panosky, 19). Acker cites Sharon Smith to make the point that Arzner “directed from a woman’s point of view,” writing

[Arzner] sought to undo the stereotypes of women characters as scheming witches, and light-hearted husband chasers, and depicted them instead as persons of intelligence, humor and humanity. (25)

Panosky further notes that Arzner’s films and plot structures focused on “women, their views, lifestyles and hardships” with “male characters and issues [taking] a backseat” (21). In adapting Frankau’s novel for film, Arzner pulls Lady Darrington to the forefront, leaving Sir Christopher in the shadows, clearly not the author’s intent, given the title of the novel. Gilbert Frankau was a British writer prominent in the fight to legitimize divorce in England, and the novel *Christopher Strong* focuses on the plight of Sir Christopher Strong, a man torn between his wife and love of his family, and Lady Darrington, an adventurous and fearless young woman with whom he falls in love.

In the film, the concerns of the male character are minimized, his voice and perspective, predominant in the novel, overridden or erased. Sir Christopher, in effect, is turned into a caricature, much like the heroine in *Rebecca*. Panosky cites Claire Johnson’s description of Arzner’s characterization of Lady Darrington:

The woman in Arzner’s [Christopher Strong] determines her own identity through transgression and desire in a search for an independent existence beyond and outside the discourse of the male...[Lady Darrington] achieves her project. (23)

Unlike the film *Rebecca* where the novel’s original title is kept for the film and the driving force behind remains the mysterious Rebecca, Arzner’s retaining the original title of the novel *Christopher Strong* for the film, when in fact the film focuses on Lady Darrington,

“gives the impression that the film will focus on Sir Christopher and the decisions he makes....[b]ut the film [does] quite the opposite”(Panosky, 23). In effect, the film delivers a portrayal of Lady Darrington as a hero, not because she sacrifices herself to shield her lover, but rather because she ultimately makes her own choices, daring to challenge the established way of thinking.

As seen by the example of Arzner's *Christopher Strong*, the elimination of the author's *voice* or deviation from the author's intent by those charged with translating a novel to film is not particular to women's literature. So the problem isn't that male directors, et al, alter the focus of literature authored by women, but rather that there is not greater gender equity in the film industry. Regarding this inequity of gender representation and the resulting difference between masculine and feminine viewpoints, it is insightful to quote Dorothy Arzner. In an interview, Marjorie Rosen asked Arzner about the main character in George Kelly's play *Craig's Wife* (1936), and her thoughts on the differences between masculine and feminine viewpoints. Arzner replied,

I told [George Kelly] I was following [his play] as faithfully as possible...but that I believed Mr. Craig should be down on his knees to Mrs. Craig because she'd made a man of him. I believe he'd been dominated by his mother who, before she died, had told his aunt to stand by him because she didn't approve of Mrs. Craig (Acker, 27).

Arzner goes on to report that upon hearing this, George Kelly rose to his six-foot height and said, “That's not my play! Harriet Craig is an SOB and Craig is a sweet guy.”

Arzner summed up the difference between hers and Kelly's perspective as “a woman's point of view vs. a man's.” Acker writes that “Arzner was aware as early as 1932” of differences in “seeing” between female and male filmmakers and offered the remedy.

“There should be more [women] directing. Try as any man may, he will never be able to

get the woman's viewpoint in directing certain stories." (Acker, 27) It should be noted that the reverse is true as well.

CONCLUSION

Just six years after Arzner ended her career as a film director, Lester Asheim authored his seminal doctoral dissertation *From Book to Film* (1949). In a series of articles built on his dissertation and published in *The Quarterly of Film Radio and Television*, Asheim describes thirty-nine "specific kinds of changes that are introduced in the film versions of books which are adapted to the screen" (*From Book to Film: Summary*, 258) and observes that the translation from literature to film "is a stylistic change which substitutes a pictorial style for the literary style of the novel [and it] alters the manner of storytelling, but need not alter the matter" (Asheim, 259).

Asheim acknowledges that his study based on a sample of twenty-four novels adapted to film is of a "very limited segment" of Hollywood's total output. He notes that, though a small sample, the study is of importance to film analysis because "[t]he pattern of changes which emerges from [his] findings will be repeated in any sample of films." However, nowhere in his study does Asheim account for a "difference in seeing" between female and male filmmakers, though he does note that "[c]ondensation results in the omission of material from the film version which the novelist apparently considered essential to [her] original conception." (258-260)

Some of the resultant changes observed by Asheim are imposed by film's technology. Asheim cites "the camera's special ability to portray action and movement" as the reason why the film version of a literary piece "concentrates upon plot rather than upon character drawing, philosophical commentary, or analysis of implications" (260) and that non-active passages are subservient to the plot action. As previously noted,

the novel's unlimited time versus a film's two-hour limitation guarantees that a novel is pared down to fit film's time constraints, a fact that Asheim himself observed. Though reducing the novel to a few select elements is necessary, the decision of which elements are integral to the narrative, and therefore should be included in the film, is not made by the author. The decision makers are the studio, scriptwriter, director, and actors. Such factors as artistic use, appeal to the widest possible audience, the dictates of the star system, as well as pressure from those outside the film industry who are charged with regulating Hollywood's products are taken into account when alterations are made to a literary work.

Following Arzner's view on the differences in "seeing" that exist between female and male filmmakers, it comes as no surprise that there would be gender differences on what material in the novel is essential to an author's conception. This difference in "seeing," coupled with "the camera's special ability to portray action and movement," translates into a film's concentration more upon the plot than upon "character drawing, philosophical commentary or analysis of implications" (260). In the case of Elizabeth Sanxay Holding's novel *The Blank Wall*, the erasure of the personal commentator coupled with the heightened "importance of the romantic love story [which] is stressed to a greater extent in the film than in the novel" results in the film version *Reckless Moment* (1949) "extol[ing] the love story above the other aspects of the plot" (Asheim, 264). In so doing, the revelation of the heroine's mind and heart, her conflicted feelings over her responsibilities to family and her need to be more than just a mother are overshadowed, and, for all intents, eliminated by the romantic element. The same can be said of *Rebecca* (1940), where the love story takes precedence over the heroine's personal growth and change. With the magnification of the romantic element in *Reckless Moment* and *Rebecca*, the focus shifts from the heroine's inner conflict and

resultant personal growth to the “casting of [a] romantic ‘hero’” thus underscoring another of Asheim’s findings (264).

Arznar and scriptwriter Zoe Atkins make similar changes in their treatment of Frankau’s novel, *Christopher Strong*, taking the novel which is centered on a male protagonist (Christopher Strong) and turning it into a feminist film treatise, infusing it with insight about Lady Darrington’s struggles, focusing on her struggle maintain her independence, be herself, rather than Christopher Strong’s dilemma of choosing between wife or mistress.

Asheim writes in *From Book to Film: Summary* that a film “must appeal to the widest possible audience if it is to [be successful]” going onto state that “[t]o appeal to every taste and to be commercial, the film devotes itself primarily to pure entertainment, minimizing or eliminating the aspects of the novel which challenge and disturb” (272). In doing so, “one of literature’s most notable contributions to the minds of men – the ability to broaden and enlarge the scope of man’s understanding” is eliminated. According to Asheim, “great literature...has the courage to tell [readers] what they don’t want to hear; to shock and agitate; to challenge and arouse; to act as a sounding board for the new, the different, and the unpopular” (272). Asheim, in his analysis of the process of books-to-film, does not consider the possibility that films, too, have great potential to “challenge and arouse.” Arznar brought a new perspective to her reading of *Christopher Strong* by empathizing with Lady Darrington rather than replicating on film the author’s empathy with Christopher Strong. In doing so, Arznar challenged and disturbed the status quo of her time.

Such changes to the literature on which a film is based creates a space wherein the producer, director, scriptwriter and/or actor have the opportunity to insert their own particular, gendered perspectives. The reinterpretation of a literary work, in and of itself,

is not necessarily a bad thing for such changes create a new work with new perspective. Rather, the problem is one of inequity, of missing perspectives. The remedy, as Arznar herself pointed out, is simple. More women are needed in all aspects of the film industry. In this way, film audiences can be “challenged and disturbed,” the scope of their understanding “broadened and enlarged” much like the readers of novels.

NOTES

^{i.} The films viewed for this paper were: *A Chef In Love* (1997), *Babett's Feast* (1987), *Big Night* (1996), *Chocolat* (2000), *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994), *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1992), *Like Water For Chocolate* (1992), *Simply Irresistible* (1999), *Spitfire Grill* (1996) *What's Cooking* (2000), *Woman On Top* (2000)

^{ii.} See Additionally, Parker's work shares similarities with *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy <http://books.google.com/books?id=GzLyVJdiwvIC&pg=RA1-PA56&lpg=RA1-PA56&dq=Annie+Laurie+Lottie+Blair+Parker&source=web&ots=88IUTX5a95&sig=6i7Kgif81kk9ZU7SSLF44iqchck#PRA1-PA56.M1> for a more details.

^{iii.} The absence of a date of publication is represented in the database by "9990" since Access does not allow this field to be left empty.

^{iv.} Marion was long considered the "The Dean of Hollywood Scriptwriters" in the 1920s and 1930s see the website www.reelwomen.com for more information

^{v.} *The Blank Wall* was released as a novel in the same year. A remake of *The Reckless Moment* entitled *The Deep End*, was released in 2001. In this version, Lucia's daughter Bee, was changed to a gay son whose liaison with an adult male is the focus of the blackmail. Whereas both the novel and the original film had no graphic sexual content, the 2001 film version includes one.

^{vi.} www.magicdragon.com/ultimatemystery/authorsH.html Not much information can be found on Elizabeth Sanxay Holding in the library or on the internet. The information found on the internet, by no means comprehensive, does shed some light on Ms. Holdings writing career as well as her ideological leanings.

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Appendix 1
Sample of Transaction Table

Film Title	Year	Studio	Literature Title	Year Published	Author's First Name	Author's Last Name	Director
Afraid to Love	1927	Paramount Famous Lasky Corp	La Passerelle	1990	Mme. Fred	De Grease	E. F.
After Business Hours	1925	Columbia Pictures	Everything Money Can Buy	1924	Ethel Watts	Mumford	Mal
The Argyle Case	1929	Warner Bros	The Argyle Case: A Drama in Four Acts	1927	Harriet	Ford	Hov
Baby Mine	1928	Metro -Goldwyn - Mayer Corp.	Baby Mind: Domestic Farce in Three Acts	1910	Margaret	Mayo	Rot
The Bat	1926	Feature Productions	The Bat, A Play of Mystery in Three Acts	1926	Mary Roberts	Rinehart	Rok
Bellamy Trial	1929	Metro -Goldwyn - Mayer Corp.	The Belamy Trial	1927	Frances Noyes	Hart	Mor
Body and Soul	1927	Metro -Goldwyn - Mayer Corp.	Body and Soul	1919	Katharine Newlin	Burt	Reg
Brown of Harvard	1926	Metro -Goldwyn Pictures	Brown of Harvard, a Farce in Four Acts	1909	Rida Johnson	Young	Jac
Chicago	1927	De Mille Pictures	Chicago	1927	Maurine (Dallas)	Watkins	Fran
Classified	1925	Corinne Griffith Productions	Classified	1927	Edna	Ferber	Alfr
The Confidence Man	1924	Famous Players Lasky	The Confidence Man	1925	Laurie York	Erskine	Vict

